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### October 9, 2017: Jewish Witness on the West Bank

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Title: Jewish Witness on the West Bank

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10/9/2017--The October 6, 2017 issue of the Jewish Chronicle in Pittsburgh brings an unusually effective critique of Israeli policy on the West Bank in the person of Ivan Frank, a well-known Pittsburgh peace advocate and former Israeli soldier. Ivan, whom I have known for many years from my Dor Hadash days, visited the West Bank with his wife Malke this past summer. The story he tells of the oppression under which ordinary Palestinians live is truly horrifying. You have to wonder both how there can ever be peace considering the hatred such treatment ensures and also what the Israeli goals really are. Judging from the account, the goal would seem to be to make life so impossible for the native population that they somehow leave and Israeli settlers take their place. In Hebron, the once thriving market area is closed and Palestinians barred from driving. There are 850 illegal Israeli settlers in Hebron guarded by 600 Israeli soldiers. The settlers honor the late Meir Kahane, whose grave is in Hebron, and Baruch Goldstein, who in 1994 murdered 29 Palestinians praying at the cave of the patriarch. Ivan also traveled to the South Hebron Hills and the Negev. He observed that there are no paved roads, except near Israeli settlements. In the Bedouin villages in the area, no permissions for building homes is ever given and the homes that are built are bulldozed. The fields are often burned by settlers seeking more land. The government is seeking to move villagers away from their traditional homes. The Jewish National Fund is building roads to allow expansion of Israeli settlements. It is a depressing story that few American Jews know. The people Ivan met were not terrorists and wanted only to be free to live on their own land in their own homes. It should also be noted that among the Bedouin being forced out are veterans of the Israeli Defense Force. That makes no difference. The Jewish Chronicle deserves tremendous credit for allowing Ivan to tell his story. I can only imagine what the response will be from some segments of the Pittsburgh Jewish community. It has been obvious for years that Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu either supports an Israeli takeover of the West Bank or is willing to see it happen by slow increments. He certainly is not going to allow a Palestinian State to emerge. The real failure here is a religious one. Where is the religious witness from the Orthodox community that sees all human beings as brothers and sisters? It seems that in Israel, the more religious you are, the less humane and loving you are to non-Jews.