

# The colonisation and ethnic cleansing of Jerusalem



**“Israel’s main motivation is almost certainly demographic – to reduce the Palestinian population of Jerusalem, while exerting efforts to boost the number of Jewish Israelis living in the city – East and West”**

*Jerusalem and Ramallah Heads of EU Missions Report, December 2005*

The Apartheid Wall is almost complete in Jerusalem, slicing through Palestinian communities and excluding many Palestinian Jerusalemites from their city. As well as threatening the whole fabric of Palestinian society, Israeli policies are destroying the ethnic, cultural and religious diversity that Jerusalem enjoyed for over two millennia.

## Jerusalem’s heritage

For many centuries Jerusalem was home to a Muslim majority, Christians of different denominations, and a small Jewish community, living in harmony under a variety of regimes.

The seventh century Dome of the Rock, next to the Al-Aqsa Mosque, is the most prominent building of the Old City, and is sacred to Muslims as the place from which the prophet Mohammed ascended to heaven. Jews have always prayed at the Western Wall, which borders the Dome of the Rock and which they believe to be part of Herod’s Temple, destroyed in 70AD. The Church of the Holy Sepulchre is perhaps the most sacred of the many Christian sites in the Old City. However, as the result of Israeli policies, Christian communities in both Jerusalem and Bethlehem are being decimated.<sup>1</sup>

As an international place of pilgrimage, Jerusalem was for centuries the hub of the Palestinian economy. The city is therefore of central importance to both Muslim and Christian Palestinians in political, economic, social and religious terms. They regard East Jerusalem as the capital of their future state.

Under international law, Tel Aviv is the capital of Israel, where all foreign embassies are housed. Despite this, Israel has proclaimed Jerusalem to be the “undivided, eternal capital of Israel”.

## The beginnings of segregation and colonisation

When the United Nations voted in 1947 to partition Palestine, Jerusalem was designated an international zone, lying in the heart of what was intended as a Palestinian state. However, Zionist militias overran the designated boundaries and occupied 78% of what had been Palestine, including West Jerusalem.

38 Palestinian villages in the Jerusalem district were destroyed and depopulated. 80,000 Palestinians were ethnically cleansed from numerous neighbourhoods in West Jerusalem alone, in a process the Israeli authorities referred to as ‘transfer’. These included Baq’a and Talbiya, al-Maliha, Lifta, Deir Yassin and Ein Karem. The Palestinian inhabitants were replaced by Israeli settlers.

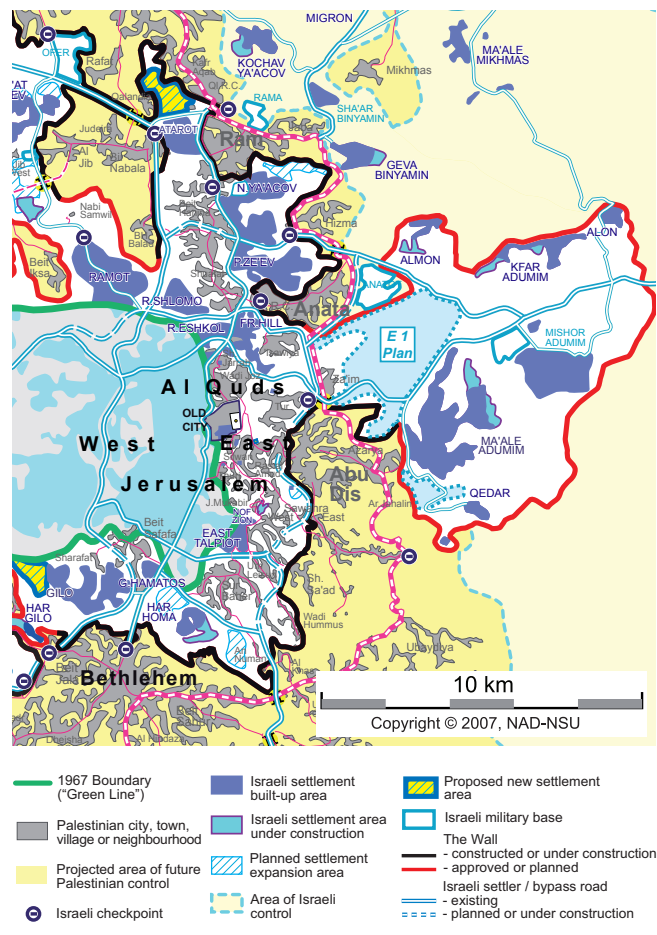
The Old City and the rest of East Jerusalem then lay to the east of the *de facto* border established by Israel (the ‘Green Line’).

## Dome of the Rock



The Israeli authorities are ‘renovating’ an entrance to the Dome of the Rock, having previously prevented the Islamic Waqf from repairing the entrance. They are also tunnelling under the foundations of the mosque compound, ostensibly to look for archaeological traces of the Jewish temple. Palestinians and Muslims fear the work could damage the Dome of the Rock – especially since extremist Jewish groups say the compound should be destroyed in order to rebuild the temple on the site. This is in complete disregard of the fact that it is a World Heritage site protected by UNESCO, who have objected to the excavations.

## Israeli Wall and settlements around occupied East Jerusalem (May 2007)



## Settlement expansion

Following the 1967 war, when Israeli forces occupied the rest of the West Bank and Gaza, they illegally annexed East Jerusalem, then populated largely by Palestinian Christians and Muslims, plus 70km<sup>2</sup> of the surrounding territory. Plans for the judaisation of the city, as well as the colonisation of other areas of the West Bank and Gaza, were put into operation. The first action was the demolition of 125 houses and the expulsion of their residents, to make way for the plaza in front of the Western Wall.

Then construction started on huge blocks of settlements, to form an outer ring around the city and isolate it from the Palestinian cities of Ramallah and Bethlehem. There are currently over 340,000 illegal Israeli settlers living in the Jerusalem area, including the outer ring, the major settlements being Maale Adumim to the east, the Givon Bloc to the north-west, Geva Benyamin to the north-east and Gilo, Har Homa and the Etzion Bloc to the south (see map).

More settlements are being implanted into the hearts of Palestinian neighbourhoods. Examples include Nof Zahav on Jabal Mukaber, Kidmat Zion in Abu Dis, Almon in Anata.

A light railway is being built to serve



Har Homa. Photo: arj.org

settler traffic around Jerusalem, integrating the outer settlements into the city. (The company involved, Veolia, which also operates bus services to the illegal settlements, is subject to a successful boycott campaign in several European countries.) At the same time settler-only highroads connect Jerusalem and Tel Aviv to settlements in the Jordan Valley.

The settlement of Maale Adumim to the east of Jerusalem, with a population of 39,000, is adjacent to the 12km<sup>2</sup> of area E1, which effectively blocks Palestinian access to the West Bank.

The overall plan will cover over 53km<sup>2</sup>, stretching from Jerusalem to Jericho. It will completely surround the city of Jerusalem with Jewish settlements and will isolate the southern part of the West Bank, just as the expanding settlement complex of Ariel further north isolates the northern part. This fragmentation of the West Bank clearly makes the establishment of a Palestinian state impossible.

## The 'Master Plan' – for ethnic cleansing

The most recent Master Plan for the Municipality of Jerusalem was produced in May 2010, to cover the period till 2030.

Consultation with the Palestinian community was not part of the process. As Meir Margalit, a Jerusalem city councillor who has written extensively on the subject<sup>2</sup>, said: "The planning team apparently sets out from the assumption that, in any case, one is dealing with a Jewish city and therefore there is no reason to ask the opinion of anyone who does not belong to the Jewish people."

A demographic battle is at the heart of the Plan. Currently, about 36% of Jerusalem's 773,000 residents are Palestinians, concentrated in and around East Jerusalem. Demographic trends suggest that by 2030 47% of the population will be Palestinian. The Israeli authorities have openly stated that they do not wish the Palestinian population to exceed 30% – which explains many of the discriminatory planning policies being practised in the city. Palestinian neighbourhoods are 'contained' by having areas in the immediate vicinity zoned as non-residential or as 'green tourist areas', for example, and by allowing a much higher density of building in Jewish neighbourhoods. The absence of sufficient infrastructure, including roads, water mains and sewage facilities further limits the possibility of expansion in the Palestinian neighbourhoods. Some are simply excluded from the planning process altogether, which means that no building permits can be authorised.

## Evictions and demolitions

Pressure of every kind is being brought to bear on the Palestinian inhabitants to leave the city. Israeli settler organisations like Ateret Cohamin and Gush Emunim target, seize and redevelop long established, strategically located Palestinian property in East Jerusalem.

500 inhabitants of Sheikh Jarah, for example, a middle class area to the north of the Old City, have been subject to eviction orders. Fighting the evictions in the courts is prohibitively expensive and the courts almost invariably back the settlers' claims. While the cases are pending, Palestinians sometimes find their homes invaded by violent settlers who make life unbearable for the inhabitants.

There are cases where a Palestinian family has gone to visit relatives for the afternoon and returned to find their home has been broken into by settlers who refuse them entry, with the backing of the Israeli army.

In other parts of the city, demolition is the preferred mode of ethnic cleansing. According to Israeli statistics, from 2000–2008 the Israeli authorities demolished more than 670 Palestinian homes in East Jerusalem. According to the UN, about 60,000 Palestinians risk losing their homes.<sup>3</sup> Families may pay large sums of money to the Israeli authorities, simply to have the demolition order postponed.



*Shops and homes being demolished in Beit Hanina*

Homes in the working class Palestinian area of Silwan on the south side of the Old City are undergoing demolition, to make way for the 'Gardens of the City of David National Park'. This is an extension of the archaeological site that aims to prove that King David once lived there. The settler organisation Elad that controls the excavation is also tunnelling under Palestinian homes, causing some of them to collapse.

## Discriminatory laws

- **The identity and residency laws** are continuously being tightened in order to reduce the number of Palestinians living in Jerusalem. Palestinian Jerusalemites, many of whose families have lived in the city for centuries, are obliged to carry annually renewable blue Israeli ID cards, which give them 'the right' to live in East Jerusalem. However, the ID card can be revoked on a variety of pretexts. Many Palestinians studying or working abroad temporarily have lost their ID cards – and their right to return.

Jerusalemites living in the city but working in the West Bank risk having their residency revoked. Palestinians who have Jerusalem ID, but who live to the east of the Wall, also face losing their ID if they stay overnight on the west side. Since the annexation of Jerusalem, over 14,600 Palestinian inhabitants have had their ID removed.

Due to the advanced biometric identification technology used on the checkpoints, the Israeli authorities know if a Palestinian spends even one night 'illegally', on either side of the barrier.

Couples where only one has a blue ID card must live separately – or live together in the West Bank and lose all Jerusalemite status.

- **Building permits for Palestinians** on their own land are all but unobtainable and Palestinian homes built in the area without permits are routinely demolished. The actual process of applying for a permit is both very expensive and can take years. Detailed documentation is required to prove land ownership, although such documents were rarely issued, either under the Turks or the British Mandate. The only solution for growing families is therefore 'illegal' construction or emigration.

- **Property is seized** on the pretext that it was once in Jewish ownership, often on very flimsy or forged evidence. However,



*Inhabitants of Silwan with eviction orders*

similar arguments cannot be used by Palestinians, even if they have retained title deeds to property in West Jerusalem, Haifa, Jaffa or elsewhere, after their expulsion in 1948. If property is left empty (usually because Palestinians have been denied access) it is seized by the Israeli government.

- **High taxation** is imposed on Palestinian Jerusalemites, while expenditure on services and amenities, such as schools, roads, rubbish collection and so on, is totally inadequate.

## Access denied

The long-standing checkpoints controlling all movement in and out of the city have been 'upgraded' to what the Israelis call "international terminals", causing even more harassment to Palestinian Jerusalemites.

The Israelis are in the process of setting up official international border crossings, manned by border police, between Jerusalem and the West Bank. Eight of the twelve routes and crossings to enter Jerusalem from the West Bank are closed to West Bank Palestinians. Of the remaining four, two major checkpoints at the entrances to the city, Qalandiya towards Ramallah and the Gilo crossing towards Bethlehem, render movement in and out of the city extremely difficult. ID cards, automated turnstiles and metal detectors are the order of the day. West Bank Palestinians are denied access into the city unless they obtain special permits from Israel. However,

## Anata: a case study

In 1967 the district of Anata covered over 7,500 acres within the Jerusalem Governorate, to the north-east of the Old City (see map).

According to the Anata Local Council, upon completion of the apartheid Wall, only some 575 acres will remain. Israel has expropriated or isolated the rest. Anata and the adjacent Shu'fat refugee camp will be enclosed on three sides by the Wall and to its east by the Israeli military base Anatot and four illegal settlements.

The impact of this enclosure of Anata on the economic future for its residents is devastating. Most of Anata's labourers have lost their permits to travel into Jerusalem or Israel and are unable to work.

Other Palestinian centres of population outside the Wall, such as Abu Dis, Ram and Eizariyya, are suffering similar fates.



Photo: [activestills.org](http://activestills.org)

even permit carriers can also be banned from leaving or entering Jerusalem on a whim.

This has led to additional commuting times and hardships, reduced access to religious sites and to the major Palestinian medical and education centres, and severe disruption to economic activity. A steady exodus of Palestinian organisations and businesses from the centre of Jerusalem into outlying areas and to Ramallah has resulted. These closures have also led to the disintegration of cultural and social life, of which Jerusalem was the hub, for many generations.

## International law

All the above policies and actions are in contravention of international law, and have been condemned by dozens of UN resolutions – to no avail.

- “The occupying power shall not deport or transfer parts of its civilian population into the territory it occupies.” Article 49, Paragraph 6 of the IVth Geneva Convention
- “It is forbidden for an occupying state to destroy any movable or immovable private property belonging to individuals, groups, states, public authorities, social organisations or cooperatives unless military operations require such destruction.” Article 53 of the IVth Geneva Convention
- “The lives of persons, and private property must be respected: private property cannot be confiscated” Section IV, Article 46, The Hague Convention on Respecting the Laws and Customs of War on Land
- The International Court of Justice ruling on 9 July 2004 declares the Wall illegal and instructs the International Community “not to render any aid or assistance in maintaining the situation created by it.”

The fate of Jerusalem hangs in the balance. Israel will soon have cleansed most of East Jerusalem of its indigenous inhabitants and utterly changed its traditional character, in blatant violation of international law and every notion of natural justice. Western governments have criticised Israel’s actions but continue to support the regime politically, economically and militarily. It is up to all people of conscience, who value the rule of law, to put pressure on our governments to radically change their approach.

## What you can do

- Support the Boycott campaign, till Israel agrees to abide by international law
- Contact PSC for campaign material
- Express your views to the media, local and national
- Bring the situation to the attention of your local faith groups
- Lobby your MP and MEP to urge the suspension of the EU Israel trade agreement
- Support the Palestinian economy in Jerusalem and the Occupied Territories

## Find out more

- PSC provides fact sheets online on many aspects of the situation, past and present: [www.palestinecampaign.org](http://www.palestinecampaign.org)
- A grassroots organisation organising opposition to the Wall: [www.stothewall.org](http://www.stothewall.org)
- The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs in Occupied Palestinian Territory, [www.ochaopt.org](http://www.ochaopt.org), provides many detailed reports and maps
- [www.palestineremembered.com](http://www.palestineremembered.com) for a visual and oral history of pre-1948 Palestine
- [www.Activestills.org](http://www.Activestills.org) for photo reportage of life in East Jerusalem and the rest of the OPTs
- The Israeli Committee Against House Demolitions – [www.icahd.org](http://www.icahd.org) – monitors and opposes the demolition of Palestinian homes.
- An Israeli human rights organisation that monitors the situation in the occupied territories: [www.btselem.org](http://www.btselem.org)
- Details of the boycott campaign: [www.bigcampaign.org](http://www.bigcampaign.org)
- Architects and Planners for Justice in Palestine – [www.apjp.org](http://www.apjp.org) – for the implications of the planning and design of settlements and their infrastructure

1 In 2009 the heads of all the different Christian communities in Palestine appealed to the international community for help; see [www.kairospalestine.ps](http://www.kairospalestine.ps).  
 2 Meir Margalit: *No place like home: house demolitions in East Jerusalem*, 2005; *Seizing control of space in East Jerusalem*, 2010.  
 3 UN report April 2009: *The Planning Crisis in East Jerusalem*, <http://unispal.un.org/pdf/EJerSpFocus300409.pdf>.

## Get involved!

### Join the Palestine Solidarity Campaign

- I enclose £ ..... to help the PSC in its work.
- I want to join the PSC (individual £24 / unwaged £12)

Cheques payable to PSC.

Return to: PSC, BM Box PSA, London WC1N 3XX.

Or telephone: 020 7700 6192 and pay over the phone, or online: [www.palestinecampaign.org](http://www.palestinecampaign.org)

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