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## JERUSALEM WEB REVIEW

Winter 2011



## Jerusalem Web Review (Nov -Dec 2011)

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## Securing the Settlements

### **1. Israel allocates NIS 5 million for security of Jewish East Jerusalem residents**

Nir Hasson, Haaretz, 4/01/2012

<http://www.haaretz.com/print-edition/news/israel-allocates-nis-5-million-for-security-of-jewish-east-jerusalem-residents-1.405357>

Court petition opposing the use of private security guards to protect the Jewish residents contends that budget ballooned from NIS 7 to 54 million within two decades.

The Housing and Construction Ministry has transferred NIS 5 million from the public housing budget and other funds in order to finance security for Jewish enclaves in East Jerusalem. The ministry noted the move was ordered by the Finance Ministry, which said social welfare needs were not harmed by the transfer of funds.

Security for the Jewish enclaves in Arab neighborhoods of East Jerusalem has been provided since the early 1990s by the Housing Ministry, which maintains a large and expensive security force for this purpose under police supervision. The security force budget has grown substantially over the past 20 years as Jewish residences have spread in the eastern part of the city and as violence - in response to the Jewish presence - has intensified.

A court petition filed by the Association for Civil Rights in Israel opposing the use of private security guards to protect the Jewish residents contended that, in 1991, the annual security budget to protect these residents was NIS 7 million. This then ballooned to NIS 54 million in 2010 and NIS 76 million last year.

Due to police demands for additional funding near the end of last year, however, the Housing Ministry needed to find an additional NIS 5 million to fund security expenses, meaning that the full amount spent in 2011 on the enclave security was NIS 81 million. The Finance Ministry refused to provide the additional NIS 5 million and instead asked the Knesset Finance Committee to approve the transfer of funds from the Housing Ministry budget.

Housing Ministry sources have said the money is being taken from the ministry's budget for security at public institutions, for urban renewal and for maintenance at public housing projects. Ministry sources complained that the cut would hurt what they said was already limited funding for social welfare needs. The Knesset Finance Committee approved the budget transfer last month.

The Housing Ministry issued a statement saying: "Of course, the Housing Ministry strenuously objected to [the transfer]. It should be noted that the debate took place without notice." (Housing Ministry representatives were not present at the session). The Finance Ministry said: "Following an increase in security expenses in East Jerusalem, which are within the area of responsibility of the Housing and Construction Ministry, the Finance Ministry transferred NIS 5 million from various [budget] lines to security in East Jerusalem. The budgets that were transferred do not relate at all to public housing or to funds from the sale of public housing units."

## 2. Madrid's Legacy -- Build Settlements, Weaken the PLO

Settlement Report | Vol. 21 No. 6 | November-December 2011  
Geoffrey Aronson, Foundation for Middle East Peace

<http://www.fmep.org/reports/archive/vol.-21/no.-6/madrids-legacy-build-settlements-weaken-the-plo>

The Madrid Peace Conference convened two decades ago in a spirit of great optimism. However it was Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir, dragged to the meeting by President George H.W. Bush, who offered the most prescient commentary on Madrid's troubled legacy.

"I would have carried out autonomy talks for ten years," he remarked in June 1992, "and meanwhile we would have reached one half a million people in Judea and Samaria."

After twenty years of negotiations the occupation is as firmly entrenched as ever. Settlements have always been a key barometer of Israel's intentions. According to this standard, Israel's commanding presence in the West Bank and East Jerusalem has only gone from strength to strength as the settler population exploded from 231,000 when Madrid convened to more than half a million today. Israel's "disengagement" from the Gaza Strip in 2005 only highlighted the critical role of complete settlement evacuation as a key element signaling a change in Israeli policy.

American leadership, so critical to bringing hesitant and suspicious leaders to the negotiating table at Madrid, is more notable today for its shortcomings. The initial effort of the Obama administration to end occupation and create a Palestinian state has been abandoned in favor of a "full court press" against UN recognition of a Palestinian state, condemned by Washington as an unacceptable "short-cut to statehood." (The PLO leadership turned to the United Nations only after Washington's diplomatic effort to win a settlement freeze collapsed in mid-2009.)

### *Palestinians Are Not Finns*

Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's unilateral determination to break with all of Oslo's conventions in 2005 led in Gaza to the first evacuation of settlements since Israel's peace treaty with Egypt in 1979 and the empowerment of the PLO's nemesis, the Islamic Resistance Movement-- Hamas. Dov Weisglas negotiated the text of an April 2005 letter from President George W. Bush to Prime Minister Ariel Sharon offering U.S. support for the Gaza withdrawal. He later explained that "we effectively agreed . . . with the Americans . . . that part of the [West Bank and East Jerusalem] settlements [blocs] would not be dealt with at all, and the rest will not be dealt with until the Palestinians turn into Finns. That is the significance of what we did. The significance is the freezing of the political process. . . . This whole package that is called the Palestinian state, with all that it entails, has been removed from our agenda indefinitely. . . . And all this with authority and permission. All with a presidential blessing and the ratification of both houses of Congress. What more could have been anticipated? What more could have been given to the settlers?"

Commenting recently on the freezing of the diplomatic process that he did so much to encourage, Weisglas soberly observed that, "the Palestinian street is liable to deduce that violence pays off. Hamas's approach currently appears to be far more beneficial than the

PA's policy of zero violence and zero terrorism. In addition to other failures by the Palestinian Authority, such as the complications their UN bid has run into, the deadlocked negotiations with the Netanyahu government and continued Israeli construction outside the settlement blocs--it is no wonder that its standing has been so badly degraded."

### *Obama's Retreat*

There is no questioning the Obama administration's retreat from active and determined diplomatic engagement to end occupation and create a Palestinian state. U.S. policy has been reduced to half-hearted suggestions from the State Department about "quiet" and "partial" settlement freezes. Bill Burns, the U.S. undersecretary of state, was in Israel during November to promote negotiations and to prevent Fateh from forming a unity government with Hamas. Quartet envoys come and go without noticeable impact. The president's inadvertently public remarks to President Nicolas Sarkozy betrayed his long-evident frustration with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. Yet administration officials, not to mention leading figures in Congress, openly convey a desire to "punish" PLO chairman Mahmoud Abbas and the Palestinian Authority for what the State Department derided as an effort to "establish statehood through the backdoor" via the United Nations, rather than confront Netanyahu's opposition to U.S. policy. U.S. funding to Palestinians through the Agency for International Development (AID) has been curtailed or stopped. The U.S.-trained Palestinian security forces have had U.S. funding of \$197 million reluctantly restored after a cut off sparked by Abbas' UN campaign, but continuing budget shortfalls have forced massive cuts in PA police and security budgets.

Washington's disaffection with Netanyahu is shared by Europe's top politicians. After the recent announcement of construction of 1,100 units in the East Jerusalem settlement neighborhood of Gilo, German chancellor Angela Merkel allowed that Netanyahu "is not serious and he does not intend to promote the basic and necessary conditions for renewal of the talks with the Palestinians." Sarkozy, in inadvertently public remarks to Obama, simply described Netanyahu as a "liar."

### *Weaken the PA, Settle the Hilltops*

The PLO, excluded from the Madrid process, stepped onto center stage in September 1993 at Oslo as the recognized--representative of the Palestinian people. But Oslo also accommodated Israel's refusal to freeze settlement or to support Palestinian statehood, grievous conditions that have haunted all subsequent diplomacy. Indeed, Oslo played a key role in enabling the expansion of settlement that continues to this day and in subjecting Palestinians to an endless progression of demands that have enfeebled the Palestinian Authority by failing to reduce Israel's grip on the West Bank and East Jerusalem.

International law proscribes all civilian settlement in occupied territory. One of the enduring myths of Israel's settlement efforts is that private Palestinian land is off limits for settlement. Israel's High Court of Justice in 1979 ruled that privately-owned Palestinian lands could be confiscated for security-related purposes but not simply to establish civilian settlements. Nevertheless, private lands continued to be stolen from Palestinian owners by settlers and the IDF after the ruling. Beginning in 1996, the first Netanyahu government embarked on a still-continuing effort to "claim the hilltops" by establishing more than 100 new settlement outposts, many of them on private Palestinian land. In some isolated cases, Israel's High Court, relying on its earlier rulings, has ordered a few of these outposts dismantled.

YESHA Council chairman Danny Dayan has lead a campaign to legalize the land theft, most notably in the new settlement outposts. In a letter to government ministers and MKs, Dayan noted that more than 150 dwellings in which 1,000 Israelis, including serving IDF officers, reside, are scheduled for demolition in coming months.

“All of Givat Assaf could be erased by the end of 2011,” he warned. “Migron--by March 2012. The Ulpana neighborhood in Beit El, by April 2012. Amona’s fate could be sealed in about a month. And the list goes on.”

The government is now attempting to remove the prohibition on the theft of private land for settlement in order to “launder” the many settlement outposts, not to mention veteran settlements like Ofra, that are sited on private Palestinian property.

Minister of Culture and Sport Limor Livnat has been charged by the prime minister with implementing this policy. She has noted that, “Beit El and Ofra are built on absentee-owner [Palestinian] land. Are we going to demolish them because that is absentee-owner land? There is no such intention. I remember our current president, Shimon Peres, dancing with a Torah scroll at Kedumim. [Peres as defense minister in the mid-1970s offered critical support to unauthorized settlement near Nablus] I was there.”

#### *Israel Settles--A Zionist Response*

After the failure of the settlement freeze effort, Netanyahu is no longer concerned about effective pressure from Washington to constrain settlement expansion. He remains opposed to the discussion of borders and security outlined by the Quartet. Pressed by market forces and public demands to increase housing construction throughout Israel, and ever-present settler demands, he is presiding over a new wave of relentless settlement expansion, particularly along the southern ring of East Jerusalem--Gilo, Har Homa and most notably at Givat Hamatos (Airplane Hill), the first new large-scale settlement in East Jerusalem since the development of Har Homa by the first Netanyahu government in 1996. Political pressure continues to advance large-scale settlement plans at the site of the now defunct Jerusalem airport at Atarot and in the E-1 area.

Settlers feel stronger today than at any time since Madrid. The United Nations has noted that the weekly average of attacks by settlers against Palestinians increased by 40 percent in 2011 compared to 2010, and by 165 percent compared to 2009. Settlers, some of whom during the late 1990s were prepared to consider the creation of a Palestinian state in the West Bank, now call openly to establish a Palestinian state . . . in Jordan.

“The two-state solution,” wrote Adi Minz, former head of the YESHA Council, “was based on the existence of a moderate [Arab] axis, which is well and truly dead. They just haven’t signed the death certificate yet. The time is now right for a change of direction: sovereignty and security control over Judea and Samaria must remain in Israeli hands, since there is no room for another state between the Mediterranean and Jordan. The answer lies in Palestinian autonomy. A genuine Palestinian state will be established one day in Jordan and the Arab residents of Judea and Samaria will be its citizens.”

Settlers easily survived the ten month settlement moratorium during 2010 and enjoy strong support in the cabinet and Knesset. Longtime settler leader Benny Katz dismissed

Netanyahu's settlement campaign as insufficient.

"This is a miserable and insulting response. In the face of Arab impudence, the government should have declared the abrogation of the Oslo Accords and announced the establishment of new settlements."

### *Whither the PA*

The November 1 decision to construct 2,000 settlement dwellings in and around Jerusalem was described as a "Zionist response" to "punish" the Palestinians for their admission as a member state to UNESCO, the United Nations Educational, Social and Cultural Organization.

Netanyahu, along with many Israeli leaders, believes that instability in the Arab world has taken peace talks off the table for a "generation." In an October 31 speech, he declared, "people make peace with the strong, not with the weak."

His remarks on this subject might well have been directed at Abu Mazen, who was famously dismissed by Sharon as a "chick without feathers." Netanyahu's associates are reported to have described Abbas as "a peace rejectionist who is unwilling to return to the negotiating table even in a secret track."

The PA is under broad assault from powers greater than itself, led by the United States and Israel. Washington, despite its efforts to punish the PA, remains invested in the success of the institutions led by Abu Mazen and Prime Minister Salam Fayyad. Israel's interests are more opaque. Abbas was reported to have said that Netanyahu wants to "slaughter" him. Ha'aretz reported that "in closed meetings Abbas expressed the view that Israel is working . . . to strengthen Hamas and weaken him." This concern is shared by Jordan's King Abdullah.

The IDF is today Israel's key institutional supporter of the PA, arguing against the segregation of tax funds and in favor of modest measures aimed at "strengthening" the PA and at reigning in the excesses of settler attacks against Palestinians and the IDF itself. There is concern that Israel, principally the IDF, will pay the price of a reduction in the PA's capacity, particularly in areas where Palestinian security forces have assumed most day-to-day security duties and provide helpful intelligence to the IDF.

Netanyahu's advisors are far more sanguine. Deputy Foreign Minister Danny Ayalon recently voiced publicly what has only been reported off the record. "If the PLO wants to quit, Israel will look for international or local forces to take charge of the PA, and if they can't find them and the PA collapses, that will not be the end of the world for Israel. The Palestinians have to know that they can't scare us by threatening to disband the PA."

### **3. Barkat seeks support to redesign J'lem borders**

Melanie Lidman, *Jerusalem Post*, 22/12/2011

<http://www.jpost.com/NationalNews/Article.aspx?id=250602>

Jerusalem Mayor Nir Barkat spoke with rabbis from the national-religious community this week in an effort to garner support for a land swap that would relinquish parts of the city.

In a speech at a National Defense College alumni event last week, Barkat suggested that small parts of municipal Jerusalem that lie on the Palestinian Authority side of the security barrier should be under the PA's jurisdiction rather than that of the municipality, which has trouble providing services and accessing those areas due to the security situation.

Other areas on the Jerusalem side of the fence that belong to the PA, which are nearly equal in area, would be annexed in the land swap.

On Wednesday, Barkat reportedly met with Rabbi Shlomo Aviner of the Ateret Kohanim Yeshiva, and on Thursday with the Or Etzion Yeshiva's Rabbi Haim Druckman. Druckman expressed support for the proposal, according to Israel Radio.

Approximately 60,000 Jerusalem residents live on the PA side of the barrier in municipal Jerusalem, in five major neighborhoods of Kafr Akab, the Shuafat refugee camp, Semiramis, Zughayer and Atarot.

Additionally, around 20,000 Palestinians live in small pockets of land on the Israeli side of the barrier, in "Area B," which is under Israeli security and PA civilian control.

The idea is to annex the Area B parts and give up the parts of Jerusalem outside the barrier. According to a municipal source familiar with the project, the exchange would result in a very small territorial gain for Jerusalem, with a loss of approximately 40,000 Arab residents.

Deputy Mayor David Hadari, who holds the economic portfolio, slammed Barkat's suggestion.

"I am totally against giving up on any part of Jerusalem; it doesn't matter what side of the fence that it's on," he declared on Thursday. "There are borders in Jerusalem, and we'll guard these borders with all the power we have."

He said he wasn't worried about the capital's borders changing any time soon, because a two-thirds majority of the Knesset is required to approve any changes to the municipal borders – something the deputy mayor said was unlikely.

"[Barkat] thinks this is the way to strengthen Jerusalem, but I think he's wrong," Hadari said.



The 60,000 Arabs who live in Jerusalem neighborhoods on the eastern side of the security barrier are supposed to receive the same services – including trash, sewage and water – as the rest of the city, though the reality is different.

These neighborhoods are under the jurisdiction of the Israel Police, but the police barely enter these neighborhoods due to security concerns.

PA security forces are forbidden to enter the neighborhoods under the Oslo Accords.

Gadi Baltiansky, the director general of the Geneva Accords headquarters in Tel Aviv, welcomed Barkat's idea of dividing Jerusalem.

“Even before the election, Nir Barkat understands that when he talks about a ‘united Jerusalem,’ that it actually needs to be divided,” Baltiansky said. But he warned that any decisions would need to be made in cooperation with the residents.

The majority of Jerusalem Arabs on the outside of the barrier want to stay part of Jerusalem, and most Palestinians on the inside want to stay part of the PA. Many residents on the PA side work and send their children to school inside Jerusalem.

“[Barkat's plan] is not a successful solution,” Baltiansky asserted. “A successful situation is with a separate Palestinian state.”

#### **4. Israel paving road to link East Jerusalem neighborhoods to city center**

By Akiva Eldar, *Haaretz*, 2/12/2011

New route would link northeast neighborhoods to capital's main Begin Boulevard; Peace Now: Plan is illegal use of occupied land, endangers two-state solution.

The city of Jerusalem began works two weeks ago on a road that will connect the capital's northeastern neighborhoods to Jerusalem's main traffic artery, Menachem Begin Boulevard, as part of a policy to strengthen bonds between neighborhoods across the Green Line and the rest of the city.

The neighborhoods to be connected by the new route are Pisgat Ze'ev, Neve Yaakov, Anatot, Shoafat, and Beit Hanina; the route 20 project will also link Jerusalem's northern neighborhoods with route 443, which in some places crosses through the West Bank.

Jerusalem's municipality, along with the Moriah Jerusalem Development Company, is advancing the project with an investment of over NIS 150 million. Work is expected to go on for 14 months.

The next stages will see the completion of a bridge over route 50, with another bridge to be constructed over Nahal Atarot due east. Route 20 will be extended to link the latter to Beit Hanina intersection.

Moriah director general Alex Weisman was cited by the Mateh Beinymin Regional Council's website as saying that in recent years "route 20 has become an important tool to develop those parts of the city which it serves."

Weisman added that he was "sure that linking the connection of the city's northeastern neighborhoods would enable the development of the area and will benefit the entire city."

The plan was approved a year ago by the planning committee of the West Bank's civil administration, after the panel had rejected the opposition by the NGO Peace Now.

Peace Now representatives argue that the "road's current route isn't legal, since the plan designates occupied territory for permanent infrastructures for the occupying power, while completely disregarding the needs of the Palestinian residents in Beit Hanina and the area."

The planning committee also rejected opposition submitted by Beit Hanina residents, who claimed the project would confiscate two dunams of the neighborhood's land, after already "confiscating 5,000 dunams for the construction of the Pisgat Ze'ev settlement."

Following orders by the Attorney General, an engineering solution was found which would limit the "slide" into West Bank territory to a few dozen meters.

Hafit Ofran, head of Peace Now's settlement tracking team, told Haaretz that the construction of such an infrastructure was in conflict with Israel's interest in reaching an agreement with the Palestinians and endangers the two-state solution.

Pisgat Ze'ev's website wrote in response to the objections that, "while the paving of route 20 would make life easier for Pisgat Ze'ev residents, it would also make it easier for the residents of Arab neighborhoods in the area, such as Beit Hanina and Shoafat.

At first, route 20's construction was approved in August of 2005, when Israeli public attention was diverted to the disengagement from the Gaza Strip. The government decided then to order the Transportation Ministry to conduct the route 20 works at a cost of NIS 80 million, through the ministry's municipal roads budget.

Another clause in that decision sought to back Jewish settlements in Arab East Jerusalem neighborhoods by allocating NIS 50 million to restore, develop, and maintain the Old City and Mount of Olives.

It was decided that the "budgets would be handled as a separate financial sector, with the aid of subcontractors."

## **5. Arabs squeezed as Jerusalem expands**

Donald Macintyre, *The Independent*, 13/11/2011

<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/arabs-squeezed-as-jerusalem-expands-6261622.html>

Jewish settlements are encroaching on Palestinian territory at an alarming rate.

Dropping into a grocery store in Beit Safafa, Amir Akel, a lawyer, was measured in his reaction to the news that his community would soon find itself wedged beside the first new Jewish settlement to be built in Arab East Jerusalem for 15 years. Yes, the government's approval of the plan was "irrational". And, yes, he understood the politics involved. But as an Arab citizen of Israel with moderate views, Mr Akel, 36, was most concerned that the settlement would eat up the only land left for the expansion of Beit Safafa's fast-growing population.

"We need a solution for the people living here, especially young couples. A home with two rooms costs \$1,000 a month, and it is very difficult to get a permit to build." Since the 1948 war that gave birth to Israel, northern Beit Safafa has bordered directly on to Jewish West Jerusalem. And relations between its Arab residents – half of whom, unusually for Jerusalem, are Israeli citizens – and their Jewish neighbours are good, said Mr Akel. "Many customers who come into this shop are Jews. A decision like this will affect that integration. That's why we need a solution that is for both sides."

The new Givat Hamatos settlement, for which the Israeli Interior Ministry's Jerusalem planning committee has approved the first 2,610 housing units, militates against just such a solution – in both the local and the wider political sense. Beit Safafa is already hemmed in to the west by the rapidly expanding Jewish settlement of Gilo. Givat Hamatos will leave it, in effect, enclosed: a Palestinian enclave in a overwhelmingly Israeli area.

Geographically, Beit Safafa – one of Jerusalem's more middle-class Arab districts with a large minority of its residents, like Mr Akel, Israeli-Arab migrants from northern Israel – is not in east but south Jerusalem. But politically the neighbourhood is clearly on the Palestinian side of the "green line" that divided the city between 1948 and Israel's conquest of the West Bank and East Jerusalem in 1967. This means the plan for Givat Hamatos, a large tract of open land with a temporary cluster of prefabs housing a small group of Ethiopian Jews, is not only illegal in international law but also a "provocative action" of just the sort the United Nations, European Union and United States warned against in September when they were trying to revive the peace process. And it is part of a wider policy that may help to explain the frustration with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu that Barack Obama vented in his now famous G20 meeting with Nicolas Sarkozy.

Jerusalem's municipality insists that almost a third of the new units will be for Palestinians. But that still means more than 1,700 Jewish new homes in mainly occupied territory – significantly more than the 1,000-odd in Gilo, approval of which last month also caused international condemnation. But, in any case, Sami Ersheid, another Beit Safafa resident and a prominent lawyer representing the community, says this will be in the existing and already overcrowded Arab neighbourhood rather than as part of the new development. Instead of a limit of six units per quarter acre, there will be a new one of 12. Mr Ersheid, whose children go to the city's only Jewish-Arab mixed school, argues that local services, including water, are already close to breaking point. "I don't believe the municipality will invest in infrastructure [for the planned growth], as it hasn't for the past 40 years." The ministry rejected the residents' demand that the Israel Lands Authority, which now controls the land, be instructed to ensure a direct benefit to Beit Safafa. "This is part of a big plan to restrict Palestinian development in Jerusalem," says Mr Ersheid. "Givat Hamatos is the only reasonable space in which Beit Safafa can expand."

But Givat Hamatos is part of a much bigger picture. The world's current preoccupation with Iran has tended to overshadow steps that Mr Netanyahu's government has taken to punish Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas for securing membership of Unesco. One was to withhold the customs revenues it collects on behalf of the Palestinian Authority – which threatens to dry up the salaries of the Palestinian security forces Israel has been depending on to keep the peace in the West Bank. And the other was to accelerate settlement building in occupied territory by issuing tenders for 1,650 housing units in East Jerusalem alone.

Amid outrage from the Palestinians, the EU and Washington, Mr Netanyahu's office argued that the new units were in locations that would fall within Israel under any two-state solution. In Jerusalem, the nuclear core of the dispute over the future borders of a Palestinian state, this is improbable. Nothing official has been said about where the new units will be built, but many are expected to be in Har Homa, the last new settlement and, like Givat Hamatos, in south Jerusalem. In negotiations with Ehud Olmert – easily the closest the two sides have come to an agreement in a decade – the Palestinians insisted on Har Homa being in Palestine.

Thanks to painstaking research on plans in the pipeline by the Israeli NGO Terrestrial Jerusalem, it's now clear the city is experiencing a major surge in settlement building, unprecedented since at least the early 1970s. The surge is in line with Mr Netanyahu's insistence – contrary to that of the international community – that Jerusalem will be the undivided capital of Israel. And it suggests that Mr Netanyahu is now convinced that the Obama administration is unwilling to back its ritual protests about the city's settlements with sanctions.

His predecessor, Mr Olmert, eventually started building and planning Jerusalem settlements at a rapid rate, and was able to do so with relative impunity because he was negotiating in earnest with the Palestinians. Mr Netanyahu continued at a similar pace, including after the start of the moratorium on settlement building in the West Bank – from which he insisted East Jerusalem should be excluded.

Yet it also shows that after a spectacular showdown with US Vice President Joe Biden over plans to expand the Ramat Shlomo settlement in March 2010, Mr Netanyahu began an undeclared freeze of seven months in East Jerusalem, which ended only when the wider moratorium did, and which strongly suggests he can, if he chooses, halt settlement building in the city without endangering his coalition. It was subsequently that, as an expert student of US politics, Mr Netanyahu clearly judged that Mr Obama was in an election cycle and no longer had any leverage on the issue.

Most Western diplomats and experts believe the settlement programme in East Jerusalem – let alone the continuing consolidation of a settler presence in Palestinian areas in the Old City – could fatally undermine the long-term prospects of a negotiated peace. According to Daniel Seidemann, the Israeli lawyer who heads Terrestrial Jerusalem, if construction continues at its current pace, "the geographic and demographic map of Jerusalem will be so Balkanised that the very possibility of the two-state solution will be in jeopardy".

As elsewhere, so in the south of the city where borders are being effectively redrawn by Har Homa, Gilo and now Givat Hamatos. "These plans create a critical mass of continuous built-up settlement areas that almost invariably alter the potential border between Israel and Palestine," says Mr Seidemann, "and sever East Jerusalem from Bethlehem and its environs in the West Bank, which will likely be fatal to the two-state solution."

## 6. National park in east Jerusalem stirs controversy

Melanie Lidman, *Jerusalem Post*, 7/12/2011

<http://www.jpost.com/NationalNews/Article.aspx?id=248435>

Residents of east Jerusalem and Israeli activists are slamming the plan for a new national park there.

A plan to create a national park in the steep hills between the Arab neighborhoods of Isawiya and a-Tur was deposited for public review last month.

The 73.2-hectare (181-acre) park, called the Slopes of Mount Scopus, is part of a larger project from the Jerusalem Development Authority to create a network of green areas around the old city to preserve the few open spaces that are left in the crowded region.

JDA, a semi-public company associated with the Jerusalem Municipality, is working to build a network of bike paths and hiking paths that will eventually enable tourists and residents to enjoy a serene and uninterrupted jaunt from Mount Scopus to the pools of Shiloah in Silwan, at the City of David archeological park.

But residents and activists charge that the plan to create a national park is a thinly-veiled land grab that will cut off Arab neighborhoods from access to other parts of east Jerusalem.

“The area is full of stones and thorns, there is nothing there that justifies a national park,” said City Councilor Meir Margalit (Meretz), who holds the portfolio for east Jerusalem. “The only reason this national park exists is to take lands and to keep these as a reservoir for future settlements... They are taking land from two villages that need the land to expand and telling them the national park is more important than building houses for their kids.”

Margalit compared the plan to the mayor’s pet project, creating a biblical garden park in the al-Bustan neighborhood of Silwan, a project that will demolish and move 22 homes to create green areas.

“This is another way to control land,” he said, calling the Slopes of Mount Scopus park a “green settlement.”

“It is a cynical use of the word ‘nature,’” he said.

Most of the land in the 73.2-hectare area, a steep and rocky embankment that is visible from Highway 1 before entering the Mount Scopus tunnels, is privately held land that belongs to Arab residents from the neighborhoods of Isawiya and a-Tur. With the establishment of a national park, the owners will not be compensated for their land, but the park will be managing the land and all changes will need to be approved by the National Parks Authority.

Elad Kandl, the director of the Old City at the Jerusalem Development Authority who is overseeing the parks project in east Jerusalem, said the establishment of a national park accomplished three goals: preserving the area’s last open areas, protecting them from vandalism and illegal building, and developing tourism. He also defended the park as a way

to stop the relentless march of development until a more effective plan for the area could be undertaken.

“When you make it a national park, you keep the status quo so that you can’t damage the area,” he said. “Now, when it’s not inhabited, we’re going to freeze the area. There are commercial interests that want to build there that are not thinking about what’s good for the residents,” he said.

Essentially freezing development means that a future government can come in and change the national park to a residential area if they so desire, Kandl added.

“If it’s not a national park, no one will be able to do that because it’ll be a mishmash. In a few years someone could decide something totally different, but if we don’t create a park now we’ll lose that option,” said Kandl.

But activists argue that designating the land as a national park, rather than a municipal park, makes it almost impossible to change because of the bureaucratic process associated with changing national parklands to residential neighborhoods.

Efrat Cohen-Bar, an architect with Bimkom: Planners for Planning Rights, has been working with residents in Isawiya since 2004 to create an updated master plan for the neighborhood that would allow the incredibly dense neighborhood to legally expand onto parts of the surrounding land, which will now be national parkland.

“If [the national park] becomes official, there’s no hope for Isawiya,” said Cohen-Bar.

After the idea for a park in that area was first floated in 2005, the residents, supported by Bimkom, entered into negotiations with NPA to try to shrink the park, allowing them to expand on part of the land and keep part of the land designated open space.

Those negotiations were ignored in the current plan for the park, which was approved by the Local Building and Planning Committee and is waiting for approval from the Interior Ministry.

“This was years of activism, and we were finally able to get some faith from the residents to work with municipality, to believe in the system and to work within it,” said Cohen-Bar. “And they got the national park. This was a slap in the face to the residents.”

Cohen said she was pessimistic the plan for the national park would be rejected, but she hoped that negotiations would be possible with NPA to reduce the size of the park to allow residents to legally build homes. She called the park a “death sentence” for their attempts to work with the residents on legal ways to build and improve their neighborhood.

The plan for the national park is currently undergoing a two-month public comment period, before it can be discussed by the Interior Ministry’s District Planning and Building Committee. If it is approved by the Interior Ministry, it could become a park in as little as six months to a year. Bimkom has joined Ir Amim and Emek Shaveh and the resident’s committees to file multiple objections to the project.

Cohen-Bar added that she would rather the municipality create a city park, which would not only compensate the residents for the land, but also be much easier to change in the future.

Kandl argued that the only way to preserve the land was with a national government body. The NPA has more experience in maintaining and developing parks and would be much more effective than the municipality, which is more easily swayed by local politics, at preserving the area, he said. “We needed a government body that had teeth.”

### Ultra-Orthodox tensions

## **7. Religion and Sex in Israel: Street Clashes Over Defining a Jewish State**

Karl Vick, *Global Spin*, 2/01/2012

<http://globalspin.blogs.time.com/2012/01/02/religion-and-sex-in-israel-street-clashes-over-defining-a-jewish-state/>

Israel seems to be at war with itself. For two weeks the Hebrew media have been dominated by street clashes between Jews arguing viciously over such matters as sleeve length and bus seating, which in the Israel of the moment are markers for the kind of country people want: Religious, or secular, or what balance of the two? It's a conflict that goes back at least to the founding of Israel six decades ago, and grows more and more potent with the dramatic population growth of the most piously observant.

The latest flashpoint speaks volumes about the state of the nation: An eight-year-old girl stopped going to school after neighborhood men spat on her and called her a prostitute because even in long sleeves and a skirt her dress was deemed “immodest.” The men were extremist members of the ultra-Orthodox, the fastest-growing segment of Israel's Jewish population. Known in Hebrew as Haredim, which roughly translates as God-fearing, ultra-Orthodox men are easily recognized by their signature black clothes and headgear (either wide-brimmed black felt or brimless beaver skin) their side locks and their agitation at being seated near women.

Which brings us to a second locus of controversy: Buses segregated by gender. On bus lines serving ultra-Orthodox communities, women ride in the back. Most do so quite happily, but a ruckus often ensues when an outsider climbs aboard and insists on taking a seat up front with the men, as a woman named Doron Matalon did last week. After being called a “shiksa” and “slut,” she summoned police, who arrested a passenger named Shlomo Fuchs. In the shorthand biography of news accounts, the suspect proved representative of his cohort: Fuchs is 45, has 12 children, and no paying job. Instead he studies scripture all day at a yeshiva, or religious college, which entitles him to welfare payments and excuses him from military service.

These are sore points for the many Israelis who pay taxes and are compelled to serve in the army, an essential obligation of citizenship here. Recent efforts to draw the Ultra-Orthodox into the Israel Defense Forces have produced some successes, but also a new platform for tension. Israeli women famously also serve in the IDF (Doron Matalon was in uniform when

she took her seat at the front of the bus) and in recent weeks Haredi soldiers made headlines by walking out when their sisters in arms sang at group morale-building events, such as the lighting of Hanukah candles.

Erupting within days of one another, these cascading controversies have Israelis questioning the nature of the Jewish State, 63 years after independence.

“Right now, what is holding the country together is the label, ‘Jewishness.’ But in practice, you have groups of people who have nothing to do with each other,” Eva Illouz, a sociologist at Hebrew University, tells TIME. “I think what we are seeing now is struggles that emanate from the label that people keep carrying around.”

There are almost as many definitions of Jewishness as there are Jews in Israel (about six million in a population of seven million-plus, the balance mostly being Arabs). But as Illouz pointed out in a lengthy meditation on Israeli identity in Saturday’s Haaretz, more and more are defining themselves in religious terms rather than cultural. And the numbers will surely grow. Today various ultra-Orthodox sects account for roughly 10% of the population, but the faithful produce offspring at a rate that demographers predict will within a generation or two remake the face of a country that, historically, has trumpeted its commitment to women’s rights, to name one topic secular observers worry will come into play. Already Haredim wield disproportionate clout in politics, frequently providing the balance of power in coalition governments.

The irony is that many ultra-Orthodox actually object to the existence of Israel as a state, arguing that Jews should have waited for a signal from God before returning to their Biblical homeland. Historians recount how David Ben-Gurion, the atheist founder of the Israeli state, struck a bargain with Haredi rabbis: In exchange for stifling their opposition to the establishment of Israel, Ben-Gurion offered the ultra-Orthodox specific concessions, including their own state-funded schools.

Their numbers always included militants. Anyone driving through their neighborhoods on the Jewish Sabbath could expect to be stoned. Bearded clerics opposed Israel’s participation in the Miss Universe pageant, and today warn against smart-phones as portals to licentious websites. But heaping abuse on a second-grader put things in another realm for many Israelis. Last week several thousand marched in protest near the scene of the incident in Bet Shemesh, a city of 100,000 between Jerusalem and Tel Aviv.

Prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu, whose right-wing coalition includes the ultra-Orthodox Shas party, also weighed in, vowing to safeguard equality for women. For his part, Shas leader Eli Yishai warned against tarring all Haredim because of the actions of a few extremists – in this case, several hundred who call themselves Sicarri, or daggersmen.

“Anyone who doesn’t live here and only follows the hyperbolic public discourse,” Yishai wrote in the daily Ma’ariv, “would think that women in Israel cover their faces in public, that the clubs and bars packed on Fridays have become yeshivas and ritual baths, that television has scheduled Bible passage readings for primetime and that thousands of citizens have signed themselves up for the new seasons of the Bible Quiz and the leading reality show Rabbinical Idol.”



But extremists have a way of getting the final word, and New Year's Eve brought images brazenly calculated to linger in the public memory. In Jerusalem's Shabbat Square, ultra-Orthodox protestors denouncing "the cruel persecution of Haredi Judaism" rolled out a wagon carrying children dressed in the striped pajamas of Holocaust death camps, complete with yellow Stars of David. "Hundreds stuck the stars to their coats with obvious pride," Nahum Barnea wrote in Yedioth Aharonoth. "Children stood before the camera with their hands in the air, in a pose meant to evoke the child from the terrible photograph taken during the Warsaw Ghetto roundup."

At the edge of the crowd, demonstrators shouted toward the police: "Nazis! Nazis!"

"The police officers didn't bat an eye," Barnea reported. "They've grown used to it."

## **8. Jerusalem & Babylon / Ultra-Orthodox need not protest Israel, they run it**

Anshel Pfeffer, *Haaretz*, 18/11/2011

<http://www.haaretz.com/jewish-world/jerusalem-babylon/jerusalem-babylon-ultra-orthodox-need-not-protest-israel-they-run-it-1.396280>

Israel's political class long ago sold Jerusalem off to the ultra-Orthodox. The deal was legal and democratic, if Israelis don't wake up, it won't stop in the capital.

Someone just woke up and discovered that women have been banished from advertising billboards throughout Jerusalem. Good morning! The Modesty Police has been ruling the streets for years and none of you have done anything about it.

I am normally very skeptical of conspiracy theories, because that is what they are, theories, and because I have actually met some of the conspiracists. But even I sometimes wonder if a group of rabbis did not get together at some point at the end of the 1990s and hatch a plan to take over the state of Israel by legal and democratic means.

When I began reporting on the capital's ultra-Orthodox community 14 years ago for the local *Kol Ha'ir* weekly, Jerusalem was still gripped by the weekly mass demonstration on Bar-Ilan Road. Tens of thousands of Haredi men gathered every Shabbat to prevent drivers from passing through this main transportation artery. These were not peaceful protests: stones were thrown, batons wielded and arrests made. And then, all of a sudden, the protests ended, the faithful remained at home, lingering over their Shabbat lunch or taking postprandial naps. Jerusalem police were allowed a brief weekend respite. What had happened? It wasn't just the Bar-Ilan demos that ceased; five decades of Haredi mass protests in Jerusalem came to an end on February 14, 1999, when over a quarter of a million ultra-Orthodox men and women blocked the main entrance to the city, protesting against the "anti-religious" rulings of the Supreme Court.

These demonstrations began at the beginning of the 1950s when the entire religious community gathered in Jerusalem to protest against the laws passed by the government to enlist women in the army. They evolved into riots against the passage of cars in the streets of the city on Shabbat, against the "desecration" of corpses in the hospital pathological departments and in archaeological digs, against the construction of a new municipal football

stadium. The holy causes were varied but they had one thing in common: they all failed. Women are drafted (religious girls are exempted through the “religion and conscience” clause); Jerusalem has remained open seven days a week, except in predominately ultra-Orthodox neighborhoods; pathologists continue to dissect cadavers and Teddy Stadium was built in the south of the city.

For 50 years, Israel remained a Jewish secular state with the Haredi community living in a small semi-autonomous enclave according to their customs. And then they changed tactics. In 1996 two leaders came to power in Jerusalem. In March, Rabbi Yaacov Alter was anointed as the Seventh Admor of the Ger Hasidic dynasty. Three months later, Benjamin Netanyahu confounded all polls by beating Shimon Peres and being elected prime minister. Alter, the most powerful Hasidic rabbi in Israel, was opposed to violence and demonstrations and directed his representatives in City Hall and the Knesset to work within the system. Netanyahu promised that in his administration, if they joined his coalition, the Haredi parties would be given an unprecedented division of power. Other changes were afoot. Ill health had forced Rabbi Eliezer Shach, the fiery leader of the other main Haredi branch, the “Lithuanians,” to withdraw from the public arena (he passed away in 2001). The new Lithuanian leader Rabbi Yosef Shalom Elyashiv was also a firm believer in soft power. Hidden from secular view, other forces were at work. A young Haredi generation that had grown up in modern Israel was not so willing to live in a ghetto. They wanted to be a part of the establishment and the rabbis were prepared to accommodate them, on Haredi terms.

A precedent had already been set in the 1993 municipal elections when a last-minute agreement with the rabbis enabled Ehud Olmert to topple eternal Jerusalem Mayor Teddy Kollek. The ultra-Orthodox parties entered the city’s administration, gaining control of municipal departments, a lion’s share of the city budget and widespread planning concessions. The Olmert-Haredi alliance won a second term in 1998 and the mayor who by then was already planning his return to national politics gave them all the rest. In 2003, Olmert left and the rabbi’s man, Uri Lupolianski, became the first Haredi mayor of Jerusalem.

Meanwhile, on the streets of the city a fundamental change was taking place. You could open up a restaurant or pub or drugstore on Shabbat and serve non-kosher dishes without bearded men picketing your business. But the customer base was rapidly shrinking. While huge affordable neighborhoods were being built for the ultra-Orthodox and religious communities, secular middle-class families were being priced out of the housing market. In less than a decade, entire residential areas in the city’s north and central sectors had changed identity, forcing an aging nonreligious population into ever shrinking quarters. City Hall closed school after school for lack of young families in the area, but there was always necessary funding for a tiny Hasidic sect that opened a new heder.

The Edison Cinema, which for over 50 years was a focal point for violent riots against its screening of movies on Shabbat, closed its doors in 1995, not because of the violence. The entire area had become Haredi and film-goers just stopped arriving. Eleven years later, the site was bought by the Satmar Hasids for building new apartments. The nearby Jerusalem trade union headquarters, for a generation the bastion of the secular labor movement, had already been taken over by Shas.

Only a fanatical ultra-religious minority still demonstrate in Jerusalem. The rest of the Haredi community has realized long ago that there is no need for protests when you control all the

necessary committees and budgets. And secular mayor Nir Barkat has not changed that situation in any way since being elected in 2008, thanks to a rare intra-haredi split. His coalition is also dominated by the religious parties. The secret municipal committee that censors all advertising publicly displayed in Jerusalem has two Haredi members and a third secular member who hasn't attended meetings for years. Last week he admitted that he thought the committee had been disbanded.

Why blame advertisers for authorizing billboards in Jerusalem that don't show female faces or bodies? No official poster of City Hall has shown a woman or even a girl for a decade and, if a billboard gets defaced no one, not even Jerusalem police, will take any action.

So far, the secular community's attempt to fight back, after they finally realized what has been going on for years, has been ineffectual. A few posters with pictures of local women and their daughters were pasted on walls in the city and quickly torn down. Last Friday three simultaneous women's demonstrations were held, but the largest one took place in liberal Tel-Aviv.

But maybe it's a good thing that citizens in other parts of the country are taking action. The Jerusalem Syndrome is being replicated in other cities. Bet Shemesh and Safed have already undergone similar transformations. As long as Yaakov Litzman is deputy health minister, a new hospital wing will not be built in Ashkelon because of rumors of ancient skeletons found on the site and don't hold your breath, there will be no affordable housing for young secular couples while Shas' Ariel Atias is housing minister.

Israel's political class has long ago sold Jerusalem off to the ultra-Orthodox. The deal was legal and democratic and if Israelis don't wake up, it won't stop in the capital.

## **9. Gender segregation and Israel's next war**

Ruth Eglash, *Jerusalem Post*, 26/12/2011

<http://www.jpost.com/NationalNews/Article.aspx?id=250926>

Society can no longer afford to turn a blind eye to undemocratic practices among ultra-Orthodox.

Their faces were masked with scarves as they attacked an Israeli television camera crew Sunday, but the angry mob was not made up of Palestinians and had nothing to do with the regional conflict between Israel and the Arab world.

Rather, it was a group of haredi (ultra-Orthodox) Jewish men in the town of Beit Shemesh, not far from Jerusalem, who were displaying their anger over the secular Israeli media's criticism of their attempts to enforce gender segregation and exclude women from the public sphere.

The attack took place just days after Channel 2 News aired a segment featuring an area haredi man justifying spitting on a defenseless eight-year-old girl because she was not dressed according to his strict standards of modesty.

Violent protests from factions within the haredi community against “outside” criticisms is nothing new – we witnessed similar attacks not that long ago when the Beit Shemesh municipality opened a religious Zionist girls school in their neighborhood, as well as in Jerusalem a few years ago when a public parking lot was slated to open on Shabbat.

What is new is the secular mainstream’s response to this rage.

Whereas in the past most of Israeli society and the authorities simply tolerated haredi demonstrations and even saw the harassment of women as just part of the “ultra-Orthodox experience,” today ever more people are becoming frustrated with such religious zealotry, which been continuing unchecked for years.

Israeli society – backed by politicians both male and female, on the left and on the right, and even religious and secular – are pretty much in agreement that this extremism and any sort of discrimination against women is wrong and must be stopped.

Last week, at a Tel Aviv conference, female lawmakers and leaders emphasized their determination to halt any more attacks against women’s place in society. This week, women’s rights activists are preparing a mass protest on Wednesday, having already vowed to battle this phenomenon head-on.

Even Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu voiced his determination to put an end to this dangerous trend, stating in his cabinet meeting Sunday, “Israel is a democratic, Western, liberal state. The public sphere is open and safe for everyone – men and women alike. There is no place for harassment or discrimination.”

Netanyahu said that he has already called on the Israel Police to take full action “to arrest and stop those who spit, harass or raise a hand.”

The problem, however, is that it may be too late for the government to reign in these religious fanatics who seem prepared to defend their extreme beliefs at all costs, even if it means jeopardizing the Jewish state’s precarious religious-secular status quo and even starting some form of civil war.

It is, unfortunately, a battle that has been brewing for decades. Moreover, for far too long successive governments have been focused on the external threats facing the state instead of dealing with society’s internal conflicts, including the growing paradox between religious absolutism and democratic freedom.

While the incident in Beit Shemesh is truly shocking, it is sadly not the first time that a Jewish woman has been the target of the spit of a haredi man.

Many a secular female who might have mistakenly wandered into the Jerusalem neighborhood of Mea She’arim or not taken enough care to observe the “modest dress” signs that have been hanging there for years might be able to tell a similar story.

The same goes for women who have experienced the indignity of riding a public bus through some of country’s most religious neighborhoods.

While it has now become popular to call all those who stand up to these attacks the “Israeli Rosa Parks,” in reality the country needs many more “Rosas” if it really wants to stop this war.

The issue is not only that religious extremism is growing but also that the population that perpetuates this ideology is expanding too.

While these communities used to be concentrated in a few neighborhoods, today they have taken over new areas and are attempting to unilaterally impose their beliefs on all residents.

The crux of this problem was perhaps summed up Sunday with a debate over comments made by Minister of Culture and Sport Limor Livnat, who declared in a radio interview that what happens in the haredi community is their own business.

“I’m not sure I mind it if they decide to segregate bus lines in Modi’in Illit or Betar Illit. It’s their way of life. If it doesn’t bother any woman, I’m not sure it bothers me,” said the Likud minister.

While the attitude up until now might have been to ignore certain undemocratic practices among the ultra-Orthodox, what is suddenly becoming painfully clear is that society can no longer afford to turn a blind eye to them.

Not challenging this phenomenon sets a dangerous precedent for the rule of law in Israel, and all forms of segregation in the public sphere should be considered illegal, regardless of where it takes place.

## **10. Right-wing group mapping Jerusalem businesses that employ Arabs**

Oz Rosenberg, *Haaretz*, 21/11/2011

<http://www.haaretz.com/print-edition/news/right-wing-group-mapping-jerusalem-businesses-that-employ-arabs-1.396686>

Meir Ettinger, 19, a resident of the West Bank settlement of Yitzhar and grandson of late Rabbi Kahane, says goal of Hebrew Labor project is 'to warn the public' against buying from businesses that employ Arabs.

About 10 days ago, a fish merchant in Jerusalem's Mahane Yehuda outdoor market noticed a young man with sidelocks and a skullcap trying to determine which of the stalls employ Arabs. The merchant, Saleh, called the police, who detained the man for questioning on suspicion that he was planning a terror attack.

But the interrogation revealed that Meir Ettinger, 19, had a completely different goal in mind. Ettinger, a resident of the West Bank settlement of Yitzhar and a grandson of the late Rabbi Meir Kahane, said he was investigating on behalf of a project called Hebrew Labor, whose goal is "to warn the public" against buying from businesses that employ Arabs.

Mahane Yehuda market, Hebrew Labor

Ettinger was released and ordered to keep away from Mahane Yehuda for two weeks. But last Thursday night, police detained four other young men from Yitzhar who were on the same mission.

Conversations with right-wing activists this week revealed that Ettinger and his comrades have been working on this project for several weeks now. Their goal is to map all of the businesses in Jerusalem that use Arab labor. They began in the northern neighborhoods of Pisgat Ze'ev and Neveh Yaakov, then moved to the western neighborhoods of Kiryat Moshe and Givat Shaul, and are now working on the downtown area, which includes Mahane Yehuda.

"They came to my boss and asked him if he has Arabs working for him," related Yaakov Azaria, an electrician from Pisgat Ze'ev. "He said no, but I know they also went to others and asked them."

About 20 people are working on the mapping project. Most are Yitzhar residents who were recently served with administrative orders requiring them to stay out of the West Bank, for fear that they might carry out attacks on Palestinians or soldiers, and are therefore living temporarily in Jerusalem. Their goal is to prevent people from patronizing businesses that employ Arabs.

"A booklet with a list of places that employ Arabs will be published soon," said Moshe Ben Zikri, an extreme right-wing activist from Jerusalem. "That will be followed by hanging up posters and signs with these lists in the streets - just so that the public will know and be cautious."

The modus operandi is simple: If it isn't clear that a store does or doesn't employ Arabs, the activists simply walk in and ask the owner. Police found a list of several dozen businesses in Ettinger's pocket, each marked with an X if it employed Arab workers or a checkmark if it did not.

The Hebrew Labor project is not one of a kind: In January, for instance, a right-wing group called Lehava - For the Prevention of Assimilation in the Holy Land launched a campaign to give "kashrut certificates" to businesses that don't employ Arabs. Benzion Gopstein, one of the leaders of Lehava, said this new campaign was unrelated, but motivated by the same goal.

"I don't understand what the problem is here," he said. "All in all, this is just a service to the public that isn't interested in buying from businesses with Arabs."

### *UNESCO and Religious heritage*

## **11. World Heritage and National Sovereignty: on Palestine's UNESCO Bid**

Chiara De Cesari, *Leiden- Stanford Heritage Network*, 6/12/2011

<http://www.networkedheritage.org/2011/12/06/world-heritage-and-national-sovereignty-on-palestine%E2%80%99s-unesco-bid/>

What is the fuss about the recent UNESCO's recognition of Palestine as a member state? On paper, the main consequence of this move consists in its opening up the possibility for Palestinians to request their most significant heritage sites to be considered for inscription on the World Heritage List, that is, the protected inventory of cultural and natural sites deemed of value to humanity as a whole. In other words, it means potentially increased protection for a set of historic and religious sites—first and foremost, Bethlehem's Nativity Church—which few would fail to regard as of great significance to a great number of people outside of Palestine. So again, we might ask, what is the problem with that? In the following essay, I argue that Palestine's UNESCO bid was and is indeed an important political move, which goes beyond symbolic politics. The clash over Palestinian UNESCO's membership also tells us something about the unsuspected entanglement of World Heritage status and national sovereignty.

On October 31st 2011, UNESCO's general conference voted to admit Palestine as a member state to a large majority. 107 countries voted in favour, 14 voted against (including the US, Israel, Germany, The Netherlands, Canada and Australia) and 52 abstained. Soon afterwards, the US and Israel, who had strongly opposed this move, announced their 'retaliation' against both UNESCO and Palestine. The US immediately halted its UNESCO contributions, throwing the organization into chaos and forcing a revision of its overall budget. (Note that the US contributes ca. 22% of UNESCO's budget, and that this contribution was supposedly considered a strategic asset in the context of the new multilateral policies of the Obama administration reversing a decades long American hostility toward the UN cultural body.) Israel, on the other hand, not only withheld its UNESCO contribution but immediately punished the Palestinian Authority (PA), announcing the construction of 2000 more housing units in its West Bank and East Jerusalem settlements as well as halting the transfer of the tax revenues it collects (being in control of all West Bank external borders) on behalf of the PA. What is the reason for these ostensibly disproportionate reactions?

'The State of Palestine finally exists': this was the incipit of Lebanon's Daily Star editorial the day after the general conference vote, rightly emphasizing the symbolic politics of the Palestinian move. The article was referring to a particular kind of 'existence' for few believe that UNESCO's membership will change much in terms of realities on the ground. In other words, membership will not change the essentially patchworked and very limited sovereignty of the Palestinian Authority (PA). This interim governing infrastructure was created by the Oslo Accords in the 1990s to administer the areas of the West Bank and Gaza from which Israel had withdrawn. Due to the failure of the so-called peace process, however, the PA never developed into an independent, viable state. In this context, the UNESCO bid is part of a recent, much wider Palestinian campaign to obtain international recognition as a state within the UN system, of which this September's submission of Palestine's request for full membership at the UN represents the most significant moment. For Israel, this constitutes a rejection of the path of negotiations. Yet, the move is precisely a response to the failure of the latter. This follows the failure of 20 years of US-brokered negotiations with Israel; this span of time has seen the doubling of the population of the Israeli colonies built inside the Palestinian territories occupied in 1967 (now up to ca. 500,000 people), and the great expansion of settlements which are illegal under international law and constitute in the eyes of many the main obstacle on the way to achieve peace in the Middle East. As a response to this Israeli policy of creating facts on the ground (and the US fundamental acquiescence), the PLO decided to move its battle to the UN, considered by Palestinians as a more objective and impartial setting, calling for a larger involvement of the international community as a whole. It also decided to move the battle to the symbolic level, by seeking formal, international

recognition of sovereignty before effective control of the territories. This is a strategy I have called elsewhere anticipatory representation, as the calling into being, through representations, of institutions that do not yet fully exist. (It must be specified, however, that as part of its state-building agenda, the West Bank PA has also recently embarked in a vast program of institution-strengthening to make it ready to function as a fully-fledged state.) For Israel's ambassador to UNESCO, this is what makes the Palestinian bid absurd, the presumption of full sovereignty before its actual realization. As for the US at the beginning of the 2012 presidential campaign, its critique of the Palestinian UNESCO bid as a 'unilateral' move unhelpful to revive the stalled peace talks does not retain much credibility in the face of its renunciation to put pressure on Israel to at least freeze settlement construction—for many, a truly unilateral action with wide-ranging, real consequences for the future viability of the two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Apparently, then, UNESCO's recognition has nothing to do with real sovereignty on the ground. It's a symbolic victory—thanks to the international recognition of Palestinian national rights within the territories occupied by Israel in 1967—and it also opens up accession to a number of other UN bodies. Yet several Palestinian commentators, including Nabil Shaath, a senior Fatah figure long in charge of foreign relations, have emphasized the importance of UNESCO membership because it will 'further empower us [Palestinians] to protect our cultural, historical, and religious sites from Israel's continuous illegal exploitation and attack.'# Indeed, UNESCO membership will allow Palestinians to finally have their nominations for inscription on the World Heritage List evaluated by the agency—with high chances of success given the uncontested significance of the sites in question. But why would then heritage protection constitute such a relevant matter in a conflict zone and how would World Heritage status affect real protection on the ground? Indeed, I would argue that in the long run, World Heritage status might give Palestinians more control over some of the hotspots of the conflict, including the Old City of Hebron.

Palestinians have sought World Heritage status for a number of their sites of historical and archaeological significance for some time now. A deeper UNESCO involvement in Palestine began in 2002 when the World Heritage Committee—appalled by the destruction of swaths of Palestinian cultural heritage and particularly by the siege of Bethlehem's Nativity Church during Israelis military incursions—decided to act and do something to protect this world-famous heritage. Concretely, it provided funding and technical support for Palestinians to produce a so-called tentative list, that is, in UNESCO jargon, an inventory of sites of outstanding universal value with potential to be included in the World Heritage List. Funding and support were also made available to evaluate the state of conservation of these sites and properties, and to strengthen the Palestinian department of antiquity endowed with such tasks. The result has been a close collaboration between UNESCO and the latter department, which has produced, among others, the equivalent of a tentative list. That the Palestinian tentative list could not be called as such (the decision ultimately rested on the non-specific term 'Inventory of ... Heritage Sites of Potential Outstanding Universal Value in Palestine'), due to Israel's sensitivity on the issue, is a barometer of how UN jargon can invest actors with the mantle of sovereignty. Indeed, only state parties to the 1972 UNESCO World Heritage Convention can produce 'tentative lists'. Only state parties, moreover, are entitled to submit nominations for inscription on the World Heritage List on the basis of these inventories: this is why Palestinians did not submit a nomination for years after the completion of their tentative list in 2005, and when they tried, as they did earlier this year, their proposal could not be evaluated. Beyond the symbolics of statehood, for Palestinians World Heritage status



means much broader possibilities to protect heritage sites such as Bethlehem, which are currently neglected due to lack of funding and/or lack of effective control. But not only.

World Heritage status implies a fundamental recognition of Palestinian sovereignty over (and the very Palestinianness of) a number of key heritage sites that, in spite of being situated inside the occupied territories, are claimed by Israel as its own because of their biblical resonance. Only in 2010 Israeli Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu inaugurated a national heritage plan contemplating the comprehensive renovation of a list of key national archaeological and historic sites. Included among the latter are two West Bank multi-religious shrines, a fact which has caused riots and great uproar among both Palestinians and the Israeli Left. These two sites are the Tomb of the Patriarchs and Rachel's Tomb, which are located right in the centre of the two historic towns at the top of the Palestinian tentative list and the firsts to be nominated for World Heritage status, respectively Bethlehem and Hebron. (What passed under silence, then, is that apart from East Jerusalem, several other West Bank heritage sites were already part of the Israeli list of 'national' heritage sites and administered as Israel national parks like, for example, Qumran.) What is interesting and revealing is Netanyahu's terminological choice of 'engagement' (specifically opposing this policy to his predecessor's, Ariel Sharon, 'disengagement' or removal of the Israeli colonies from Gaza) to specify the nature of the national heritage plan as a way to foster national fortitude by 'reconnecting' people to 'their' land and history.

I would also like to turn to the case of Hebron. Its old city is a remarkable example of historic Arab-Islamic architecture built around the shrine known as Haram Ibrahimi or Tomb of the Patriarchs, which is believed to house the graves of a number of biblical patriarchs, including Abraham, sacred to both Jews and Muslims. Soon after the 1967 occupation, Hebron experienced a wave of colonization, and today around 500 Israeli settlers occupy key spots in the Old City around the shrine. The presence of the settlers has triggered the militarization of the old town, and with it, the departure of most of the original Palestinian inhabitants who left in order to escape daily harassment by both settlers and soldiers, as well as long years of continuous closures and curfews. A large-scale restoration and rehabilitation project run by a local committee has recently brought Palestinians back to the Old City, but life for them is still extremely difficult. The Old City continues to be under full Israeli military control like the majority of the West Bank. The PA is severely limited in its range of action there, and in spite of the hopes triggered by the Oslo Accords, the settlers have never been evacuated.

Currently, a new nomination file for Hebron is being finalized by a group of stakeholders including the municipality, the committee responsible for the Old City rehabilitation project, and the PA ministry of tourism and antiquities. This will follow, probably by next year, Bethlehem's nomination. Palestinians in Hebron hope that they will be able, in the future, to better protect their heritage from decay but also from settlers and soldiers. They hope that World Heritage status will give them more control over cities where they are no longer free to move. This clearly points to the complexly interwoven relationship between World Heritage and national sovereignty, one which deserves further scrutiny by anthropological researchers working in the context of heritage. Of course, all World Heritage activities necessarily pass through the heritage institutions of member states, which are thus empowered in the process. Yet a less obvious aspect of the project to safeguard the common heritage of humanity is that, while affirming the relevance of a site from a global perspective—one ostensibly outside of the borders of the state in which it is located—the World Heritage process refigures the sovereignty of that state over that particular cultural heritage in a manner that elicits a

constellation of recognitions and expectations. This is also why the recent UNESCO recognition of Palestine carries great meaning in the struggle for this lacerated piece of land.

## 12. Political Implications of Palestinian Accession To UNESCO

Michael Weiss and Houriya Ahmed (Henry Jackson Society), *Eurasia Review*, 3/11/2011

<http://www.eurasiareview.com/03112011-political-implications-of-palestinian-accession-to-unesco-analysis/>

On 31 October 2011, the United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) ratified the Palestinian Authority's (PA) bid for full membership as a state, bringing the number of full member states in UNESCO to 195. The Palestinian bid received overwhelming support, with 107 member states voting in favour of membership, 52 abstentions and only 14 votes against the motion.

This development comes one month after the PA submitted a formal application for full membership at the UN Security Council. The latter initiative provoked intense international controversy over whether or not it violates the letter and spirit of the 1993 Oslo Accords, which mandate that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict must be resolved by direct negotiations.

UNESCO is the first UN affiliate body to grant the Palestinians full membership befitting a sovereign and independent nation. The PA's motivations in pursuing UNESCO membership has been interpreted as a domino strategy of joining secondary international organisations to enhance their diplomatic momentum in advance of the Security Council's consideration of the the statehood bid—a process that could take months or even years. Both the United States and Israel are strongly opposed to the statehood bid and the US has threatened to block it by wielding its veto right at the Security Council.

The US also led the charge against the PA's UNESCO accession, describing the move repeatedly as “premature” and announcing that it would henceforth restrict its sizeable donation to the agency, which currently constitutes approximately a quarter of UNESCO's two year budget. Also voting against the membership were Israel, Canada, Australia, Germany, Sweden, and the Netherlands. However, EU countries were divided, with France and Belgium voting in favour, while the United Kingdom, Poland, Portugal, Denmark and Italy abstained. Brazil, Russia, India and China—all of which have signalled their willingness to vote “yes” at the Security Council on the Palestinian statehood question—voted in favour of accession to UNESCO, as did most African and Arab states.

The PA's membership admission met with cheers and applause at the UNESCO headquarters in Paris on Monday. One UNESCO delegate reportedly shouted: “Long live Palestine!” in French. The Palestinian Foreign Minister Riad al-Malki welcomed the decision as a way of “help[ing] erase a tiny part of the injustice done to the Palestinian people.”

*A diplomatic victory for the Palestinian Authority*

Admission to UNESCO represents a significant propaganda victory for the PA. Mahmoud Abbas, President of the PA, has reportedly stated: “accepting Palestine into UNESCO is a victory for (our) rights, for justice and for freedom.”

The UNESCO bid was another attempt to maintain the support from a Palestinian population eager to see progress towards independence. Such PR victories especially benefit Fatah, the party which dominates the PLO and leads the PA, given the fact that their political rivals, Hamas, received popular praise for their recent deal with Israel, which saw the kidnapped Israel Defense Forces soldier Gilad Shalit, in Hamas custody for five years, exchanged for more than a thousand Palestinian prisoners. Hamas has openly welcomed UNESCO admission, despite the fact that it previously criticised the PA for its September application at the UN.

UN Security Council members are very likely to split along the lines of the UNESCO members when the Palestinian statehood bid is debated on 11 November, and when the PA attempts to secure full membership at any other UN agency. Other UN agencies the PA is expected to approach include the UN Industrial Development Organization; the World Intellectual Property Organization; the UN Conference on Trade and Development, which has reciprocal agreements that would allow UNESCO members in as full members; and the International Atomic Energy Agency.

The overwhelming support the PA received for full membership admission to UNESCO will make it more difficult for countries to oppose Palestinian attempts to secure statehood recognition at the UN. Moreover, in future the PA could present any opposition to UNESCO recognition as an attempt to deny the Palestinian claim to a distinct and legitimate culture.

As a UNESCO member, the Palestinians can also now apply for World Heritage classification for their cultural sites in the Occupied Territories to legitimate and promote their cultural rights, which would be protected by the UN, and could also receive funding from UNESCO for preservation and restoration projects. These sites could include contested landmarks which Israel has officially declared part of its national heritage, such as Temple Mount in Jerusalem (where the Al-Aqsa mosque also stands), Rachel’s Tomb and the Tomb of the Patriarchs, both of which are in the West Bank. If Israel were to damage any UNESCO heritage site in a military campaign, it would be in violation of international law and UNESCO member states would be obliged to take action.

### *Implications for Israel*

The Israeli response to the PA’s accession to UNESCO was swift and categorically negative: “This is a unilateral Palestinian manoeuvre which will bring no change on the ground but further removes the [peace] agreement.” The Israeli Foreign Ministry has added that Israel would consider “cutting all ties with the Palestinian Authority,” and senior officials have indicated that punitive measures against the PA should be expected, including a halt on the transfer of tax money that Israel currently collects for Ramallah—a measure Israel had temporarily imposed in early 2011 to penalise the announced “reconciliation” accord between Fatah and Hamas. Another statement by the Israeli Foreign Ministry suggests that it is also re-considering its ties with UNESCO: “Following the decision... the State of Israel will consider ongoing cooperation with the organization.” (Israel contributes approximately 3 percent of the organisation’s annual budget, money it has pledged to withdraw as well.)

Israel has long had a fraught relationship with the UNESCO. In November 2010, the cultural agency classified Rachel's Tomb in the West Bank city of Hebron as a mosque, drawing the ire of the Israeli Foreign Ministry, which suspended relations with the UNESCO. The third holiest site in Judaism, Rachel's Tomb is considered by Jews to be the resting place of the Biblical matriarch. However, the Tomb also has religious significance to Muslims and Christians. Nevertheless, the UNESCO board voted 44 to one—with 12 abstentions—to assign the “Bilal bin Rabah Mosque/Rachel's Tomb” the status of national heritage site and to affirm that it was an “integral part of the occupied Palestinian territories and that any unilateral action by the Israeli authorities is to be considered a violation of international law.” Yet, as a study of the Palestinian school curriculum found in 2008, the PA reference to the “Dome of Rachel” persisted through 2001 when the name Bilal bin Rabah Mosque was suddenly bestowed upon the site in a new educational textbook.

The fate of Jerusalem is a crucial aspect of this debate. The PA claims the eastern half of the city as the future capital of a sovereign State of Palestine. A host of international bodies—including the UN—have affirmed the legitimacy of this claim, describing Israeli expansion into East Jerusalem as settlement building and therefore a violation of international law. Despite allowances from previous Israeli governments for the re-division of Jerusalem along the “1967 borders” the current Israeli government has repeatedly described an undivided Jerusalem as the capital of Israel.

At the close of the Six Day War in 1967, Israel prohibited Jews from praying at the Temple Mount, the holiest site in Judaism, and ceded its administration to the Waqf (Islamic trust) because it is also where the al-Aqsa Mosque, the third holiest site in Sunni Islam, resides. In Islamic scripture, the Temple Mount is known as al-Haram ash-Sharif, the Noble Sanctuary.

The twinned location of two monotheistic religions' holy sites has led to archaeological controversies— some of which have turned violent. In 1996, Prime Minister Netanyahu, then in his first term in office, allowed for the excavation of a tunnel that ran along the Western Wall alongside the Temple Mount in Jerusalem. The tunnel emerged in the Muslim Quarter of that multicultural city, although some Israeli extremists attempted to dig upwards toward the Temple Mount. The Waqf responded by pouring concrete in to fill the hole. Rumours that the archaeological dig was an attempt to tarnish or reclaim the Noble Sanctuary caused a riot in which 75 people were killed and 1,500 more wounded.

Indeed, the politicisation of sacrosanct sites in Jerusalem has also long been a hallmark of the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO), which the UN currently recognises as the “sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people.” Under the original orders of former PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat, there is a proscription on Palestinian historians against acknowledging that a Jewish Temple ever existed on al-Haram ash-Sharif. During the US-brokered the Camp David talks in 2000, Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak offered Arafat control of all the Arab suburbs of East Jerusalem. Under Barak's proposal, the Old City would be demilitarised and patrolled by both states, but would remain under Israeli control. The Muslim and Christian Quarters as well as the Temple Mount itself would devolve to Palestinian “sovereign custodianship,” while the tunnels beneath al-Haram ash-Sharif would remain under Israeli control. Barak also conceded the Armenian Quarter in response to Arafat's demands. However, Arafat responded to these conciliatory measures by insisting that the Jewish Temple had never existed in Jerusalem at all, but rather on the Samaritan Mount Gerizim in Nablus. When he was later offered full sovereignty over the Temple Mount, with Israel retaining only symbolic ties to the Holy of Holies beneath the site, Arafat

still refused to accept the deal. In 2002, Arafat began to deny that the Temple ever existed in historic Palestine at all; a year later he briefed a delegation of Arab leaders and insisted that the site of the Temple was in fact in Yemen, which he claimed to have personally visited.

For Israel, the overriding concern now that the PA has been granted membership to UNESCO will be for the agency to re-engage with this “Temple Denial” by culturally certifying al-Haram ash-Sharif as a predominantly Muslim holy site. Any such determination would surely carry diplomatic weight in any final status agreement.

### *Implications for the United States*

The US shares Israel’s rejection of the bid and has stated that the move “undermines the international community’s shared goal of a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East.” In response to the PA’s admission, the US State Department announced on 1 November that it would withhold \$60 million in a scheduled disbursement due to UNESCO this month. The US currently contributes \$80 million per year to the organisation, the equivalent of 22 percent of UNESCO’s annual budget.

Like Israel, the both the US and the UK have had a parlous relationship with UNESCO. The Reagan and Thatcher governments withdrew their countries from the agency in 1984 and 1985, respectively, following the publication of the New World Information and Communication Order, (also known as the MacBride Report) which argued in favour of nationalising media as a way to “democratise” the flow of information. The US and UK condemned the report as being opposed to freedom of the press and imbued with an anti-American and pro-Soviet bias. After a series of financial and doctrinal reforms, the UK rejoined UNESCO in 1997 and the US in 2002.

Two pieces of federal law obligated the State Department to cut its donation to UNESCO. The first law, passed in 1990, prohibited the disbursement of funds “for the United Nations or any specialized agency thereof which accords the Palestine Liberation Organization the same standing as a member state.” The second law, passed in 1994, enlarged the remit of the first to include “any affiliated organization of the United Nations which grants full membership as a state to any organization or group that does not have the internationally recognized attributes of statehood.”

Crucially, in the midst of the current controversy, the State Department has emphasised that US membership in UNESCO is not again in question.

UNESCO has proven to be a valuable tool for American business and national security interests. It has facilitated introductions for US companies such as Cisco, Intel and Microsoft to developing countries, leading to job creation. After Japan’s devastating earthquake earlier this year, a UNESCO-coordinated tsunami warning system helped alert Californians of the possibility of a related natural disaster. In Afghanistan, the agency has helped educate a populace that will soon have to inherit and run a country without the assistance of American soldiers.

### *Implications for UNESCO*

The rescission of US aid is likely to force the closure of some UNESCO operations around the world and lead to staff terminations, unless the shortfall is made up by other donors.

While it is possible that its programmes in developing countries could be negatively affected by the withdrawal of US funds, the extent of the impact remains unclear. If UNESCO can recoup the \$60 million lost, it is likely, given continued US membership in the organisation, that American interests will continue to be pursued, unless bureaucratic tensions or resentments within the organisation lead to the deliberate marginalisation of those interests.

UNESCO may face further controversies as a consequence of their decision to admit the PA as a member. The PA and Hamas are known to curb journalistic freedoms in their individually governed territories. A 2011 Amnesty International report found that both the PA and Hamas maintain “tight controls on freedom of expression, and harassed and prosecuted journalists, bloggers and other critics” in both the West Bank and Gaza. With its strong commitment to freedom of expression and information, UNESCO may face further scrutiny over whether it holds the Palestinians to these ethical standards; if it fails to do so, it will be accused of hypocrisy.

Moreover, UNESCO may find that its efforts to improve literacy, women’s education, and protect World Heritage sites may be held hostage to internecine Palestinian politics in the way other UN agencies have done. In one example, Hamas has condemned the UN for what it claimed were plans by the UN Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA), the body which tends to the humanitarian needs of Palestinian refugees, to incorporate the Holocaust in the Gaza school curriculum. (Hamas officials describe this historical event as a “Zionist lie.”) While the PA has gained full membership in UNESCO as a state, the West Bank and Gaza are governed by parties that are ideologically and practically divided in terms of security and local governance—a conflict which could cause problems for UNESCO as a whole.

#### Conclusion

Seeking—and now gaining—admittance to various UN agencies is the first step in a wider diplomatic campaign by the PA to secure a UN Security Council vote on Palestinian statehood. In fact, it appears to be a deliberate tactic to isolate those countries opposed to the statehood bid—chiefly, the US and Israel.

The PA’s strategy may yield short-term dividends by refocusing media attention on what is destined to be a prolonged and intensely legalistic battle for a Security Council resolution, and in shoring up moral support for statehood. However, by antagonising Washington, the largest single funder to the PA’s own budget which has already withheld aid in response to the UN gambit, President Mahmoud Abbas’ strategy may prove counterproductive in the long-term: it still is not certain whether Qatar and Saudi Arabia, for example, will fill in the gap for funds that the US provided—an uncertainty which may leave ordinary Palestinians substantially worse-off.

As for the overall effects to UNESCO, there is no certainty that nations strongly supporting the Palestinian statehood plan are eager or willing to compensate for the funds withdrawn by the US. The extent to which this withdrawal in funding will harm the organisation’s educational and civil society development projects abroad remains to be seen. If other international bodies such as the World Intellectual Property Organization or the World Health Organisation follow suit in granting PA membership, this could lead to similar American rescissions of aid and consequent budget shortfalls.

The PA's recent success at UNESCO is a symbolic and diplomatic victory for Palestinian nationalism, but masks underlying crises of what kind of nation is being built. Hamas and Fatah, despite their reconciliation accord of May 2011, remain ideologically and practically divided in their visions of a desirable Palestinian society. As much as the Palestinians need and deserve an independent state, efforts such as the UNESCO gambit will only undermine any prospect for the resumption of peace negotiations with Israel, and the punitive measures taken as a result will negatively affect the Palestinian people.

### Communities on the edge

#### **13. East Jerusalem: Key Humanitarian Concerns (UN-OCHA Dec 2011)**

[http://www.ochaopt.org/documents/ocha\\_opt\\_Jerusalem\\_FactSheet\\_December\\_2011\\_english.pdf](http://www.ochaopt.org/documents/ocha_opt_Jerusalem_FactSheet_December_2011_english.pdf)

Around 270,000 Palestinians currently reside in East Jerusalem, in addition to 200,000 Israeli settlers who reside in the settlements which have been constructed since 1967, contrary to the international law.

- 3.7 million Palestinians from the remainder of the occupied Palestinian territory (oPt) are prohibited from entering East Jerusalem without Israeli-issued permits, which are difficult to obtain.
- Access to East Jerusalem is controlled by a combination of physical and administrative obstacles. Palestinians who are able to obtain permits can only use four of the 16 checkpoints along the Barrier.
- This system of restrictions obstructs Palestinian access, including patients by ambulance, to the East Jerusalem health facilities which provide specialized and emergency services, unavailable elsewhere in the oPt.
- Approximately 55,000 Palestinian residents of East Jerusalem are physically separated from the urban centre by the Barrier.
- While 35% of East Jerusalem's land has been confiscated for the development of Israeli settlements, only 13% of East Jerusalem is zoned for Palestinian construction.
- At least 32% of all Palestinian homes in East Jerusalem lack building permits, which are difficult to obtain, potentially placing at least 86,500 residents at risk of displacement. Since 1967, the Israeli authorities have demolished some 2,000 houses in East Jerusalem.
- Palestinian residents of East Jerusalem lack a secure legal residency status. Around 14,000 Palestinians have had their Jerusalem residency revoked by the Israeli authorities since 1967.
- Because of settlement activity and eviction, several hundred Palestinian residents of East Jerusalem are at risk of forced displacement. Particularly affected are the Old City and Silwan, and 500 people in the Sheikh Jarrah neighborhood.
- 1,000 additional classrooms are required to accommodate Palestinian children in schools in East Jerusalem and many existing facilities are substandard or unsuitable.

#### **14. Israel gearing for effective separation of East Jerusalem Palestinians**

Nir Hasson, *Haaretz*, 23/12/2011

<http://www.haaretz.com/print-edition/news/israel-gearing-for-effective-separation-of-east-jerusalem-palestinians-1.403034>

State whitewashing construction plans between Jerusalem, Ma'aleh Adumim

Last week, a new border crossing was opened in East Jerusalem's Shoafat neighborhood, to little fanfare. Two days later, Jerusalem Mayor Nir Barkat asserted that Israel should relinquish Palestinian neighborhoods of the capital that are beyond the separation barrier, despite the fact that their residents carry Israeli identity cards.

Some people view these events as two pieces of the same puzzle. A third piece is the resumption of work on separate roads for Israelis and Palestinians between Jerusalem and the West Bank settlement of Ma'aleh Adumim.

Put the pieces together, and you get a picture of Israel erecting, at enormous expense, a major system of roads and checkpoints that would allow for the total separation of Palestinians and Israelis while also enabling the construction of Mevasseret Adumim, a neighborhood that would connect Ma'aleh Adumim to Jerusalem.

The new crossing at Shoafat, which replaced the old military checkpoint, resembles a border terminal between two countries more than it does a security checkpoint. Its generous proportions include five lanes for vehicles and a lane for pedestrian traffic.

In the days leading up to and following the opening, an intolerable stench hung over the pristine terminal, testimony to the "skunk truck" and its cargo of liquid stink, which the Border Police used to drive away Palestinians demonstrating against the new crossing. But the protesters' efforts were in vain, and the terminal is operating according to plan. It may even improve the quality of life of Palestinian Jerusalemites living in and around Shoafat, by reducing their travel time to and from the rest of the city.

The Shoafat crossing joins other big crossings built in the Jerusalem area over the past several years. They mainly serve the 70,000 or so Palestinians with Israeli residency who were cut off from the city by the separation barrier. These neighborhoods turned into pockets of crime and anarchy, with no government and crumbling infrastructure. It is their inhabitants that Barkat wants to sever from his city.

"The municipal boundary of Jerusalem and the route of the separation fence must be identical to allow for proper administration of the city," Barkat told a conference at the National Security College last week.

On Thursday, the mayor's office announced a plan "for the municipality and the Civil Administration to trade responsibility for providing services to residents in the area between the security barrier and the municipal boundary." Until now, the Civil Administration's domain has been confined to the West Bank.

On the face of it, excising these areas would be relatively simple. Palestinians in East Jerusalem are Israeli residents because Israel defines their neighborhoods as part of Jerusalem; thus in theory, changing the city's municipal boundary would simultaneously



cancel their residency. It would also do wonders for Jerusalem's demographic balance, from the perspective of the city's Jewish majority.

But anyone familiar with the situation knows it is not so simple. The announcement would be followed by a rapid migration into Jerusalem of tens of thousands of Palestinians who do not want to lose their residency, and the rights to receive social services and to work and study in Jerusalem that go with it.

"We are Jerusalemites, we're used to Jerusalem," said the director of a maternity hospital in Kafr Aqab, which lies on the other side of the separation fence. "If something like that happens, everyone will want to move to within the city. People will live on the street if they have to."

Some observers view the Shoafat terminal and Barkat's recent remarks as just a small part of the broader picture being sketched out in Jerusalem's West Bank hinterlands. According to Col. (res. ) Shaul Arieli, a member of the Council for Peace and Security and one of the leaders of the Geneva Initiative, the Israeli government is spending hundreds of millions of shekels on plans to establish Mevasseret Adumim in the area known as E1.

Roads, electricity lines, traffic circles and lots for development have already been put in place in E1. Everything needed for the neighborhood's construction is there, but because of American pressure, all work in the area halted in 2007. Both the Americans and the Palestinians claim that building in E1 would in effect cut the West Bank into two sections and make it impossible to establish a Palestinian state with any kind of reasonable territorial contiguity.

Arieli and others argue that Israel seeks to solve the problem by means of an advanced traffic control system that would provide rapid travel between Ramallah and Bethlehem on one hand and between Ma'aleh Adumim and Jerusalem on the other. In the last few months, work was resumed on this road system in two places: the new access road to Ma'aleh Adumim, and in the vicinity of Metzudat Adumim, where a few years ago a highway was built with a wall in the middle - the eastern side for settlers, the western side for Palestinians.

The roads meet up at Hazeitim Interchange, on the Jerusalem-Ma'aleh Adumim road. The interchange, which is nearly complete, is designed to fulfill three purposes: to enable people from Ma'aleh Adumim to reach the capital without having to stop at a checkpoint; to enable settlers from the northern West Bank to do the same, and to enable Palestinian travel between the northern and southern parts of the West Bank.

That final point will enable Israel to claim that building in E1 does not harm Palestinian territorial contiguity. "They're preparing the ground for this possibility," Arieli said. "It's not clear when they'll decide to carry it out. But it's enough for there to be a terror attack on the road: They'll close the road and say it's for reasons of security.

"This [road] complex is burning through a sea of money and a sea of people to serve a plan based on a delusional working assumption: that [East] Jerusalem will remain under our sovereignty, and greater Ma'aleh Adumim, including E1, will as well," Arieli added.

According to Ahmad Sub Laban, who works for the non-profit organization Ir Amim, the only way the roads system could be understood is that it serves to enable the division of the West Bank.

"They did not build it in order to divide the West Bank, they built it to maintain the territorial contiguity between Ma'ale Adumim and Jerusalem and to give the settlers a road to Jerusalem without any checkpoints. In practice, they divided the West Bank into two," he said.

## **15. The last straw for Bedouin in Jerusalem's periphery?**

Jonathan Guyer, *Foreign Policy*, 23/12/ 2011

[http://mideast.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2011/12/24/the\\_last\\_straw\\_for\\_bedouin\\_in\\_jerusalem\\_s\\_periphery](http://mideast.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2011/12/24/the_last_straw_for_bedouin_in_jerusalem_s_periphery)

KHAN AL-AHMAR, WEST BANK-- United Nations officials have issued a warning that the Government of Israel's plans for Palestinian Bedouin communities living in Jerusalem's periphery could constitute "mass forcible transfers" and "grave breaches" of international law. A pending plan in the West Bank threatens to displace Khan al-Ahmar, a Bedouin village of refugees originally from Israel's south, pushed off their indigenous land in the early 1950's. Khan al-Ahmar lies on the side of a major West Bank thoroughfare and is sandwiched between the Israeli settlement of Maale Adumin and Jerusalem. This area is known as E1, an especially controversial 12 km patch of land where East Jerusalem would expand as the capital of a future Palestinian state.

It is impossible for Bedouins living here to obtain building permits from Israeli planning authorities, a situation that is not unique to Khan al-Ahmar. That Israeli officials consider Khan al-Ahmar's local community school, which educates over 70 children from surrounding villages, to be illegally constructed might spell its imminent destruction.

Over tea -- and then coffee -- Id al-Jahalin, Khan al-Ahmar's spokesman, described the perilous nature of day-to-day life in his village. There is neither running water nor electricity from a central grid here, and trash is burned as there is no waste pick-up by Israeli public services. Provocations from neighboring settlers punctuate daily routines in this pastoralist community.

The proposed site for re-residence of this community is a newly flattened plot just outside of Jerusalem, less than 100 meters from the municipal garbage dump, and in clear violation of international health standards. A thousand tons of rubbish from the Jerusalem municipality and settlements are trucked to this dump daily, making it the largest refuse site in the West Bank. An armed guard sitting atop a watch tower prohibits visitors from entering the dump. But from the proposed relocation site, one can see pipes coming out of the trash mountain, where methane gas is released in order to limit the internal combustion occurring underground. CO2 levels here are also dangerously high, according to UN officials. Standing in the squalid relocation site for the Bedouin community, the putrid scent of the dump is unbearable.

Maj. Guy Inbar, a spokesman for the Israeli Defense Ministry's administration office for the West Bank, would not provide a timeline for the development of these plots, only more than a

stone's throw from the dump. He said that environmental tests for the site were currently underway. "Whether a rubbish dump, a golden palace, or even Paris, I don't want to go anywhere," said Jahalin, also known as Abu Chamis. "It's my right to have a village here. It's my right for my children to have an education, and for us to live in dignity like any other human beings."

The Jewish settlement of Maale Adumin has pushed for the immediate bulldozing of the school. They have cut off all contact with Khan al-Ahmar's residents since the educational facility's construction in 2009. Ultimately, the decision whether to raze the school and transfer the Bedouin population will fall under the jurisdiction of the Defense Ministry.

Under the Oslo accords, Israel exerts full civil, administrative, and military control over Area C, which consists of 60 percent of the West Bank. Even as Ramallah has attempted to expand its influence in Area C, the Palestinian Authority (PA) refused to build a school in Khan al-Ahmar in defiance of Israeli zoning regulations. This community is one of 20 Palestinian Bedouin villages in Area C that are unrecognized. And with access to only 1 percent of Area C for agrarian usage, Bedouin children shepherd livestock on the side of busy roads. An Italian NGO assisted in constructing the community's school out of tires, mud, and used falafel oil. It is situated between the ramshackle structures of the village, also built "illegally," according to authorities in Israel. Before the six classrooms were here, young Bedouin students had to travel as far as Jericho for basic schooling. Following much pressure, the PA has now provided teachers and a head-mistress for the education facility, but has provided little else. "We know the PA doesn't care about the people here, but they should at least care about the land," said Abu Chamis. "Since 1996, [PLO negotiator] Saeb Erakat has used this road [adjacent to Khan al-Ahmar]. Three or four years ago he actually had a puncture while driving on the road, and I fixed his tire for him. I invited him to come here, but he would not come and see our life."

There are other challenges facing Khan al-Ahmar, too. To understand how unwelcome this refugee Bedouin community is, one need only look at the sewage air vent from pipes leading from the adjacent settlement: the sewage ventilation is less than a meter from the school's restroom facilities. Recent expansion of the freeway has meant that the main road is creeping onto the little land the Jahalin tribe lives on. Khan al-Ahmar could easily be linked to the public services and utilities of the nearby settlements, according to one Western official in Tel Aviv. The Israeli government, however, has not even considered such an arrangement.

It seems that there are so many disturbances here that many in the Bedouin community have become normalized to basic violations of rights, including livestock theft at the hands of settlers. Furthermore, residents fear filing official complaints to the Israeli government -- even in extreme cases, like when Maale Adumin's cesspool has overflowed into Khan al-Ahmar. "Self-defense is being punished," Abu Chamis explained, going on to say that if one were to issue a complaint against the settlement that the village could face fines for the clean-up.

"It's quite clear that the plan for mass forcible transfer relates to settlement expansion, which is not just illegal under international law but also condemned by powerful U.N. member states, including some of Israel's closest allies," warned UNRWA spokesman Chris Gunness. The European Union Security Council members issued a joint statement two days ago drawing attention to ongoing settlement growth in the West Bank. "The viability of the Palestinian state that we want to see and the two-state solution that is essential for Israel's

long-term security are threatened by the systematic and deliberate expansion of settlements." Meanwhile, EU envoy Andrew Stanley has specifically raised the issue of road expansion in E1 to Israeli officials.

Maj. Inbar would not confirm whether there was a master plan for relocating Bedouin communities living outside Jerusalem and would not comment on the status of demolition plans for Khan al-Ahmar. Yet the Washington Post reports that a scheme to resettle up to 2,000 Bedouins is in the works.

If the Bedouin re-settlement plan moves forward, combined with Maale Adumin's attendant expansion, a wedge would be further driven through E1, cutting off Palestinian East Jerusalem from thousands of Palestinians living in the West Bank. This would effectively make it impossible for Jerusalem to be Palestine's capital in a two-state solution. "I think we have to build in E1 and elsewhere in Maale Adumin," Israeli Finance Minister Yuval Steinitz told the Jerusalem Post last week. "...[I]t is high time to tell our American friends that this is not the [moment in which] Israel should take into consideration any objections..."

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## **16. East Jerusalem hospital cut off from all communication due to technicians' fears to visit area**

Nir Hasson, *Haaretz*, 8/12/2011

<http://www.haaretz.com/print-edition/news/east-jerusalem-hospital-cut-off-from-all-communication-due-to-technicians-fears-to-visit-area-1.400253>

Al-Quds maternity hospital in Kafr Akeb is an Israeli hospital under Health Ministry supervision; technicians will not visit hospital to fix phone line, internet service, outside separation fence, without security escort.

Three months ago, the fax line to the Al-Quds maternity hospital in East Jerusalem's Kafr Akeb neighborhood was disconnected. Two weeks ago, the hospital's Internet service was cut off, followed by the phone line a few days later.

Apparently, the communications cables were stolen. But Bezeq technicians are afraid to visit the area, which is outside the separation fence, without a security escort, so the hospital has been left without any communications.

On Tuesday, a woman in labor arrived in great distress. She gave birth prematurely in an emergency operation that saved her life. The baby was rushed to Al-Muqaddas Hospital in East Jerusalem. But the medical file, which is usually sent by fax, could not be delivered.

"I went to the pharmacy, located about 100 meters from the hospital, to send the faxes from there," said Helmi Barak, the hospital's administrative director. "But it didn't arrive. They kept telling me to try again. In the end, the baby arrived before the medical reports. Afterward they asked for another report, and I had to go to the pharmacy again."

The hospital cannot receive the results of routine laboratory tests, so infants are discharged without the test results about diagnosed sensitivities or diseases.

Mothers delivering babies, ambulance drivers, suppliers and staff members are forced to contact the hospital by calling senior doctors' cell phones.

"At night, the hospital is cut off from the world," Barak said.

Al-Quds is an Israeli hospital under Health Ministry supervision, within Jerusalem's municipal borders. Most of its patients are Israeli citizens or legal residents.

The hospital has appealed to Bezeq repeatedly to fix the lines.

"They said the problem was with the underground cables, but the police and the Israel Defense Forces don't enter the area," Barak said. "Then a technician came and said the problem lies near Atarot Airport. We're an Israeli hospital. Is there any hospital in the world without a fax?"

The separation fence has effectively cut the hospital and Kafr Akeb off from the Israeli authorities, but the Palestinian Authority is forbidden to operate in the area. The result is anarchy, residents say.

"There are no laws, no security," said Munir Zahar, who heads the neighborhood council. "Everyone does whatever he likes. The municipality cannot enter because it needs a security escort; the police won't enter without the army's escort; and the army has no time."

Due to this situation, telephone lines and communication cables are repeatedly stolen, and Bezeq is unable to fix them.

Some 50,000 residents of Kafr Akeb and other nearby neighborhoods suffer from inadequate municipal and state services. They are also forced to wait for hours at the checkpoint on the way to and from Jerusalem.

Following recent improvements, the municipality now collects some 70 percent of the neighborhood's garbage. The rest the people have to burn themselves.

"Kafr Akeb is a Jerusalem neighborhood," said Jerusalem Deputy Mayor Yosef Alalo. "It is entitled to all basic services. It is unthinkable that 50,000 people should be totally neglected by the municipal and state authorities."

Bezeq said Kafr Akeb's communication cables have been "repeatedly stolen in recent months. Bezeq is doing all it can to reconnect its clients there. As for the hospital, Bezeq is looking into alternative solutions to resume service."

The municipality said that "garbage is collected in Akeb four times a week. Recently the city has increased sanitation work there ... The contractor was instructed to pay adequate attention to garbage removal from the hospital."

## 17. Refugee camp near Jerusalem becomes- a haven for drug dealers

Oz Rosenberg, *Haaretz*, 21/11/2011

<http://www.haaretz.com/print-edition/news/refugee-camp-near-jerusalem-becomes-a-haven-for-drug-dealers-1.396700>

Jerusalem Magistrate's Court indicts two men from the Shoafat refugee camp for dealing drugs to minor girls, sometimes in exchange for sex, and of using violence against the girls.

The Jerusalem Magistrate's Court indicted two men two weeks ago from the greater Jerusalem area on charges of drug dealing. Among the charges against Mohammed Abu-Nagma of the Shoafat refugee camp and Asher Abuksis of Mevasseret Zion are dealing drugs to minor girls, sometimes in exchange for sex, and of using violence against the girls.

Both suspects have denied the charges. But Moaz Zat'ari, head of Al-Maqdese, an East Jerusalem group that fights drug addiction and other social problems, says he is not surprised one of the suspects is from the Shoafat refugee camp. Zat'ari says the camp, which is within Jerusalem's municipal boundaries, has become the main drug supplier for users in and around the capital.

"You can see people going around with weapons and selling drugs as if it were nothing," Zat'ari said.

One main reason for this situation, he says, is the separation fence, which a few years ago was built all around Shoafat. At the front and only entrance to the camp is an Israel Defense Forces checkpoint, but the back is a convenient area to bring in infiltrators from the territories. From there, the road into Israel is an easy one.

Residents of Shoafat say that since the fence was put up, police presence in the camp has declined dramatically. Jamil Sanduka, head of the camp residents' committee, says Magen David Adom ambulance teams and firefighters avoid entering the camp without a police escort, which sometimes costs human lives.

"A year and a half ago, two children of one of the families here in the camp burned to death because firefighters were waiting for an escort at the checkpoint."

According to a senior local police official, there is police presence in Shoafat, but it is undercover. "From the beginning of the year the minorities branch conducted 14 actions to catch drug and arms dealers in Shoafat alone," he said.

The police concede that working in Shoafat is especially difficult, and that is the reason it is under cover. "Once we drove into Shoafat to protect a Magen David Adom ambulance that went to save a life, to help the residents. We got stones thrown at us. Four patrol cars were smashed to bits," he said.

Most of the drugs reach Israel through the Palestinian Authority and Arab countries, going through the desert south of the Dead Sea, and from there to the "back door" of Shoafat.

Arms are also coming in. "We've recently been seeing dealers selling automatic weapons. They get them in Nablus and bring them here. They cost NIS 3,000 a piece ... I've seen kids using them," Sanduka says.

A senior Jerusalem police official said it is difficult to overcome the arms and drug dealers because "the customers and the sellers both have an interest in thwarting us," although he says efforts are ongoing to dry up the market.

But Sanduka is skeptical. The best example is a large building to which he gestures at the entrance to the camp, some 30 meters from the IDF checkpoint. "That used to be a Coca Cola plant," he says. "Addicts are around here all the time."

About six weeks ago the body of an addict was found there, a member of the Abu Nijma family, prominent in the camp. Two months before, the body of another addict, from Jaffa, was found there.

"Most of the hard cases of addiction in East Jerusalem are from Shoafat," Zat'ari says. "They sell drugs there from cars, on the road. They have no shame."

The Jerusalem police said its responsibility is strategic, while it is up to the local leadership in the camp to stop illegal residents from coming in.

### Other current issues

#### **18. Hamas insists on East Jerusalem poll**

By Mohammad Mar'i, *Arab News*, 10/12/2011

<http://arabnews.com/middleeast/article545611.ece>

RAMALLAH, West Bank: Hamas on Friday ruled out the possibility of holding general elections if East Jerusalem is not included in the process.

Salah Al-Bardawil, a Gaza-based Hamas leader, said that his movement made a condition during national reconciliation talks with the rival Fatah movement that it will only agree to hold presidential and parliamentary elections if voting takes place in East Jerusalem the way they are conducted in the West Bank and Gaza Strip with the participation of Hamas.

A top Israeli official told the Israeli daily Haaretz that Israel was unlikely to allow voting in occupied East Jerusalem if Hamas participated. Israel considers Hamas a terrorist organization.

Al-Bardawil said that "it is the right of the Palestinian people to hold elections in East Jerusalem which is the capital of their state."

He added that preventing the Palestinians from holding elections in the city is "tantamount to Israeli blackmail that aims at torpedoing the national reconciliation deal."

In 2006, Israel arrested four Hamas legislators in Jerusalem — Ahmed Atoun, Mohammed Abu Teir, Khaled Abu Arafah and Mohammed Toutah — for their connections to the movement.

It had warned the four Hamas legislators to renounce membership of Hamas or risk losing residency rights in East Jerusalem. Israel decided to expel Abu Teir and Atoun after they rejected the Israeli condition. Arafah and Toutah has taken refuge at the International Committee of the Red Cross compound in East Jerusalem since 2010.

Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas and Hamas Politburo chief Khaled Meshaal met in Cairo late last month to discuss the implementation of the national reconciliation deal in a bid to end a Palestinian rift. The agreement aims to restore political unity between the Hamas-controlled Gaza Strip and the Fatah-ruled West Bank.

In December, Palestinian factions will meet in Cairo to continue talks on restoring political unity between Gaza and the West Bank through a transitional government preparing for elections in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

Abbas' commitment to retain caretaker Prime Minister Salam Fayyad as his candidate to head the interim unity government blocked the implementation of the reconciliation deal. Hamas fiercely objects to having Fayyad serve in the transition government as it holds him partly responsible for the Palestinian split.

Abbas fears that failure to appoint Fayyad would prompt the US and EU to suspend financial aid to the Palestinians. The West sees Hamas as a terrorist organization.

## **19. Will Jerusalem Cause a Third Intifada?**

Daoud Kuttab, *Huffington Post*, 21/12/2011

[http://www.huffingtonpost.com/daoud-kuttab/will-jerusalem-cause-a-th\\_b\\_1163828.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/daoud-kuttab/will-jerusalem-cause-a-th_b_1163828.html)

This may be a journalistic hunch, but I have a feeling that we are about to witness an explosion in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, this time again over Jerusalem.

In 2000, a Palestinian-Israeli human rights film festival took place in Tel Aviv, Jerusalem, Ramallah and Nazareth. The concluding event, during which the name of the winning film was to be announced, was scheduled for Ramallah. It never happened, as protesters against Israeli-Palestinian normalization marched towards the location of the event and forced its cancellation.

The reason I relate this story is that this week, two similar events were cancelled. For more than two years, Israeli and Palestinian peace activists have been working on an interesting concept: a Palestinian-Israeli confederation.

The idea was translated into a draft constitution and elections were to be held for parliament and co-presidents earlier this month.



Candidates and other speakers were scheduled to meet the public in three events, in Jerusalem's Ambassador Hotel, at Talita Kumi School in Beit Jala (the only location legally accessible to West Bank Palestinians and Israelis) and in Haifa. Sari Nusseibeh and Yael Dayan were among the speakers. The first two events never happened as a result of consistent and angry protest by Palestinians.

Another similar event was cancelled this week. The Palestinian Israeli Journal (PIJ) had scheduled a conference at the Galaxy Hotel, in East Jerusalem, to launch its latest issue, titled "The impact of the Arab Spring on the Palestinian-Israeli conflict."

In responding to inquiries, the founders of the organization noted the tremendous amount of pressure by Palestinian groups opposed to "normalization" on the hotel owners after a Facebook group called for its boycott.

Palestinian anger at the lack of progress in peace talks should not be belittled. A look at what happened in the last few months in terms of hardening of official Palestinian position and reaction to Israel's attempts to change the infrastructure at the entrance of Al Aqsa Mosque are indications of the severity of the situation.

The lack of progress in the peace talks, the US' total incompetence in moving the process and the Arab Spring have no doubt contributed to this feeling of helplessness and the need to reject any perceived superficial attempt at making peace while the occupation goes on unabated.

Perhaps the most disturbing problem for Palestinian Jerusalemites today is the deterioration of their status and the feeling that no one cares about them.

While politicians at all levels give lip service to Jerusalem and Jerusalemites, the reality is much different. Israel's concrete wall, coupled with continuous Jewish-only settlement buildings, brought the people of the city to the brink of explosion.

East Jerusalem lacks any form of local leadership. Israel has barred the creation of indigenous national institutions, contrary to international law and written commitments by previous Israeli governments. The Orient House, which stood as a symbolic Palestinian reference point, continues to be closed by court order.

The chamber of commerce has been also shut down and barred from holding any public event or elections. Even cultural and sports activities are barred if the Israelis smell that they are in any way connected to Palestinian nationalism.

Last spring, a local football team was barred from holding a ceremony after winning the Palestinian football tournament, under the guise that it was a Palestinian Authority event. Israel bars the Palestinian Authority from any public activity in Jerusalem.

The day-to-day life of Jerusalemites is also a source of anger. On the one hand, the Ramallah-based leadership is prevented from involvement, on the other, the Israeli government and the West Jerusalem municipality show little interest in the quarter of a million Palestinian Arabs.

Zoning plans for East Jerusalem neighborhoods continue to collect dust, while large Jewish settlements are being built without restrictions. And when a Palestinian family decides to

expand its home or build a small family home on its property, Israeli bulldozers come rolling in to demolish them under the pretext that they are built without permits.

Social, commercial and cultural issues are also suffering. With the wall barring the usual movement of people from the surrounding towns and villages, the centre of Jerusalem is suffering greatly. Some say it has been on autopilot for so long that they are bracing for the day this plane will crash.

In 2000, Palestinian anger at the provocative visit by Ariel Sharon sparked the second Intifada. The Al Aqsa Intifada was very violent and bloody, causing deaths, injuries and destruction. It also pushed all parties to harden their positions.

In some ways, that second Intifada ended with the death of the Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat. His successor, Mahmoud Abbas, came in with a new anti-violence policy and has been trying hard for years to walk this peaceful walk, tightening security and ending incitement to violence.

But as Abbas prepares to exit the political scene and not run for office in the May elections, the region is bracing for what will happen next.

No one wants another round of violence, but at the same time, no one will accept the continuation of humiliation and denial. Clearly Palestinians insist that they will not tolerate continued military occupation, isolation and rejection of their national rights.

Addressing these issues may help avoid another undesired round of expression of anger and its consequences.

## **20. Christian community divided by Israeli separation barrier**

Hugh Naylor, *The National* 17/11/ 2011

<http://www.thenational.ae/thenational/news/world/middle-east/christian-community-divided-by-israeli-separation-barrier>

CREMISAN, WEST BANK // Even though its concrete pillars and barbed wire have yet to be pieced together through these terraced olive orchards, Israel's separation barrier has already divided this small Christian community.

Israeli authorities are expected to build a segment of its 760-kilometre fence through Cremisan, an area of verdant hills wedged between occupied East Jerusalem and the West Bank.

On one side will be the largely Palestinian-Christian landowners who stand to lose access to about 3,000 dunums (300 hectares) of ancestral farmland. On the Israeli side will be the 19th-century Cremisan monastery and the monks who run its winery. Despite repeated petitions and protests against the fence by landowners and clergymen, the foreign-born monks, who come from the Vatican's Salesian order, have remained silent. It is a decision that many here regard as driven by the bottom line, not Palestinian rights.

"They have a wine making business here, and everyone is suspicious that they want to be on the Israeli side when the wall is built so they can gain better access to Jerusalem," said Nader Abu Amsha, 50, a resident of the neighbouring town of Beit Jala, whose olive orchards near the monastery will be cut off by the barrier.

According to maps showing the barrier's current route, the monastery, its agricultural land and hundreds of dunums of private Palestinian land will fall on the Israeli side. Palestinians divided from their land would be required to ask for Israeli permits to reach it.

Villagers near Cremisan say the eight-metre-high fence will be used by Israel to expand onto their land from the East Jerusalem settlement of Gilo, which is located on a hill adjacent to the monastery.

At the same time, they suspect the monks have also received perks for their muted stance. Israeli authorities are building a new, private road that directly links the monastery to Jerusalem. Previously, the monks had to travel and ship their wine products into Israel through Israeli checkpoints.

The monks' new road is partly built on top of private land owned by Palestinians from the village of Walajeh.

The monastery failed to respond to repeated requests for an interview.

Ghaith Nasser, a lawyer representing the Palestinian landowners, has filed a petition to the Israeli government contesting the barrier's route through Cremisan and the private road.

"The only justification that can be legitimate for such a road is if it's for security reasons, but that's not the case here," he said. "It's a private road for the private use of the monks that's on top of private Palestinian land."

Israel claims the barrier is needed for security purposes, but Palestinians call it a tool for grabbing land because roughly 80 per cent of its planned route falls inside territory occupied after the 1967 Arab-Israel war.

Palestinians from Cremisan's surrounding communities believe that pressure from the monks could convince Israel to reroute the fence. Israel, they say, would not want to be seen to be in conflict with the Catholic Church.

They cite the example of nuns, also Salesians, from a convent next to the monastery who successfully petitioned the Israeli authorities against the barrier's original path.

Their compound of farmland and schools would have fallen on the Israeli side of the barrier under the route first presented by Israel five years ago. After the nuns protested its path, Israel re-routed the fence so the convent's facilities would remain connected to the Palestinian villages they served. Despite repeated attempts over the last five years, however, officials from Beit Jala's municipality, clergymen and residents say they have tried and failed to get the monks' backing.

"People here know that if the monks stood with them, there's a good chance the wall wouldn't be going through the area at all," said Samia Zeit, head of Beit Jala Municipality's head of planning and zoning, whose family also owns land that will be cut off by the barrier.

She said residents and municipal officials have attempted to enlist support - to no avail - from the Vatican because it alone has the authority to pressure the Salesians on the issue.

A source in the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) familiar with the issue confirmed that Mahmoud Abbas, PLO chairman and president of the Palestinian Authority, also is preparing letter to request support from the Vatican on the issue.

Despite repeated attempts, officials in the Vatican could not be reached for comment.

Ibrahim Shomali, Beit Jala's parish priest, said the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem, which represents Catholics in the holy land, also has made contact with the Vatican over the Cremisan issue, though he did not have details.

Mr Shomali has organised a weekly protest Mass on the soon-to-be-confiscated land near Cremisan. Local residents, clergymen of the Patriarchate and the Greek Orthodox Church and the Salesian nuns have attended - but not the monks.

"When we asked them why they don't help us with this issue, they said it's because they are waiting for a decision on the issue from the Vatican," he said.

Standing on the land that he expected to lose, Mr Abu Amsha began questioning the conflicting role played by the church in his community.

"If these monks cared about us, they would help us save our land," he said.

"It's not just about X-number of dunums being confiscated. It's a matter of our national homeland being taken away, piece by piece."