

Jewish cities and towns in the West Bank are sometimes referred to as “settlements,” making them sound illegitimate. Some claim that these communities preclude a future “two-state solution” in which the Jewish state of Israel and an Arab state of Palestine co-exist peacefully side by side. In fact, while settlements are a contentious issue, they are *not* an obstacle to peace.

Jews have deep historical ties to Judea and Samaria.

- The West Bank is the cradle of Jewish civilization. A sovereign Jewish nation, the Kingdoms of Israel and of Judea (the source of the word “Jew”), ruled there from c.1020 BCE to 586 BCE, and again from the Maccabean Revolt (164 BCE) until the fall of Jerusalem to the Romans (70 CE). The area includes ancient Jewish holy sites, the Cave of the Patriarchs in Hebron and Rachel’s Tomb in Bethlehem.
- The area has had continual Jewish presence since Biblical times, except for a few years in Hebron following the 1929 massacre by Arabs and during the Jordanian occupation from 1948 to 1967. The Hebrew University, for example, was founded in 1913 on Mt. Scopus and granted its first degrees in 1931. The first modern Jewish community in Gush Etzion was established in 1927.

There was no peace before settlements, nor after settlements were removed from the Gaza Strip.

- Israel captured the West Bank in the 1967 Six-Day War, ending 19 years of Jordanian occupation. Before 1967, Israel didn’t rule West Bank and there were no Jews living there—yet Israel did not have peace with the Palestinians, Jordan, or any of its other Arab neighbors. [From 1967 to 1983](#), there were virtually no Jewish communities in the West Bank and Gaza—yet Israel did not have peace.
- In August 2005, Israel withdrew from the Gaza Strip, evacuating 8,000 Israelis from 27 towns and communities. The Iranian-backed terrorist group Hamas violently took control of the Gaza Strip and began launching mortars and rockets at southern Israel. The Gaza withdrawal did not bring the hoped-for peace, even though settlements were removed.

Most settlements are close to the “Green Line,” the 1949 armistice line.

- Approximately 75 to 80 percent of Israelis in the West Bank live close to the Green Line, Israel’s de-facto border until 1967. There is little Arab population in these areas, which could be incorporated into the Israeli side of a future border, possibly with corresponding land swaps.

Israel has twice already dismantled and evacuated settlements in its pursuit of peace.

- Israel has proven its willingness and ability to evacuate settlements in pursuit of peace, in 1981 as part of the peace agreement with Egypt and in 2005 in the unilateral withdrawal from the Gaza Strip.

Jewish settlements do not preclude the establishment of a future Palestinian state.

- There are [many examples](#) of ethnic minorities in nation-states, usually in and near border regions. Two million Hungarians live in Romania, over a million Germans in Russia, 800,000 Turks in Bulgaria, and over a million and a half ethnic Albanians in Kosovo.
- Over a million Arabs are full citizens of Israel. Arabic is an official language in Israel, and Israeli Arabs vote, study at universities, are elected to parliament, even serve as diplomats and judges. Jews should be able to live in a future Palestine under similar terms, if they so choose. The demand for a Jew-free Palestine asks for “ethnic cleansing” and amounts to a human-rights violation.

For further information, source documents, and additional resources, please visit www.broaderview.org/settlements.