

The Allon Plan and the Netanyahu's Proposal

Background

During June 1997, the media reported the outlines of a proposal offered by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu as a basis for the permanent settlement to be reached between Israel and the Palestinians. The program, presented during a Security Cabinet meeting, was referred to by Netanyahu as the *Allon Plan — Plus*. According to reports, the program entailed the creation of Jewish *settlement clusters* that would include the Greater Jerusalem area, especially Gush Etzion and Ma'ale Adumim, the entire Jordan Valley, large concentrations of settlements in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, the area along the perimeter of the Green Line, the network of roads constructed to bypass the Arabic villages and towns, and sources of water.

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Netanyahu has denied that a map has been drawn according to these principles, although every attempt to implement these guidelines on a map of the region has revealed that *settlement concentrations* would be isolated from each other within the region under Israeli control.

The Allon Plan

Even before the close of the Six Day War, the late Yigal Allon reached the conclusion that Israel would have no choice but to return most of the area captured to Arab control. This assessment was based on evidence of an incipient *demographic problem* on the one hand, and the fact that the new situation had provided Israel with new advantages which could be used to bargain for peace on the other.

The *Allon Plan*, as it was formulated over the coming years, was based on *territorial compromise* — that is, the return of most of the occupied territories to Arab sovereignty — in return for peace. The plan's details were based on the principle that Israel was to relinquish control over densely populated Arab territories but not over those territories requisite for its defence, primarily before a land invasion from the east. It should be recalled that when Yigal Allon died, on 29 February 1980, the Jewish population living in the Occupied Territories numbered only a few tens of thousands, and in those areas he intended to return to Arab sovereignty — almost none. Moreover, since then, security-related and geo-strategic conditions have changed; the threat of artillery broached in Allon's plan has become much less relevant in the missile age.

Allon's plan covered Judea and Samaria, the Shomron, the Gaza Strip and the Sinai. More specifically, Israel would continue to control the entire city of Jerusalem within its new municipal boundaries; the entire Jordan Valley, including a 10-15 kilometre-wide fringe that included the first ridge of mountains west of the Jordan River, excluding the Jericho district, which would be linked by a corridor to the Arab territories; Gush Etzion; a certain amount of territory in the Hebron Mountain and Judean Desert regions; the area around Latroun; all of the Gaza Strip and its inhabitants, exclusive of the Palestinian refugees living there; the Red Sea shore from Eilat to Sharm-el-Sheikh, the airports built in the northern Sinai, and the Rafiah district. Allon suggested that the remainder of the West Bank be transferred to Jordanian sovereignty, and the rest of the Sinai to Egypt.

Furthermore, all of the territory west of the Jordan River, now occupied by Israel, and from which it would withdraw, would be declared a demilitarised zone.

Allon never publicised a detailed map reflecting the details of his plan, and even disavowed the map appended to the article on his plan published in the American quarterly, *Foreign Affairs*, in October 1976. However, he never concealed his intention of creating a territorial continuity between the Kingdom of Jordan, east of the Jordan River, and the West Bank by means of a corridor passing through the Jericho district.

After being appointed Foreign Minister in Yitzchak Rabin's first government (June 1974), Allon tried, with the assistance of the American Secretary of State, Henry Kissinger, to promote the *Jericho Plan*, according to which the segments of the Jericho district bordering Jordan would be returned within the framework of a separation of forces agreement, similar to the agreements Israel had signed with Egypt and Syria. As is well known, the Jericho Plan was abandoned after the Arab summit, held in Rabat in

October 1974, denied King Hussein the right to negotiate on the future of the Occupied Territories. In regard to the Gaza Strip, Allon anticipated that a highway would eventually link the area to the West Bank.

What Links Netanyahu's Plan to that of Allon?

A consideration of the above should make it clear that few similarities are to be found between the plan presented by Prime Minister Netanyahu and that formulated by Allon. Nonetheless, it is difficult not to perceive the similarities between the current plan and what has been termed, since the mid 1980s, the *Sharon Plan*. This plan proposed establishing a string Jewish settlements around densely populated Arab communities for the purpose of threatening (Palestinian) regional autonomy by creating continuous Israeli territorial sovereignty between Gaza and the Left Bank.