

**Thursday, December 3, 2020**

**Minister of Settlement Affairs Tzachi Hanegbi held a fact-finding field seminar with the Regavim Movement to investigate the Palestinian takeover of Area C**

Minister of Settlement Affairs Tzachi Hanegbi spent the day on a fact-finding field tour and seminar in Gush Etzion and Mount Hebron to learn about the challenges facing Jewish communities in the area and to take a closer look at the extent and impact of the large-scale illegal Palestinian Authority land seizure projects, funded by foreign governments, that are changing the map of Judea and Samaria.

The tour began with strategic briefings at overlook points at Har Gilo and Mitzpor Haelef in Gush Etzion, where illegal Palestinian land seizure - construction, illegal agricultural projects and infrastructure projects - are threatening large swaths of Israeli state land.

The head of the Efrat Council, Oded Ravivi, joined Minister Hanegbi and gave him a briefing on the illegal construction on the outskirts of al-Khader that has blocked the construction of a regional road designed to serve the residents of both Gush Etzion and Bethlehem, as well as the construction of a new neighborhood in Efrat.

Shaul Goldstein, head of the Nature and Parks Authority, reviewed the restoration work at the Herodion World Heritage site. Members of "Preserving the Eternal," a non-profit organization dedicated to preservation of antiquities and archaeological sites in Judea and Samaria, detailed the extent of the damage to heritage sites by antiquities theft and looting, illegal construction, and PA-sanctioned destruction of sites of unparalleled historical importance, including the Herodion site itself.

The head of the Gush Etzion Council, Shlomo Ne'eman, said during the tour that "the struggle for land is the most important, because land that is plundered today will never return to the Jewish people."

In Tekoa, Minister Hanegbi heard from the local secretariat and residents whose homes were retroactively placed outside the municipal lines by the Civil Administration "Blue Line Team." Attorney Boaz Arzi, Regavim's Legal Counsel, gave a comprehensive legal review of land registration and regulation.

The tour continued with a field trip in the Judean Desert, for a close-up impression of the thousands of structures built in the heart of the desert as part of the Palestinian Authority's takeover plan. The day concluded with an overview and remarks by Mount Hebron Council Chairman Yochai Damari at the Umm Daraj police station overlooking the Judean Desert.

Minister Hanegbi concluded:

"I spent long hours here today on an experiential learning tour; what I have seen is both cause for much pain and much beauty."

"The beauty is to see an organization of idealists that works without a government budget and without state funding, and in fact spurs the state to act against the Palestinian invasion and takeover of Area C. The sad thing is that this situation was allowed to come into existence in the first place, and that the state did not take command or responsibility for this situation. We are lagging far behind an opponent that is acting with force, with violence, illegally, to take over our homeland and the land of Area C."

Minister Hanegbi added that "the Ministry of Settlement Affairs was established, among other things, to preserve the vision expressed in the settlement enterprise, and that vision includes the preservation of state lands. This is my commitment as Minister of Settlement Affairs and of the Ministry as a whole. Today we learned a lot about how to accomplish that goal. We will continue to cooperate with all the regional councils in Judea and Samaria. Today, we have more resources at our disposal, which will enable us to be more effective and more efficient, and we will work hand in hand with the Regavim Movement, which has been leading this blessed and fateful struggle for many years."

For further details:

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