

Jerusalem 1967-2020: The Truth About Annexation

In June of 1967, Israel conquered East Jerusalem and the West Bank (in addition to the Golan Heights, the Sinai Peninsula, and the Gaza Strip). Later that month, Israel unilaterally - and in contravention of international law - in practice annexed the seven square kilometers of East Jerusalem, and over 60 square kilometers of the West Bank that surrounds it. These areas were incorporated together into one unit named 'East Jerusalem,' subject to the Jerusalem municipality and to Israeli law. Since 1967 until the present, this is the only area of the West Bank that has actually been annexed to the State of Israel. Therefore, **in order to understand the consequences of annexation on both Israelis and Palestinians, it is pertinent to learn from the case of East Jerusalem:**

- 1. In 1967, Israel annexed all of East Jerusalem but did not fully annex its residents.** The Palestinian residents of East Jerusalem, who currently constitute approximately one-third of Jerusalem's population, were not offered to join the Israeli political entity; rather they were only granted the status of "permanent resident" - a status significantly lesser than that of citizen and one that is also subject to revocation. As a result of annexation, the Palestinians - many of whom were multi-generation Jerusalemites - suddenly became stateless residents lacking political rights, sentenced to constant uncertainty and impermanence.¹ Permanent residents are not eligible to vote nor can they run as candidates in Knesset elections. Palestinians in East Jerusalem may not freely organize nor engage with their political leadership, physically and socially develop their communities, nor choose where they live without taking the risk of having their residency status revoked.

So, what will happen if Israel annexes more areas of the West Bank? The architects of the annexation initiative have already made it clear that Palestinians living in the areas

¹ See Ir Amim's report: "[Permanent Residency: A Temporary Status Set in Stone](#)"

expected to be annexed under the Trump Plan will not even be entitled to the residency status that East Jerusalem residents received in 1967. **One can call this arrangement by various names, but the conclusion is unavoidable: with every area annexed comes a regime built upon formal discriminatory differentiation of civil statuses.**

2. Since 1967, Israel has pursued various strategies to drive Palestinian residents to leave the city:

- Over the course of the 52 years since annexation, approximately 15,000 Palestinian residents have lost their residency status and consequently denied the right to live in their city and near their families.
- The Separation Barrier that was built in the first decade following the turn of the century physically disconnected eight East Jerusalem neighborhoods from Jerusalem itself. Approximately one-third of the residents of East Jerusalem (about 120,000 people) live in these neighborhoods and suffer from severe municipal neglect, including lack of basic services and essential infrastructure. Furthermore, these residents are forced to pass through checkpoints every day in order to enter their own city.²

The Trump Plan purports a long desired Israeli policy that these neighborhoods will be decisively and formally cut off from Jerusalem.³

By its very nature, a system of separation and annexation regards the other side – that is, Palestinians – as a looming, existential, demographic threat and is constantly undertaking ever-increasing enterprises to drive them out of annexed land.

² See Ir Amim's Report: "[Displaced in their Own City: The Impact of Israeli Policy in East Jerusalem on the Palestinian Neighborhoods of the City Beyond the Separation Barrier](#)"

³ See Ir Amim's Report: "[Ramifications of the US Middle East Plan on the Future of Jerusalem](#)"

- 3. Since 1967, Israel has made every attempt to take over land in East Jerusalem.** Israel has expropriated more than one third of the land of East Jerusalem, upon which extensive neighborhoods have been built for Israelis, and not a single one built for Palestinian residents. At the same time, the building rights of Palestinian residents in their own neighborhoods have been severely restricted, leading to housing shortages, illegal construction, and home demolitions. It is important to note that most of these extensive expropriation processes occurred in the early years following annexation.

As the recent decision of the High Court of Justice regarding the Regulation Law demonstrates, without holding a formal sovereign status over the Territories, the State is limited in its ability to legalize expropriation of private lands in a manner that does not serve the interests of all of the residents.⁴ And indeed, one of the main goals of the planned annexation in 2020 **is to exploit the Israeli law in order to confiscate additional Palestinian lands in the West Bank and to legalize the swaths of land that have already been taken.**

- 4. In the wake of the annexation of East Jerusalem in 1967, two legal tools for the eviction of Palestinian residents from their homes were put into use:** The Absentees' Property Law (1950) and The Law and Administration Ordinance (1970). The 1950 law enables the expropriation of Palestinian property from owners who are considered to be residing in an enemy country - even if that means in a part of the West Bank outside of Jerusalem. The 1970 law provides for the unilateral transfer of property, solely to Jews, that was lost in East Jerusalem in 1948. This law does not apply to Palestinians who lost property in West

⁴ See the words of Michael Sefard, one of the attorneys representing the petitioners in the High Court of Justice petition against the Regulation Law: <https://www.haaretz.co.il/news/law/.premium-1.8913799> (Hebrew)

Jerusalem.⁵ Through the use of these two laws, hundreds of families in East Jerusalem have either been evicted or are in danger of being evicted from their homes, largely by State-backed settler organizations.

While there is no lack of means for taking over Palestinian assets within the framework of the occupation of the West Bank, **in the case of annexation, we only have to look at East Jerusalem to know what additional tools will be at the authorities' disposal to remove Palestinians from their homes and land.**

5. Since 1967, Israel has repeatedly attempted to expand Jerusalem's municipal boundaries to include 'Greater Jerusalem,' comprised of the three settlement blocs outside of the city – Maaleh Adumim, Gush Etzion and Givat Ze'ev:

- The route of the Separation Barrier around the Jerusalem area encloses these three settlement blocs, in practice advancing the plan for 'Greater Jerusalem'. In 2018, two bills were introduced in the Knesset to promote the annexation of 'Greater Jerusalem.'⁶ The Trump Plan adopted the spirit of these bills and established the route of the Separation Barrier as the boundary of Jerusalem – settlement blocs included. **In this manner, even before official steps towards annexation have been taken, the Trump administration has recognized the de facto annexation of 'Greater Jerusalem.'**⁷
- There are many signs that show that 'Greater Jerusalem,' or part of it, are to be included in the 2020 official Annexation plan. Moreover, in the wake of pressure both at-home and

⁵ See Ir Amim's Report: "[Absentees Against their Will – Property Expropriation in East Jerusalem under the Absentee Property Law](#)"

⁶ See Ir Amim's Report: "[Destructive Unilateral Measures to Redraw the Borders of Jerusalem](#)"

⁷ See Ir Amim's Report: "[Ramifications of the US Middle East Plan on the Future of Jerusalem](#)"

abroad, substitute proposals for a 'minor annexation' expected to occur within 'Greater Jerusalem' have been suggested. However, the consequences of a 'minor annexation' are not minor at all. 'Greater Jerusalem' already penetrates deep into the West Bank, effectively splitting the area in two and fracturing the space into additional enclaves. Even without further steps towards annexation, **'Greater Jerusalem' alone severely sabotages the chances for a two-state solution and denies Palestinians the right to self-determination and sovereignty.**

- Palestinian communities that are at a particularly high risk of being dispossessed of their property and expelled from their homes live **on the seam between the 1967 annexation boundaries ('United Jerusalem') and the projected 2020 annexation boundaries ('Greater Jerusalem').** These include the struggling communities of Walajeh, to the south of Jerusalem, and Khan al-Ahmar, in the Maaleh Adumim settlement bloc. Other communities, such as Battir, south of Jerusalem, will not be annexed but the residents will be cut off from their agricultural lands (that are slated for annexation) and the villages themselves will become isolated enclaves. Even now, the Separation Barrier which marks the boundaries of 'Greater Jerusalem' separates the communities of Bir Neballah, Beit Hanina, al-Balad, and al-Jib – all found in the Givat Zeev settlement bloc - from their lands and fences them into an isolated enclave. **Annexation of 'Greater Jerusalem' will cause a further fractionalization of the Palestinian space surrounding the city, with residents being expelled from their homes, cut off from their lands and centers of life, and restricted to living in fragmented enclaves.**

The annexation plan will again change the character of Jerusalem and the future of the entire Israeli-Palestinian conflict. This new reality will subject both Israelis and Palestinians to a growing, irreversible, apartheid reality.

In Jerusalem, as in the entire Israeli-Palestinian arena, a secure and stable life can exist only with recognition of the entirety of the connections and rights of both peoples to the land; when each can conduct their daily and public lives- without fear- in an independent, democratic, and equal manner.