

How Global Real Estate Giant Profits from Stolen Palestinian Land

By [Ben Norton](#)

Global Research, August 13, 2015

[Electronic Intifada](#) 12 August 2015

Region: [Middle East & North Africa](#)

Theme: [Global Economy](#)

In-depth Report: [PALESTINE](#)

US-based multinational RE/MAX is marketing properties in illegal Jews-only settlements built on stolen Palestinian land such as Ariel, near Salfit in the West Bank. Keren Manor/ActiveStills

Agents working for the US-headquartered real estate giant [RE/MAX](#) are promoting themselves as specialists in property built in [Israel's settlements](#) on occupied Palestinian land.

The [Colorado](#)-based corporation which says it operates in nearly 100 countries was [identified](#) as responsible by a 2013 United Nations' probe for how its Israeli franchises sell houses and apartments in the occupied [West Bank](#).

Despite that criticism, many RE/MAX representatives are continuing to handle such property.

Shlomo Benzaquen, a RE/MAX agent, [states on a website run by the company](#) that his "area of expertise" includes a number of Israeli settlements.

He particularly recommends Kokhav Yaakov, Tel Zion and Adam (also known as Geva Binyamin) as "communities" which "offer tremendous value to young families and investors looking for high returns."

In fact, all of these "communities" are Israeli settlements inside the West Bank and are illegal under international law. Their construction and growth violates the [Fourth Geneva Convention](#), which forbids an occupying power from transferring its civilian population into a territory that it occupies.

The Electronic Intifada contacted Benzaquen by telephone, asking him why he is selling property built on illegally occupied land in [East Jerusalem](#) and elsewhere in the West Bank.

"I don't know what illegally occupied is," he said. "I deal with [Jerusalem](#). I'm not sure what you mean by East Jerusalem."

Asked if he was familiar with the Fourth Geneva Convention, Benzaquen replied "I'm not getting into politics" before hanging up.

His colleague Hillel Weinschneider, meanwhile, [says on a RE/MAX website](#) that his "area of expertise" is Ramat Eshkol and Givat Hamivtar.

Both of those settlements are in occupied East Jerusalem, which Israel claims to have

annexed [in direct violation of UN Security Council resolutions](#).

High prices

Scores of properties in the occupied West Bank (including East Jerusalem) are currently listed as for sale on RE/MAX websites.

Some of them are on the market for high prices. RE/MAX is trying to sell a three-bedroom [house in Jerusalem's Old City for \\$1.7 million](#). According to RE/MAX, the house was "built over 600 years ago by the Turks."

A [video for the same property posted to YouTube](#) by Benzaquen, states that the "light train is just nearby." That is a reference to a tram network which connects Israel's settlements in East Jerusalem to other parts of the city.

The French corporation [Veolia](#) has faced years of criticism and activist campaigns for its large-scale involvement in building the [Jerusalem light rail](#), which Palestinians see as a means of tightening Israel's grip on their city.

RE/MAX's Colorado headquarters did not reply to requests for comment.

Illegal

The firm has generally kept silent when its activities have been highlighted by Palestine solidarity activists. It did, however, [issue a terse statement](#) last year.

The statement tried to distance the firm's headquarters from its Israeli franchise and noted that RE/MAX had reduced the number of its offices in the West Bank.

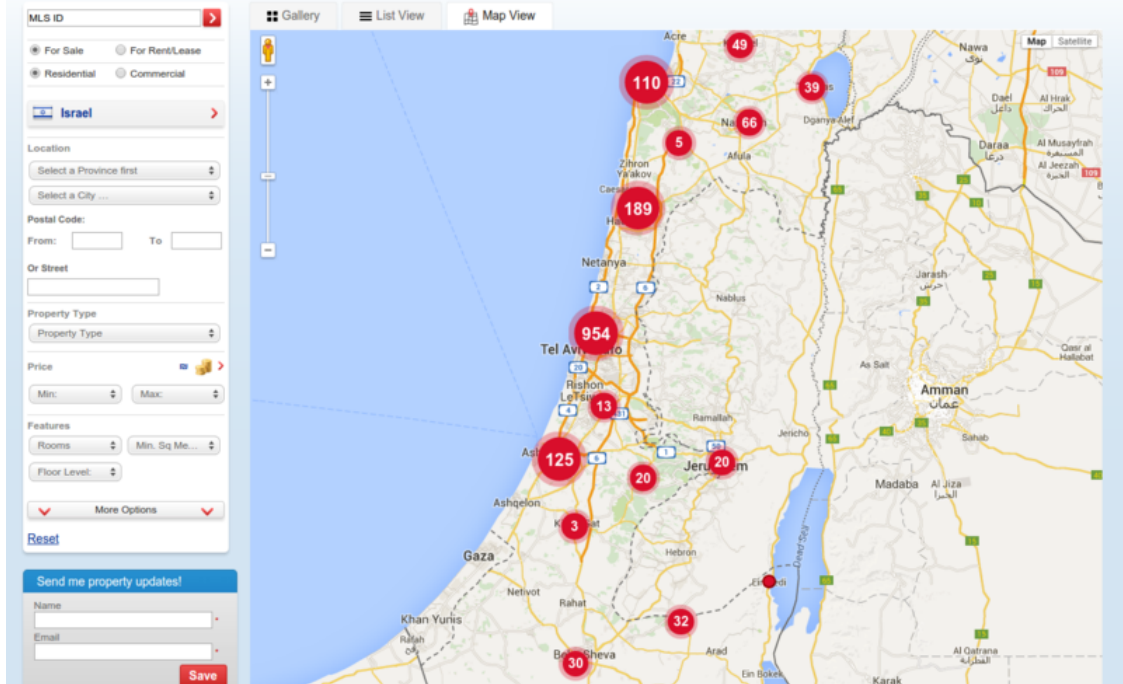
It failed to acknowledge that many of the agents handling property in East Jerusalem and the wider West Bank are working from offices in West Jerusalem.

But the company seems to be sensitive to activist criticism that it is involved in selling homes in illegal settlements within the Israeli-occupied West Bank.

Searches on the RE/MAX Israel website suggest the company may be engaging in deliberate obfuscation of its West Bank settlement listings.

An [interactive map of present-day Israel and the occupied West Bank](#) displays red dots showing where RE/MAX-marketed properties are located. This map conveys the impression that it does little or no business in the West Bank.

All Property Types For Sale



The screenshot shows a real estate website interface. On the left, there is a search filter panel with the following sections:

- MLS ID:** A search input field.
- Property Status:** Radio buttons for "For Sale" (selected) and "For Rent/Lease".
- Property Type:** Radio buttons for "Residential" (selected) and "Commercial".
- Location:** A dropdown menu set to "Israel".
- Postal Code:** Fields for "From:" and "To:".
- Or Street:** A text input field.
- Property Type:** A dropdown menu.
- Price:** "Min:" and "Max:" input fields.
- Features:** "Rooms:" and "Floor Level:" dropdown menus.
- More Options:** A dropdown menu.
- Reset:** A button.
- Send me property updates!:** A section with "Name:" and "Email:" input fields, and a "Save" button.

On the right, there is a map of Israel with several red circular markers containing numbers, indicating property listings. The markers are located in various regions, including the north (Ariel, 110, 49, 39, 5, 66), central (Netanya, 189, 954, 13, 20), and south (Jerusalem, 125, 3, 30, 32). The map also shows major cities like Tel Aviv, Haifa, and Amman, and geographical features like the Mediterranean Sea and the Jordan River.

However, if one searches for the names of individual West Bank settlements, the true story becomes clear.

For instance, a [search for "Ariel" results in a listing of 12 properties in that settlement](#) in the northern occupied West Bank near Nablus. However, switch [through to the "map view" of the same search result](#), and the red dots over Ariel have been removed.

RE/MAX Israel

HOME ABOUT US FRANCHISING

All Property Types For Sale **Ariel, Central, Israel** English

MLS ID: [input] Gallery List View Map View Most Recent

12 Matches

Contact us for information about other properties >

Ariel, Israel ID: 50121040-29

דירת 4 חד מהממת

Condo/Apartment - For Sale

Total Rooms: 4 Num. of Bedrooms: 3

1,040,000 ₪ 272,702.90 USD

Avi Komemi RE/MAX Trend

Ariel, Israel New Build ID: 50121040-28

דירת גן בפרויקט חדש

Garden Apartment - For Sale

Total Rooms: 4 Num. of Bedrooms: 3

1,280,000 ₪ 335,634.34 USD

Avi Komemi RE/MAX Trend

Ariel, Israel ID: 50121040-27

דירת גן צמודה לאוניברסיטה

Garden Apartment - For Sale

Total Rooms: 4 Num. of Bedrooms: 3

1,280,000 ₪ 335,634.34 USD

Avi Komemi RE/MAX Trend

Send me property updates!

Name: [input] Email: [input]

RE/MAX Israel

HOME ABOUT US FRANCHISING PROPERTIES AGENTS & OFFICES MY RE/MAX CONTACT US

All Property Types For Sale English

MLS ID: [input] Gallery List View Map View

For Sale For Rent/Lease Residential Commercial

Israel

Location: Select a Province first, Select a City

Postal Code: From: [input] To: [input] Or Street: [input]

Property Type: [input]

Price: Min: [input] Max: [input]

Features: Rooms, Min. Sq Me..., Floor Level

More Options

Reset

Send me property updates!

Name: [input] Email: [input] Save

Map view showing property counts in various locations: Ariel (circled in purple), Tel Aviv (181), Ramat Gan (60), Petah Tikva (3), Herziya (57), Kfar Saba (26), Tel Mond (44), etc.

Similar obfuscation is evident while searching for properties in the settlements of [Maaleh Adumim](#), [Gilo](#) and [French Hill](#).

The map is a key online marketing tool for RE/MAX Israel. Those who search for a property handled by RE/MAX Israel are immediately taken to this map.

RE/MAX still has agents based in [Maaleh Adumim](#), one of Israel's largest settlements in the West Bank.

The anti-war group [Codepink](#) has set up a campaign targeting RE/MAX over its property sales in Israeli settlements.

Jodie Evans, a founder of Codepink, argued that it was dishonest for RE/MAX to claim that its Israeli franchise was unconnected to the Colorado headquarters.

[Bernard Raskin](#), director of RE/MAX Israel, attended the parent company's annual convention in [Las Vegas](#) during March.

Raskin was faced by protesters but he "was not backing down and stood his ground the entire time we were in Vegas," said Evans.

"We can also say they lied in trying to distance themselves, because he had a huge presence and major influence in Vegas," Evans added. "He was bossing the hotel security around."

Additional reporting by [David Cronin](#).

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