

Israeli Theft of Private Lands Slammed

AL-QUDS, Nov. 21--Nearly 40 percent of land held in illegal settlements in the occupied West Bank is privately owned by Palestinians, an Israeli watchdog's report revealed Tuesday.

Using maps and leaked official documents, the anti-settlement Peace Now movement said that the land in question amounted to 61 square kilometers (24 square miles).

Dror Etkes, who compiled the report, said the Israeli occupation regime "is acting as a mafia state by indulging in the theft of private land in defiance not only of international law, but Israeli law and rulings from the high court in particular".

"Israeli officials have for a long time pretended the settlements were built on state land, now they are proved wrong," Yaariv Oppenheimer, a Peace Now spokesman, told a news conference in Al-Quds.

One of the examples given was the case of Maale Adumim, the largest settlement in the West Bank that lies east of Al-Quds and which the report said sits on about 86 percent of privately held Palestinian land.

All settlements in the West Bank, occupied by Israel since the 1967 Middle East war, are considered illegal under international law.



Osama (l) and Saleh Zahaikah look out over their family's land. Israel has confiscated it for use in creating infrastructure for the Nof Zion illegal settlement.