

## **For Immediate Release**

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### **The Israeli Settler Movement Is Not Welcome in New York City!**

*November 15, 2013* On Sunday, November 17, at 1:30 PM, at the Edmond J. Safra Synagogue, 11 East 63 Street, several groups will protest a conference (see link below) supporting the Israeli settler movement, featuring leaders of the Shomron Regional Council, the Zionist Organization of America, a U.S. congressional representative (Michael Grimm, Republican of Staten Island/Brooklyn), and others. They are meeting to discuss "why Judea and Samaria [which is the Israeli-occupied West Bank] must be the main focus of today's Israel advocacy."

All Israeli settlements in Israeli-occupied Palestinian Territories violate international law, according to major human rights organizations like Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International, the International Court of Justice, and governments worldwide. The Fourth Geneva Convention prohibits an occupying country from moving its citizens into the occupied area as residents.

The Shomron Regional Council claims to represent over 30 Israeli settlements in the Northern West Bank, including settlements, like Yitzhar and Itamar, known for attacks on Palestinian residents. The Shomron Regional Council's slogan is "Shomron: The Heartland of Israel." It claims that "The geographical area comprising the Shomron Municipality is larger than any municipality in all of Israel," though the entire area is located in the Israeli-occupied West Bank. (<http://www.yeshuv.org/>)

The pro-settler forces expect that U.S. policy makers, Jews, and others will remain either unaware of or unbothered by the knowledge that the settlers engage in violence against West Bank Palestinians' lands, persons, and properties. Most recently, extremist Jewish settlers near the Yitzhar settlement used clubs and stones in their attack on Palestinian farmers and Jewish volunteers who were harvesting olives; the Israeli security forces failed—in this and other instances of settler violence—to protect Palestinians (Rabbis for Human Rights, October 21, 2013). As of mid-October, 2013, settlers had vandalized 1,650 olive trees in a two-month period, attacks that struck at a key part of the Palestinian economy (Rabbis for Human Rights, October 17, 2013).

Shavei Shomron is only one among many settlements that have dumped waste water onto nearby Palestinian villages to pollute their land and isolate their farmers in an attempt to force Palestinians to leave their homes--so settlers can move in to them. (Stop the Wall, March, 3, 2012). These attempts are part of a decades-long Israeli strategy to appropriate land from the Palestinians. This strategy includes the demolition of Palestinian homes "on the grounds that the structures were built without permits, but in prac-

tice such permits are almost impossible for Palestinians to obtain in Israeli-controlled areas, whereas a separate planning process available only to settlers grants new construction permits much more readily” (Human Rights Watch 2012 World Report). “Through a combination of legal, military and administrative means and citing various rationales, Israel prohibits Palestinian construction and development in about 40% of the West Bank - about 70% of Area C, which is under full Israeli control . . . .” (B’Tselem, November 3, 2013).

The speakers routinely demonize Muslims and Arabs. Gershon Mesika of the Shomron Regional Council, for example, believes that Israel is the only barrier “to stop the Muslim flood from washing over Europe” (Israel National News, May 20, 2012).

“We certainly hope that a movement that fosters anti-Arab/anti-Muslim hatred and acts of violence would not be welcomed into a synagogue in our—or any other—city,” said Elly Bulkin of Jews Say No!, one of the groups organizing the protest. In the past week, Yuval Steinitz, Israeli Minister for Strategic Affairs, said at the Jerusalem Press Club, “We will build in the settlements during the negotiations” (*Democracy Now*, November 14, 2013). Rebecca Vilkomerson of Jewish Voice for Peace, another of the groups organizing the protest, noted: “The settler movement and its supporters advocate building still more settlements on Palestinian land. We see their advocacy for what it is: an insuperable obstacle to peace and justice and continued expansion on Palestinian land.”

<https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=547066308711870&set=a.139416342810204.37749.100002255175305&type=1>

The protest is sponsored by Jews Say No! and Jewish Voice for Peace NY and several endorsing groups—Adalah-NY: The New York Campaign for the Boycott of Israel, Brooklyn For Peace, NYC Queers Against Israeli Apartheid, John Jay Students for Justice in Palestine (SJP), Rutgers Newark SJP, Brooklyn SJP, Hunter SJP, Rutgers New Brunswick SJP, CUNY Law SJP, New Yorkers Against the Cornell-Technion Partnership