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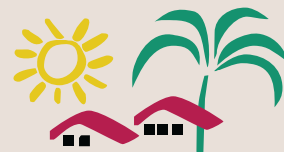
## Days Since the Disengagement



# Is there a solution for every resident

Overview of the Situation of the Former Residents of Gush Katif

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Approximately one month before the implementation of the Disengagement Plan the Israeli government marketed a campaign under the heading "There is a Solution for Every Resident".

The campaign, which included massive advertising on television, radio, newspapers and the Internet, described the complete preparations of the Israeli government for absorbing and assisting the residents of Gush Katif in the areas of housing, social services, granting of compensation, education, employment, locating agricultural land and other vital needs.

### **Today, after almost 1000 days -**

**97% of the former residents of Gush Katif have not begun building permanent houses.**

**The building has started in the 4 sites out of the 24.**

**Only 20% of the owners of agricultural land have returned to growing.**

**23% of the former residents of Gush Katif are unemployed; in addition the underemployment is approximately 15%.**

**The delay in finding solution cost the country more than 625 million NIS, the continuation of this situation will cost in addition almost 300 Million NIS.**

For almost three years the 8800 residents uprooted from Gush Katif have been forced to cope with the incompetence of the government in a wide range of areas vital to everyday life.

**If we describe the uprooting of Gush Katif as being with the force of a D-9 tractor then the rehabilitation process is regrettably proceeding at the rate of a wheelbarrow and is characterized by needless bureaucratic red tape.**

The situation in which 1000 days after the Disengagement there are no suitable solutions is the mark of failure for the government.

**We, the former residents of Gush Katif, demand that our plight be put on the national agenda and that we receive our due – by rights and not out of pity.**

**It is important to note** that despite all of the difficulties the communities have actively maintained themselves. Over 85% of the former residents of Gush Katif have remained with their communities with the goal of continuing the values and ideals upheld in Gush Katif. The mutual assistance, support and concern for the communities is clearly evident among the uprooted and in the ideological activism of the youth and the adults.

Permanent Settlements:

First, congratulations to the sites which have begun actual building: Bat-Hadar and Mavki'im.

In four sites the plots have been allotted by lottery but actual building has not begun: Yad Binyamin, Buston HaGalil, Golf and Nitzan.

In two additional sites (Halutzit 1, Halutzit 4) plots have been opened to lottery.

## Permanent Sites:

- We are including a table of the permanent sites which lists the difficulties.

Permanent sites	Communities	Permanent homes	Infrastructures	Agreement
<b>Nitzanim*</b>	250 families from agricultural communities	<b>None</b>	In process	<b>None</b>
<b>Mirsham*</b>	40 families from Tel Katifa	<b>None</b>	<b>None</b>	<b>None</b>
<b>Yesodot*</b>	50 families from Netzer Hazan	<b>None</b>	<b>None</b>	<b>None</b>
<b>Avnei Eitan</b>	22 families from various communities	<b>None</b>	<b>None</b>	<b>None</b>
<b>Neve Yam</b>	30 families from Eley Sinai and Nisanit	<b>None</b>	<b>None</b>	<b>None</b>
<b>Ariel</b>	20 families from Netzarim	<b>None</b>	<b>None</b>	<b>None</b>
<b>Ein Tzurim*</b>	30 families from Gadid and Netzer Hazani	<b>None</b>	<b>None</b>	<b>None</b>
<b>Palmachim*</b>	32 families from Elei Sinay	<b>None</b>	<b>None</b>	<b>None</b>
<b>Shokeda*</b>	20 families from Kfar Darom	<b>None</b>	<b>None</b>	<b>None</b>
<b>Golf (Ashkelon)*</b>	Nisanit	<b>None</b>	In process	<b>None</b>
<b>Talme Yafe</b>	21 families from Elei Sinai	<b>None</b>	<b>None</b>	<b>None</b>
<b>Hazan*</b>	80 families from Neve Dekalim	<b>None</b>	<b>None</b>	<b>None</b>
<b>Amatzyia*</b>	50 families from Katif	<b>None</b>	<b>None</b>	<b>None</b>

**No UBP approved\***

Infrastructures are on their way in Halutza 1 and 4, Nitzanim, Yad Binyamin and Bustan Hagalil although major problems still slow down the process.

Building of permanent homes has started in Mavqi'im, Bat Hadar and Yad Hana



## Housing

### Temporary Housing:

- Over 1400 families (85%) from Gush Katif have remained with their communities and are living in 18 temporary sites.
- The caravilla sites were designed for between two and four years of use. It is obvious now that the temporary sites will be in use for a much longer time, at least six to eight years. This has many problematic ramifications: **lack of community buildings, difficulties in managing the communities, problematic infrastructure and construction, distance between employment and the site of the permanent settlements and children's education among others**

### Permanent Settlements:

According to all opinions the permanent settlements form the basis for the communities and as such affect the residents in the remaining parts of life: employment, individual and community well-being, etc.

Advancing the permanent settlements is not merely a project to be completed but rather a moral responsibility to reestablish the communities by building them a strong framework on which to renew themselves.

- Out of 24 sites on which the permanent settlements are supposed to be built **only on two sites** (comprising 74 families – 3% of the population) have the houses begun to be built despite the fact that some of the sites were suggested before the Disengagement, for example Nitzanim, which was the model project of the government.
- The reasons for the lack of closed agreements varies from site to site but the fact remains that the government has not offered solutions which very much exacerbates existing difficulties and **causes a feeling of great uncertainty which directly affects all areas of living.**
- In most of the sites of permanent building, construction work on infrastructure has not yet begun, even though there is authorization from the Israeli Land Authority. Included is Talmei Yaffe, concerning which an agreement was closed many months before the implementation of the Disengagement Plan.
- The planned settlements in the eastern Lachish region, which the prime minister defined as a project of national importance, have suffered a long period of wait and the first tractor has yet to arrive.



## Employment

The rate of unemployment among the former residents of Gush Katif is still high and stands at approximately 23% (approximately 820 people) in addition 15% are underemployed.

Because of the high unemployment rate many families are using their compensation money for daily livelihood.

## Businesses

- Only approximately 80 out of 180 business owners have reopened their businesses, most of them on a limited scale only.
- The other business owners are struggling under the burden of previous financial obligations and are using up the compensation money planned for their houses.
- The ability to restart a business, with new clients and rules for business, is greatly limited as the Eviction/Compensation Law does not reasonably take into account the costs of moving and restarting the business, the loss of income, reputation and credit during the period of transfer.
- The erroneous method of calculating compensation for businesses does not allow for restarting and reestablishing a business on the same status that it was before the implementation of the Disengagement Plan. Reestablishing the businesses is designed to serve as stable employment for the business owners and as a source of employment for other former Gush Katif residents as part of the solution of the problem of unemployment and rehabilitation among them.

## Agriculture

- Only approximately 60 growers, out of approximately 380 agricultural businesses, have received land. Out of them, only a small number have actually returned to growing on a full scale.
- Those among the growers who have returned to growing are forced to cope with many problems of infrastructure. (The infrastructure of electricity, sewage, drainage, communication, etc. is incomplete.)
- Under the existing conditions of the Eviction/Compensation Law the Ministry of Agriculture is unable to supply solutions.
- The period of time written in the Eviction/Compensation Law allotted for reestablishing a business did not stand up to the test of reality and lasted much longer than expected. Due to the time elapsed between the Disengagement and reestablishing the businesses the growers suffered damages resulting from lost seasons of growing and marketing.
- Due to age or condition after the implementation of the Disengagement Plan, some growers are unable to return to the work force. These growers are ineligible for any severance pay or pension whatsoever.
- The compensation given today in the framework of the Eviction/Compensation Law for the value of land is much lower than its real value according to the costs of purchasing and preparing agricultural land, thus also according to the decision of the Ministry of Agriculture the compensation granted to the growers and independent business owners among the former residents of Gush Katif is low as does not reflect the actual value of the property.
- According to the financial work that has been done on the subject of compensation for greenhouses and has been accepted by the Ministry of Agriculture it is apparent that the amount of compensation received by agricultural businesses in the framework of the Eviction/Compensation Law is low and lacking. This situation does not allow the growers to found an alternative agricultural business.

## Education, Social Services and Youth

- Many former residents of Gush Katif are coping with severe emotional pressures due to the situation forced on them by the uprooting. Many of the families are suffering from financial difficulties due to forced unemployment, the unclear future, breakup of communities, loss of friends, lack of space in the caravilla, difficulty in leading a normal family life, inability to host close family relations, maintaining the stamina required by the bureaucracy, living under pressure, prolonged uncertainty and more.
- The lack of certainty affects various parts of life, among them the educational stability of the youth.
- Some of the youth are in a crisis characterized by introversion, contempt for educational or parental framework and difficulty concentrating.
- There has been a noticeable decrease in the number of youth turning to "Ma'anim" (a social work organization) to receive assistance, however the nature of problems treated today among the youth is more serious than in the past.
- The financial situation of more than 500 families has significantly worsened and some of them are even receiving aid from welfare organizations.
- "Eating the compensation" – Many former residents of Gush Katif are not working – not by choice – and are therefore using their compensation money for daily existence instead of saving it to purchase a house.

## Compensation

The working agreement with the government on the subject of rectifying the Eviction/Compensation Law has relatively improved the situation of individuals. Up until now there has been no understanding finalized on the level of businesses, including agricultural businesses (business owners and growers are not compensated for the loss of income until the business is restarted, etc.), contrary to a finalized working agreement in which a date was set for completion of these subjects.



## **The delay of solutions is costing the state approximately one billion NIS**

Research conducted by Professors Ezra Sedan and Yakir Plasner reveals that the government used a policy of postponement and delay that has continued to this day.

According to their appraisal there is no effective effort to accelerate the timetable for solving the problem.

The research also determines that while the compensation for the former residents of Yamit was 2 million NIS per person, the compensation for the former residents of Gush Katif is .5 million NIS per person (including monetary equivalences).

According to the results of the research, delays in the solution of housing cost the state approximately 615 million NIS in lost work. Additional costs include approximately 225 million NIS for maintenance of the caravilla sites and approximately 40 million NIS a year for the expenses of the SELA Authority.

The compilers of the research conclude that each additional year of delay damages the gross national product and costs approximately 140 million NIS.

## **Survey on the treatment of the people of Gush Katif determines:**

- 86% of the public – The government of Israel is responsible for the failure in treatment of the former residents of Gush Katif.
- 88% think that the government is denying its obligations to the former residents of Gush Katif.
- Most of the public (60%) would not be willing to trade places with the residents of the Gush Katif caravilla sites for any reason in the world (peace, money etc.).
- 65% of the public think that the government should give full priority to the former residents of Gush Katif who lost their jobs due to the Disengagement.

The survey was conducted by the Motagim Institute during the month of March 2008 among 500 people who comprise a representative sample

## **In Conclusion**

There is no doubt that this overview clearly bears witness to great failings of the government. The length of time spent in temporary housing is being prolonged much more than the time planned by the government and it appears that no-one from the governmental offices has an agenda for this time period. It is unnecessary to state that an agenda with a clear time table and full authority from the administrative rank, including bypassing obstacles, would accelerate finding solutions thereby saving national resources and much grief from the uprooted residents of Gush Katif.

It is important to stress that in spite of all mentioned above, the Gush Katif communities continue to function as such. Over 85% of the former residents of Gush Katif have remained with their communities with the goal of continuing the values and ideals upheld in Gush Katif. The mutual assistance, support and concern for the communities is clearly evident among the uprooted. Educational and Torah-oriented institutes are being founded in the new settlements, along with informal activities for children and youth and daily exhausting volunteer efforts by various committees in order to further the preservation of the communities and found the permanent settlements.

**After nearly 1000 days we demand classifying a solution to the problem of the people of Gush Katif as a project of national importance.**

There is no doubt that the moment they receive the essential tools, the people of Gush Katif will return to being a strong, creative, active and contributing community.

## A WORD ABOUT THE GUSH KATIF COMMITTEE



After the first chaotic months following the evacuation, leaders from Gush Katif formed the Gush Katif Committee, and its American branch, "Friends of Gush Katif" which is recognized as a 501 (c)(3) organization.

The Gush Katif Committee represents the former Gush Katif communities and coordinates all relief efforts, both from private and public sources. A social welfare infrastructure was built to fill the gap left by government cuts. A teenage support program has been instituted. The Gush Katif Committee assists the communities in various projects for the well-being of the children, youth and adults.

Our team has been working in active coordination with the representatives of all the dispersed communities as well as all government agencies in order to find the most adequate solutions in view of the complete rehabilitation of the communities.

For contributions in the U.S., please send checks to:  
Friends of Gush Katif 501(c)(3)  
P.O.B. 1184 Teaneck, NJ 07666

In Israel: The Gush Katif Committee  
P.O. Box 450, Ahuzat Etrog, 79411

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