

## Periodic Update

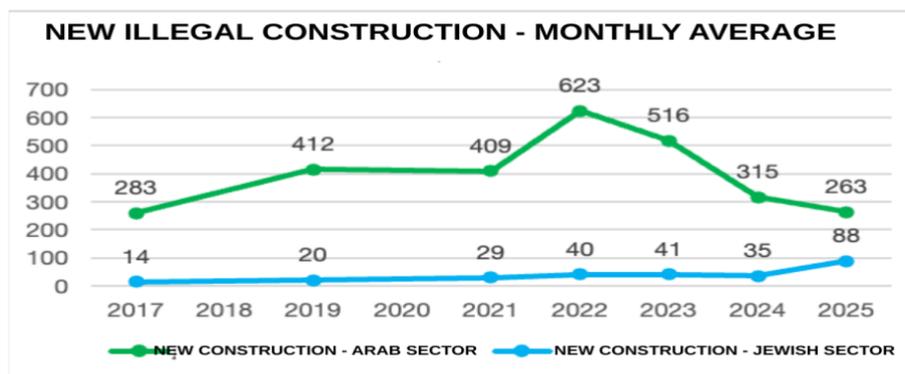
Writing: Achiya Krothamer  
Editing: Moriah Michaeli, Aviv Elisha Ashurov  
Translated by Naomi Linder Kahn

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# Illegal Construction in Judea and Samaria Periodic Update – March 2025

## Introduction

An analysis of the most up-to-date mapping data for 2025 indicates a significant slowdown and a positive shift in trends in the scope of illegal Arab construction in Area C. This represents a meaningful improvement, reflected in a nearly **50% decline in the rate of construction starts compared to the peak period**. This success can be attributed to enhanced enforcement policy, increased security presence in the field, and the economic downturn within the Palestinian Authority, which has made it more difficult to finance construction projects.



This update presents the detailed data and outlines the operational steps required to preserve the current trend of deceleration and transform it into a complete halt to the takeover of state lands.

## Background

### The Oslo Framework<sup>1</sup>

Under the Oslo Accords, signed in 1993 (the “Interim Agreement”), the territory of Judea and Samaria was divided into three zones of control:<sup>2</sup>

- **Area A:** Approximately 17% of Judea and Samaria, encompassing all cities and parts of the rural space. This area was transferred to full Palestinian Authority control, both civilian and security.
- **Area B:** Approximately 21% of Judea and Samaria, including most of the rural area. Civilian control was transferred to the Palestinian Authority, while security control remained with Israel.
- **Area C:** The remaining territory, including open spaces, Jewish communities, and more. This area remained under full Israeli civilian and security control.

Following the outbreak of the Second Intifada in 2000, negotiations between Israel and the Palestinian Authority were suspended. Israel treated the situation on the ground as a stable “status quo,” while the Palestinian Authority chose to act unilaterally in order to alter realities on the ground.

### The Fayyad Plan

In 2009, then–Prime Minister of the Palestinian Authority **Salam Fayyad** announced the program “*Palestine: Ending the Occupation and Establishing the State*,” whose declared goal was the establishment of “an independent Palestinian state on the Palestinian territory occupied in 1967, with East Jerusalem as its capital.”<sup>3</sup>

The Fayyad Plan is based on the fact that Areas A and B are already under Arab control. Accordingly, in order to establish a Palestinian state across the entirety of Judea and Samaria, the effort must be focused on construction in Area C. The underlying assumption is that **construction and territorial takeover will ultimately determine the borders of the future state**.

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<sup>1</sup> For a more detailed discussion of the Oslo Accords and the Fayyad Plan, see “The War of Attrition: The Palestinian Authority’s Program For Establishing a De Facto Stat in Judea and Samaria.” Regavim, 2022, pp. 11-14.

<sup>2</sup> The Israel-Palestinian Interim Agreement on the West Bank and the Gaza Strip.

<sup>3</sup> “Ending the Occupation, Establishing the State - Program of the Thirteenth Government”, The Palestinian Initiative for the Promotion of Global Dialogue and Democracy – MIFTAH, August 26, 2009. <https://www.miftah.org/Display.cfm?DocId=20388&CategoryId=8>

Over the years, the Palestinian Authority invested extensive resources in widespread illegal construction in Area C. Previous Regavim reports examined the scope of this phenomenon in depth.<sup>4</sup> The research shows that in the decade between 2009 and 2019, Arabs in Judea and Samaria built **more than 40,000 illegal structures in Area C**—nearly **2.5 times** the number that existed prior to the announcement of the Fayyad Plan (22,935 structures in 2008 compared to 60,911 in 2019). In subsequent years, the trend of illegal construction continued, reaching its peak in **2022–2023**, with an average of **more than 600 illegal structures per month**.

### The 2024 Turning Point

Regavim’s 2024 report<sup>5</sup> presented a significant shift in trends, as the number of illegal construction starts dropped to an average of **323 structures per month**, nearly **50% lower** than in 2022–2023. The present document provides updated data based on **March 2025 mapping**. The reasons proposed for this shift were detailed in the previous report and will be further addressed below.

### 2025 Data

In the first quarter of 2025, the downward trend in illegal Arab construction in Area C continued, similar to that identified in 2024. Between the previous mapping (May 2024) and the current mapping (September 2025), **1,317 additional illegal structures** were built in Area C—an average of **220 structures per month**.

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<sup>4</sup> The War of Attrition, Regavim 2019; “The War of Attrition,” Regavim 2022; “Turning Point: Updated Survey of Illegal Construction in Judea and Samaria, 2024.”

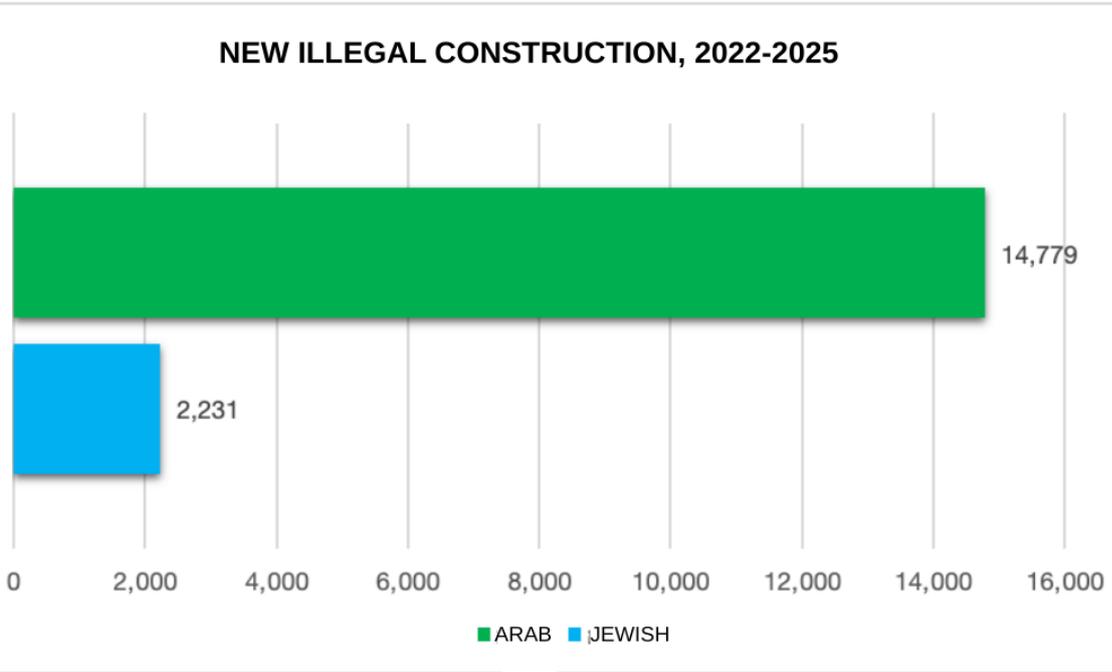
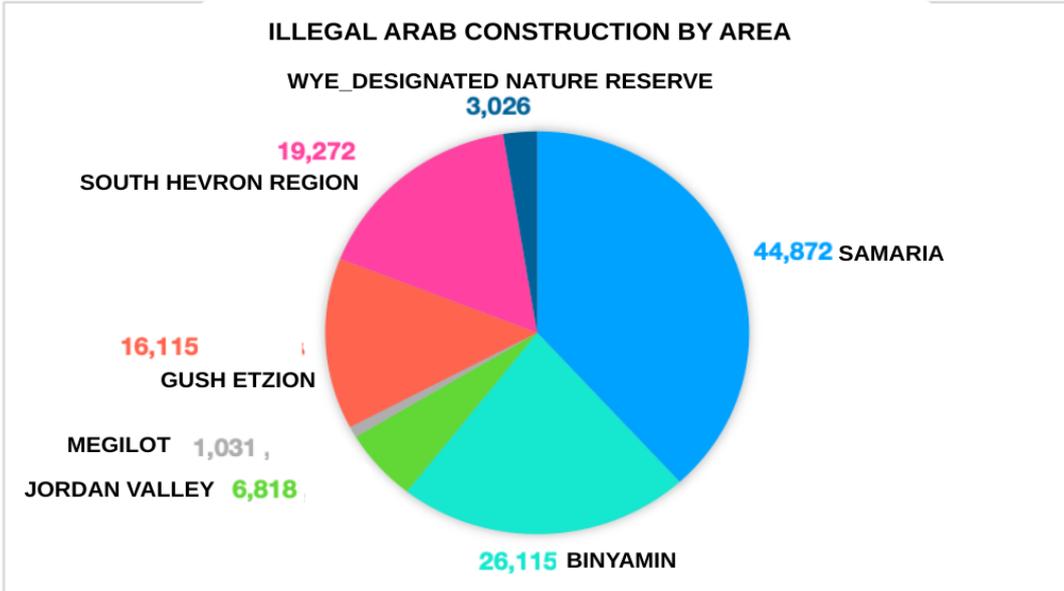
<sup>5</sup> Turning Point: Updated Survey of Illegal Construction in Judea and Samaria, 2024. Regavim, 2024.

### Illegal Arab Construction in Area C –Periodic Analysis

	Illegal structures - TOTAL	New structures built between surveys	Average construction per month
<b>2008</b>	22,935		
<b>6/2017</b>	50,959	28,024	259
<b>06/2019</b>	60,911	9,952	415
<b>04/2021</b>	69,902	8,991	409
<b>04/2022</b>	77,372	7,470	623
<b>01/2023</b>	81,329	3,957	440
<b>06/2023</b>	84,295	2,966	593
<b>05/2024</b>	87,762	3,467	315
<b>03/2025</b>	90,834	3,072	307
<b>09/2025</b>	92,151	1,317	220

As a basis for comparison, the data for illegal construction in the Jewish sector in Area C:

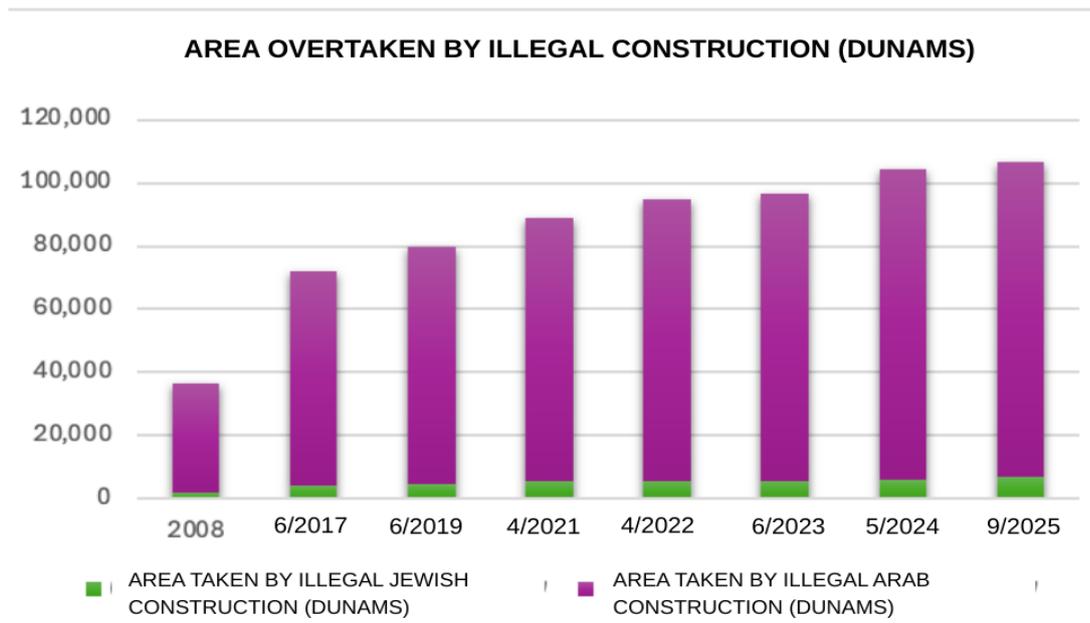
	Illegal structures - TOTAL	New structures built between surveys	Average construction per month
<b>2008</b>	1,152		
<b>6/2017</b>	2,657	1,505	14
<b>06/2019</b>	3,136	479	20
<b>04/2021</b>	3,769	633	29
<b>04/2022</b>	4,251	482	40
<b>01/2023</b>	4,586	335	37
<b>06/2023</b>	4,815	229	46
<b>05/2024</b>	5,200	385	35
<b>03/2025</b>	5,764	564	56.4
<b>09/2025</b>	6,482	718	120



The Jewish population of Judea and Samaria stands at approximately **530,000** as of early 2025. <sup>6</sup>Estimates of the Arab population range from **100,000 to 400,000**, with the higher figures clearly reflecting political bias. This underscores the urgent need for an orderly population census in Area C, in order to obtain a clear and authoritative dataset. In any event, it is evident that **more Jews than Arabs reside in Area C**, yet the scope of illegal Arab construction there exceeds illegal Jewish construction by an **enormous margin**.

## Analysis

After years of rampant illegal Arab construction in Area C—particularly during 2022–2023, **2024 marked a reversal**, and the March 2025 data shows the continuation of this trend. In contrast, Jewish construction figures show an increase. This rise is explained by the establishment of farms, a project that, although approved, is not yet fully regulated. Regavim includes only approved and regulated settlement in its counts; therefore, these farm projects are classified as illegal Jewish construction despite political authorization.



<sup>6</sup> Population Data in Judea, Samaria and the Jordan Valley as of January 2025 (Hebrew), Website of the Council of Jewish Communities in Judea and Samaria (Yeshu Council).  
<https://myesha.org.il/?CategoryID=187&ArticleID=10387>

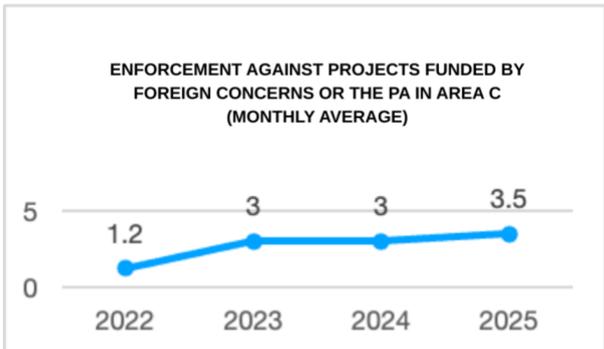
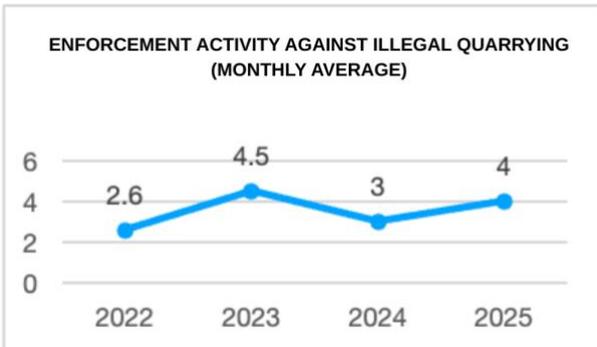
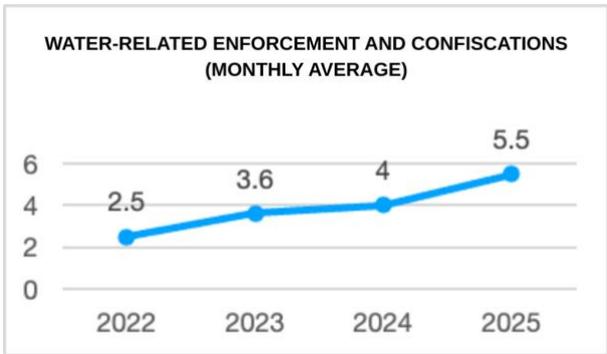
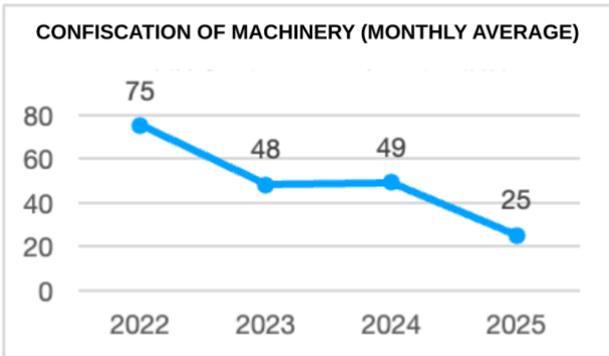
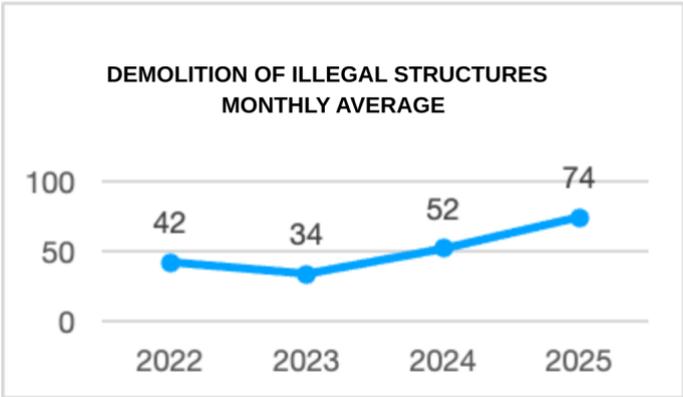
Despite the recent moderation, long-term trend analysis reveals an alarming accumulation of seized land. Since 2008, the area taken over has **more than doubled**, reaching approximately **100,000 dunams** by September 2025. This is nearly **twice the municipal area of Tel Aviv**, or **over 60% of the total area of the Sea of Galilee**. In other words, even under a reduced pace, annual accumulation translates into **entire territorial blocs** taken over through planned Palestinian Authority encroachment.

The decline in illegal Arab construction may be explained as the result of three concentric circles of impact:

#### **First Circle: Policy Change and Enhanced Enforcement**

Since the swearing-in of Israel's 37th government in December 2022, Israeli policy toward the Palestinian Authority has shifted. This is reflected, inter alia, in increased enforcement against illegal construction in Area C and other illegal activities. According to Civil Administration data, most enforcement indicators have risen in recent years (with the exception of equipment confiscations). As the data covers only the first half of 2025, figures were converted to monthly averages for comparison.

In addition, following years of Regavim advocacy, the Ministry of Settlement Affairs and National Projects established land-protection units within Israeli regional councils in Judea and Samaria. These units conduct field patrols and report illegal construction in real time to enforcement authorities and the Civil Administration, enabling more effective enforcement and enhanced deterrence.



## Second Circle: Increased Security Presence

Since the outbreak of the *Swords of Iron* war, Judea and Samaria has been designated a secondary arena (relative to Gaza and Lebanon). This has resulted in reinforced IDF deployment and stricter security policy. The increased presence, combined with intensified enforcement, has made the advancement of illegal construction in Area C significantly more difficult.

## Third Circle: Economic Collapse of the Palestinian Authority

As a result of the war, the Palestinian Authority's economy in Judea and Samaria has suffered severe damage in both the public and private sectors. Reduced exports to PA areas and the cessation of employment of Palestinian Arab laborers in Israel caused massive losses—while the PA continued to pay salaries to terrorists at the expense of “residents.”<sup>7</sup> The implication is clear: individuals have less capital to build, and the Palestinian Authority itself has fewer resources to invest in organized territorial takeover in Area C.

## Summary and Conclusions

After years of massive illegal Arab construction, the past two years show a shift in trend—though illegal construction continues to expand. The scope has narrowed in both 2024 and early 2025, but has not been halted entirely. To preserve and deepen this trend, the following steps are recommended:

1. **Refocus enforcement priorities.** In 2020, after prolonged litigation, Regavim obtained the Civil Administration's official enforcement priority framework.<sup>8</sup> This framework explicitly differentiates between Jews and Arabs, prioritizing “security-risk” construction in the Arab sector while placing “ordinary” illegal Jewish construction on private land at the top of enforcement priorities. Beyond the blatant discrimination, this framework ignores the Fayyad Plan and applies a narrow security prism. The priorities must be revised to address the strategic battle over Area C and to correct the institutionalized disparity in enforcement between the Jewish and Arab sectors.
2. **Tighten inter-ministerial oversight of foreign-funded projects.** As documented in previous reports, international organizations and foreign governments support illegal Arab

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<sup>7</sup> “The Palestinian economy in Judea and Samaria has taken a mortal blow – and there are ricochets in Israel as well,” Dean Shmuel Elmas, *Globes*, 27 November 2025 (Hebrew) .

<https://www.globes.co.il/news/article.aspx?did=1001527757>

<sup>8</sup> Enforcement Priorities for Planning and Construction 8513-21, 8 Tevet 5782-12 December 2021, Regavim Legal Library (Hebrew). <https://bit.ly/4jDzkTd>

construction in Area C. This must be addressed through diplomatic tools and the government must demand that foreign actors cease interfering in Israel's internal affairs. Such intervention violates international norms and Israeli sovereignty, and the Israeli government must use all of the tools at its disposal to end this interference.

3. **Focus on strategic economic and infrastructure projects.** Illegal construction includes housing, roads, and public institutions such as schools. Certain projects—particularly illegal road-building—are key strategic elements in the Fayyad Plan's strategy of territorial takeover for the creation of a de facto, Palestinian state, and should therefore be the focus of enforcement action. For example, illegal road projects<sup>9</sup> are an essential element of the program of territorial conquest, used to carve out municipal frameworks and to establish alternative transportation routes that are not subject to Israeli oversight. Enforcement must prioritize these activities, which are currently not included in the Civil Administration's list of enforcement priorities.
4. **Increase equipment confiscations.** The Civil Administration data referenced above show a decline in confiscations—from an average of 75 per month in 2022 to 25 per month in 2025. Confiscation of engineering and other heavy machinery is one of the most effective deterrents, because it inflicts severe economic loss on the equipment's owners in addition to stalling the construction project. The actual impact as well as the deterrent effect of more widespread impounding and confiscation of machinery used in illegal construction would significantly reduce the phenomenon.

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<sup>9</sup> For more detailed analysis, see "[All Roads Lead to Ramallah: The Palestinian Authority's Illegal Roadworks Project in Area C.](https://bit.ly/4jFrw3s)" Regavim, Elul-September 2025. <https://bit.ly/4jFrw3s>