

From Creeping to Formal Annexation: Israel's Actions under American Auspices to Actualize "Greater Jerusalem"

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Background

Under the auspices of a supportive American government, Israel has been promoting sweeping measures to strengthen its hold on East Jerusalem and to carry out annexation steps towards "Greater Jerusalem" – comprised of the three large settlement blocs of Gush Etzion, Ma'aleh Adumim, and Givat Ze'ev. Over the course of the three election campaigns between 2019-2020, Prime Minister Netanyahu has clearly declared his intent to initiate steps towards annexation.¹ While Netanyahu stated his intention to specifically annex the Jordan Valley should he be reelected, accumulated facts on the ground likewise signal a similar move concerning "Greater Jerusalem."

A myriad of signs point to plans to advance moves consistent with legislative efforts and government initiatives from recent years, including: partial or total annexation of these three settlement blocs, entrenching Israeli sovereignty in East Jerusalem, and excising between a third to half of the Palestinian residents from Jerusalem.² These measures will fundamentally change the status of Jerusalem and its demographic fabric, while dismantling conditions for an agreed political solution and undermining international law along with UNSC Resolutions 242, 338, 478 and 2334. Through describing and analyzing the Israeli government's measures towards separation and annexation, this policy paper underscores the stark congruence between these plans and the moves and declarations of the Trump administration. Together, these joint measures carry severe implications on the future of Jerusalem and the conflict as a whole.

This congruence becomes even more evident against the backdrop of the impending release of the purported US peace plan ("the Deal of the Century"). The chances that the plan will be implemented are exceedingly low since the Palestinians are expected to reject it, while Israeli politicians from across the political spectrum are likely to voice reservations on various different aspects. Whether "the Deal of the Century" is implemented or not, the steps and statements that have accompanied it to this point underpin the notion that an advanced understanding has been reached between Israel and the Trump administration concerning far-reaching unilateral and irreversible measures. The projected Palestinian rejection of the plan is anticipated to give Israel a green light to unilaterally carry out portions of the plan which explicitly serve its interests. This concern increases in light of a series of unilateral moves the Trump administration undertook in coordination with the Israeli government over the course of the past three years: moving the US Embassy to Jerusalem, closing the PLO office in Washington DC, shutting down the American Consulate in Jerusalem, cutting American aid to the Palestinian Authority and to UNRWA institutions and ultimately granting US recognition of Israel's sovereignty over the Golan Heights. Statements by US Ambassador

1 David M. Halbfinger, *Netanyahu Vows to Start Annexing West Bank, in Bid to Rally Right*, The New York Times, April 6, 2019

2 Ir Amim, *Destructive Unilateral Measures to Redraw the Borders of Jerusalem*, January 2018

Friedman and former US Special Envoy Greenblatt affirming Israel's right to annex portions of the West Bank³ along with US Secretary of State Pompeo's recent declaration that settlements are not inconsistent with international law only serve to further bolster these notions. It is likewise worth noting that none of these steps have been effectively opposed by the Israeli center/center-left.

Over the past few years, the Israeli government, with the support of the Trump administration, has been attempting to reframe the terms of the diplomatic debate by removing its core issues - sovereignty, borders, Jerusalem, and refugees. Likewise, it has steadily been eroding the broadly agreed framework of the two-state solution and international law. Hence, the discourse is no longer between two national collectives with mutual historical and political rights – an elementary condition for any political process – but rather between a sovereign nation (Israel) and its subjects (Palestinians) who are entirely dependent on it and other foreign governments and who have no more than humanitarian needs and little in the way of religious rights. Even if the US peace plan ultimately pays lip service to the concept of a future Palestinian state, the conditions it stipulates will render it all but meaningless and nonviable, particularly in relation to Jerusalem.

With the notice of his decision to move the US embassy to Jerusalem in December 2017, President Trump declared that moving the embassy to Jerusalem was simply a matter of "recognizing reality" and would not affect the political situation and/or determine the future borders of Jerusalem. Yet, this decision and the series of additional measures undertaken by the US administration are part and parcel of an overall Israeli-US attempt to advance a new regional reality. The "Greater Jerusalem" vision goes far beyond recognition of the current reality and rather seeks to exploit the present conditions in the international arena to create additional facts on the ground as a means to unilaterally impose a new reality that is advantageous for one party. With no real effective opposition to these policies among Israeli policymakers across the political spectrum, gradual moves from creeping to formal annexation, varied only in pace and manner of implementation, are likely to continue with the formation of a new Israeli government regardless of its composition. As laid out in this paper, this new reality will not only impact Jerusalem, but also the Israeli-Palestinian conflict as a whole and will subject both Israelis and Palestinians to a growing irreparable apartheid reality.

3 David M. Halbfinger, *US Ambassador Says Israel has Right to Annex Parts of the West Bank*, The New York Times, June 8, 2019

The "Greater Jerusalem" Concept

Since 1967, Israel has acted to deepen its control of East Jerusalem and to reinforce a solid Jewish majority in the city. This policy has included incentives and massive building for Israelis in East Jerusalem, while simultaneously imposing legal and bureaucratic restrictions on building, planning and permanent residency status for Palestinians. In spite of Israeli policy making, the Israeli Jewish majority in Jerusalem has steadily declined over the years. The initial Israeli target to guarantee a majority of 70% Israelis and 30% Palestinians has been eclipsed by a forecast of 60% to 40% (currently nearly 38%). To address this trend, Israeli policy makers have increased their efforts to bolster the Israeli hold on East Jerusalem, while pushing out Palestinian residents.

The concept of "Greater Jerusalem," which was developed in the 1990's, sought to provide a solution to the territorial and demographic challenges: preventing possible compromises in future political negotiations and halting the erosion of an Israeli Jewish majority in Jerusalem. This idea called for connecting the three major blocs of settlement around Jerusalem to the city: Givat Ze'ev to the north, Ma'aleh Adumim to the east and Gush Etzion to the south, creating one large metropolitan body with Jerusalem at its center.

Thus, Israeli officials sought to ensure Israel's control of these areas, which are located deep in the West Bank, while concurrently altering the demographic center of gravity from the urban to the metropolitan framework as a means of artificially guaranteeing a strong Israeli majority. At the same time, Israeli policy makers have worked to fracture and erode the Palestinian presence in Jerusalem through various levers of displacement: mass revocations of permanent residency, severe impediments to zoning and building, increased home demolitions, state-backed settler-initiated evictions of Palestinian families, tightening the ring of private and touristic settlement in the Old City Basin and overlooking the unrestrained construction as a result of the abovementioned pressures in the grossly neglected enclaves of the Kufr Aqab-Semiramis and Shuafat refugee camp areas.⁴

While the Separation Barrier, whose construction began in 2003-2004, was intended to serve as a security measure, the planning of its route was greatly driven by political considerations seeking to transform the concept of "Greater Jerusalem" from theory into reality. The route of the "Jerusalem Envelope" Barrier was planned so as to enclose the three settlement blocs from the north, south and east of the city, stretching deep into the West Bank. At the same time, the construction of the Separation Barrier was exploited in order to physically detach tens of thousands of Palestinians from Jerusalem. The Barrier cut off namely two areas from the city: Kufr Aqab-Semiramis in the north and the Shuafat refugee camp area - including the neighborhoods of Ras Shehadeh, Ras Khamis and Dahiyat a-Salaam--in the northeast. At present more than one-third of the Palestinian population of East Jerusalem - between

4 Ir Amim, *Displaced in their Own City: The Impact of Israeli Policy in East Jerusalem on the Palestinian Neighborhoods of the City Beyond the Separation Barrier*, June 2015

120,000-140,000 permanent residents - reside in these two areas, having been forced to migrate there due to the mass restrictions on Palestinian building within the city and the constant threat of permanent residency revocations in the event of living outside the municipal borders.

Officially, these areas are part of the Jerusalem municipality and its residents pay municipal taxes, contribute to the city's economy, participate in its everyday life and maintain family and communal ties centered in the city. However, in practice, the Israeli authorities virtually neglect these neighborhoods, abdicating all responsibility for providing basic municipal services and leaving the residents under constant apprehension that Israel intends to ultimately sever the neighborhoods off entirely from Jerusalem. In recent years, Israeli efforts to completely uproot the neighborhoods beyond the Barrier from Jerusalem have accelerated through both legislative means and government plans.⁵

In May 2018, the Israeli government announced Government Decision No. 3790 – a five-year plan for narrowing socio-economic gaps and promoting economic development in East Jerusalem.⁶ For the first time since 1967, the Israeli government adopted a decision for a two billion shekel socio-economic investment in East Jerusalem. While the decision demonstrates Israeli recognition of the longstanding neglect of East Jerusalem, its stated objective is to ultimately strengthen Israeli sovereignty and governance in the eastern part of the city, closely echoing discussions related to the US peace plan, which has posited economic benefits as an alternative to tangible political gains and a viable agreed solution to the conflict. Moreover, the decision includes clear political components, such as conditioning a large portion of the education budget on adopting the Israeli curriculum. The decision likewise largely omits the dire issue of building and planning – a core lever of discrimination employed against residents of East Jerusalem and the key to any significant improvement in their living conditions.

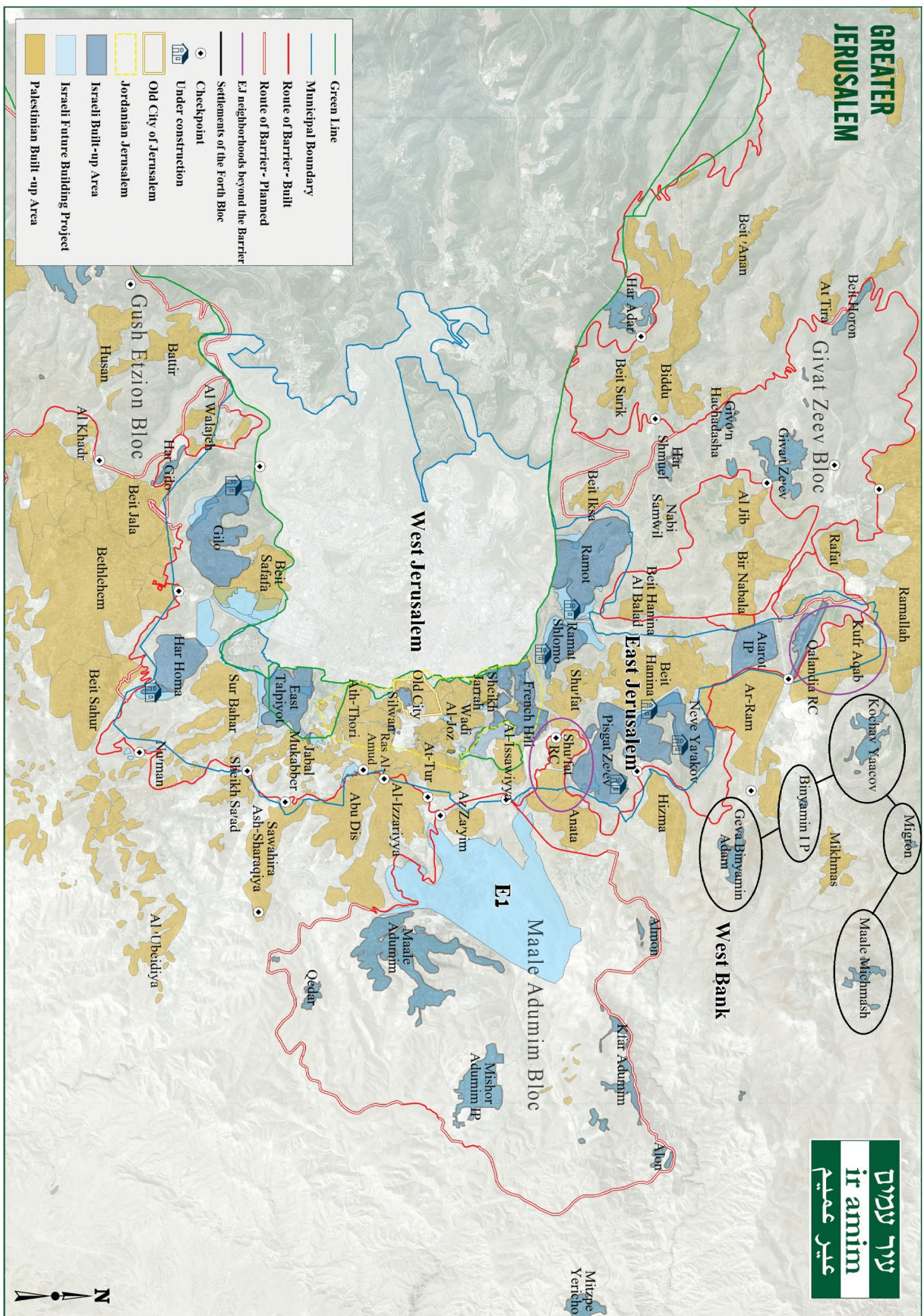
While the topic of urban planning was conspicuously absent from the decision, the issue of land registration, however, does appear in the plan and raises grave concerns among East Jerusalem residents. There is fear that the government will exploit the processes of land registration to expedite further land expropriations from Palestinian landowners, including locating and designating properties as "absentee."⁷

Additionally, there is concern that the method of allocating funds will be utilized to further deepen the distinction between the neighborhoods within the Separation Barrier and those

5 Ir Amim, *Destructive Unilateral Measures to Redraw the Borders of Jerusalem*, January 2018

6 Government Decision No. 3790, May 13, 2018

7 The Custodian of Absentee Property is a body formally belonging to the Ministry of Finance. Under the law, it is allowed to register property as "absentee" if it has been proven that the owner of the property was absent on the effective date in May or June 1948. The registration process of the property as absentee is not public and the owner of the property has no way to know that his property was registered as absentee; he cannot stop the expropriation with legal measures; and he is not entitled to compensation for property registered as absentee.



beyond it as was done in Decision 1775 from June 2014 – in other words – withholding budgetary allocations from the neighborhoods beyond the Barrier as a means of further differentiating them and reinforcing their separation from Jerusalem.⁸

Over recent years, the Israeli government has accelerated the implementation of "Greater Jerusalem." The concept was repeatedly raised in legislative bills and political declarations as well as implicit in building and government investment plans.⁹ The government likewise invested large sums of money into road infrastructure designed to connect the settlement blocs to Jerusalem, expediting settler access to the city through a massive network of highways and roads.

Under current US auspices, further steps are anticipated towards formal annexation of the settlement blocs around Jerusalem followed by the deepening of separation measures, as detailed below.

Actualization of "Greater Jerusalem": The Operative Measures

Settler Inclusion

The "Greater Jerusalem" paradigm not only includes the neighborhoods/settlements built by Israel over the Green Line in East Jerusalem, but also the blocs of Israeli settlements surrounding it: Gush Etzion, Ma'aleh Adumim, Givat Ze'ev, and possibly a fourth bloc (detailed below). As part of the moves towards the realization of "Greater Jerusalem," it is not unlikely a green light will be given to building in the E1 area of the Ma'aleh Adumim bloc as well as in Givat Hamatos in south Jerusalem, paving the way for gradual or even sweeping annexation of "Greater Jerusalem." Until now, these two areas have both been considered red lines according to US foreign policy and the international community. The gradual or even sweeping annexation of these three settlement blocs and their inclusion into the larger "Jerusalem metropolis" will artificially add approximately 140,000 Israeli settlers to Jerusalem's demographic balance. According to the plans of the Israeli right-wing, these settlers would eventually be granted the right to vote in the Jerusalem municipal elections, while continuing to reside and vote within the area of their own local councils.¹⁰

8 Ir Amim, *Monitoring Implementation of Government Decision No. 3790 for Investment in East Jerusalem: First Quarter*, May 2019 (Hebrew)

9 Ir Amim, *Destructive Unilateral Measures to Redraw the Borders of Jerusalem*, January 2018; *Ir Amim's Year-End Review: Israeli Policy in East Jerusalem – "Greater Jerusalem and a Fractured Palestinian Space*, January 2019 (Hebrew)

10 Ir Amim, *Destructive Unilateral Measures to Redraw the Borders of Jerusalem*, January 2018

A Potential Fourth Settlement Bloc

The massive road infrastructure project being carried out in the northeast of Jerusalem indicates a potential fourth bloc as part of this "Greater Jerusalem" vision, which is not included in the planned route of the Separation Barrier - the Adam-Kokhav Ya'akov-Psagot bloc. Highway 4370 (northern branch of the Eastern Ring Road), which opened in January 2019, has been coined the "Apartheid Road" due to the wall that runs through it, separating Palestinian and Israeli settler traffic.¹¹ The western side of the road serves the Palestinian population, which directs it away from Jerusalem, while the eastern side serves primarily residents of the settlements in the "fourth bloc," easing travel to and from Jerusalem.¹² Though this is the only road in the West Bank which is physically divided by a wall in the middle, it is not the only segregated road, nor is it the only one which ruptures the Palestinian space and separates settlers from the Palestinian environs surrounding it.

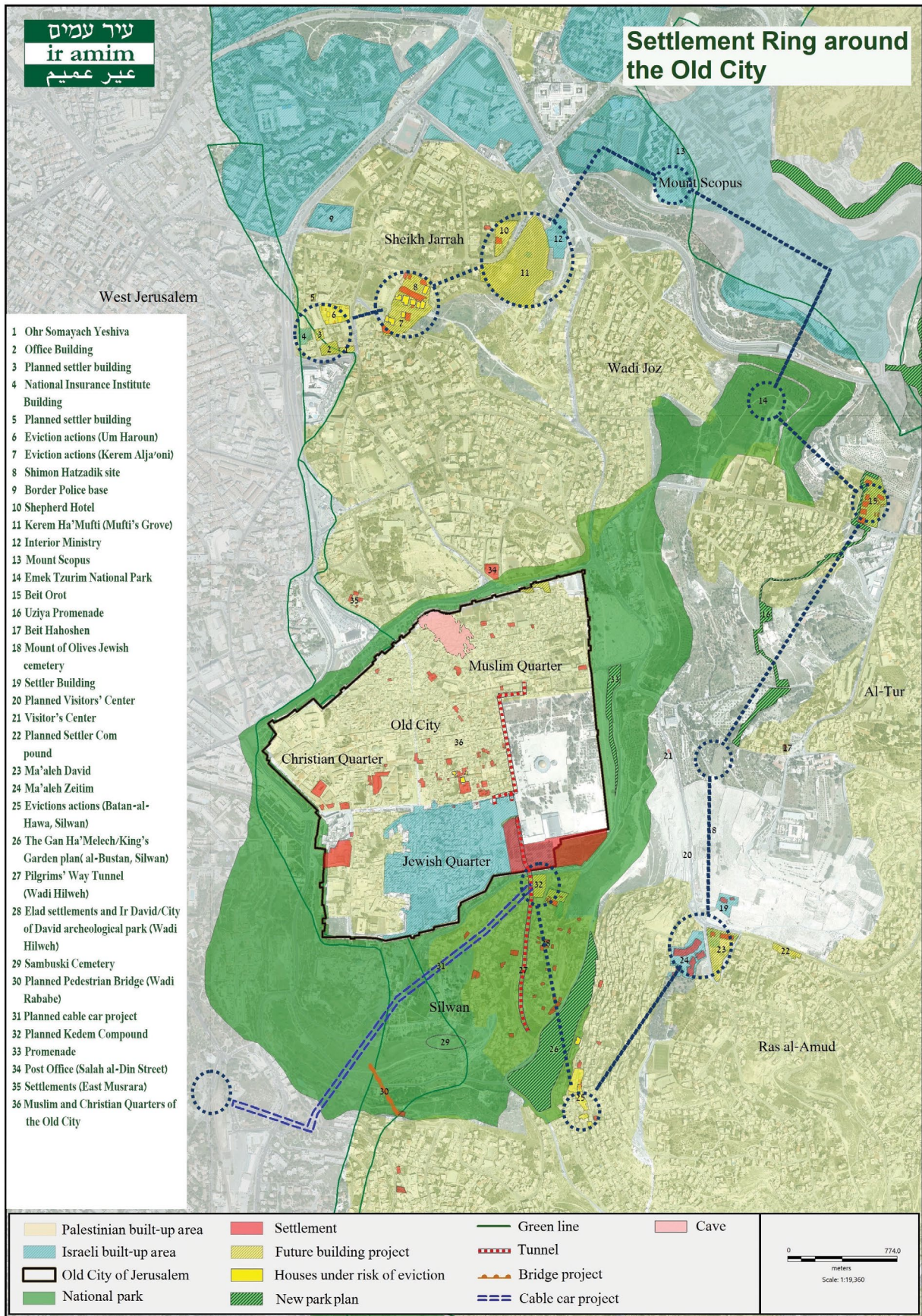
In effect, Highway 4370 merges into a network of roads surrounding "Greater Jerusalem" with the objective of forming one contiguous Israeli entity. This intricate system of roads expedites settler movement between the four blocs and from each bloc to Jerusalem on highways primarily separated from the surrounding Palestinian areas, creating an imaginary contiguity between them and Jerusalem, while simultaneously isolating and fragmenting the Palestinian space and its environs. Thus, the separation and annexation policy is implemented step-by-step, not only through settlement construction and legislative initiatives, but also through massive infrastructure projects implemented in the area.

Palestinian Exclusion

The "Greater Jerusalem" vision also includes severing off from Jerusalem the eight Palestinian neighborhoods located beyond the Separation Barrier: the area of Kufr Aqab-Semiramis in the north of the city and Shuafat Refugee Camp area in the northeast. The plans and legislative proposals raised by the Israeli government over the years point to its intent to officially detach these neighborhoods from Jerusalem, cutting off between 120,000-140,000 Palestinian residents from the city. This would lead to the potential displacement of over one-third of East Jerusalem residents and the fracturing of its physical space. There is some opposition to this move in right-wing factions based on the concern that such a step could be interpreted as "dividing Jerusalem." However, Israeli authorities presently treat the neighborhoods beyond the Barrier as if they have already been incised from the city, turning them into disconnected and isolated enclaves with little municipal oversight and provision of basic services. In this way, Israel succeeds in cutting off the population from Jerusalem on a practical level without risking physically "dividing Jerusalem."

11 Ir Amim, Opening of Eastern Ring Road Signals Cause for Heightened Vigilance in E-1, January 3, 2019 Alert

12 Nir Hasson, *New Jerusalem 'Apartheid Road' Opens, Separating Palestinians and Jewish Settlers*, January 10, 2019



The Old City Basin - potential US recognition of Israeli sovereignty and increasing pressures on the Palestinian space

The Old City Basin is comprised of the Old City and its surrounding Palestinian neighborhoods of Silwan, Sheikh Jarrah and the Mount of Olives. Home to 100,000 Palestinians and approximately 6,000 Israelis (half of whom live in the Jewish Quarter of the Old City), this area is the heart of historic East Jerusalem and contains the major historical and religious sites sacred to the world's three largest monotheistic religions. Many signs indicate that Israel is seeking unilateral American recognition of Israeli sovereignty over East Jerusalem and in particular, the Old City Basin. The significance of such a move cannot be underestimated, and it is likely to trigger immense opposition among Palestinians, the Arab world and the international community.

In tandem, Israel has accelerated efforts to consolidate its control over the Old City Basin and to separate it territorially and symbolically from its Palestinian environs through increased cooperation between the State and settler organizations bent on establishing settler strongholds throughout the area. There has been a significant escalation in settler-initiated evictions of Palestinians from their homes, the execution of demolition orders and increased policing and harassment of Palestinian residents. Two communities in particular, Sheikh Jarrah and Batan al-Hawa in Silwan, are at the focus of these operations with over 70 Palestinian families in each community at risk of eviction by settler organizations operating under the auspices of the State. This cooperation is further exemplified in the acceleration of well-financed and large-scale settlement projects under the guise of touristic initiatives, including national parks, archeological sites, historic tunnels, promenades and heritage centers, as illustrated in the "Settlement Ring around the Old City" map.

Despite the size of the initiative and the controversies surrounding it, the ambitious cable car project was recently approved in an expedited manner, circumventing the official planning process. The cable car is slated to run from the First Station complex in West Jerusalem to the roof of the planned Kedem Compound in Silwan, a massive visitor center and future headquarters of the Elad settler organization currently under construction. Channeling thousands of people a day over an invisible Green Line to the epicenter of Elad's settlement operations, the cable car will likely divert tourists from the traditional Old City entry points via Jaffa and Damascus Gates, potentially impacting Palestinian businesses who rely on tourism as a main source of income. Likewise, such a project will damage the delicate landscape of the Old City's surroundings.

The cable car along with other touristic projects constitute points on an emerging ring of settlement that encompasses the Old City Basin, connecting otherwise isolated settler compounds to create a contiguous band of settler-controlled areas. The settlement chain likewise serves to further fracture the Palestinian space and sever it from the rest of East

Jerusalem, while eroding the delicate fabric, historic assets and the multi-cultural and multi-religious heritage of the Old City and its environs.¹³

Portrayed as innocuous touristic initiatives, these projects grant legitimacy and paint an illusory apolitical appearance of the settlement enterprise in the heart of East Jerusalem, while superimposing an exclusive nationalistic Israeli narrative of the space. Although the number of ideological settlers living inside Palestinian neighborhoods may still be relatively small (roughly 2,500), tens of thousands of non-ideological Israeli and international tourists visiting these sites serve to blur the Palestinian surroundings and propagate the idea of the entire space as an Israeli environment. This in turn strengthens Israeli control of these areas, dismantling opening conditions for a viable resolution on the city. Moreover, visitors to these sites are often accompanied by an entourage of security guards, police forces and roadblocks, which impinge on the personal security, property rights and freedom of movement of Palestinian residents.

Together, these measures serve to tighten Israeli control of the Old City Basin and simultaneously fragment the Palestinian space and erode their entitlement to the area.

The Temple Mount/Haram al-Sharif – continued erosion of the status quo and mounting efforts to formally overturn it

The Temple Movements with the backing of Israeli right-wing politicians and government ministers unremittingly act to exacerbate tensions at the holy site and to exploit every crisis in order to push for a change of arrangements on the Mount. As part of their agenda, they have called for the establishment of a synagogue in the compound, a move that even as discourse alone has caused a great deal of friction and alarm. In recent years, Temple Movement activists have heightened their efforts to significantly increase the number of Israeli visitors to the site and to initiate Jewish ceremonial and religious activities that continually undermine the status quo. If in the past, the Israel Police stood squarely against such provocations, it currently overlooks them and fosters close relations and cooperation between the police and Temple Movement activists.¹⁴

In the wake of the Bab al-Rahma crisis in 2019,¹⁵ Temple Movement activists explicitly increased their demand for the establishment of a synagogue in the complex. This demand, which constitutes a flagrant violation of the status quo, likewise received support from government ministers. These developments indicate a significant decline in Israel's commitment to the status quo, although enshrined in peace agreements with Jordan and supported by the entire Muslim

13 Ir Amim, MAP: Settlement Ring Around the Old City and Accompany Maps Notes, February 2019

14 Ir Amim, *Increasing Cooperation between the Temple Movements and the Israel Police*, November 2017; *Reaching New Heights: Temple Movement Activists Build Support from within the Political Establishment*, July 2018; *Dangerous Liaison: The Dynamics of the Rise of the Temple Movements and their Implications*, March 2013

15 Ir Amim, "Court Issues Order for Temporary Closure of Bab al-Rahma," March 2019 Alert

world. The forthcoming publication of the US peace plan will reveal the extent of American backing of Israeli aspirations to alter the accepted arrangements on the Holy Esplanade. Against this backdrop, it should be noted that most of the acute crises in Jerusalem in recent years have arisen as a result of Israeli attempts to challenge the existing arrangements on the Temple Mount /Haram a-Sharif.

Campaigns of Over-policing and Collective Punishment - Additional Palestinian Exclusion

In some East Jerusalem Palestinian neighborhoods within the Separation Barrier, there has been in recent years a trend towards further tactics of suppression and exclusion, such as erecting policing and patrolling points, temporary roadblocks, and imposing restrictions on movement in the heart of Palestinian communities. Roadblocks, supposed temporary means of separation, are put in place in moments of tension and were intentionally left on the roadsides ready for renewed use at any moment. They have become a permanent feature of the landscape particularly in the neighborhoods of Jabal Mukabber and Al-Issawiya. These neighborhoods have likewise been subject to ongoing acts of collective punishment that are expressed in the imposition of curfews and aggressive police campaigns that run contrary to the rule of law.

In addition to generating continual friction with residents, these campaigns are often accompanied by hostile police raids, significant numbers of arbitrary arrests and at times serious injuries, which stand in stark contrast to the duty of the authorities to provide both protection and to address the severe municipal neglect of these neighborhoods. In particular, children, who already suffer from a serious infringement of their right to education due to a severe lack of classrooms, school hours and appropriate facilities in East Jerusalem¹⁶, are exposed to constant violence and punitive measures in these neighborhoods.

These severe acts of collective punishment constitute an intensification of the already hardline approach and treatment of East Jerusalem residents. The two neighborhoods of Jabal Mukabber and Al-Issawiya are located on the eastern border of East Jerusalem (the former in the southeast and the latter in the northeast) on the Abu Dis axis, an area that has repeatedly appeared in Israeli proposals as an attempt to reinvent Palestinian Jerusalem outside of Jerusalem. This "reinvention of Palestinian Jerusalem" exists in various constellations whether related to Abu Dis, other areas beyond the barrier or simply outside the heart of East Jerusalem.

The over-policing and collective punishment imposed on these neighborhoods could also serve to delineate external and internal borders. These measures enable authorities to more effectively mark these neighborhoods with the stigma of isolated violent enclaves inhabited by lawbreakers in order to justify any potential future steps towards excluding them from the city.

16 Ir Amim, The State of Education in East Jerusalem: Failing Infrastructure, August 2019

These moves could be implemented through redrawing the route of the Separation Barrier and/or by denying these neighborhoods municipal services and budgets along with increased policing and law enforcement. Such a policy became particularly evident in the unprecedented aggressive police campaign being carried out in Al-Issawiya since the summer of 2019¹⁷, which has effectively imposed a perpetual state of collective punishment on the entire community. The neighborhood has had no trouble understanding Israel's message - in the words of one community resident, "they don't want us in Jerusalem."¹⁸

The Palestinian neighborhoods in the heart of Jerusalem, especially those within the Old City Basin, such as Silwan, have likewise suffered in recent years from persistent harassment, including increased home demolitions and severe policing and law enforcement operations. These measures are not only employed in response to incidents of public disturbances or clashes, but with the goal of demonstrating Israeli presence and control, harassing residents and creating an atmosphere of fear and terror.

In the area of the Old City and its environs, where Israel is intensifying efforts to convert it into an Israeli space, while blurring its Palestinian surroundings, invisible boundaries of inclusion and exclusion are marked not through physical barriers, but rather through budgetary, bureaucratic and disciplinary measures. In this manner, Israel is working to ensure that even if residents of these neighborhoods remain within the borders of Jerusalem, they will live there as a suppressed and subjugated minority.

Conclusion and Recommendations

In close coordination with the current US administration, Israel is advancing its "Greater Jerusalem" policy, shifting from the reality of a creeping annexation to the critical stage of official annexation. Such a policy will not only affect the future of Jerusalem, but also the entire Israeli-Palestinian conflict and will consign both Israelis and Palestinians alike to an accelerating permanent apartheid reality.

In Jerusalem, the uprooting of approximately one-third or more of the Palestinians living in East Jerusalem from the city and their confinement in neglected enclaves along with further isolation and suppression of those who remain within the city will fracture the urban fabric and liable to increase confrontation between the two populations of the city. A sustainable future can only be reached through negotiations between the two parties and through mutual recognition of both peoples' rights and ties to the city. Despite its seeming unfeasibility at the moment, the principles behind the two-state solution provide

17 Nir Hasson, 340 Arrests and Only Five Indictments: Summer-long Police Sweep Strikes Fear in Isawiyah, Haaretz, August 28, 2019

18 Kan News, July 17, 2019 (Hebrew)

the conceptual and political framework for defining and upholding the mutual rights of both parties.

Amid an existing reality of mutual distrust and a divided international arena, small steps towards preventing further deterioration along with moves towards rebuilding trust between the sides are preferred to large comprehensive plans that are currently unviable. Enhancing living conditions and the socio-economic status of Palestinians in East Jerusalem and the West Bank is vital for rebuilding trust, however, not at the expense of cementing Israeli control of the Palestinian space and dismantling conditions for a mutually agreed political future.

Jerusalem is the current home of two peoples, and both regard it as their capital and the source of their historic, religious and political attachments. A secure and stable life in Jerusalem can exist only out of recognition of the entirety of the connections of both peoples to the city, and when both are able to conduct their daily and public lives in an independent and sovereign manner. In the absence of a permanent solution in the foreseeable future, the two peoples will continue to share a complex urban reality dependent on a delicate weave of symbiotic relations and interdependence. In this current reality, policies should be adopted to enhance the living environment and personal security of all of Jerusalem's residents and to reduce elements that exacerbate tension in the city.

First and foremost, the living conditions and the personal security of East Jerusalem residents must be significantly improved, both within and outside of the Separation Barrier, in an adequate and non-coercive manner. Palestinians must be permitted to physically and socially develop their communities in the urban sphere, preserve the wholeness of their community and physical surroundings, and conduct their affairs in the city through their own institutions without fear.

Living conditions in West Jerusalem also require improvement, while positive economic, social and political channels for dialogue and cooperation must be established. The residents of both parts of Jerusalem and their respective political leaderships, along with the support of the international community, must be full partners in determining the political future of the city. The shared life in the city can and must constitute a basis for negotiations for a viable sustainable solution, out of the understanding that in every possible political constellation the two peoples will live alongside each other in Jerusalem.



Ir Amim ("City of Nations" or "City of Peoples") is Israel's longest standing NGO focused on Jerusalem within the context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The mission of Ir Amim is to render Jerusalem a more equitable and sustainable city for the Israelis and Palestinians who share it and to help secure a negotiated resolution on the city.

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