



5 Years after Disengagement and its Results

Dror Vanunu, Gush Katif Committee

www.gushkatif.org

Background: In August 2005, after a moral, political, and social struggle which tore at the fabric of Israeli society and nearly caused a civil war, the Government of Israel unilaterally uprooted the 21 blossoming settlements of Gush Katif and the four settlements in the Northern Samaria. In addition, army camps and military apparatus were removed and new positions set up precisely on the Green Line.

The Declared Aims of the Plan were:

1. **Facilitating the Peace Process:** The prevailing thought was that all friction between the Arab population and the Jewish residents and army would cease by the removal of the Jewish communities. In so doing, the Arab population would no longer seek to harm Israel resulting in quiet in the southern region.
2. **The Palestinian Economy:** The expectation in transferring the settlement lands, including their infrastructure and many public buildings, was to create high potential in the area and improve the economic-situation of the Arab population. This, it was believed, would induce employment rather than acts of terror. Creating a positive atmosphere would make it possible to renew the Peace Process.
3. **Legal Motives:** the Disengagement process transferred the entire Gaza area to Palestinian independent control rendering the Arab population self sufficient and responsible for their own welfare. Israel would no longer be responsible for the Palestinians of Gaza.

International Status: Israel believed that these unilateral steps would strengthen her International position as a peace-seeking country willing to make dramatic steps in order to break the political stagnation. USA President Bush, in recognition of Prime Minister Sharon's Disengagement plan, gave a letter of commitment to support Israel, on the Right of Return, leaving blocks of settlements in Israel, and not negotiating before the terrorist organizations were destroyed .



The Price Israel Paid:

Moral:

- Land concessions in areas that are an inseparable part of Israel demonstrate or evince a doubt that this is, indeed, our Biblical and historical homeland.
- Uprooting the pioneers that were sent to settle Gush Katif since 1970 by the Labor government and banishing them using 57, 000 Israeli Defense Force soldiers and policemen increased the division and caused a rift in the nation that has yet to mend.

Economical:

The State of Israel has spent about 23.5 billion shekels (\$6.35 billion dollars) on the Disengagement and its aftermath.

- 10.8 billion shekels for uprooting the settlements, evacuating the army camps, establishing new military bases, finding temporary solutions for Gush Katif refugees (hotels, caravans), and compensation for settlers.
- 1 billion shekels for staying in temporary sites (according to Prof. Ezra Sedan)
- 2 billion shekels for protecting houses in S'derot and in the Kibbitzim around Gaza.
- 8.2 billion shekels for the IDF's operation "Cast Lead."
- 1.5 billion shekels for the infrastructure left in the Gaza Strip (estimated)

Security:

Israeli security was abandoned and the Gaza Strip turned into "Hamastan." This has allowed Iran to gain a foothold in Israel's southern border.

- Massive supplies of advanced weapons are being smuggled into Gaza through tunnels, e.g., explosive powders, anti-tank missiles, anti-craft missiles, Al-Queada fighters, and weapon experts.
- Loss of control in the center of Gaza's cities hurt Israel's intelligence efforts to prevent terror attacks and facilitates the release of Gilad Shalit; a prisoner in the Gaza Strip.



- The firing of thousands of rockets towards S'derot, Ashkelon, Be'er Sheva, Ashdod, and Yavne while smuggling more advanced and precise rockets. This places the Gush Dan region, Israel's demographic and industrial heartland, in range as well.
- Operation "Cast Lead" operation required thousands of soldiers in order to damage the terror infrastructure; something which prior to Israel's Disengagement could have been accomplished by a much smaller force!

Legal:

Despite the drastic steps Israel took when she disengaged from 21 settlements and withdrew her forces to the 1967 border, the countries of the world, the United Nations, Human Rights movements all see Israel legally responsible for the situation of the Gazan population.

The Goldstone Report, which the United Nations published following defensive actions Israel took after numerous rocket attacks targeted the citizens of Israel, completely ignored Israel's long restraint and found Israel guilty of war crimes.

International:

Israel's status became shaky following Disengagement. The world and close friends of Israel view the retreat from Gaza as a tease for further retreats from Judea and Samaria and Jerusalem.

In consequence of this process there has been the complete de-legitimatization of the State of Israel; the Jews are viewed as temporary conquerors not only in Judea and Samaria, but in all of Israel.

"The flotilla of terror" - the obvious outcome of the world image of Israel as a State who places a blockade on the Gaza Strip. "Humanitarian" flotillas and Muslim fanatics are joining them in order to harm Israel. These actions have led to Israel's isolation in the world arena and a sharp decline in her international status.

The Palestinians:

The Palestinians view The Disengagement as a sign of Israeli weakness and recognition that "Jews understand only strength." In other words, what they didn't get through years of negotiations they will receive 100% through resistance. This assumption led, in January 2006, to a Hamas victory in democratic elections four months after Disengagement.

The Palestinians claimed that the evacuated settlements provide housing solutions for their "refugees." De facto, terror centers have been established on the ruins of Gush Katif and a Hamas training camp has been erected in the Neve Dekalim industrial area.



- Hundreds of public buildings which served the vibrant Gush Katif communities are mainly used today for terror basis. e.g., 26 beautiful synagogues, 100 kindergarten and day care centers, 6 elementary and 2 high schools, offices, commercial centers and industrial zones
- The farmers of Gush Katif produced sophisticated technology for organic and conventional greenhouses and general agriculture; exported vegetables, herbs, and flowers amounting to over 100 million dollars a year. In the course of the Disengagement, these greenhouses were purchased by the World Bank and handed over to the Arab population of Gaza. Once Israel left the Gaza Strip, most of the greenhouses were vandalized; metal was taken to be used for the "Kassam Missile industry" and the blossoming agricultural enterprise reverted to barren sand dunes.

How did it Affect Gush Katif People?

In August 2005, 10,000 Jews from Gush Katif and North Samaria were expelled from their homes and their thriving communities. Despite promises from the state of Israel, nothing had been prepared in the way of providing adequate solutions for the Gush Katif people. Directly following the uprooting, the majority of the population had to stay in pre temporary solutions such as tent cities, dormitories, and hotels up to a year. An overwhelming majority, 80%, of the population lost their jobs and businesses rendering them unemployed.

An air of uncertainty adversely affected various parts of life including the educational stability of youths which resulted in significant educational gaps. The financial situation of more than 500 families has significantly worsened over time with many families using their monies for daily existence - "eating the compensation" - instead of saving it to purchase a house.

The governmental Commission of Inquiry headed by Judge Eliyahu Matza investigated the failure of the Israeli government to provide appropriate solutions for the people from Gush Katif. "This is the most severe violation of human rights in the history of Israel," stated Professor Yedidya Stern himself a member of the inquiry.



5 Years after Disengagement:

1. Permanent Communities:

- In only 9 new communities, (Bustan Hagalil, Bat Hadar, Golf-Ashkelon, Bnei Netzarim, Naveh, Yad Binyamin, Mavqi'im, Nitzan, Talmei Yafe), permanent homes have begun to be built
- In 6 locations, (Hafetz Hayim, B'nei Dekalim, Shomeriya, Yesodot, Neta, Be'er Ganin - previously Nitzanim) the infrastructure work has been completed.
- In 5 locations, infrastructure work has not started (Amatzia, Palmachim, Neve Yam, Nir Akiva, Ariel).

2. Communities and families:

- Only 157 families (9%) have completed the construction of their permanent home
- Over 1400 families (85%) continue to live with their respective communities in 18 different temporary sites.
- Many families, such as the Bnei Menashe, young couples, and the families who have been unemployed since the Disengagement, encounter tremendous financial difficulties and will not be able to build their homes without some financial support.

3. Agriculture:

- There were 380 agricultural farms in Gush Katif.
- Only 28% of the farmers have re-established their farms.
- In order to achieve complete restoration of their livelihood, the farmers demand amendments to the compensation law or a cabinet decision in 4 areas: full compensation for the greenhouses (today the farmers have received only 40% of the value), full compensation for the value of the agricultural land, compensation for the loss of agricultural seasons, the loss of international markets, and retirement wages for the older farmers.

4. Businesses

- Only 50% of small business owners of Gush Katif have resumed their activity. Most of them are in temporary settings.
- In general, most of the small businesses today provide only 50% of their original capacity because the method of calculation for indemnities is inequitable.
- Following the interim conclusions of the Commission of Inquiry 9 months ago, an agreement was reached between the small businesses owners and the government. Nevertheless, none of the clauses of the agreement were implemented.



5. Employment

The rate of unemployment among the people of Gush Katif is 18% (with higher figures in the areas of Nitzan and Ashkelon); whereas, in Gush Katif the rate stood at a mere 5%.

Today, the only organization seeking solutions for the employment issues is JobKatif. Their activity, was based solely on contributions until last year. A year ago an agreement was reached with the government who finances only 50% of JobKatif's activity.

- The main obstacle faced by the people of Gush Katif in finding employment is their age (over 50 years old) and the fact that they lack professional training.
- Because of this, many families use monies for daily living otherwise intended for their home construction.
- The age of retirement agreement has not been implemented.

Our main challenges:

- The implementation of all the agreements that were signed: compensation for the businesses owners, retirement allocation, relocation agreements in the permanent locations.
- Amendments to the Compensation Law in 4 areas: compensation for the farmers, for private renters, land appraisal, and the loss of personal belongings.
- The rapid establishment of all the permanent communities including the allocation of budgets for the reconstruction of all the public buildings which existed in Gush Katif.
- We request specific time tables until the completion of the rebuilding processes in the permanent locations.