**Hey Israeli Taxpayer, This Is How Much the Settlements Cost You**

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[**https://www.haaretz.com/…/.premium-hey-taxpayer-this-is-how…**](https://www.haaretz.com/opinion/.premium-hey-taxpayer-this-is-how-much-the-settlements-cost-you-1.6767618?&ts=_1545545653852&fbclid=IwAR0TZVyEORG9ukBPngtMkUUdNYxc-c97PrRU4orYNJV1uiTgtpx_MADAsH4)

alls by Israeli legislators, mainly from the Habayit Hayehudi party, for “a fitting Zionist response” to the recent terror attacks – in the form of building permits for settlements and the authorization of illegal outposts – are part of an attempt to conceal the bleak picture that is the messianic settlement project outside the settlement blocs and east of the security barrier.

The Central Bureau of Statistics’ recently published socioeconomic index for the West Bank – covering 413,000 settlers in 127 settlements – once again reveals the poor socioeconomic status of most Israelis there. It reveals the burden on the Israeli economy and the gloomier economic future lurking around the corner.

The distinction between “settlement blocs” and isolated settlements underscores yet again the government’s cynical exploitation of the weaker segments of Jewish Israeli society, which are being sacrificed to the disastrous nationalist messianic Moloch. These voices seek to present a false picture of the growing Jewish presence in the West Bank and justify the enormous budgets uselessly poured there without any chance of altering the spatial and demographic balance that clearly tilts in the Palestinians’ favor.

The vast majority of the terror attacks occur outside the main settlement blocs that are within the security barrier, or in the Gush Etzion settlement bloc, where the barrier was not completed due to pressure from the council heads there. Around 90,000 people currently live beyond the barrier in 49 isolated settlements. Some 93 percent of them fall into the bottom half of the socioeconomic rankings. The 2015 election results show that the poorest settlements are home to messianic, religious-Zionist, right-wing voters for Habayit Hayehudi and the Yahad party.

The Netanyahu government, led by the efforts of Habayit Hayehudi’s Naftali Bennett and Ayelet Shaked, isn’t stinting on funding for these areas. In almost 80 percent of the settlements that improved their situation, Habayit Hayehudi was the largest party. A 5-billion-shekel ($1.3 billion) plan to improve roads was also recently approved. The rate of government-ministry participation in the revenue of these communities is very high. For example, in the area governed by the Samaria Regional Council, home to just 41,000 people, this sum is 265 million shekels, or 84 percent of revenue.

Worse, these are the settlements that with the illegal outposts comprise thousands of homes built on private Palestinian land, the situation that yielded the law that legalized settlements built on such land. Some of these settlements are the source of anti-Arab “price tag” attacks, as well as clashes with Palestinians and the army.

The communities located outside the barrier also include the Jordan Valley and northern Dead Sea settlements, which have a smaller number of residents – 6,451 people living in 26 settlements. They’re largely associated with the Zionist Union party and fall in the upper half of the socioeconomic index. People settled here in the first decade after the Six-Day War mostly for security purposes. Some of these settlements, however, are in the bottom third of the index, with a majority of Habayit Hayehudi voters.

Along the western side of the security barrier the picture is totally different. The settlements here were built according to government plans that sought to avoid placing Jewish communities in densely populated Palestinian areas. This group, comprising 51 settlements with 316,608 residents, may be divided into three subgroups.

Ultra-Orthodox Israelis, or Haredim, who live in five settlements and account for 41 percent of the total, are the poorest of the three and almost all come in at the bottom of the index. The percentage of children is huge; 67 percent in Modi’in Ilit, for example. The percentage of 12th-graders who were able to earn a matriculation certificate and meet the basic admission requirements for university is scandalous – just 0.7 percent in Modi’in Ilit.

In other words, 90,000 children in this group, or nearly a quarter of the Israeli population in the West Bank, will continue to need government support and remain at the bottom of Israel’s wage index.

Sixty percent earn up to the minimum wage, no further. These figures also explain the high rate of government participation in these areas’ revenue – about 400 million shekels. These settlements’ contribution to the messianic choir of Bennett, Shaked & Co. comes in the form of the false portrayal of population growth in the settlements, because nearly half the annual growth comes from these Haredi settlements, which are not aligned with Habayit Hayehudi’s messianic-nationalist ideology.

Still in the bottom half of the index, to the west of the security barrier, is a group of 10 settlements home to less than 5 percent of the population, and where Habayit Hayehudi is the dominant party. Another 5 percent is in the settlement of Givat Ze’ev, where Likud leads.

The third and largest group falls in the upper half of the index and comprises 49 percent of the population living in 35 settlements. This group includes many voters for Likud, Zionist Union, Yesh Atid and Kulanu. In these places, the percentage of children is lower at 38 percent. The percentage of students eligible for a matriculation certificate is high – 82 percent. Only one-quarter of this population earns the minimum wage or less. Government participation in these localities’ revenue is 40 percent on average, for a total of 300 million shekels.

The picture revealed by the socioeconomic index shows us what people making heated calls for a “Zionist response” are trying to hide from us. They want to bring more people to the poor settlements in the “Gav Hahar” area that were put there by Gush Emunim adherents and never took off. Instead these places are simply in the heart of Palestinian areas and have been a constant cause of friction and violence.

A fitting Zionist response at this point would be an evacuation-compensation law, the evacuation of the isolated settlements, the completion of the security barrier around the main settlement blocs, and the finding of a way to resume negotiations with the Palestinians.

After all, only with a final-status accord will it be possible to make the strong settlements near the Green Line part of Israel proper and find a different way of handling the Haredim who were pushed over the Green Line due to the housing crunch.

Unfortunately, for this we need a government with a Zionist vision of a Jewish-majority democratic country that seeks peace with its neighbors, not a messianic-nationalist government.