

The Palestinian Strategic Report 2007



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Chapter Six

The Land and the Holy Sites

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Introduction

The year 2007 was no different from the previous years as far as Israel's practices in the occupied territories were concerned. Israel continued its settlement projects, confiscated lands, Judaized the city of Jerusalem, and isolated the WB. It also established the Separation Wall, continued with the policy of besieging Palestinian villages and towns, isolated the Jordan Valley, prevented Muslims from performing prayer at *Al-Aqsa* Mosque, decided on the age of Muslims praying there, demolished houses of Palestinians, and dislodged Bedouins from their dwelling places and separated them from their sources of livelihood. This chapter particularly focuses on Jerusalem but it also examines other aspects of Israeli occupation of the WB.

First: Jerusalem and the Holy Sites

Israel's policy in Jerusalem aims at extending its domination and with that aim in mind, depopulating the city of Jerusalem of Palestinian inhabitants. The success of such a policy would trigger a demographic and geographic change resulting in a fait accompli that would benefit only Israel. It shows no interest in entering into any negotiations with the Palestinians for a final peace settlement. Israel's negotiating position is bolstered by America's pledges to former Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon that the facts on ground would have to be taken into consideration in any final peace settlement. Prime Minister Ariel Sharon was given such a pledge on 14/4/2004, during his visit to Washington as a guest of US President George W. Bush. Israel is determined on creating such facts on ground, i.e., a Judaized Jerusalem.

1. Judaization of the Old City

As part of Israel's policy of Judaization of Jerusalem, several significant changes took place in 2007 regarding the expansion of Israeli settlements and excavation works within and around the Old City of Jerusalem. Groups of settlers,

supported by the Israeli government, continued working on several projects to expand the Jewish presence in the city. It began with the acquisition of licenses to establish the first Jewish synagogue in the region of the Islamic quarter, near Bab Al-Silsilah. This Jewish synagogue is only 100 meters away from *al-Aqsa* Mosque.¹ The Moskovitch family bought the site, known as “The Tent of Isaac.” However, this fact became public only after the Ateret Kohanim acquired building licenses. It was also revealed that Israel Antiquities Authority (IAA) was carrying out excavations under the remains of the synagogue. Wailing Wall Traditions Fund was utilized to build a museum and a cultural center in a tunnel under the synagogue. This tunnel crosses the tunnel that is parallel to the Western Wall and extends underneath the Islamic quarter.² Moreover, the Jerusalem Municipality confirmed that settlers acquired a license to build the synagogue.³

At the same time, Elad Foundation continued the excavation works under the Spring of Salwan Mosque.⁴ The same organization took over the building of a parking space for settlers in the area of Salwan.⁵ Furthermore, The Company for the Reconstruction and Development of the Jewish Quarter in the Old City of Jerusalem Ltd. (JQDC) prepared a new plan entitled “The Roofs Park” which is aimed at providing tourists transportation between the Islamic and Jewish quarters. Company officials hope that a tourist course over the roofs would lead to attracting more tourists from all religions.⁶

Ateret Kohanim is about to begin digging a tunnel that opens the Quarries of King Solomon (*Me'arat Tzedkiyahu*). However, its entrance is near Damascus Gate (*Bab al-'Amud*), and Al-Malwiyah School in the Muslim quarter of the Old City. The school was taken over by the settlement society several years ago. At present, there are talks about diggings that are tens of meters in length, at a distance of about 150 meters from the wall delineating the Noble Sanctuary. Moreover, the society communicates regularly with IAA in order to dig this tunnel.⁷

The policy of confiscation of the Palestinian houses continued like the one in al-Qarmi quarter when settlement associations seized the first floor of a building owned by al-Zalloum family.⁸

Al-Aqsa Foundation for Endowment and Heritage exposed the attempt of a large group of leading settlers, Jewish Knesset members and business executives, to establish a Jewish synagogue on the remains of Islamic Court building, located near The Cotton Merchant's Gate. The American-born Jewish billionaire Ira

Rennert donated \$100 million for this purpose. They attempted to build such synagogue based on the claim that the building was originally a synagogue in the past.⁹

Before holding the Middle East peace conference at Annapolis in the USA, the Israeli ministerial committee endorsed the resumption of archeological excavations in the Mughrabi Gate, near *al-Aqsa* Mosque in Jerusalem. This was the result of pressures exerted on the Israeli government by the “Rabbi of the Wailing Wall” and “The Wailing Wall Legacy Fund.”¹⁰

In line with the Judaization policy of the Old City, Jewish extremists of Galetsia religious school undertook excavation works and removal of dust in the Jewelers’ old market beneath Sabra market. This was done with the explicit aim of taking possession and expanding the school. The area of the market amounts to four donums (1 donum=1,000 m²). This site collapsed 400 years ago and became full of dust.¹¹

Hebrew journals exposed the close cooperation between the Israel Land Administration and settlement societies in the Old City. Their expositions confirmed the firm bond between the government and the settlers. The Israel Land Administration got away with more than 70 real estates. The Israeli “Absentee Property Guardian” and other official circles, such as the Ministry of Construction and Housing, the Ministry of the Interior and the Jerusalem Municipality greatly support such activities. It was also found out that Israel Land Administration rents Palestinian land to Ateret Kohanim Society, and that hundreds of donums of these lands have already been given out in favor of settlement associations as well as Israeli contractors and construction companies.¹²

In order to increase the pace of Judaization of the city, Palestinian lands were dug to make way for the light train project in East Jerusalem that would link Israeli settlements with West Jerusalem. The Israeli Ministry of Transportation and the Municipality entrusted a private union of companies to establish the first line of the light train project. The City Pass Consortium presided over the union, which also included two French companies, namely Alstom SA and Veolia Environment SA, and three Israeli companies. The participation of the two French companies in the consortium adds legitimacy to the illegal annexation of East Jerusalem by Israel.¹³

Indeed, the Israeli settlement projects inside and outside the Old City are designed to achieve, first of all, a demographic change in favor of Israel by carrying out intensive construction works and to change Islamic historical scene

in the city by reducing the renovation and construction of the Islamic historical sites. One example of such a policy was the certification by the Israeli authorities of the course of the Plateau of the Mughrabi Gate and the excavations taking place in the Mughrabi Quarter.¹⁴ A further example was the declaration of the mayor of Jerusalem, Uri Lupolianski, to construct and market 20 thousand housing units in an area located among the Arab quarters, especially in the village of Salwan. This declaration was a revival of the Yemeni quarter project.¹⁵

It is clear from the examples cited above that the Jewish settlement projects aim at fragmenting the geographic unity of the city of Jerusalem and thereby prevent the establishment of a Palestinian state with Jerusalem as its capital.

2. Encroachments on Holy Sites

In 2007, Israel continued its encroachments on the holy sites, especially in the region of *al-Aqsa* and Jerusalem. One of the most significant developments in 2007 was the Israeli excavations at the Mughrabi Gate and its attempt to establish the Museum of Tolerance (MOT) on the grounds of Mamilla Cemetery.

In the beginning of February 2007, Israeli bulldozers were sent to raise the hill adjacent to the Mughrabi Gate in the precincts of *al-Aqsa* Mosque. Furthermore, the occupation authorities declared that they were carrying out restoration works in the Mughrabi Gate road with the aim of establishing a new overhead bridge to replace the old one that had collapsed two years ago in a storm. Jerusalem Affairs Minister Yaacov Edery stated that the restoration works began only after consultations with the Islamic Endowment Department, the United Nations and Jordan. At the same time, the Licensing and Inspection Department of Jerusalem Municipality admitted that the excavation was taking place without a clear plan and without a legal license, either from the municipality itself or from the National Building and Planning Committee.¹⁶

The Israeli excavation works and land shoveling at the Mughrabi Gate brought intense and widespread protests from the Palestinians, and the Muslim world. Muslim scholars and endowment officials proved wrong the Israeli claims of the existence of any coordination or agreement between the Palestinians and the Israeli authorities regarding excavations at the Mughrabi Gate. As a result, faced with the reality, on 12/2/2007, Israel declared the cessation of works at the Mughrabi Gate.¹⁷ Two days later, however, Sheikh 'Ikrimah Sabry, chairman of the Higher Islamic

Council in Palestine, rejected the Israeli authorities' claims about the halting of excavation works. He pointed out that Israeli bulldozers were working for three consecutive days and, after completing their work, excavation works had, in fact, continued using hand-held tools.¹⁸ The Israelis, in defiance of their own public declaration, had clearly continued with their excavation works without any media attention.

Muslim scholars and endowment executives in Palestine believe that Israel aims are—through what it calls restoration—to allow a large public entrance into the Mughrabi Gate by way of *al-Buraq* Yard (Wailing Yard) and the Jewish quarter. It also aims at changing the region's landmarks, barring the Western Wall of *al-Aqsa* Mosque and exposing it to destruction, and tampering with Islamic monuments. This is all part of a first stage towards taking possession of *al-Buraq* Mosque, which lies within the boundaries of *al-Aqsa* Mosque, as a foothold to extend the Israeli dominion over *al-Aqsa* Mosque.¹⁹

The Arab members of the Israeli Knesset also strongly protested the nefarious designs of the Israelis on *al-Aqsa*. At a press conference held in Ramallah, they, along with the activists of the local Islamic movement, charged that excavations carried out by Israeli authorities on top of the plateau is a camouflage for dangerous excavations that were taking place under the plateau. 'Abbas Zakkour, the Knesset representative of the United Arab List, pointed out that he had visited the site and thus could confirm with absolute certainty about the existence of an in-tact Islamic *Mihrab* of high quality, which the Israelis covered with boards. At its side, the two chambers to the right of the *Mihrab* were used as a mosque. Since the mosque was destroyed now only the *Mihrab* remained. He further added that the target of the Israelis was to obliterate the Islamic landmarks, threaten the foundations of *al-Aqsa* Mosque and extend the Western Wall. Farid al-Haj Yahya, director of *al-Aqsa* Society in 1948 occupied Palestine, mentioned that the Israeli authorities are determined to open the Jewish house of prayer at al-Magharibah Plateau, located below the Islamic Court. He is also convinced that the excavations, currently being carried out there, are aimed at the destruction of the Islamic Court, and is designed also at adding a second Jewish synagogue in its place.²⁰

However, Israel insisted that the excavation works did not damage Muslim holy sites. It also insisted that these works did not change the status quo of the Old City. Nevertheless, it agreed to a proposal that a specialized Turkish committee could

verify the issue. Hence, the Turkish committee conducted a study on the Israeli activities in the area of the Mughrabi Gate and submitted its report in autumn 2007. The report found Israeli procedures as illegal and established that Israel had violated international law and the interests of Muslims. The committee called for the immediate cessation of all such activities.

However, the Israeli authorities shrugged off the findings of the Turkish committee, and continued its past policy of halting its activities when protests increase, and resuming its works once the protests die out. Following a decrease in those protests to Israeli activities, in mid December 2007, Israel issued orders to IAA, to resume work in the area of the Mughrabi Gate and to finish it as soon as possible. Furthermore, the Israeli government granted an immediate \$900 thousand subsidy to IAA to complete the work. As part of the package, Israel promised to transfer a sum of \$3.5 million to build a permanent bridge after the Jerusalem District Planning and Building Committee grants its authorization. The instructions of the concerned ministerial committee, headed by Prime Minister Ehud Olmert himself, involved the removal of Islamic Ottoman monuments dating back to 1700 CE.²¹

The establishment of the so-called Museum of Tolerance on the grounds of Mamilla Cemetery in Jerusalem—referred to the 2006 Strategic report—was rehashed in the year 2007. On 29/4/2007, the Israeli Supreme Court demanded that the attorney of Israeli and American firms, insisting on the establishment of the museum, produce their evidential defense papers, as they had refused to do so previously.²² In a report presented to the Israeli Supreme court in July 2007, Prof. Raphael Greenberg, of the University of Tel Aviv, revealed that IAA had earlier received a report from its expert pointing out that there were at least 800 tombs at the Mamilla cemetery and therefore recommended against construction at that site. Nevertheless, IAA submitted a report in January 2007 without referring to its own expert's recommendation. Its report recommended that the establishment of the "Museum of Tolerance" could commence.

Greenberg added that the maps provided by IAA did not reflect the reality on ground, as they showed the completion of survey of monuments. Actually, IAA did not carry these out. Greenberg emphatically pointed out the historical significance of the tombs and opined that their destruction would conflict with the professional ethics of the archeologists.²³ In spite of all these, as 2007 ended, the issue of the establishment of the museum was still pending. However, Muslims continued all

efforts including pleading with the Israeli authorities to stop their project. The aim of Israel remains eliminating one of the most important Islamic monuments in Jerusalem.

In September 2007, Israeli authorities announced the opening of a new synagogue below *al-Aqsa* Mosque, within the boundaries of its southern wall and beneath the Chain Gate, and only 97 meters away from the honorable Dome of the Rock. The synagogue was finally opened after extensive renovation and restoration works financed by Ukrainian Jews.²⁴

An organization known as the “Temple Institute” carried out a provocative act when it installed a golden menorah, giving it the name of “Temple Menorah,” opposite the Mughrabi Gate, near the western side of *al-Aqsa* Mosque. This menorah, made of pure gold and weighing 45 kg, was installed in a prominent elevated place opposite *al-Aqsa* Mosque on the western side. On its part, *al-Aqsa* Institution for the Renovation of Islamic Sites warned against such provocative acts and described them as further steps towards the establishment of the temple.²⁵

3. Settlement in the Jerusalem Area

The Israeli government continued pursuing its policy of Judaization of Jerusalem, as part of well-drawn framework of Israeli claims that Jerusalem is the permanent capital of the Hebrew State. In this context, an Israeli source in Ateret Kohanim, which supervises the expansion of settlements in Jerusalem, said that it has a license from relevant authorities to build 300 housing units in place of the headquarters of the Israeli police in Ra’s al-‘Amud neighborhood.²⁶ It is worth noting that a leftist association revealed that the Jewish settlement societies and the Israeli government had concluded a deal on this. The deal stipulated that these associations would take possession of a large building of the Israeli police in the middle of Ra’s al-‘Amud neighborhood in return for financing it in order to establish a new building for the police on Palestinian land within the perimeter of the city, in the region called “E1.” This settlement project links the settlement of Ma’ale Adummim, located in East Jerusalem, to West Jerusalem.²⁷

The above-mentioned society also obtained licenses to build 300 more housing units in the region of Abu Dees, located at a place known as Kidmat Zion,²⁸ in front of the Separation Wall. Moreover, the Jewish billionaire Moskovitch instituted legal proceedings against an Arab family living in Ra’s al-‘Amud, claiming the

land on which it was living. Thus, he attempted to establish a new settlement pit at the foot of the Mount of Olives. The area of this land amounts to approximately 2.5 donums.²⁹

In the immediate aftermath of launching of Moskovitch's legal proceedings, the Israeli authorities invited bids to build 307 housing units in Jabal Abu Ghneim.³⁰ Mark Regev, the Israeli spokesman commented on these bids saying that the building of these housing units clearly set the Israeli government's intention to set both the WB and Jerusalem apart.³¹ He also said that the implementation of the first stage of the Road Map does not apply to Jerusalem. At the very same time the Israeli Prime Minister Olmert pledged to freeze settlement activities, settlers declared the establishment of eight random private sites around the city of Jerusalem.

On 15/12/2007, Israeli authorities invited bids to build 150 housing units near al-Mukaber mount. It announced yet another bid on 30/12/2007 to build 440 housing units in "Armon Hanatziv" quarter of the Talpiot settlement, in southern Jerusalem.³²

As if these announcements for the building of new housing units were not enough, Pensioner Affairs Minister Rafi Eitan declared that the 2008 budget included the building of 250 housing units in the settlement of Ma'ale Adumim and the building of 500 more units in Jabal Abu Ghneim.³³ Peace Now Movement disclosed the Israeli government's full backing to all these projects by revealing that the Israeli government had assigned a sum of \$25 million for the establishment of these housing units.

On the other hand, according to the *Kol HaZman* journal the Israeli Ministry of Interior decided to revive and implement the Eastern Ring Road project (Route 45), which had been decided in 1996. Its course was changed for the construction of the largest and highest bridge. It reaches 350 meters in length and 115 meters in height in areas dominated by Israel. For this purpose, 1,070 donums of land belonging to the villages Sur Baher, al-Sawahrah al-Gharbiyah, Abu Dees and al-Tour were to be confiscated. Moreover, two tunnels were opened, each measuring 258 meters and 960 meters respectively in length. This street is intended to link the settlements located in northeast Jerusalem while demolishing several Arab houses.³⁴

Plans to establish 20 thousand housing units in West Jerusalem, over an area of 26 km² did not succeed because of strong opposition from the environmentalists, as the designated lands were forested areas. When Moshe Safdie's project failed,

Haaretz newspaper, on 15/1/2007, reported a new plan to establish a settlement quarter on the lands of the village of Qalandia, north of the city of Jerusalem. The plan aims to build from 11–13 thousand housing units that would house more than 60 thousand settlers.³⁵

The plan also includes the construction of a tunnel under the village of Kafr ‘Aqeb in order to link the new quarter to the Kochav Yaakov settlement that is located in East Jerusalem. This tunnel is to be built under the land belonging to the village of Barqah. The Israeli Ministry of Housing acknowledged the existence of this plan, and admitted that it also plans to establish 10 thousand new housing units north of Jerusalem, in the area of Qalandia. These plans are part of Israeli policy of bringing about a demographic change in the city, and linking this settlement to other settlements located outside the boundaries of the municipality through tunnels. When implemented, it will be the largest settlement established by Israel in East Jerusalem since 1967.³⁶

The Israelis continued planning new housing units in Jerusalem in 2007 but under local authority. For example, the Jerusalem Municipality through its local construction committee legalized the two plans to construct 1960 housing units. The first covers an area of 70 donums and the second one spreads over an area of 527 donums, in Ramat Shlomo settlement, which is located in the village of Shu‘fat. This project aims at confiscating more Palestinian land.³⁷ Further, the Ministry of Housing in Jabal Abu Ghneim approved the construction of one thousand housing units.³⁸

The Israeli government pushed ahead its policy of building new Jewish settlements in the occupied territory by confiscating two thousand donums of land in al-Walaja village. The name of the new settlement is Givat Yael. This is to hold 13 thousand new housing units, designed to accommodate 55 thousand Jewish settlers.³⁹

In a further demonstration of Israeli government support to building of Jewish settlements in the Arab sector of Jerusalem, in January 2007, the Israeli government set aside \$1.5 billion for continuing its policy of Judaization of the city. In the eyes of international law and majority of states, including those of Israel’s allies, the Judaization of Israel is illegal. This announcement was in a private session that the government held in the presence of the Mayor, who assured the necessity of enhancing the number of Jews living in the Holy City. This plan requires, in order

to Judaize the city, the transfer of more ministerial units to Jerusalem, building courts' complex, cancelling taxes imposed on employers.⁴⁰

In March 2007, the Mayor of Jerusalem announced the "Marshall Plan" for the city. Under this plan, 200 million shekels (\$50 million) are to be spent to build infrastructure and public utilities in the area. The aim of this is to encourage the building of more housing units in the area as part of the Israeli plan to establish Greater Jerusalem. Thus, Olmert's main aim to create a Jewish majority in the city of Jerusalem is being slowly implemented, hence making it difficult for the division of the city into two capitals for the two states.⁴¹

The Israeli Commander-in-Chief of the West Bank issued, on 9/10/2007, a military order number T/19/07 that orders the confiscation of 1,128 donums of al-Sawahirah, Abu Dis and al-Khan al-Ahmar. The Israeli military authority justified this by arguing that this was designed for the benefit of Road 80. Actually Israel would be the only beneficiary of such a plan since the appropriation of this land is designed to segregate and isolate the Palestinians and Road 80 is under Military Command no. 50 for Roads issued in 1983.⁴²

This road has political and economic implications. Politically, since the only the Palestinians are to use the road, it is racist. The road would also separate northern part of the WB from its southern side. The road would also isolate the city of Jerusalem from its Palestinian southern and eastern parts. The construction of such a road would also mean the expansion of the boundaries of Jerusalem by annexing the eastern settlement blocs, which consists of eight settlements, resulting in demographic change for the benefit of the Israelis. Economically, this road is designed to weaken the position of Jerusalem, drawing it out of the center of movement of trade, disqualifying it as a transportation center, and hindering constructional development eastward due to the annexation of these settlement blocs and the isolation of the villages surrounding the city.

The Jerusalem Municipality participated in the confiscation process by declaring the confiscation of certain pieces of land located within basin no. 30124 and basin no. 30120 of the lands of Salwan for building parking lot.⁴³ The Jerusalem Municipality also revealed a new plan that aims at seizing 150 donums of lands in the village of Salwan for the purpose of housing Jewish immigrants.⁴⁴ Moreover, the Hebrew University took over more Palestinian lands by building a road on land belonging to Palestinians from the village of Lifta.⁴⁵

4. Policy of Demolition of Houses and Refusal of Building Licenses

The occupation authorities' destruction of houses and possessions in occupied Jerusalem contradicts International Humanitarian Law—Fourth 1949 Geneva Convention. It also contradicts article 25 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Indeed, by insisting on following the policy of demolishing houses, the Israeli authorities make it very clear that their intention is to force the Palestinians to leave the city of Jerusalem and turn the city into a Jewish-majority one.

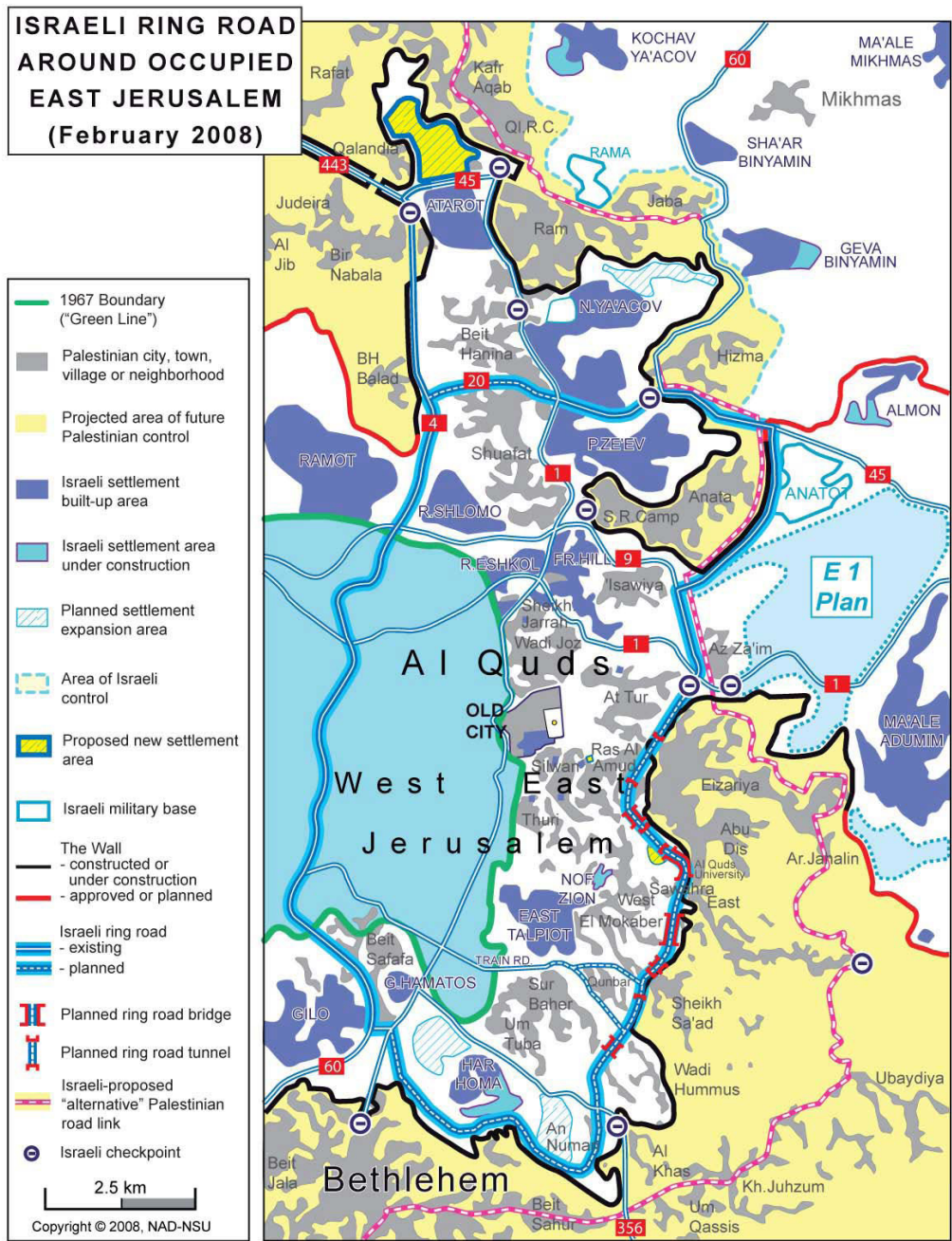
Since the beginning of 2007, the Jerusalem Municipality and Israeli Ministry of the Interior have escalated their policy of demolition of Palestinian houses, as exemplified by demolitions in all areas of Jerusalem. Thus, the Jerusalem Municipality insists on following its racist policy against Palestinians by demolishing buildings owned by Palestinians, and imposing exorbitant fines for alleged violation of building licenses. Steep fines were imposed on even licensed Palestinian-owned buildings on the pretext that they had “exceeded” the allowed ratio of building. As Israeli authorities take possession of more lands, they put up obstacles, create difficulties, and create regulations and procedures, as well as exorbitant costs for the Palestinians. This drives the Palestinian inhabitants of Jerusalem to choose between either desperately holding onto their land or painfully leaving their lands. The following table details the number of demolished houses in Jerusalem during the period 2004–2007:⁴⁶

Table 1/6: Demolition of Houses in Jerusalem 2004–2007

Year	No. of Demolished Units
2004	183
2005	120
2006	78
2007	97

The table reveals that the demolition of houses owned by Palestinians dropped to 97 in 2007. However, this needs to be accepted with much apprehension. This statistics contradicts the ones provided by the Palestinian Popular Campaign against the Separation Wall. Its statistics indicate that the occupation authorities demolished about 137 houses in the city of Jerusalem and its suburbs, as well as at least 165 houses in the WB during the year 2007.⁴⁷

Israeli Ring Road around Occupied East Jerusalem, February 2008



5. Displacement of Palestinian Inhabitants of Jerusalem and the Withdrawal of Their Right of Residence

In 2007, the Israeli violation of the rights of Palestinians of Jerusalem registered an unusual escalation in its violation of the basic rights of individuals and groups, especially in the areas of family reunion, dwelling and residence.

Investigations reveal that there are more than 10 thousand family reunion requests; where the fate of the entire family and not just that of the individuals is concerned. All pending with the Ministry of Interior, are mostly frozen because of a government order issued in the year 2002. As a result, thousands of Palestinian children are unable to register their births. Unless they are allowed to do so, they will be unable to claim medical treatment, and national insurance allowance. The Israeli policy, of course, also means that the Palestinian families would not be able to reunite their members. According to documents published by the Israeli Ministry of Interior, the latter cancelled permanent residence cards of 1,363 Jerusalemites in 2006. During the period 1967–2006, the number of cancelled residence cards reached 8,269.⁴⁸ No records are available for 2007.

The Israeli authorities intend to drive out 22 thousand Bedouins, now living in villages surrounding Jerusalem, into narrow areas all over the WB. The Bedouins are not used to this kind of life style, and the areas they are being relocated to are not suitable for the kind of work they engage in. In 1997, 60 Bedouin families living in al-Jahalin were forcibly transported to an area the south of Abu Dees. They were placed in temporary dwellings near a garbage dump. About 7,500 al-Jahalin Bedouin families live in Jerusalem. They live throughout the northern, eastern and western hills of Jerusalem. They have become the latest victims of Israel's "Greater Jerusalem" Project. The Israeli authorities intend to force them out of the city. The Bedouins of the WB have been forced to immigrate by the Israeli authorities since 1948. The Israeli occupation authorities chase the Bedouins wherever they go, and have their grazing lands closed down, houses demolished and their cattle confiscated. In this way, the Israelis have denied the Bedouins their right to live in their traditional way, hence threatening their very existence.⁴⁹

The Israelis have not spared the dead. They, too, have become the target of the Israeli policy of forcing the Palestinians out of the occupied lands. Avraham Dichter (Moshe), the Internal Security Minister of Israel, ordered the closure of Gate of Mercy cemetery, located outside the Old City. Such orders breach all

human decency and violate international conventions and charters. Thus, the Israelis, after steadfastly following the policy of confiscating the Palestinian lands and demolishing their houses, are now pursuing the Dead.⁵⁰ Dichter's orders came in the wake of a demand put forward by "The Committee for the Prevention of the Destruction of Antiquities on the Temple Mount," which is a committee for the Judaization of Arab, Islamic landmarks in Jerusalem. According to this committee, the Palestinians have "expanded the graveyards at the expense of an archaeological region." The racial separation around the city of Jerusalem by Israeli authorities went so far that they built roads separated by a five meter high concrete barrier; one for the Israelis and the other for the Palestinians.⁵¹

6. The Separation Wall in Jerusalem

Despite the international resolutions and the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice (ICJ), declaring the wall "contrary to international law," Israeli authorities continued to build the wall and the system attached to it. With the exception of a section that links Dahiat Al-Barid and Beit Hanina, the wall around Jerusalem was completed. Moreover, the occupation army is constructing a military checkpoint to be an official crossing "gate" in the wall, and is making extensions at the northwest entrance of Shu'fat refugee camp. The wall has been completed in this area to isolate 45 thousand citizens in Shu'fat refugee camp, Al-Salam suburb and Anata from Jerusalem; their city and the center of their life.

In addition, the children of Beit Hanina (Tal 'Addas) are suffering greatly because of this wall, as they are:

precluded from joining schools in Jerusalem as a punishment, where the Wall separates their homes from their schools. This has deprived them of the opportunity to have an education, which is a free right and an obligation of the society and the authority. It should be available for every child who has attained the age of learning, as this is stipulated by Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), article 20, and by the UN Commission on Human Rights (UNCHR).⁵²

The construction of the Wall has isolated the villages located to the northwest of Jerusalem from Jerusalem and Ramallah. The construction of the Wall and Mekorot's (Israel's National Water Company) decision to supply only 25% of the villagers' daily water needs have turned those villages into arid land. This caused serious damage to crops, on one hand, and drove farmers to stop breeding sheep

and poultry, on the other. Furthermore, the inhabitants of the villages located to the northwest of Jerusalem were very distraught with the completion of the wall, as they no longer have any roads other than the tunnel that would be opened to connect these segregated villages with the region of Ramallah. In addition, the region has been turned into a garbage dump for the settlements. Wastewater from the settlements is diverted into the valleys of the region, leading to the pollution of wellsprings and groundwater, as well as devastating agriculture.

Furthermore, villages located to the southeast of Jerusalem are experiencing another type of isolation imposed by the wall, as the two villages of Sheikh Sa'd and Jabal al-Mukabir resemble isolated islands. The population of these two villages totals around 15 thousands. These two villages are inseparable from the eastern gate of the city as these lack sufficient basic services such as medical facilities. The construction of the wall has separated the inhabitants of these two villages from their children's schools, work places, families and even their only graveyard. As a result, 25% of the inhabitants of these two villages had to leave.⁵³

7. Aspects of the Suffering of the People of Jerusalem

a. The Economic Aspect

The Israeli economic stranglehold of the city of Jerusalem began immediately after the occupation. They began to exert pressure on the people of Jerusalem to transfer their economic activities to West Jerusalem or to move it outside the boundaries of the municipality. Israel imposed exorbitant taxes on shop owners or industrialists in East Jerusalem, restricted the issuance of licenses for new facilities forcing economic emigration to areas surrounding Jerusalem, where comfortable conditions for economic investment were available.

Israeli policy soon began to push economic weight northward, in the direction of "al-Ram," or eastwards, in the direction of al-'Ayzariya and Abu Dees. The Israeli military authorities then resorted to leniency in granting licenses and reducing taxes. In short, the occupied authorities created all obstacles in Jerusalem, by confiscating lands, freezing structural plans and restricting construction of building. All these factors led to the migration of capital to areas surrounding Jerusalem. Israeli policies encouraged Jerusalemites to move to the suburbs especially to al-'Ayzariya, and depopulated a greater part of the Old City and its precincts.

The outbreak of *al-Aqsa Intifadah*, the second uprising, created serious problem for those who had moved out of Jerusalem precisely because of Israeli incentives described above. The Israeli authorities used the outbreak of *Intifadah* to establish barricades and closed roads cutting off those Jerusalemites who had moved out of the city for better economic prospects. The Israeli authorities cancelled their residence cards arguing that they lived outside the city limits. As a result, the citizens of Jerusalem resorted to moving their dwelling places located outside the boundaries of the municipality to within its boundaries. In 2007, about 40 thousands moved to the Jerusalem Municipality causing overcrowding and leading to shortage of housing and school classrooms.⁵⁴

b. The Social and Psychological Aspects

The city of Jerusalem is following a systematic policy targeting the city's Arab population. Consequently, Palestinians' infrastructures are neglected, houses are demolished, institutions are closed, drugs are spread among the youth, and construction is restricted. Undoubtedly, these actions increased the degree of poverty and the subsequent negative effects on the Jerusalemites. For example, unemployment has increased, especially among the professionally qualified youth, reaching 20% during the year 2005.⁵⁵ Social problems, such as drug addiction and family troubles have escalated. It is worth noting that drug addiction is a painful reality among the youths in Jerusalem. This has resulted in an increase in school dropouts among the Palestinian youths. As a direct consequence, illiteracy among them has increased. Moreover, there is also an increase in crime involving the youths and a general moral degradation among them. The Palestinians lived at the average of 2.2 persons per single room before the creation of the wall. When the wall was built, and the Palestinians were denied of their residencies, many of them moved to live within the city limits so that they could claim the residency. As a result, there was overcrowding, and now five Palestinians have to share a single room. Such dire living conditions have negative impact on the ethical and social status of the family.

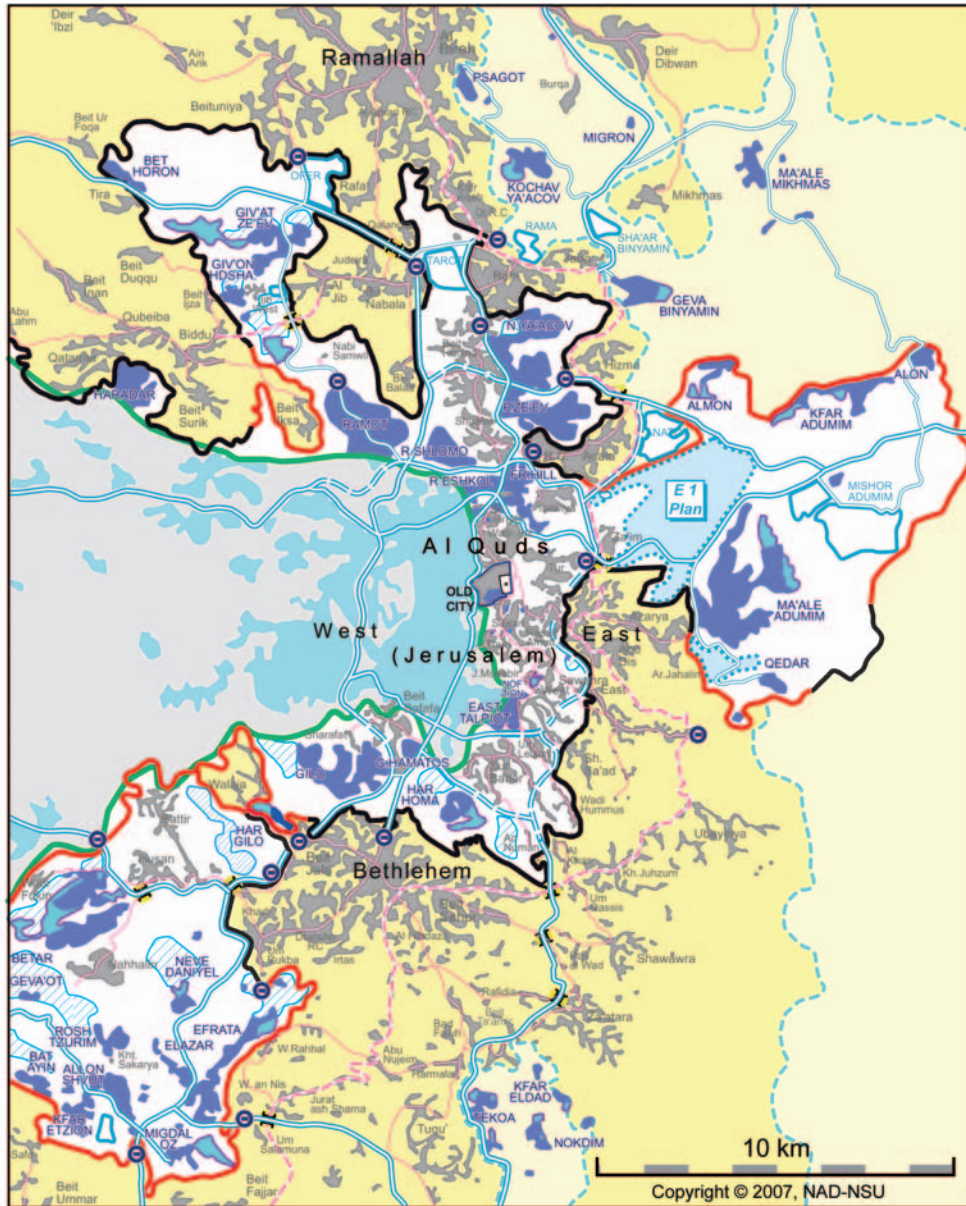
Indeed, having more than one family occupying one housing unit has contributed to marital problems and an increase in divorce rates, thus seriously affecting the stability of family structures of the Palestinians in Jerusalem. In addition, Palestinian families with limited resources face serious social problems because of the increase in rentals.

The Jerusalemites have to face innumerable problems because of the wall. This is so because they need to follow various Israeli procedures to reach their workplaces or schools. Many of them had to move their residency so that they could reach their workplaces and schools. Most of them had to move to continue to enjoy the privileges guaranteed under Jerusalem residence cards. We witness two types of retrogressive movement of Palestinians; the first is outward, while the second is inward. Movement of a person is natural, yet the movement of Palestinians out of Jerusalem was not natural. Their reason for doing so was due to the Israeli policies directed at emptying the city of Palestinians. According to official statistics, the number of families displaced from the Jerusalem governorate reached 1,635 due to the building of the wall, while the number of individuals displaced in the governorate reached 9,609. In addition, quarter of a million Palestinians will live in complete isolation following the completion of all sections of the wall. It will be extremely difficult for them to enter Jerusalem because of the strict procedures imposed by Israeli authorities since 1993.

The movement of Palestinians into the city of Jerusalem from outside is a daunting task. It has become difficult to enter the city even for those carrying WB residence cards. And although Jerusalem remains a spiritual center, it has lost its splendor and its actual centrality in the lives of the Palestinians. Its markets, therefore, are crowded with tourists (foreigners and Israelis), but its native inhabitants are noticeably absent. Moreover, cultural activities have stopped after many national institutions have moved outside the city. Hence, Jerusalem has turned into a big village.

Israel's policies directed at Palestinians in Jerusalem have devastated their social and cultural structures. The occupiers' policies have led to divided Palestinian families. For the members of such divided families living in Jerusalem, many are without any moral and emotional support as the rest of the family members are unable to enter Jerusalem. The wall has put many nuclear families in an impossible situation as far as dwellings are concerned. It is extremely difficult for the so-called mixed families (one of the spouses holding a blue ID and the other holding a green one). They face an impossible choice: either to stay together illegally—and live under the threat of cancellation of the Jerusalem ID from its holder if she/ he lives outside the boundaries of the Jerusalem municipality or the danger of detention for the one who holds the WB ID—or to live separately.

Israeli Wall and Settlements around Occupied East Jerusalem, February 2007



- | | | | |
|---|--|--|---|
| 1967 Boundary ("Green Line") | Israeli settlement built-up area | Israeli military base | Israeli-controlled tunnel or underpass for Palestinians |
| Palestinian city, town, village or neighborhood | Israeli settlement area under construction | The Wall - constructed or under construction | Local Palestinian road |
| Projected area of future Palestinian control | Planned settlement expansion area | - approved or planned | Israeli-proposed "alternative" Palestinian road link |
| Area of Israeli control | Israeli settler / bypass road - existing | - planned or under construction | Israeli checkpoint |

The movement of Palestinians into Jerusalem from the surrounding areas of the city has its share of serious economic and social implications. For the Palestinians, who decide to live in Jerusalem, they have to pay exorbitant costs for doing so. For example, they are required to pay high property taxes and other taxes. These put families under heavy financial pressure and their members live their day without any future plans. Palestinian residents of Jerusalem share dwellings and are therefore live in unhealthy living conditions, which ultimately affect their individuality and privacy. Life in an overcrowded environment also increases the suffering of children as well as other family members, which—in turn—often leads to an increase in the divorce rate and perversion as well as the emergence of fatal social phenomena, such as drug abuse.

c. The Educational Aspect

Undoubtedly, large investments in establishing educational institutions, especially private institutions, in north and east Jerusalem resulted in elevating the pressure in municipal schools. Moreover, the phenomenon of overcrowded classes was not quite tangible, and schools assimilated thousands of students (in mostly Endowment and Christian schools). The establishment of the wall has forced students to attend schools in East Jerusalem; thus, these schools whether public, private or endowment schools have become overcrowded with students.

Due to lack of attention paid by the Jerusalem municipality to the education sector and the development its infrastructure since the occupation has started and till this day; and due to its method of using rented housing units as classrooms, the number of schools is not adequate to accommodate all students. As a result, thousands of students are denied education. Moreover, crowded classrooms also contribute to school dropouts.

In addition, the following factors have contributed negatively to the acquisition of knowledge by the students: the increase in the number of students and the overcrowded classrooms in schools that are not proper school buildings but rented residential buildings. That's why some parents send their children to private schools, whose tuition fees are extremely high and affordable only by high-income families. While the majority, therefore, need to attend the Arab municipal schools. These schools have the policy of alienating the students and stripping away their national and cultural identity. The citizens of Jerusalem resisted sending their children to these schools until 2004, when the scale began to tilt in favor of such schools.

Then, with the emergence of municipal contracting schools, which follow Israeli curricula, these schools received 56% of the total enrolled school students, and the numbers are still increasing. This increase constitutes a serious threat to the future generations of Palestinian school children. Hence, the head of the East Jerusalem Parents' Association in a press statement stated that the conditions of education in public schools in east Jerusalem are very bad. He added that there is a severe shortage of classrooms—more than 1,500—and that the rate of dropout among secondary school students is increasing due to the privatization of public secondary education. The rate of dropout has now reached 50%, one out of every two students, according to Israeli government sources. Some schools face accommodation problem. The Rashidiyyah School—a public secondary school in East Jerusalem—for example, failed to provide seats for more than 150 students in 2007. This also applies to other public schools. In particular, the situation is worse at primary and preparatory stages. At these stages, students could not be accommodated because there isn't sufficient number of classrooms. This forced the municipality to cram them together in shelter rooms using them as classrooms, as is the case with Jabal al-Mukabir. The following are two factors have influenced the educational process:

First: An increase in overcrowdedness levels in classrooms, where it reaches 40 student per classroom in some cases.

Second: The schools lack proper infrastructures, such as playgrounds and laboratories. There is also severe shortage of administrative and educational staff and libraries. In fact, most schools have no playgrounds, auditoria, teachers' rooms or even yards.⁵⁶ The magnitude of the tragedy is clear when we note that 87% of more than 15 thousand children in Jerusalem, ranging between three and four years of age, are without an educational background, and that only 55 children are registered in public kindergartens, while 1,900 children are registered in private kindergartens. Meanwhile, 64% of Jerusalemites live below the poverty line, which makes it difficult for children to enter private schools. Moreover, the rate of dropout in public schools has reached 45%, which is in itself an indication of a systematic and organized policy of depriving the students of Jerusalem of education.⁵⁷

8. Solidarity Activities with Jerusalem

Due to the position of Jerusalem in the hearts of Arabs and Muslims, and in light of the threats and dangers to which it is exposed, the year 2007 witnessed several solidarity activities with Jerusalem. During this year, many statements condemning, warning and appealing were issued. Their subject was only one: the dangers of Israeli plots and threats against Jerusalem. In addition, some organizations held meetings with the presence of influential international figures and spoke about the dangers of what is happening in Jerusalem. Other organizations preferred to organize cultural functions and events. Meanwhile, the Muslim masses all over the world rose spontaneously to defend *al-Aqsa*. In February, this was clearly demonstrated, when dangerous excavations were taking place at the Mughrabi Gate.

The year 2007 also witnessed the launching of the second stage of reconstruction of the Old City in Jerusalem, financed by \$4 million offered by *al-Aqsa* and Jerusalem funds. This move followed a meeting, in January, to approve the project at the headquarters of the Islamic Development Bank of Jeddah, Saudi Arabia.

Furthermore, the year 2007 witnessed a number of major events demonstrating solidarity with Jerusalem. One such meeting was that of the annual conference of the Al Quds International Institution held in March in Algiers. At this conference, the institution—in cooperation with the Network of Institutions Working for Jerusalem—managed to acquire funding for about 55 projects in the fields of social and economic development as well as conservation of environmental and natural resources. These projects cost more than \$10 million, according to the statement of the Secretary General of Al Quds International Institution, Dr. Muhammad Akram al-‘Adlouni. During the same conference, Mr. Bouabdallah Ghlamallah, the Algerian Minister of Religious Affairs and Wakfs (Religious Endowments), declared the commencement of a \$6 million endowment project consisting of 74 luxurious houses and 28 stores to be established in Algiers over an area of 1,800 m². The earnings of this project would be used to support projects in Jerusalem and Palestinian lands. In April, the Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (ISESCO) announced its decision to support educational projects in Jerusalem. In May, the Egyptian Medical Syndicate launched the “One Million Signatures for *al-Aqsa*” Campaign under the auspices of the Secretary-General of the Arab League, in cooperation with

the Qatari Sheikh Eid bin Mohamed Al Thani Charity Institute, which had earlier launched the campaign in a number of Arab countries.

Furthermore, *al-Quds* Net Center for Studies, Media and Electronic Publishing Center held a conference entitled, “Together for the Sake of Jerusalem,” in Jerusalem, Gaza and Beirut via satellite. A number of ambassadors to the Palestinian National Authority, religious scholars, writers, researchers, as well as political and civil figures attended this conference. The Fifth International Day of Jerusalem was celebrated via the Internet. Renowned scholar, Sheikh Yusuf al-Qaradawi, and many other prominent personalities participated in this program.

The 40th year of Jerusalem’s occupation was marked in June 2007 by Al Quds International Institution, which launched an international campaign with the slogan, “Jerusalem, 40 Years of Occupation... Let’s Light the Lamps of its Steadfastness.” The campaign highlighted a number of realities in Jerusalem and *al-Aqsa*, with the aim of raising public support for Jerusalem and *al-Aqsa*. The campaign also aimed at raising funds to support the struggle of the people of Jerusalem. This campaign urged influential governments, institutions and individuals to support the struggle of the citizens of Jerusalem. In order to reach the global audience, the campaign extensively used satellite, the Internet, stickers, newspaper advertisement and mobile Short Messages Service (SMS).

One of the most prominent meetings for supporting the cause of Jerusalem was “*Al-Quds* International Forum,” organized by Al Quds International Institution and the International Network of Institutions Working for Jerusalem on 15/11/2007 in Istanbul. This was attended by more than five thousand prominent figures from 65 Arab, Islamic and foreign countries. This forum adopted the Istanbul Declaration.

In addition to holding meetings and forums, several public donation campaigns in support of Jerusalem were organized in several Arab capitals, such as Beirut, Damascus, Amman, and Sana’a. Campaigns were also organized in a number of Gulf and European countries at the invitation of several societies, of which the Arab Physicians Union was the most prominent one. Prominent groups organized campaigns in most Arab capitals calling for the lift of Israeli siege of the Palestinian people. The year 2007 also witnessed the launching of a number of

youth organizations for supporting the cause of Jerusalem, such as the “League of Youth for the Sake of Jerusalem.” Moreover, Al Quds International Institution launched a website about the city of Jerusalem.

It is important to note here the low-key role of the official Arab and Islamic institutions in supporting Jerusalem. Among the most conspicuous of these institutions is the “Jerusalem Committee,” set up by the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC). This committee, as well as other such organizations, did not come out with strong statements supporting the cause of the citizens of Jerusalem. Their attitudes are incompatible with their official responsibilities and the representation of about 56 Muslim countries. Ironically, the *al-Aqsa* Mosque fire of 1969 was the direct reason behind the establishment of the OIC.

Second: The Separation Wall

In 2007, Israeli occupation authorities continued building the separation wall in the WB. The readers may kindly refer to several background reports and details related to the wall published in the previous edition of the Strategic Report. In April 2007, the Israeli occupation authorities sanctioned the most conspicuous development related to the Wall. However, the Israeli Ministry of Defense made it public only in September 2007 when it published new maps of the wall. The new map revealed an increase in the areas intended to be isolated behind the Wall, reaching 28.5% (that is 157,920 donums or 157.92 km²) of the total land area of the Palestinian land. In other words, the distance of the isolated area increased from 555 km² to 713 km², and the length of the Wall increased from 703 km to 770 km.⁵⁸

Additionally, the increase centered around two areas; the first was in the southeast of WB. More precisely, it is located to the east of the two governorates of Hebron and Bethlehem, in the area adjacent to the southwest of the Dead Sea. Here the Israelis increased the length of the Wall by 53.5 km. This increase in the Wall resulted in the isolation of 153,780 donums. The second was in Latrun (Mudi'in), an area located to the northeast of Ramallah. In this area, the occupation authorities increased the length of the Wall by 13.5 km, isolating an area of 4,140 donums behind the wall. By increasing the length of the Wall in this area, the Israeli military intended to include

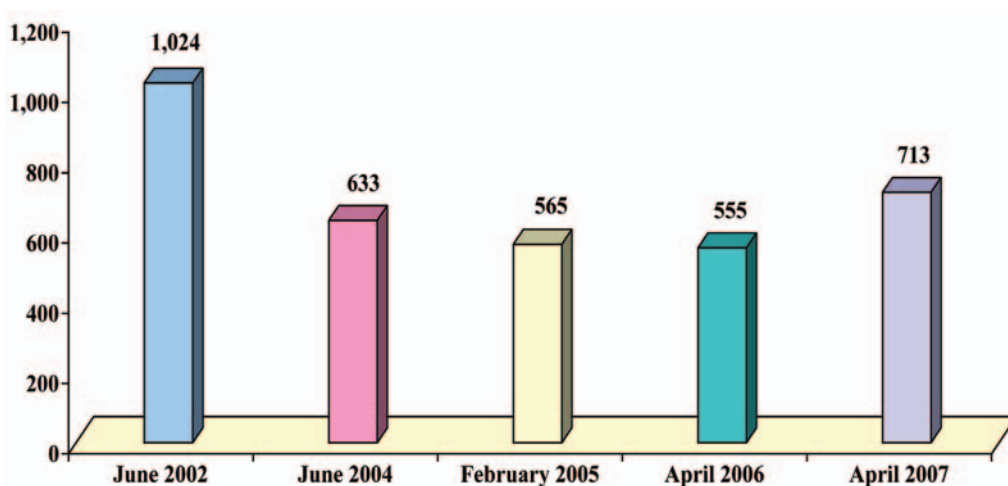
the two settlements of Nili and Na'ale within the wall. Consequently, two further Palestinian cantons would be created inhabited by about 20 thousand people who would be isolated from the rest of the WB (see the map).⁵⁹

This is the fourth time that the course and length of the Wall as well as the total area of the isolated Palestinian land was changed (see table 2/6).⁶⁰

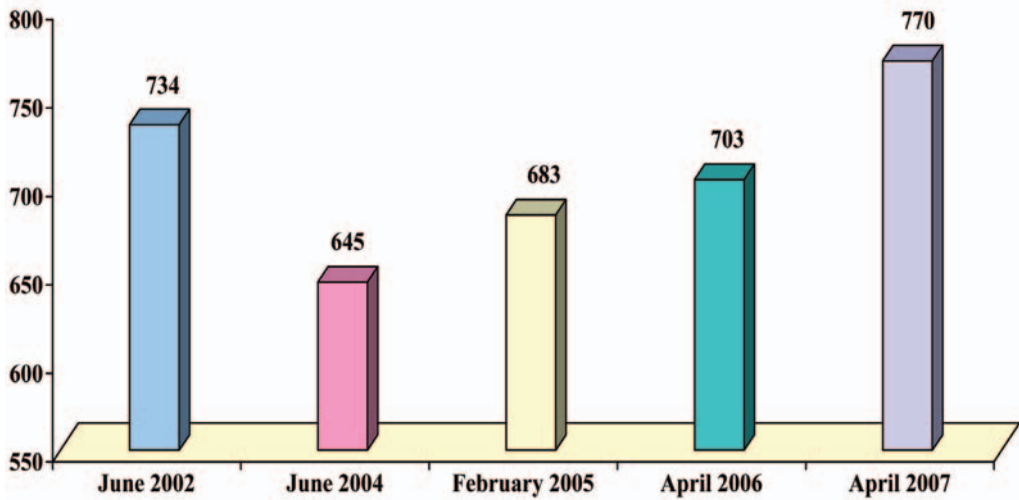
Table 2/6: The Development of the Course of the Separation Wall in the WB 2002–2007

Date	The area taken out in favor of the wall (km ²)	Percentage to the area of the WB (%)	The length of the wall (km)	The length of the wall on the Green Line (km)
June 2002	1,024	18	734	-
June 2004	633	11.7	645 with some exceptions	83
February 2005	565	10	683	138
April 2006	555	9.8	703	128
April 2007	713	12.6	770	80

The Development of the Area Taken out in Favor of the Wall in the WB 2002–2007 (km²)



The Development of the Wall Length in the WB 2002–2007 (km)



The report of the Applied Research Institute of Jerusalem (ARIJ) indicates that 29 Palestinian villages will find themselves in closed areas in the form of cantons encircled by the Wall. The total area of these lands is 216.7 km². Moreover, the construction of the Wall would damage 138 more villages, since it isolates 554.4 km² of their lands behind it. In addition, 40 other Palestinian communities, consisting of more than 37 thousand Palestinians, will find themselves isolated on the eastern side of the Wall. The Wall will encircle 107 Israeli settlements inhabited by about 425 thousand settlers. These settlements, however, cover an area of 106.7 km². As for the rest of the settlements east of the Wall, it covers an area of 37.8 km².⁶¹

Here, it is worth noting that in addition to the Separation Wall, Israel declared 925 km² of the WB as “Closed Military Zones,” and 630 km² as “state lands,” which included settlement areas and military bases. This means that the total area of confiscated lands adds up to about 40.1% of the total land area of the WB.⁶²

Furthermore, the numbers provided by the Popular Campaign Against the Wall (PCAW) indicate that occupation authorities completed the building of 48 km of the Wall in 2007. This means that the Israelis have already built about 450 km of the Wall. The PCAW estimates also indicate that almost 80 km of the Wall was still under construction.⁶³

It should be kept in mind that there are differences in the statistics about the Wall between those published by Palestinian studies institutions, such as ARIJ and

PCAW, and those published by the Israeli Information Center for Human Rights in the Occupied Territories (B'tselem),⁶⁴ or those published by institutions related to the United Nations (UN). However, we do not want to confuse the readers with contradictory numbers especially that the differences are not significant.

However, we must have respect for the Palestinians' insistence on resisting the Separation Wall and their perseverance to protect their lands in spite of their great suffering. Here, we should mention the people of Bal'ain village. They have set up a magnificent example of steadfastness, perseverance and innovation using the various available means to demand their rights. We also acknowledge distinctive efforts exerted by Palestinian institutions, societies and parties.

In 2007, there were some amendments in the course of the Wall, in Jenin governorate (Zububa, Faqu'a and Jalbun), in the governorate of Qalqilya (the sections of Jayyous, Falamyeh and 'Azzun 'Atmah), and in the governorate of Ramallah (Bal'ain, Badras and Deir Qeddis). Moreover, the occupation authorities extended the time for the completion of the construction of the Wall by two more years. The occupation authorities aim to finish constructing the Wall in 2010 instead of the original deadline of 2008 thus taking eight years to complete the Wall.⁶⁵

According to various UN reports, once completed, the Wall would slice off 8.6% of WB land. There are 19 gates of the Wall, which open daily for permit holders. However, they remain closed at night. There are 19 other gates that open during special harvest seasons, or weekly.⁶⁶

Some Israeli organizations acknowledge the sufferings of Palestinians brought about the construction of Wall. For example, the Bimkom Center, estimated that the cantons stifled by the Wall affect the lives of 248 thousand Palestinians in the WB, and almost a similar number (250 thousands) living in East Jerusalem. They face serious economic, social, and health problems.⁶⁷

Moreover, Bethlehem faces a real catastrophe because of the Wall that separates it from Jerusalem and from the villages surrounding the city.⁶⁸ The Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities also affirmed that the Wall is among the most ominous obstacles to the tourism sector in Bethlehem.⁶⁹ In addition, the Israelis are ruthlessly following the construction of the "annexation" Wall, torturing Palestinians and usurping all their legal humanitarian rights, unilaterally drawing the borders of the "state of Israel." Therefore, the Israeli claim that security is the main objective of the Wall is false.

Third: The Settlers and the Settlement Expansion

In 2007, the policy of settlement expansion and construction in major settlement blocs, along with settlement expansion in the Jordan Valley region, an area excluded previously), continued unabated. Although the peace process and negotiations between both parties are continuing, the Israeli government persists in its policy of construction and expansion of settlements on occupied territories. The construction of settlements on occupied territories is illegal by any standard of international law. The Israeli government, in justifying its settlement policy, uses a pledge made by President Bush on 14/4/2004, in which he declared that any final peace settlement between the Palestinians and the Israelis must take into account the facts on grounds. The following table provides the details of growth of settlements and the numbers of settlers:⁷⁰

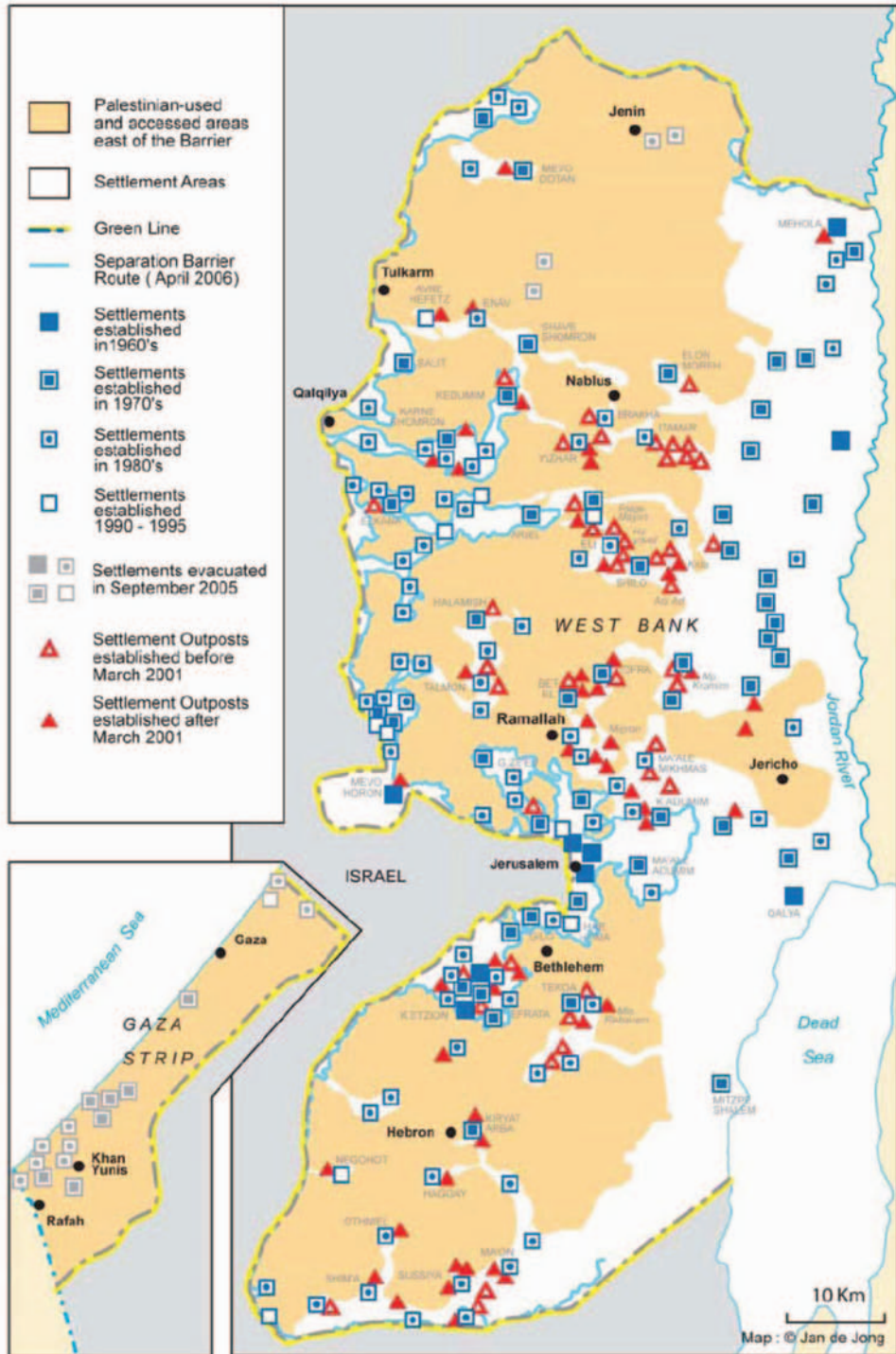
Table 3/6: Number of Settlers and Housing Units 2005–2007

Year	No. of new housing units in the settlements	No. of settlers in the WB, including East Jerusalem (thousands)*
2005	1,727	452
2006	1,700	468
2007	3,614	482

* Average numbers.

Here, it is worth noting that there are discrepancies among different sources in identifying the number of housing units. This is perhaps due to differences between the approved housing units or the actual number of housing units mentioned in tenders in a certain year and the actual number of units either constructed or approved in the previous year. The ways the housing units are classified may also explain the said differences. For example, some may consider a building as one single housing unit, while others may consider it based on the number of flats it contains. Perhaps, we can understand this point in light of the great difference between the estimates of ARIJ and others when the former mentioned that Israel had established 122,677 new housing units in Israeli settlements during the period 2001–2007. ARIJ also states that in 2007, there had been intensive expansion of settlement movement on the occupied lands, characterized by its focus on the increase in the number of established housing units. This increase had reached 32,064 housing units by September 2007.⁷¹

Israeli Settlements in the WB and GS, 1967–2008



The Jewish Agency and its plan, divides the WB into four settlement quarters, namely Jerusalem, the western part of the WB, the Jordan Valley, and the southern area of Hebron, in addition to the existence of buffer zones and strategic paths (roads) crossing the WB, and two strategic pivotal roads along the WB.⁷² Moreover, the plan to isolate the Jordan Valley, began in 2004, is proceeding at an accelerated rate. During the period 2004–2007, the authorities have not allowed the non-permit holders, with the exception of the Jordan Valley inhabitants, to stay in the area. Moreover, the Israeli authorities have deported the Arab inhabitants from the area and have demolished their houses. The isolation of Jerusalem from the WB is now at its final stage.

In 2007, Israel began to achieve some of its objectives adopted since the outbreak of the Second *Intifadah* in 2000 namely, the “settlement expansion,” establishment of the Separation Wall, building of alternative roads, and transformation of the prospective Palestinian state into cantons. The former Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon initiated those policies and the period of his prime ministership (2001–2005) is known as the “The Sharon Era.” This is because the settlements war, the occupation of hills and winding roads, and the Settlement Stars Project all bear the stamp of one single man, Sharon, who led the state with pessimism and violence. He was the man who established tens of settlements and settlement outposts, successfully completed his project of Judaizing Jerusalem, built hundreds of alternative roads for the settlements, established tens of thousands of housing units, and brought about the *fait accompli* that is almost impossible to change. Then, his disciple, Olmert, persisted in the previous policies, beginning by accelerating the establishment of new settlement units. In 2007, 3,614 new housing units were built within the vision of a Greater Israel and the kind peace it seeks. Moreover, the settlers celebrated Jewish festivals with the commencement of a settlement campaign, without any significant opposition from either the army or the police. Daniela Weiss and Aryeh Yitzhaki, the two well-known brutal settlers led this campaign. They established five settlement outposts in the major settlement blocs of Gush Etzion and Latrun, and Nablus.⁷³

A report by the Peace Now Movement revealed that the Israeli government established three thousand new housing units in the WB settlements, especially in major settlement blocs.⁷⁴ In its report, the movement also uncovered the

establishment of hundreds of settlement housing units just before the Annapolis Peace Conference. Moreover, the report indicated that settlement expansion is concentrated in 88 settlements outposts, in addition to large settlements surrounding Jerusalem; Beitar Illit, Giv'at Ze'ev and Ma'ale Adumim.⁷⁵ Furthermore, the Israeli government invited tenders to bid for the establishment of 44 new housing units in the settlement of Ma'ale Adumim.⁷⁶

Moreover, in 2007, the isolation policy and ethnic cleansing in the Jordan Valley, which began four years ago, as well as the prevention of hundreds of citizens from entering the region, has continued.⁷⁷ However, in order to create areas free of inhabitants, the Israeli authorities pulled down Bedouins' tents in Ramadin, al-Samu'a and Yatta regions in the southern region of Hebron.⁷⁸ The Israeli authorities destroyed, as well, the Bedouin villages in the Jordan Valley forcing out all Bedouin communities from the (Iron) region.⁷⁹ This highlights its desire to isolate the Valley and to consider it as an area under Israeli dominion, so clearly expressed earlier by the former Israeli Minister of Defense, Shaul Mofaz.

Fourth: Confiscation and Razing of Lands and Uprooting Trees

In 2007, the occupation authorities confiscated about 3,143 donums for the Separation Wall, most of which was centered in the Jerusalem area. Israeli military vehicles destroyed more than three thousand donums of the WB lands. In order to identify the landmarks of the southern zone of isolation, the occupation authorities declared the confiscation of 1,230 donums of land in the villages of East Jerusalem. Military order no. T/19/2007, justified this confiscation, which stipulated building of an alternative road within the framework of policy of providing contiguous transportation for the Palestinian state and geographic contiguity for the settlement state.⁸⁰

In line with the policy of collective punishment, followed especially during the period of the First *Intifadah*, Israel pursued a new policy striking the agricultural sector, on which the Palestinian people depend, especially targeting the olive

trees. This policy included preventing Palestinians from picking olives during the harvest season, burning and cutting trees in order to impoverish Palestinian farmers who depend on the land; stopping rehabilitating and planting these trees, especially during the long periods of siege, and preventing workers from working within the green line. The development of the tree-cutting policy, along with the persistence of the *Intifadah*, the economic siege and the systematized destruction of the Palestinian economy is highly noticeable.

In addition, statistics indicate that the total area of razed land in the WB and GS during the period 28/9/2000–31/7/2006 reached 80,712 donums. Moreover, the number of trees uprooted by Israel amounted to about 1.36 million trees.⁸¹ According to statistics prepared by ARIJ institute, it is clear that in 2006, 20,300 fruit-bearing trees were uprooted, razed, or confiscated. According to the estimates made by ARIJ in 2007 a total of 34,650 fruit-bearing trees were uprooted, razed, confiscated or burned, most of which were in northern governorates of Nablus, Tulkarm and Jenin, in addition to Hebron and Bethlehem governorates in the south. Israeli transgression had a huge impact on the agricultural sector, especially in the shape of uprooted trees (mostly olives), which are the main source of income for many Palestinian families.⁸²

The Israeli encroachments also inflicted the GS. As on 28/6/2007, the Israeli occupation forces were ready to re-demarcate the buffer zone of over 58 km along the extension of the northern and eastern borders of the GS. Hence, Israel unilaterally expanded the width of the “security zone” for the second time. This expansion extended for a distance of 1.5 km onto the Palestinian side, along the border of the GS. It began from the farthest northwest point to the Karm Abu Salim crossing point in the southeast. The distance of the security buffer zone dominated by Israel is 87 km² of the borderline in the GS; that is to say 24% of the GS area (362 km²). Thus, the remaining area for the Palestinians, who amount to approximately 1.42 million people, is 275 km².⁸³

Moreover, the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) indicated that the Israeli military operations in December 2007 destroyed 275 donums of arable lands east of the GS.⁸⁴

Palestinians in the WB suffer from Israeli control over water resources. Israel plundered about 85% of the water of the WB for use by its citizens and the settlements. Furthermore, Israel uses water as a means of pressure against the Palestinians, to embitter their lives or to strike at agriculture and economic needs. There are still 220 villages and Palestinian communities inhabited by 215,200 Palestinians. These lack water distribution networks. There are several other villages that lack complete water distribution networks or have limited or unorganized water supply. The average daily use of the Palestinian citizens amounts to 60 liters, which is 40% less than the quantity determined by international recommendations, while the Israeli citizen consumes an average of 280 liters daily.⁸⁵

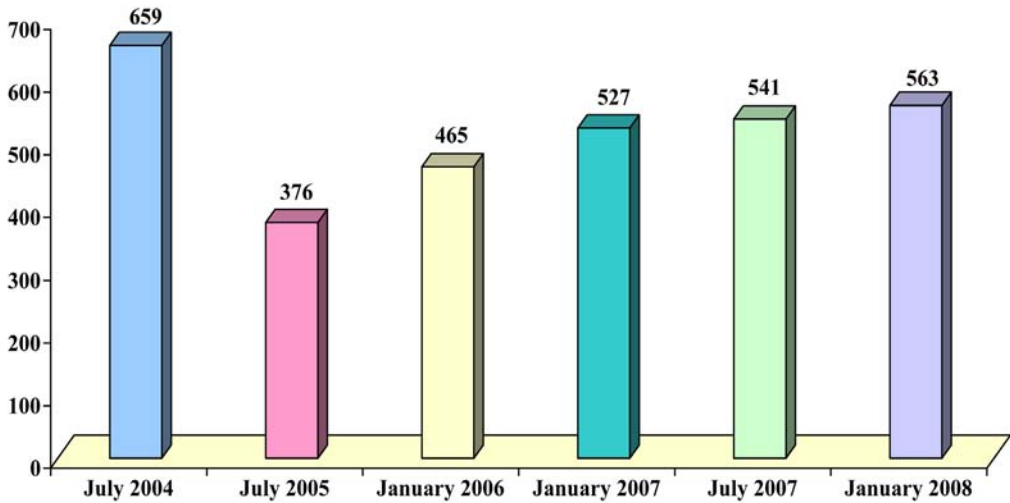
Fifth: Roadblocks, Checkpoints and Borders

Israeli authorities are not content only with the occupation and confiscation of Palestinian lands. The occupying authorities aim to restrict the natural movements of the Palestinians, and confine them to small prisons within a larger prison of the WB and the GS so that they are psychologically and economically exhausted.

Now, the Israeli authorities are establishing flying (random) checkpoints in the WB, moving them from one place to another according to its security measures in subjecting and humiliating the Palestinian people. Hence, in 2007, Israel established 5,858 flying checkpoints with a monthly average of 488 checkpoints, while in 2006 it established 7,090 flying checkpoints with a monthly average of 591 flying checkpoints.⁸⁶

Closure count in the WB totaled 553 in May 2007, and then increased to 561 in October 2007, and then into 563 in January 2008. This indicates the domination of the emergency government under President 'Abbas for the WB. This government adopted a large number of security and political measures against Hamas. It failed to reduce the number of closures in 2007, knowing that the number of closures was 527 in January 2007 and 465 in January 2006. In the period between April and October 2007, Israeli authorities removed 80 closures, but added 115 new ones. It needs to be pointed out here that the closures take on different forms like military barriers, checkpoints, gates, road blocks, earth mounds, trenches and gates, etc.⁸⁷

Immovable Barriers in the WB 2004–2008



In addition, Israeli authorities laid down obstacles against the movement of individuals of a certain age within the WB. Thus, it prevents the movement of individuals between 16 and 35 years of age, from the inhabitants of Nablus, Jenin, Tulkarm and Tubas, who are without special permits. The number of such citizens amounts to 269 thousand, i.e., 32% of the total inhabitants of these governorates.⁸⁸ Moreover, there are severe restrictions against the movement of people in the WB to East Jerusalem, which the Palestinians enter as if it has international borders. Usually, Israeli authorities do not allow citizens younger than 45 years of age to go to Jerusalem or to visit *al-Aqsa* Mosque.

As part of Israel's siege of WB and GS, it completely controls their borders. Therefore, it has full control over movement of people and goods to and from WB and GS. There are 11 military barriers covering the entrances and exits of the WB with East Jerusalem and Israel. Israel also controls borders with Jordan. Furthermore, Israel intentionally adopts the policy of closures of these points and complicates procedures with the sole aim of de-humanizing the Palestinians. This policy also aims to control their political and economic activities. The costs of transporting merchandise from Nablus to Ashdod port, for example, underwent a 55% rise due to Israeli barriers and checkpoints.⁸⁹

In the GS, Israel did not pay attention to the spirit of Crossings Agreement since Hamas swept to power in the GS. It took this situation as an excuse to close the crossing points, on 15/6/2007, and tightening its already strong siege of the GS.⁹⁰ In order to maintain the minimal necessities of life in the GS, Israel designated the two crossing points, al-Mintar and Sufa for the transportation of merchandise and humanitarian aid to the GS.⁹¹

On 19/9/2007, Israel escalated its siege of GS, declaring it a “hostile entity,” and imposed a series of additional restrictions on the GS.⁹² Moreover, on 18/1/2008, the escalation reached excessive limits when the Israeli Minister of Defense, Ehud Barak ordered the “closure of all crossing points” to the GS,⁹³ and Israel completely cut oil supplies to the GS, bringing darkness to most of the GS due to the stoppage of electricity generation stations on 20/1/2008.⁹⁴

On the other hand, Israel through the Crossings Points Agreement controls the seven crossing points of the GS at Rafah that link its borders with the GS. Egypt’s strict adherence to the peace treaty with Israel has also bolstered Israel’s grips at Rafah. According to the documentation of the Palestinian Center for Human Rights, the number of days in which the Rafah crossing was closed during the period 26/11/2005 and 31/12/2006 reached a total of 159 days. However, it was partially opened for limited hours for 31 days.⁹⁵

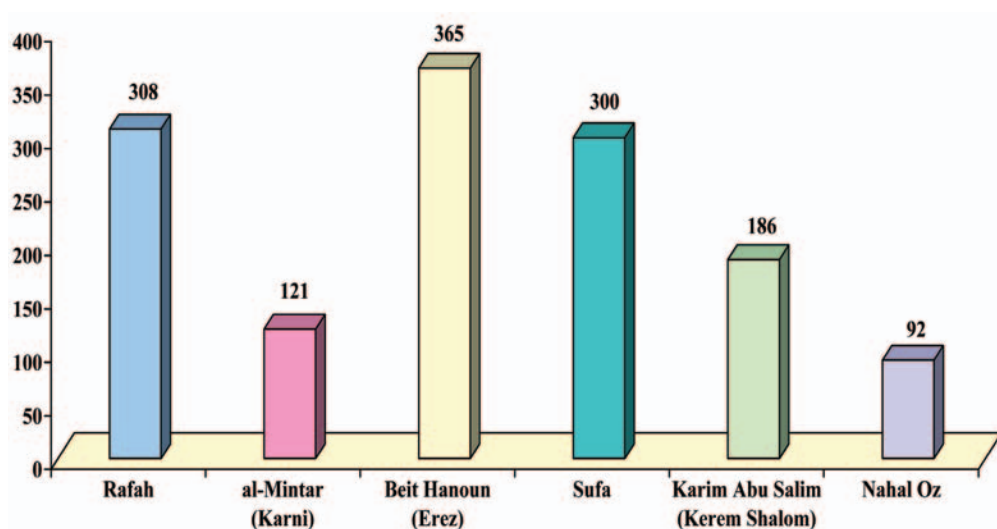
Yet, from the beginning of 2007 until 9/1/2008, occupation authorities closed the crossing point for 308 days.⁹⁶ Thus, occupation authorities completely closed the crossing point for 457 out of 776 days; about 59%, since the signing of the Crossings Agreement (see table 4/6).

The closure of the crossing points causes serious economic, health, educational and psychological damage to the Palestinians. For more details, the reader can refer to the chapter on economy in the present report.

**Table 4/6: The Number of Closure Days at the GS Crossing Points
2005–2007**

Crossing point	No. of full closure days	No. of partial closure days	No. of work days	Year
Rafah	159	31	175	25/11/2005–31/12/2006
	308	-	57	2007
al-Mintar (Karni)	112	142	111	25/11/2005–24/11/2006
	121	56	188	2007
Beit Hanoun (Erez)	254	-	-	25/11/2005–24/11/2006
	365	-	-	2007
Sufa	For goods 186	-	For goods 179	25/11/2005–24/11/2006
	For workers 365		For workers 365	
	300	-	65	2007
Karim Abu Salim (Kerem Shalom)	314	-	51	25/11/2005–24/11/2006
	186	-	179	2007
Nahal Oz	62	-	303	25/11/2005–24/11/2006
	92	-	273	2007

Number of Days in Which the Crossing Points of the GS were Completely Closed 2007 (Out of 365 Days)



Conclusion

We can state that land is at the center of the conflict, and that Jerusalem is the focus of attention. This edition of the Strategic Report concludes that Israel has exploited local and international circumstances to take possession of more Palestinian land. The occupation authorities has Judaized and expanded Jerusalem, increased the number of settlers, expanded the borders of the settlements by establishing settlement outposts, and linked these with roads that devour more Palestinian land, separate Palestinian villages and towns from each other, just like isolated prisons and islands. In this way, Israel aims at implementing previously designed projects to obliterate the Palestinian identity, Judaize the land and create a justification to deport Palestinian citizens on the pretext that the Palestinian state is Jordan (the alternative homeland). In the meantime, it maintains a broad and programmed campaign to make Jerusalem the permanent capital of Israel, with an absolute Jewish majority and an easily controlled Arab minority. Israel continues to follow these objectives within a clear plan that utilizes peace negotiations and Arab–Israeli conventions to approve their nefarious plans.

Here, it is important to refer to the steadfastness and continuous struggle of the Palestinian people for their land in spite of facing severe forms of suffering and oppression. It is also important to refer to the increasing interaction of Arabs and Muslims with Jerusalem. They continue to express indignation against Israeli occupation, and support the Palestinians in their just struggle. The Palestinians have clearly demonstrated that, as a nation, they will never surrender to the dictates of Israel. Indeed, the support for the Palestinian people’s struggle for their land is an Arab, Islamic and humanitarian duty. The interaction of the Palestinian nation with this just cause deserves more worldwide encouragement. We also need to redouble the efforts to continue earnest and programmed institutional works to stop the aggression and liberate both the people and the land.

Endnotes

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This Report

Al-Zaytouna Centre is glad to present to its reader The Palestinian Strategic Report 2007, the third in an annual series. The Report aims at monitoring the Palestinian issue through an informative and analytical approach. The Report covers the Palestinian internal political situation, issues concerning the Land and the holy sites, the economy, the Palestinian demographic indicators, the Israeli scene and the Israeli-Palestinian relations. It focuses on the Arab, Islamic, and international stances towards the Palestinian issue.

This Report is distinguished for its updated information till the end of 2007 and for its outstanding team of academics and experts.

Despite the unfortunate state of schism that characterized the Palestinian arena, and despite the hot and sensitive issues discussed, the Report did its best to be professional, scientific and objective. Thus, this Report is a distinguished addition to the Palestinian studies.

The Palestinian Strategic Report 2007



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