

# The Palestinian Strategic Report

# 2008



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# Chapter Six

*The Land and the Holy Sites*

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# The Land and the Holy Sites

## *Introduction*

The pace of the vicious attacks launched by the Israeli occupation authorities and the extremist Jewish societies in occupied Jerusalem, particularly in the interior of the old city and in the areas adjacent to and surrounding *Al-Aqsa* Mosque, had accelerated during the year 2008 in a persistent strive to judaize this region. These attacks took an intensive form after Annapolis conference and following the Israeli municipal and partisan elections, when all the Israeli parties -with no exception- were outbidding each other on the issue of Jerusalem and the WB settlements; this has reflected through the numerous contracts and plans advertised by settlement societies and their executive arm, the “Jerusalem District Planning and Construction Committee” at the Israeli Jerusalem municipality, to construct thousands of new settlement units inside and around Jerusalem; in an obvious strategy of imposing a drastic change on the Jerusalemite population and land composition.

## *First: Jerusalem and the Holy Sites*

Jerusalem has been the centre of focus for the Israeli greed; very often, Israeli plans are revealed on how to take over the city without giving any consideration to the city’s holy sites. The occupation authorities never hesitate to use any possible mean to control and judaize the city. On one side, it imposes restrictions on the various aspects of the daily lives of the Jerusalemites, in an attempt to displace them away from their city and thus achieve a Jewish demographic majority; and on the other side, the occupation strives to control the land through settlement projects, building of synagogues, and construction of tunnels beneath *al-Aqsa* Mosque.

### **1. Judaizing the Old Town**

The Israeli authorities have maintained their policies of judaizing the Old Town in Jerusalem, confiscating houses and building synagogues, in pursue of the Israeli



vision “Jerusalem 2020” aimed at judaizing the Old Town, which was originally set and planned in 1994 to reduce the number of Palestinians in the Old Town and expelling them.

Accordingly, the Israeli District Planning and Construction Committee in Jerusalem approved a plan to expand the Jewish women’s prayer area at *al-Buraq* Yard (Wailing Yard) near the Mughrabi Gate, where all vacant areas around will be surveyed and allocated for the use of Jewish prayers. Shmuel Rabinovitch, Rabbi in charge of the Western Wall, believes that the above measures will eventually settle the issue of building the bridge between the Mughrabi Gate and *al-Aqsa* Mosque.<sup>1</sup> The Israeli Antiquities Authority (IAA) had started excavations to dig a tunnel beneath the Islamic neighborhood in the Old Town; this tunnel, dug under the houses of the Islamic neighborhood, is planned to connect to the tunnel beneath *al-Buraq* Wall.<sup>2</sup> Yet further, to tighten the Israeli grip on the city especially the Old Town and its Islamic and Christian holy sites including *al-Aqsa* Mosque, the occupation has announced a plan to enforce its presence in East Jerusalem, referring the aforementioned holy sites (known as the “Holy Basin”) and areas to direct Israeli supervision and administration.

The new plan also includes a number of settlement projects aiming at confiscating the Islamic and Christian lands and endowments [*Awqaf*], putting it under the authority of an especially set official committee by the government, municipality and the Jewish Land Authority.<sup>3</sup> In a serious development, UNESCO agreed, in a meeting it held in Canada, on placing the Mughrabi Gate under an Israeli supervision;<sup>4</sup> the Jerusalem District Planning and Construction Committee refused all objections to the plan of the Mughrabi Bridge, and a relatively short bridge was approved. The plan suggests the construction of a bridge that is supported by several pillars, which will enable the entry of 300 policemen at once into the courtyards of *al-Aqsa* Mosque, causing a great imbalance within the sensitive area inside and around *al-Aqsa* area; it will also lead to a profound change of movement and mobility within the area, and in the existing status that goes back to 1967; allowing for the infiltration of Jews in large numbers to the yards of the mosque.<sup>5</sup>

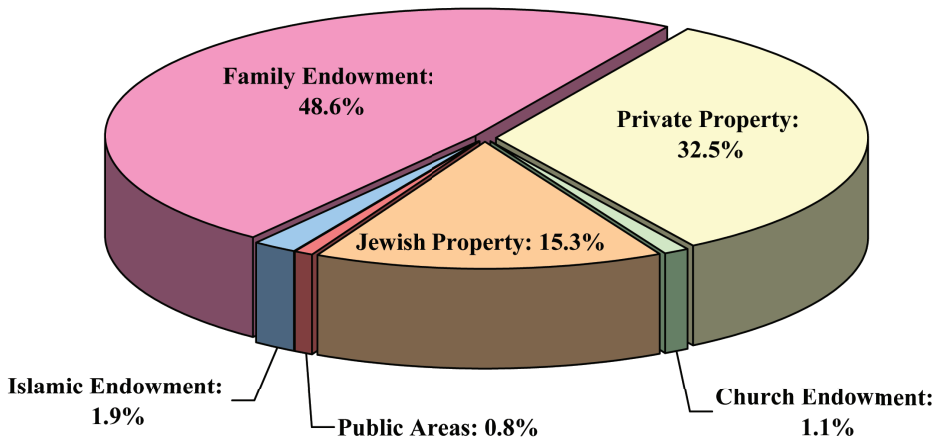
Meanwhile, the Israelis have proceeded with the implementation of another unprecedented project in the Jewish neighborhood of the Old Town. The Israeli weekly *Urshalem* published on 11/11/2005 a news piece, which was republished by

*Haarteẓ* newspaper of 10/3/2008, stating that the Jewish Quarter Development Company (JQDC) is working on the registration of 1,300 real estates in the Old Town in the *Tabo* (land register). The properties included 585 apartments, 146 shops and more than 60 public institutions. The occupation authorities issued in 1967 an official decision no. 5b/a/108/322 published in Official Gazette no. 1443, for the confiscation of 116 dunums of land from the Old Town. According to the decree, 790 properties were confiscated, whose ownership is distributed as indicated in the following table:

**Table 1/6: The Real Estates in the Old Town<sup>6</sup>**

Property Type	No. of Properties Confiscated	Percentage %
Islamic Endowment	15	1.9
Family Endowment	382	48.6
Private Property	257	32.5
Church Endowment	9	1.1
Jewish Property	121	15.3
Public Areas	6 (municipality)	0.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>790</b>	<b>100</b>

**The Real Estates in the Old Town**



A report issued by the Palestinian Ministry of *Awqaf* (endowment) and Religious Affairs revealed 120 cases of registering and transferring real estates in Jerusalem to Jewish settlers by using forged documents and in an illegal way. Moreover,



the occupation authorities were reportedly harboring to register an area of 137 dunums of land and real estates in the area of the Mughrabi Gate as well as the Jewish settlements in the Old Town, which were originally owned by the Islamic Endowment.<sup>7</sup>

Statistics indicate that 84% of the confiscated land in 1968 belonged to the Arabs. The Israeli government actively continued its policy of judaization, inaugurating a synagogue in the Old Town; this synagogue is one of ten synagogues planned in the Old Town in an attempt to change the dominant Arab and Islamic architectural character of the Old Town, and imposing a new style of architecture that eliminates the former historical roots. A synagogue was built in al-Sharaf neighbourhood (*Harat al-Sharaf*) with a multi-domed dome directly facing that of *al-Aqsa* Mosque, so as to impose the synagogue's presence in the general view of the city. Yet more seriously, the occupation authorities inaugurated one of the most culturally treacherous museums, administered by a group of fanatic settlers, and established in the heart of the Old Town; to ascertain, according to its founders, the "Jewish history of Jerusalem", through a major Jewish symbol: King David (*Daoud*), who is often mentioned in the Old Testament, and who is presented in the museum as the "first conqueror" of Jerusalem, that he made the capital of his kingdom. The museum includes a special section for printed material on King David, including a copy of the Davidic Psalms that date back to 1511 AD, and other copies of different later dates starting from 1696 AD. The museum presents the history of Jerusalem in three thousand years.<sup>8</sup> Also within context is the Israeli practices in the historic Silwan neighbourhood, or what the Israelis call the "Holy Basin", where houses are confiscated, settlement societies are sprouting, and a museum of "Jewish history" is being built.

Attempts of Judaizing the city went to the extent of Esterina Tartman of Yisrael Beiteinu Party demanding that the Muslim call to prayers (*Athan*) should not be loudly announced over microphones, under the guise of peace and calm for the settlers.<sup>9</sup> The settler association Elad took over three settlement units, by seizing eleven houses in the region of Wadi al-Hilwah. The organization runs two religious schools, a nursery, and a centre that receives the students of extremist religious schools and organizes tours and visits to excavation sites of the IAA such as al-'Ain, the Roman stairs, the tunnel and the museum. These tours are

supervised by a team of Elad during which the association spreads its ideology and its own view of history; it issued new maps of the area with Hebrew names for all sites and areas seized. The number of settler families dwelling in Silwan has amounted to 16 families and around 300 students of extremist religious schools; a synagogue was established in the region.<sup>10</sup> Jerusalem municipality has proceeded with arrangements for building the synagogue in Silwan that would include a library, nurseries, ten dormitory rooms, and an underground area that accommodates hundred cars.<sup>11</sup> Elad association is very active in this area where it strives to seize the Arab houses there on the pretext that they constitute part of “the historic Holy Basin”.

Yet further, to close the settlement circle surrounding the Old Town, a new 18 dunum 200 units settlement project was announced in the Sheikh Jarrah area. The project aims for destroying the existing neighborhood where forty Palestinian families live, and to erect housing units by which Jewish settlements would extend to surround the Old Town, which is inhabited by a considerable Palestinian population majority.<sup>12</sup> Not far away from the latter site is another 122 housing units settlement project, project no. 11356, with a nursery, a synagogue, and hotels, specifically in the Shepherd hotel area. A third project of 300 settler units is planned to be built on lands confiscated in 1968 (Karm el-Mufti)<sup>13</sup> in some of the lands that were confiscated in 1968. These projects, as well as that of “Ras al-‘Amoud”, come within the Israeli policy of creating and imposing *de facto* conditions, which is adopted by the successive Israeli governments for Jerusalem, especially after the green light given by the American President George W. Bush to the Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert that the realities on the ground would be taken into consideration in the final status agreement.<sup>14</sup> An interesting phenomenon has appeared in the Jerusalem judaizing projects which is the increase of wealthy Jews donations to support different settlement projects in Jerusalem, particularly those of the Old Town;<sup>15</sup> also in Silwan and *al-Buraq* tunnel, in addition to building synagogues.<sup>16</sup>

Diplomatic missions have objected to these projects, requesting from the Israeli government to stop making this area a quagmire for conflict between the settlers and the Palestinians.<sup>17</sup> The only observed reaction or response of the Israeli government to this was instead, the confiscation of additional houses, in Sheikh Jarrah area, and expelling their Jerusalemite inhabitants.<sup>18</sup>





## 2. The Excavations

Within a clear policy and plan that have been pursued by the Israeli establishment and the settlers' societies, the excavation within and outside the Old Town continued. The pace of these excavations under *al-Aqsa* Mosque has accelerated in 2008, which increased the fissures and collapses in the buildings of the Old Town.

At the beginning of 2008, *al-Aqsa* Foundation revealed that the Israeli authorities started digging a 200 meter tunnel adjacent to the Western Wall of *al-Aqsa* Mosque. The tunnel starts from the left side of *al-Buraq* Yard and goes northwards towards the interior of the Old Town, passing under tens of the Palestinian houses, until it reaches al-Wad street in al-Hammam al-‘Ain neighborhood where other excavations are also taking place; there, the Israeli authorities are erecting a Jewish synagogue only fifty meters away from *al-Aqsa* Mosque.

The Israeli authorities are also actively engaged in deepening the excavations and directing them towards Bab al-Silsila; as the excavations there go in an opposite direction, southward from Hammam al-‘Ain towards *al-Buraq* Yard, connecting the two sides of the tunnel, and, the above mentioned synagogue, under construction, with *al-Buraq* quarter and the area of The Mughrabi Gate.<sup>19</sup> The excavation of another 600 meter tunnel was revealed southern of *al-Aqsa* Mosque, extending from the valley of Wadi al-Hilwah in Silwan village to the southern-western corner of *al-Aqsa* Mosque.

Such excavations have caused many collapses, including the one that took place in mid February 2008 near Sabil Qait Bey area, in the interior of the courtyard of *al-Aqsa* Mosque, between the gates of al-Muthara and al-Silsila. Major fissures and cracks were observed in the Jerusalemites' houses in that region.<sup>20</sup> In July 2008, the Islamic-Christian Front announced that fissures and cracks are increasingly observed, and widening, in the buildings and the houses located southern of *al-Aqsa*, and in the region of Wadi al-Hilwah till ‘Ain Silwan; in addition to many historical houses and buildings located adjacent to the western wall of *al-Aqsa* Mosque, particularly in the most adjoining quarters like Bab al-‘Amoud, Bab al-Silsila and Bab al-Hadid. Some 13 historical houses in these areas were classified as uninhabitable because of the serious and wide fissures and cracks observed in its ceilings and walls; nonetheless its inhabitants have refused to leave it even if that will led to its collapse over their heads. With the excavations in these regions ongoing, the Arab constructional belt

that extends from Wadi al-Hilwa south of *al-Aqsa* through *al-Buraq* Wall up to the area that lies north-west of *al-Aqsa*, is facing an imminent danger that seriously threatens to demolish its significantly historic buildings, architecture, holy sites and its historical legacy and symbolism.<sup>21</sup>

Worth recalling here is that Ehud Barak once told the former Palestinian President Yasir ‘Arafat, during a round of final settlement negotiations that, in Jerusalem the Palestinians have what is over the ground, but what is beneath is the Israelis’.<sup>22</sup> But what is actually taking place, *viz* settlements, depopulation and excavations that threaten *al-Aqsa* and the Jerusalemites’ houses with collapse, indicate that Israel is attempting to impose its control on both, above and under the ground. Until the date of this report, sixty excavations were undertaken in Jerusalem, concentrated in the areas under *al-Aqsa* and it’s surrounding, and essentially constituting a series of deep tunnels, sometimes forty meters deep, that threaten the foundations of *al-Aqsa* Mosque.

### **3. Infringements on the Holy Sites**

It is essential to mention that the Israeli judaization plans are not restricted to Jerusalem but extend in varying degrees to many other Palestinian towns and villages. However, all these designs aim at significantly changing the historic Arab and Islamic identity of the Palestinian regions. Thus, the Israeli infringements on the Islamic and Christian holy sites in the various Palestinian towns and villages continued throughout the year 2008. In Jerusalem, the Israeli authorities contracted with Reichmann’s International Property Corp, a construction company to demolish a major part of the compound of the Supreme Islamic Council, situated near *Al-Aqsa* Mosque; to construct a residential building. The Supreme Islamic Council compound construction was completed on 22/12/1929, on the request of the Haj Ameen al-Husseini, then seized by the Israeli occupation in 1948 under the guise of the discriminatory Israeli “absentee law”.<sup>23</sup>

The Israeli authorities had also issued a decree to demolish al-‘Umari Mosque in the village of Umm Tuba south of Jerusalem, notwithstanding its great historic significance being named al-‘Umari after its founder the second Caliph ‘Umar ibn al-Khattab, and later rebuilt during the Ayyubid Era. In addition, this mosque has been the only mosque for the three thousand or so inhabitants of Umm Tuba village.<sup>24</sup>



Yet more, an Israeli attempt to seize the properties of the Orthodox church in *Bab al-Khalil* east of Jerusalem was halted, after the Patriarchate won the suit filed against an Israeli settlement company, which made the original deal in the term of the deposed Greek Patriarch of Jerusalem, Irineos I, demanding the stoppage of the maintenance and developmental works of al-Batra' hotel, prohibiting the Patriarchate from collecting the rents of the hotel and the appointment of a liquidator to administer the building.<sup>25</sup>

In Hebron (*al-Khalil*) town, some settlers attempted to burn al-Ra's Mosque, east of the town, and they threw garbage inside it. In November 2008, the Israeli forces seized four houses in the town for four days, on the guise of "military purposes", compelling its dwellers to squeeze into one room. The Israeli forces closed *al-Haram al-Ibrahimi* Mosque or the Sanctuary of Abraham for two days, on the excuse of allowing the Jewish worshippers to commemorate the death of the biblical matriarch, Sarah. During the same month, the settlers had once more attacked a Muslim cemetery and a mosque in Hebron, where they wrote on the mosque's walls insulting expressions to the Prophet Muhammad.<sup>26</sup>

Similar attacks have been observed recurrently on mosques and Islamic cemeteries throughout the year 2008, in different parts of occupied Palestine. In Tiberias (*Tabariya*) city, al-Zaidani Mosque was converted into storage for building materials.<sup>27</sup> In Acre (*'Akka*), a group of settlers profaned al-Manshiyyah Mosque and wrote insulting expressions to Islam and the Arabs.<sup>28</sup>

#### **4. Settlement Activities in the Region of Jerusalem**

Settlement activities and Judaization campaigns have increasingly focused on Jerusalem in 2008, more than any other region, to the extent that Ehud Olmert, the Israeli Prime Minister, and a number of his ministers had declared that settlement activities in East Jerusalem are not included in any Israeli commitment to settlement freeze, being part of their united capital that was "liberated" in 1967 -all according to the Israeli statements.<sup>29</sup> Olmert had reportedly said that Jerusalem will be the last issue to be negotiated.<sup>30</sup> He also undertook to continue the construction activities in Jerusalem,<sup>31</sup> and had specifically assured Shas Party that settlement activities will continue in East Jerusalem, after the party has threatened to withdraw from the coalition government.<sup>32</sup>

Ze'ev Boim, the Israeli Minister of Housing and Construction, considered the construction within Jerusalem territory an Israeli right,<sup>33</sup> while Binyamin Ben-Eliezer, the Israeli Minister of National Infrastructure, said in reference to the settlements in Jerusalem and the WB: What we build are the settlements that we intend to keep,<sup>34</sup> adding that the settlers' buildings in East Jerusalem are constructed with the approval of the prime minister, and that Jerusalem and the settlements are not of the same status as the WB.<sup>35</sup>

It must be noted that many Israeli officials stated to the media that Israel will relinquish the Arab quarters of East Jerusalem in peace treaties,<sup>36</sup> with the last of these statement being by the Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert himself, who said:

If we are determined to preserve the Jewish and democratic character of the State of Israel, we must inevitably relinquish, with great pain, parts of our homeland, of which we dreamt and for which we yearned and prayed for generations, and we must relinquish Arab neighborhoods in Jerusalem, and return to that territory which comprised the State of Israel until 1967.<sup>37</sup>

In a daring move, the Israeli media spokesman of the Jerusalem municipality declared that the municipality will construct 31,990 settlement housing units in Jerusalem, in the context of its attempts to impose a pro-Israeli demographic change in the city. The (currently former) Israeli mayor of Jerusalem, Uri Lupolianski, declared plans to build 10,000 settlement housing units in East Jerusalem.<sup>38</sup>

Several other settlement expansion activities were also given the green light. The table below presents approved construction plans of new settlements and expansion plans of existing settlements:



**Table 2/6: Plans to Build and Extend Illegal Settlements in Jerusalem<sup>39</sup>**

Neighbourhood	Settlement housing units	Area (dunums)
East Talpiot - Western Armon Hanatziv ( <i>Jabal al-Mukabbir</i> )	440	262.5
Har Homa-Stage 2 ( <i>Jabal Abu Ghneim</i> )	2,653; tenders have been approved for 1,486	977
Eastern Pisgat Ze'ev	233	90
Eastern Pisgat Ze'ev	252	163
East-central Pisgat Ze'ev	274	-
East Talpiot- Armon Hanatziv	180	67
Ramot	180	12
Gilo	Hotels and residences; 1,905 units.	
Givat Hamatos	3,150	
Neve Ya'acov	393	108
Har Homa	121	
Pisgat Ze'ev	763	

Jerusalem municipality had earlier approved the construction of 20 thousand housing units in West Jerusalem within Moshe Safdie's project which was opposed by the largest coalition of activists ever assembled in the city, a group of twenty organizations led by the Society for the Protection of Nature in Israel. The Israeli Minister of Housing, Ze'ev Boim, said building is continued within all Jerusalem's municipal boundaries. He added that what had been portrayed as delays in construction in East Jerusalem "are in fact final stages of coordination" with the municipal authorities.<sup>40</sup> The Israeli weekly *Urshalem* cited Ehud Olmert on continuing the settlement construction on the outskirts of Jerusalem.<sup>41</sup> The construction of 750 settlement housing units in Givat Ze'ev (Agan Ha'ayalot) was approved,<sup>42</sup> in addition to 800 other housing units in Ma'ale Adumim in the region known as 07. The expansion of the same settlement northwards under the title (E1) was approved, whereby four thousand settlement housing units and five hotels are to be constructed. The police station has been moved from the area of Ra's al-'Amoud, following an agreement with the settlers, and sixty new settlement units were constructed on a 14 dunum land within the project of

extending Ma'ale Hazeitim settlement. A ten dunum area project has been also presented under the Town Planning Scheme (TPS) number 13098 for constructing 110 settlement housing units and six public institutions, with the name Ma'ale David. The property originally belonged to the Bukharian Jewish community and the Bukharian endowment submitted a plan for the new neighborhood to be built, the settlement societies have collectively decided to use these buildings as a base to build a settlement quarter in the heart of the Arab area Eastern of Jerusalem, thus providing a continuation of the adjacent neighborhood of Ma'ale Hazeitim. The Israeli right concentrated on this region in order to obstruct any somehow "safe" connection between the Palestinian areas in the WB and Jerusalem.<sup>43</sup> In response to Annapolis, Jerusalem municipality announced TPS number 7984 for the extension of East Talpiot settlement, originally constructed on the lands of Sour Baher village. The project includes the construction of 440 settlement units and a football stadium, on a 262.5 dunums area.<sup>44</sup> This was followed by another 67 dunum of 180 settlement housing units.<sup>45</sup> The lands on which these settlements will be built were confiscated in 1970 by the orders of confiscation for the public interest, and are currently used to establish new settlement units.<sup>46</sup> In continuation of this *de facto* policy and to effect a demographic change, the TPS number 5834 A was announced to establish Givat Hamatos settlement of 2,200 residential units, on 411 dunums of the Palestinian Beit Safafa village south-west of Jerusalem. This project is part of a grand one thousand dunum project for the establishment of 4,200 housing units and nine hotels with an estimated 25 thousand settler population capacity.<sup>47</sup> In accordance with that, a tender was announced for the establishment of 307 settlement units in Har Homa, and the Israeli Land Administration (ILA) published the list of successful bidders, in an important preparatory step to start the building construction in the region.<sup>48</sup>

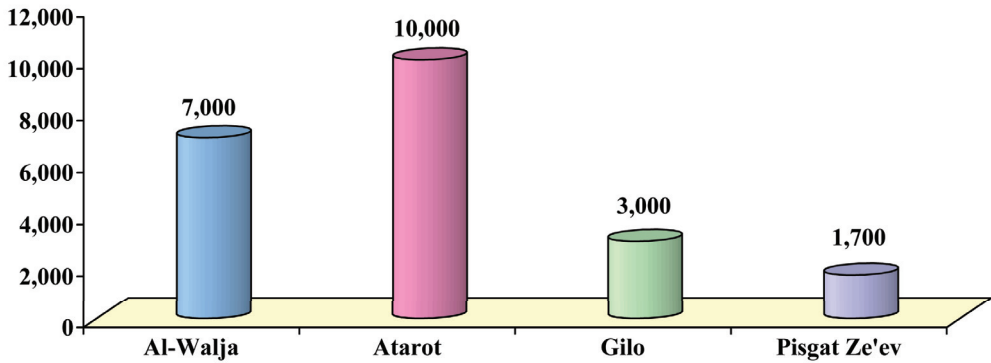
To further consolidate the settlement and the judaization drive, construction was approved to a grand educational centre on the confiscated lands of Shu'fat village north of Jerusalem, near the railway station under construction. This project is part of a plan to support the Israeli educational institutions in Jerusalem, for which also forty dunums were allocated from Pisgat Ze'ev settlement that is constructed on the lands of Beit Hanina village.<sup>49</sup>



**Table 3/6: Plans for Settlements' Expansion<sup>50</sup>**

Region	No. of settlement residential units	Description
Al-Walja	7,000	It is expected that the settlement of Givat Yael will be built on the lands of al-Walja village. The village's geographical location is divided, half inside the wider municipal borders of Jerusalem, and half inside the WB. The settlement will include 3,500 housing units, and will connect the southern settlement of Gush Etzion with Jerusalem. Most important in this, is that with the construction of the separation wall, <i>al-Walja</i> village will become totally isolated.
Atarot	10,000	Settlement construction in this area, currently unused lands of Qalandia airport, has not yet been fully approved; but when so, it will become the largest settlement in East Jerusalem, and some very extremist Jewish families will reside there, similar to those residing in Kochav Yaakov settlement on the eastern Palestinian side of the Separation wall, near the village of Kafar 'Aqab. Geographically, this area is near the Separation wall and Qalandia crossing, towards the north of the WB. A tunnel will connect this settlement with road number 443 to facilitate transportation to coastal areas.
Gilo	3,000	Currently, 32 thousand settlers reside in this settlement. Gilo was established in 1970 on the lands of Sharafat and Beit Jala villages. 2,743 dunums of these villages' lands were confiscated to build settlements, under the Israeli occupation order H F /1/211/322.
Pisgat Ze'ev	1,700	Established in the north of Jerusalem in 1985; lands were confiscated to build this settlement from the villages of Beit Hanina and Hazma, under the Israeli occupation order H F /135/322. Currently, 41,200 settlers reside there.
<b>Total</b>	<b>21,700</b>	

### Number of Residential Units in Settlement Expansion Plans



In support of the project of a greater Jerusalem, MK Yisrael Katz, who represents the Likud Party in the Knesset, submitted a draft law that provided for the annexation of the settlements that lie outside the boundaries of the Jerusalem municipality, i.e. Ma'ale Adumim, Givat Ze'ev and Gush Etzion, to the authority of the Jerusalem municipality. The proposal itself is not new in that it had been previously suggested by the former Israeli Prime Minister Sharon and by Shaul Mofaz, Minister of Transportation and Road Safety. In effect, this project totally isolates East Jerusalem and many Palestinian communities from the WB, besieging them from all sides; it also annexes wide Palestinian lands to the authority of Jerusalem, and obstruct any possible geographical communication between Jerusalem and the WB. In an interview with *The Jerusalem Post* newspaper, the Israeli PM Ehud Olmert claimed that the Ma'ale Adumim settlement is an integral inseparable part of Israel, describing the continuation of building in the settlement blocs surrounding the city as “legitimate”, as in the case within the municipal borders.<sup>51</sup>

During his campaign in the latest elections for Jerusalem municipality, Nir Barakat, declared, on the initiative of the Israeli right, his intention to erect in an area of two thousand dunums a Jewish settlement of four hundred residential units and a high-tech industrial park, connecting Jerusalem with Ma'ale Adumim (the eastern gate). In his winning speech, the Mayor of Jerusalem, Barkat promised to maintain the unity of Jerusalem to be the forever capital of Israel. Moreover, some of his close aides declared that he will cooperate with the Ministry of Construction and Housing in its ongoing projects to establish a new Jewish neighborhood, north of Jerusalem with more than ten thousand residential units and two tunnels to

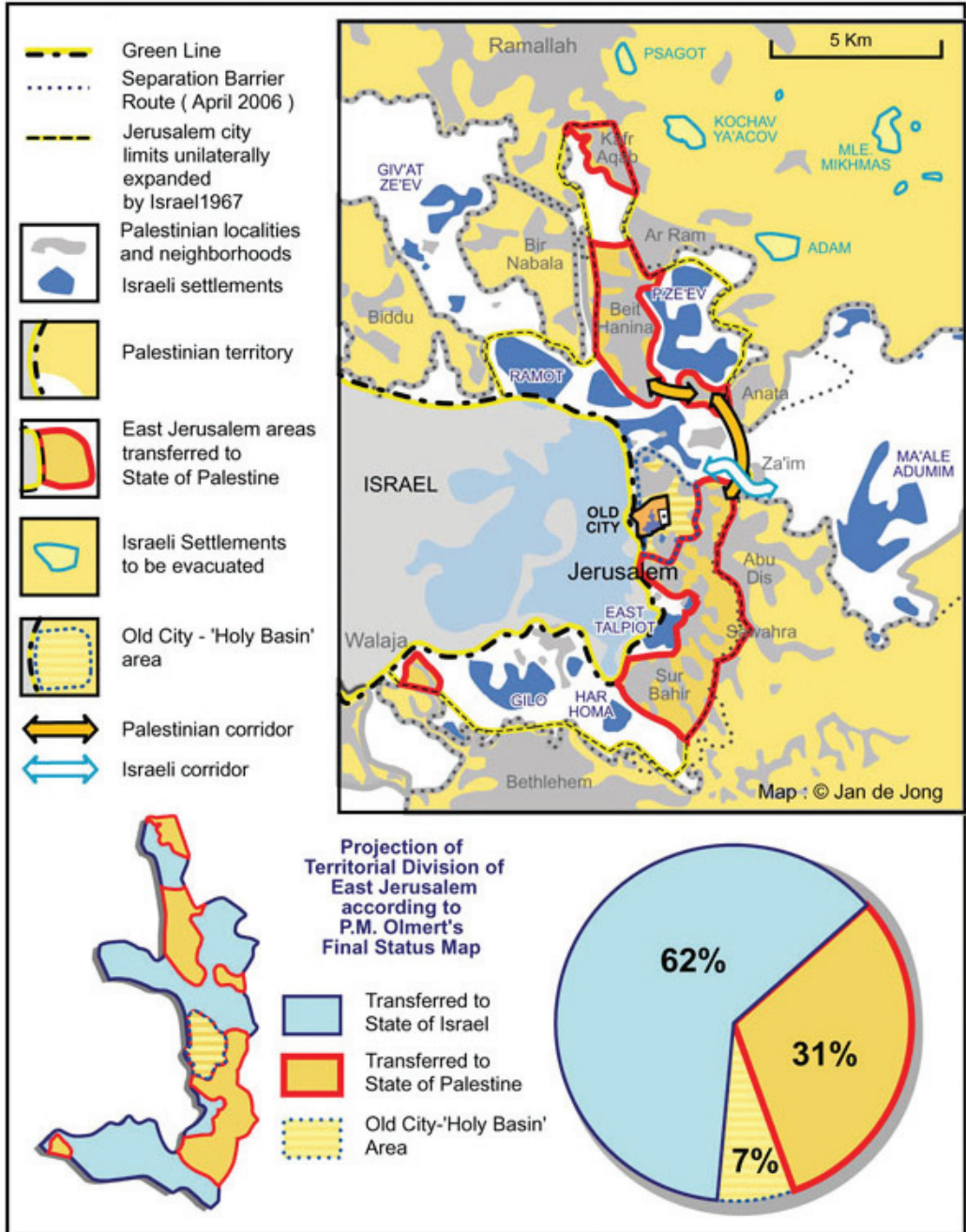




connect the Jordan Rift Valley region with the eastern settlements in Jerusalem and Beit El in Atarot, without the need to pass through or open the separation wall; in addition to developing the industrial region.<sup>52</sup> A new Jerusalem District Plan (30/1), aims at developing the district economically, socially and educationally, through intensifying construction activities, erecting new settlement neighborhoods or extending the existing ones, and to consider Jerusalem the “capital of the state and the heart of the Jewish people, and the spiritual congregation to all the Jews in the world and in the state.” Moreover, due consideration will be given to the Holy Basin that surrounds the Old Town, by establishing representative agencies for the international Jewish societies as intermediaries between the city and the Jews of the world.<sup>53</sup> The objective was to effect a demographic change through extensive building that makes Jerusalem an attractive centre for Israelis. Barkat also promised, as the new mayor, to intervene in the administration of the holy sites, especially *al-Aqsa* Mosque.

The Israeli government has developed a new project, 30/A, that will serve till the year 2020, and in accordance with the Israeli policy drive to make Jerusalem the eternal capital of the state with an overwhelming Jewish majority and a handy Arab minority. The “Jerusalem 2020 Master-plan” has similar aims as the aforementioned goals of the 30/1 project, namely: providing for the economic, social and educational development in Jerusalem through improving the infrastructure; establishing new Jewish settlements and neighborhoods in the city, and/or expanding the existing ones; giving privileges to the city of Jerusalem and announcing it as a first class developmental zone; improving educational and cultural services, by assembling all the institutions of the “Jewish people” in it, and establishing legations representing the World Jewish Communities to become the link between the city and the Jews around the globe; and moving all the governmental scientific research centres to Jerusalem. Also among the stated goals is encouraging the Jewish migration to Jerusalem, especially the various nationalities; fighting the phenomena of Israelis/Jewish migrating outside Jerusalem; establishing new industrial zones that would contribute to the development of the city, in addition to a transportation infrastructure (railroads, highways, tunnels, and bridges) that connect residential areas to commercial and industrial ones. Thus, the project is but an embodiment of the Jewish geopolitical vision of the city.

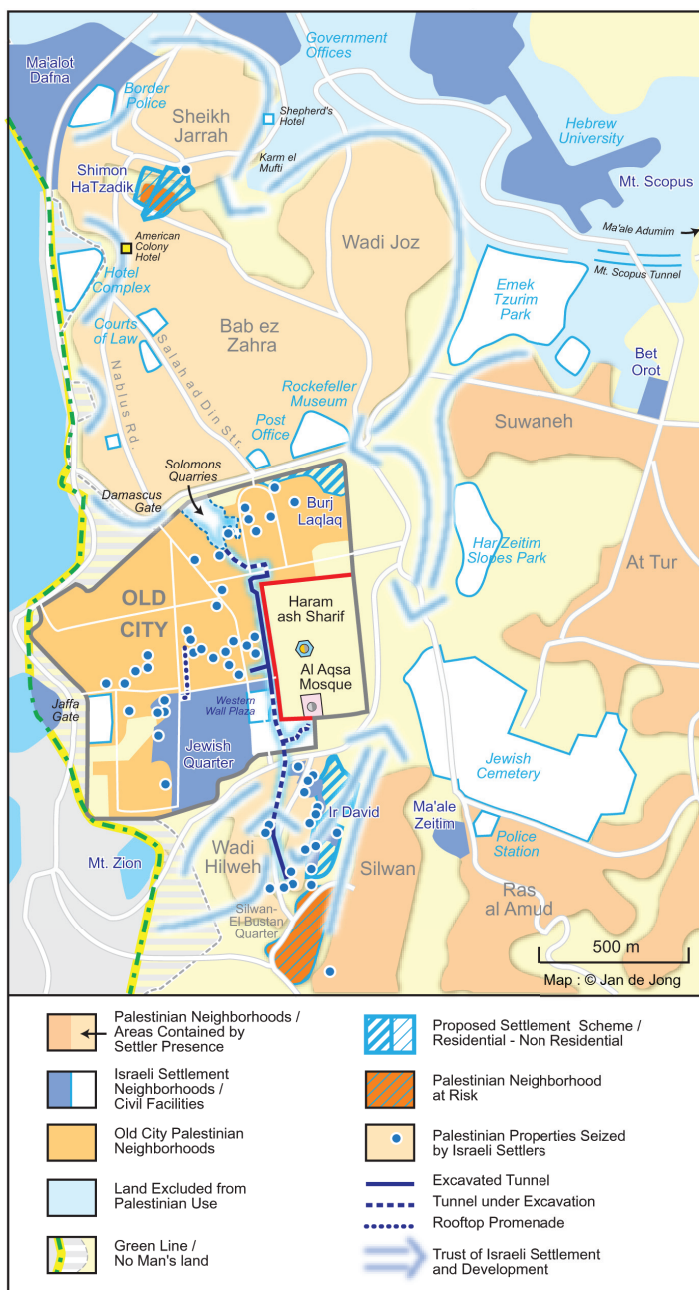
## Projection of Prime Minister Olmert's Final Status Map East Jerusalem - October 2008



Source: <http://www.fmep.org/maps/redeployment-final-status-options/v18n6-map-jerusalem-inset.jpg>



## Map Illustrating the Palestinian Neighborhoods in and around the Old Town, March 2008



Source: <http://www.fmep.org/maps/jerusalem/containing-palestinian-neighborhoods-in-and-around-jerusalem-old-city-mar-2008>

## 5. Ethnic Cleansing and the Withdrawal of the ID Cards

In a continuation of the Israeli policy to implement plans that divide the WB into isolated provinces, and the policy of isolating Jerusalem and reducing its Palestinian inhabitants, the Israeli authorities started quietly but persistently a major operation of ethnic cleansing around Jerusalem in al-Aghwar region. The dwellings of the Jahalin Arabs [a Bedouin Arab group] in al-Jeib area north west of Jerusalem were demolished under the guise that they obstruct the path of the separation wall. The rest of the Bedouin families who lived near to this site were told to vacate their houses and leave the area because their residences lie in the closed military zone, the so-called “the security boundaries of the wall”.<sup>54</sup> In Jerusalem district alone there are about 7,500 Bedouins of the Jahalin and al-Ka‘abneh Bedouin Arabs, who are distributed along the northern, eastern, and western hills of Jerusalem. Within its plan of the “ethnic cleansing of the Bedouins”, the occupation authorities intend to remove them from this area in order to establish the Israeli vision of their “greater Jerusalem”.

Similarly, the Jerusalem District Planning and Construction Committee, a subsidiary of the Israeli Civil Administration, has demolished with military bulldozers the agricultural structures, houses, cattle barns, and wells in the Bedouin areas of the northern Aghwar; Hadidiya, Hamsa, Furush Beit Dajan and al-Qadisiyah.<sup>55</sup> Moreover, the Israeli court in Beit El settlement issued an order for demolishing all the houses and agricultural constructions in the area of Wadi al Maleh in Tubas Governorate.<sup>56</sup>

The withdrawal of identity cards (ID) and the denial of family reunion applications has continued at high rates, that it led to social problems especially with issues of marriage and travel since as many as over 50 thousand citizens have lived for a long period in Jerusalem without having Jerusalemite IDs, i.e. living at risks of being punished. In addition, and within its efforts to delimit the Jerusalemite Arab population, the Israeli government conducted a new population census in order to put a new anti-Arab policy, which had eventually led to a new campaign of destruction of the houses of those who were asked to emigrate (i.e. expelled). In 2008 alone, the demolition of 72 houses was documented.<sup>57</sup> This impelled the Swiss government to firmly demand Israel to stop demolishing houses, which is considered a violation to the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War - Section III: Occupied territories.<sup>58</sup>



However, these statistics should be cautiously viewed. For while Palestinian sources recorded that 72 houses were destroyed in 2008, Israeli reports raise the figure to 85. Other sources mention that the total number of demolished houses in 2008 with the pretext of lack of building licenses or for security reasons was 400, of which 65 were in Eastern Jerusalem.<sup>59</sup>

## **6. Activities in Solidarity with Jerusalem**

The exacerbated threats and dangers that Jerusalem was subjected to from the Israeli occupation triggered the rise during the course of the year 2008 of a number of movements in support and solidarity with the inhabitants of the city. This was reflected in a flood of protests and declarations from Arab, Muslim, and foreign states as well as from many public, private, and international institutions and personalities, who warned against the occupation measures against *al-Aqsa* Mosque and the city of Jerusalem and its people, particularly with regard to the policies of judaization, house demolition, and settlement expansion.

Many protest movements were organized in Arab, Muslim, and foreign countries. Following an invitation by the Muslim community in South Africa, the Islamic movement in the 1948 occupied lands (i.e. Israel) held the festival event of “*al-Aqsa* in Danger” in Cape Town in February 2008.

The Islamic movement also held its same festival even, “*al-Aqsa* in Danger” later on 13/8/2008, in the city of Umm al-Fahm in the 1948 occupied lands, with the participation of thousands of 1948 Palestinians (the Palestinians whose villages lie inside the current borders of Israel).

Also in Umm al-Fahm, where the headquarters of *al-Aqsa* Foundation for Reconstruction of Islamic Sanctuaries is based; the Foundation has played a major role in revealing a number of documents that scandalize the judaization practices of the occupation in Jerusalem. The most significant among which was a plan to build several Jewish synagogues in the Mughrabi neighborhood which was reported by the Foundation on 12/8/2008. Two weeks later, and on the directive of the Israeli Minister of Defense Ehud Barak, the Foundation was closed down, and its properties and funds were confiscated along with many invaluable historical documents and documentaries, under the pretext of having contacts with Hamas.



In October 2008, Shiekh Ibrahim Sarsur, head of the southern wing of the Islamic Movement, issued a letter to the Secretary-General of the OIC and its current chairman, and to Secretary-General of the Arab League, alerting them on the heavy burden and responsible measures needed for *al-Aqsa* Mosque, noting that all the currently forced efforts by the Islamic movement's *al-Aqsa* Foundation for Endowment and Heritage, and also the efforts of tens of societies, foundations, and committees within and outside Palestine, cannot alone shoulder this heavy burden of protecting *al-Aqsa* Mosque and the Islamic holy sites; calling for an instant Arab, Islamic and international action, before it is too late: "before there remains nothing that we can defend in Jerusalem."

In another vein, the International Media Assembly for the defense of Jerusalem was founded in Gaza on 30/8/2008. It appealed to all the Arab and Islamic television networks to transmit directly from *al-Aqsa* Mosque the Friday and taraweeh prayers during the month of Ramadan; in response, al-Quds Satellite Channel did so, being the first precedent of its kind among all satellite channels.

Khartoum, the Sudanese capital, hosted the 3<sup>rd</sup> al-Quds Youth Forum between 10-14/7/2008, under the motto "Together, for al-Quds", with the participation of 170 youth representing 35 countries from different parts of the world.

In Jordan, Secretary General of The Royal Committee for Jerusalem Affairs (RCJA), 'Abdullah Kan'an, called on 22/7/2008 for sanctioning Israel under the mandate of the UN Charter - Chapter seven, to compel it to end its occupation of Jerusalem and the rest of the occupied Palestinian territories. The Palestine Committee of the Jordanian Professional Syndicates Union held a festival in the memory of the 39<sup>th</sup> anniversary of *al-Aqsa Mosque* burning, in the Jordanian capital, Amman. The participants signed the pledge for Jerusalem, which has been initiated by the International Popular Campaign in Support of Jerusalem; together, they orally recited the oath of defense for *al-Aqsa* and Jerusalem.

On the fringe of its sixth annual conference held in Doha in Qatar, al Quds International Institution organized a fund-raising event on the evening of 12/10/2008, where some Jerusalemite items were sold in auction, and approximately \$16 million were collected for funding projects in Jerusalem. The final statement of the institution's conference called the Arab and Islamic countries to lift the siege



on Palestine, reconcile Palestinian factions, and condemn the Israeli excavations beneath *al-Aqsa* Mosque with a consensus resolution on the necessity of sidelining the political, religious, and sectarian difference between the Sunna and the Shi'ah and to prioritize the interest of Jerusalem, noting that: "We are now experiencing a decisive phase in the history of the conflict over Jerusalem; what is happening now and will happen in the coming few years will determine the destiny of *al-Aqsa* Mosque." The statement also noted that "the declaration of Jerusalem the Capital of Arab Culture for the year 2009 represents a real challenge to the Arab nation with all its sects and official and popular components."

The 11<sup>th</sup> conference of the Arab Archaeologists Union, held in Damascus on 21/10/2008, called upon Arab countries to extend technological and financial support to the Union's effort to prepare academic and documented studies that reveal the occupation's transgressions against *al-Aqsa* and the rest of the Islamic holy sites in Jerusalem.

In the same vein, the participants in the "Urban Planning in Palestine" conference, held in Amman in October 2008 and organized by the Jordanian Engineering Syndicate, called for serious efforts in the area of exposing the Israeli deliberate plans and infringements and make them fail, through serious scientific efforts at all levels; so as to preserve the Arab and Palestinian identity and protect the Islamic and Christian holy sites from judaization.

The Islamic-Christian Front for Defending Jerusalem and the sanctuaries continued the publication of its periodical reports on the status of Jerusalem and the Islamic and Christian holy sites, especially *Al-Aqsa* Mosque. These reports were successfully released for the press and widely received and covered in the media.

## *Second: Separation Wall*

In total and deliberate disregard to international resolutions, the Israeli government continued building the separation wall, even though an international report demanded the termination of the illegal status resulting from the construction of this wall. In this respect, John Dugard, the UN Special Rapporteur on the

situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967 said that the wall can never be an excuse for self-defense.<sup>60</sup> This report supported what the Israeli Information Center for Human Rights in the Occupied Territories (B'Tselem) had earlier published, namely that the Israeli government does not abide by the International Court of Justice (ICJ) resolutions, or even by the Israeli Supreme Court injunctions that certain parts of the wall should be demolished.<sup>61</sup> The PLO had also appealed to the UN to issue a resolution against the continued construction of the wall, as its construction also prevents the Palestinian farmers from reaching their lands behind. The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) said that only 18% of the Palestinian farmers who own lands behind the wall are actually given the permission to reach their lands; the remaining 82% are denied their rightful access.<sup>62</sup> This tremendous Israeli pressure on the inhabitants of the districts near to the wall aims at compelling them to emigrate but in an ostensibly voluntary manner.<sup>63</sup>

Nonetheless, the Palestinians continued to protest against the wall;<sup>64</sup> thus establishing a popular movement which compelled the occupiers to return 2,600 dunums of the lands of the villages of Jaiyyous and Falamyeh in turn, this was in itself an incentive for the continuation of the struggle against the wall.<sup>65</sup>

In Jerusalem, the residents of Sheikh Sa'ad neighborhood filed a lawsuit against the wall because, if constructed, its path will divide the town of *Jabal al-Mukabbir* into two halves, thus dispersing families and obstructing the inhabitants' access to various necessary services.<sup>66</sup> Meanwhile, the court turned down a case against the construction of the wall around the area of Shu'fat camp and Ra's Khamis, particularly al-Salam suburb, on the basis that the wall was necessary to completely stop the infiltration of the "undesired people". Hence, the work on the wall was resumed.<sup>67</sup>

The Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert declared that all who live outside the wall are living outside the state of Israel,<sup>68</sup> which emphasizes that the wall was not a security measure but a political and demographic barrier. Thus, the Israeli government started to deal with the inhabitants of those regions in this manner, which resulted in great sufferings and hardship. This was particularly reflected in the slow and inefficient services extended to the area, and in the pupils' long



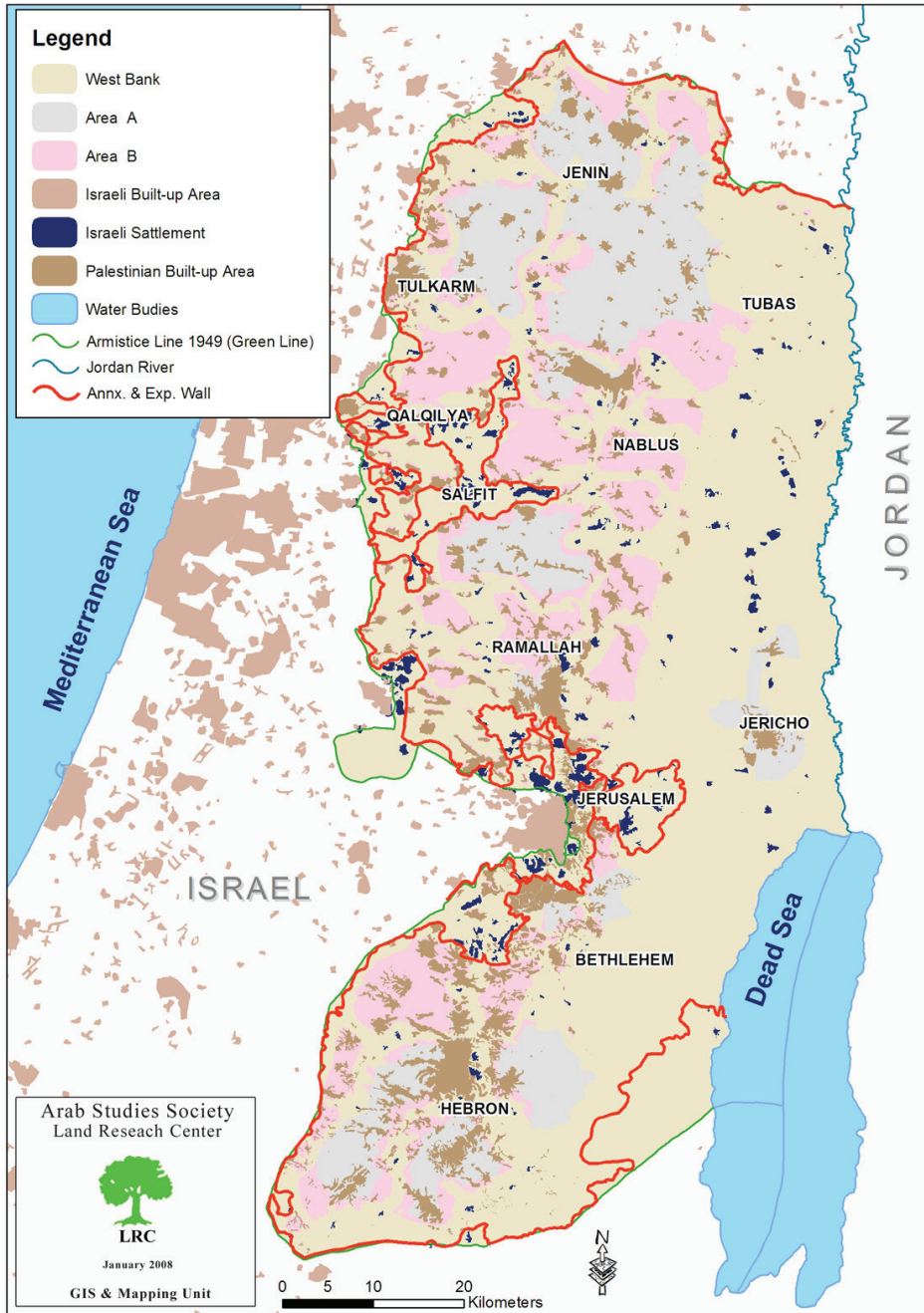


queues to schools, in addition to the worsening health and social conditions in those areas.<sup>69</sup> In his election program, Nir Brakat, the candidate for Mayor of Jerusalem office, presented his proposal to build a tunnel in the Mount of Prophet David through which trains of tens of thousands passenger capacity will be traveling daily to The Mughrabi Gate of East Jerusalem, and from there to *al-Buraq* Wall. Barakat also undertook to transfer Silwan into a tourist town, similar to Tuscania, where tourists will be able to reside facing the walls of the old city.<sup>70</sup> Moreover, Jerusalem municipality prohibited putting municipal election boxes/centres for the villages situated behind the wall, which was an obvious move towards getting rid of the Palestinians living there. In fact, this was one of the Israeli steps to have an overwhelming Jewish majority in Jerusalem, and an easy-to-control Arab minority.

A closer look at the available statistics on the construction of the separation wall would reveal that the building was rather slow during the year 2008. Micha Lindenstrauss, the Israeli State Comptroller, attributed this delay to budget constraints and to the many cases filed by Palestinians against the path of the wall through their lands. He added that 30% of the wall around Jerusalem was not yet completed i.e. 50 km out of 164.5 km; but that ten out of the 13 gates in the wall around Jerusalem were finished.<sup>71</sup> According to the Israeli Ministry of Defense, 12 km of the wall were constructed during the year 2008, and that what had been completed up to the beginning of the same year totaled 490 km. The ministry's spokesman, Shlomo Dror, noted that the construction in about 100 km has been frozen because of the lawsuits filed against the wall, and that the meager budget allocated for the construction in 2008 was the primary reason behind postponing the construction of many new sections of the wall; according to Dror, this allocated budget was 1.05 billion shekels, i.e. around \$292.7 million, way less than the required.<sup>72</sup>

An estimated population of 300 thousand Palestinians of the WB (12.4% of WB population) was isolated from the agricultural lands; while an estimated 256 thousands were isolated from the rest of the WB, i.e. 10.6% of the WB population. Moreover, around 46% of the WB lands area has been seized by the settlements and the wall, i.e. around 2,703 km<sup>2</sup>.<sup>73</sup>

## Map Illustrating Separation Wall, the Israeli Settlements, and PA Territories in WB



Source: [http://www.poica.org/editor/case\\_studies/IV\\_Map1.jpg](http://www.poica.org/editor/case_studies/IV_Map1.jpg)



This discriminatory expansionism had adverse socio-economic impact upon the Palestinians who lived on the path of the wall. The percentage of those who were forced to emigrate increased substantially by 58% in 2008 compared to 2005. This is glaringly reflected in the following figures (as of June 2008): The number of families who were compelled to emigrate from the beginning of the wall construction and until June 2008 was estimated by 3,880; compared to 2,448 during the period from the beginning of the construction of the wall up to May 2005. The numbers of individuals who were compelled to leave during the same two periods were 27,841 and 14,364 respectively.

Meanwhile, statistics indicated that the area of land confiscated for the construction of the separation wall totaled up to the end of June 2008 about 49,291 dunums; while approximately 274,607 dunums of land have become isolated and their owners have no access to them.

### *Third: Settlements and the Settlement Expansion*

The building and expansion of the settlements remained a major Israeli drive throughout the year 2008, which reflected the Israeli determination to impose the *de facto* policy. This drive had the support of the government and the religious establishment, who ruled that the construction may continue on Saturdays and during the Jewish festivals as long as this would contribute towards the imposition of the Israeli authority on more Palestinian lands.<sup>74</sup> The published data revealed that more than 2,600 new housing units were scheduled to be constructed in the existing settlements in the WB, of which 55% will be east of the wall. The pace of settlement construction between January and May 2008 has increased by 80% compared to the same period in 2007; the advertised tenders for the settlements' construction have increased by 550%.<sup>75</sup>

Within this unprecedented and government-supported drive, it was declared that more than 1,800 new settlement housing units will be constructed outside the green line.<sup>76</sup> Moreover, the Israeli Ministry of Defense approved the extension of the industrial zone in Ariel settlement (geographically located to the south of Nablus and northeast of Salfit), by building 25 new factories on lands that had already been confiscated on the pretext of being property of the state. Currently, wide-scale infrastructure activities are taking place there.<sup>77</sup>

Within the Israeli policy to encourage settlement in the WB, Histadrut (General Federation of Laborers in the Land of Israel) reduced the debts of 3,500 settlers who live in 140 settlements in the WB; out of their total debt of 700 million shekels (\$195 million), 350 million shekels (\$97.5 million) were removed.<sup>78</sup>

New structural plans for expanding the current settlements were approved, as was the case in Har Bracha settlement, which is established on the seized lands of Borin village in Nablus, on 229 dunum area; to build new settlement housing units.<sup>79</sup>

Moreover, a project for the transfer of the military settlement Maskiot into a civilian one was declared in order to establish 30 housing units in the Jordan Rift Valley area. The Israeli Ministry of Defense approved this project within the government's policy to resettle the evacuated settlers from Gaza in this highly strategic region.<sup>80</sup> This intensified settlement activity in the Jordan Rift Valley area comes within the Israeli policy of isolating, where the borders of future Palestine state are drawn according to Israeli vision, and preventing the geographic contiguity with Jordan, and shutting down the area in the face of Palestinian expansion. The Israeli Civil Administration statistics show that 94% of the Palestinian building permit requests were rejected, while licenses and contracts for Israeli settlements were generously granted.<sup>81</sup>

As for the illegal settlement outposts, they were kept on the pretext of making them touristic or educational institutions.<sup>82</sup>

Meanwhile, the Israeli Vice Prime Minister Haim Ramon expressed his looking forward to avoid confrontation with the settlers by reaching a deal on the settlement outposts. He said that on investigating the legality of 200 settlement outposts, it was found that one third of them could be "legalized", while a second third could not, and the last third is negotiable.<sup>83</sup>

Within the overbidding between the Israeli political parties in preparation for the Knesset legislative elections, and to gain the votes of the settlers in the WB, the Israeli Defense Minister Ehud Barak approved a number of settlement projects in the WB, that included the construction of sixty housing units in Sansana settlement quarter,<sup>84</sup> and other housing units east and behind the separation wall, i.e. beyond the areas the state defines as "settlement blocs" and it expects to retain under



Israel's control following a permanent agreement with the Palestinians.<sup>85</sup> These projects also included the registration and publication of construction projects in the "Seven Stars" project which blurs the green line, a project that was suggested way back in 1990 by the then Israeli Minister of Housing, Ariel Sharon.

Settlement activities continued to increase in the WB, both in big settlement blocs or in the isolated areas. A report by the national relations department of the PLO indicated that the occupation authorities was directly involved in 2008 with the establishment of 20 thousand settlement housing units in and around Jerusalem, of which four thousands were already completed. In addition, 1,500 dunums of land were confiscated for the sake of the separation wall.<sup>86</sup> Another report issued by the Israeli "Peace Now" movement stated that the settlements outside the region of Jerusalem increased in 2008 by 60% compared to 2007, with the number of buildings constructed in 2008 being 1,257 of which 748 were permanent and 509 were caravans; while the number of the settlers increased to 300 thousands. This figure does not include 200 thousand settlers east of Jerusalem. Here, it should be mentioned that Palestinian and Israeli figures vary considerably because most of the Israeli institutions do not include in their figures the settlements or the settlers east of Jerusalem.

**Table 4/6: New Settlements and Settler Population in WB and East Jerusalem (2006-2008)**

Year	New Settlement Units	Settler Population in the WB
2006	1,700	468,000
2007	3,614	482,000
2008	3,515	500,000

The construction of the infrastructure of E-1 settlement, for which \$50 million were allocated, continued during the year 2008. Being one of the eight settlements of Ma'ale Adumim settlement block (the seven others are Kedar, Mitzpe Yehuda, Alon, Kfar Adumim, Almon, Neve Brat and Mishor Adumim), E-1 settlement is viewed as one of the most dangerous settlements because it will obstruct the establishment of a Palestinian state with Jerusalem as its capital, since its erection

will prevent the extension of such a state westwards, northwards and southwards, and the only way for the extension of east Jerusalem will be towards the east. The 12,442 dunums land area of this settlement were confiscated in 1994 from the lands of Abu Dis, al-Tur, al-Issawiyyeh, al-Izriyyeh, and Anata villages under the guise that this land is state property. According to the plan, four thousand settlement units, ten hotels and an industrial area would be established in the E-1 area, in addition to the moving the Israeli Police headquarters of Judea and Samaria District to there. The plan generated harsh criticism from the American government and the European Union. Both demanded that the plan be frozen, on the grounds that it violated Israel's commitments according to the "Road Map". Instead, they maintained that the future of this territory be decided upon by a final status agreement between Israel and the Palestinians. Following this pressure, the Israeli government froze the project in 2004. However, building of the police headquarters was continued on the grounds that, like army bases, the police station would not be seen as creating facts on the ground, but rather as a building that could be removed.<sup>87</sup> Therefore, the biggest Israeli police headquarters in the WB was inaugurated in April 2008.

#### *Fourth: Land Seizures and Uprooting of Trees*

The year 2008 started with a vicious Israeli settlement wave targeting Jerusalem, at a time when the extremist Israeli settlement groups and political parties within the Israeli government were engaged in a bitter electoral competition; taking advantage of the assertion made by Olmert in Annapolis and Paris conferences on his intention to relinquish the occupied lands, including Jerusalem. Meanwhile, the Israeli government continued its policy of connecting settlements in the WB and isolating various Palestinian communities. It advertised tenders for the Ring Road project no. 4585 that extends for 1,250 dunums across the lands of Sur Baher, Abu Dis and al-Sawahira al-Sharqiyya villages. This includes the construction of three tunnels, and a bridge forty meters long and 115 meters high above al-Nar Valley. Moreover, six houses were demolished immediately and others will be demolished later, including houses situated beneath the bridge; while a third group of houses would be sandwiched between the road



and the separation wall. The aim of this road is to connect the settlements in the north of East Jerusalem (Gilo/ *Jabal Abu Ghneim*) with those to its south. Part of this road was already constructed, under the number 70; for which an estimated 550 dunum area of land were confiscated from the towns of Anata and al-Issawiyyeh.<sup>88</sup> To complete the connection between the settlements outside Jerusalem with those inside the city, the project number 4/905 was announced to widen Road no.1 Mishur Adumim and off Anata. An estimated 1,500 dunums of land were confiscated to connect Ma'ale Adumim settlement with the highway,<sup>89</sup> especially Jerusalem.

Meanwhile, 356 dunums of the village of Tubas were confiscated.<sup>90</sup> Another 36 dunums of Bardala village in the Jordan Rift Valley were also confiscated, in continuation of the Israeli policy of erecting road blocks and checkpoints.<sup>91</sup> And in al-Zahiriyya and Dura villages, 766 dunums of land were confiscated to build a security wall around the nearby settlement of Eshkolot.<sup>92</sup>

The segregation wall had been instrumental in swallowing further lands from the WB. On 23/6/2008, the Israeli occupation force eradicated wide areas from Beit Hanina village destroying 500 olive trees, and seized al-Zawayia site near Wadi Lefta declaring it a closed military zone. This was after an Israeli decree was issued to confiscate 5,500 dunums of the lands of Beit Hanina al-Tahta in order to complete the construction of new segments of the wall.<sup>93</sup> The Israeli forces also confiscated for the wall another four thousand dunums of land from Ramadin Bedouin village, thus depriving its population from their agricultural and grazing lands that was their only source of income.<sup>94</sup>

The number of documented ultimatums of destruction or control of houses and economic institutions in 2008 was 219, in addition to 36 cases of land seizure in Jerusalem city.<sup>95</sup> In January 2008, the Israeli Civil Administration confiscated 47 dunums of the lands of al-Jab'ah village south west of Bethlehem, and five other dunums of the lands of Nahalin south west of Bethlehem, under the pretext of being state property.<sup>96</sup>

The Israeli forces confiscated 23 dunums of the lands of Husan village west of Bethlehem, and another 140 dunums from Bardala village near the Beesan checkpoint in the northern Jordan Rift Valley.<sup>97</sup> Moreover, a military directive



was handed to the inhabitants of the village Bil'in, issuing orders to confiscate 61 dunums of their agricultural land to establish a military checkpoint under the name Kiryat Sefer.<sup>98</sup>

According to a report by the Israeli organization "Peace Now", a total of 275 dunums of land in the WB were confiscated during the year 2008. The most common method Israel uses in order to confiscate land is to declare it state land. The method is based on a law from the Ottoman era (from 1858) that allow the Sultan to confiscate land that had neither been planted nor cultivated for three years in a row. Over the years Israel sought out land that was not being cultivated in the WB and declared it as state land. In this way Israel confiscated more than 900 thousand dunams in the WB; the report added. Israel sometimes also used a confiscation order for public needs in order to take over land or issued a seizure order for military needs.<sup>99</sup>

The following table presents some military decrees issued by the Israeli occupation authorities to confiscate Palestinian lands in the WB between January and September 2008.<sup>100</sup>





**Table 5/6: Selected Israeli Military Orders for the Confiscation of Palestinian Lands in WB between January and September 2008**

Date	Confiscated area (dunums)	Location	Purpose
21/1/2008	72.2	al Jab'aa and Wadi Fukin	"State Property"
24/2/2008	860	al-Zahiriyya and Dura, south of Hebron	To build a military wall around Eshkolot settlement
29/4/2008	20	Ni'lin	To construct Kiryat Sefer crossing
1/5/2008	-	Zawata, Qusin, Nablus (city), Beit Iba, Beit Wazan, Azmut, al- Junaid, Deir al-Hatab, Salem, Sarra, 'Askar (Camp), Balata (Camp), Tell, 'Iraq Burin, Rujeib and Kafr Qallil.	Security fence on Nablus city and 15 surrounding Palestinian villages
18/5/2008	25	al-Issawiyyeh, south-east of Jerusalem city	to construct a section of the Israeli Separation Wall
16/6/2008	356	Khirbet Samra, east of Tubas city	-
1/7/2008	-	al-Bustan Neighborhood in Silwan	demolition of 100 Palestinian houses
9/7/2008	6	Rummanah, west of Jenin	Expansion of training base located close to Salem Camp
15/8/2008	1.5	Tel Rumeidah, Hebron	To construct a military Road
15/8/2008	92	al-Khader, west of Bethlehem	Expansion of Efrata settlement, south-west of Bethlehem
21/9/2008	33	Yatta, south of Hebron	to add new wall sections in the area
22/9/2008	6.5	Ramin, east of Tulkarm	To expand Enav military Checkpoint
2/9/2008	427	Jayyous and Falamyeh	to amend the path of the Israeli Separation Wall

In another vein, the Israeli authorities continued their policy of economic siege in the WB and Jerusalem, and the policy of uprooting trees, particularly the fruitful ones. Israel imposed during the year 2008 strict restrictions on the entry of Palestinians to Jerusalem, in pursuit of its policy of separating the WB from the holy city. And in the WB, the attacks of the Israeli settlers on the Palestinian farmers during the olive harvest had intensified to such an extent that they destroyed, burned and stole the yield;<sup>101</sup> the olive harvest being an important source of revenue for the Palestinian economy.

The aggravating tension between the Palestinian inhabitants and the Jewish settlers led a curfew imposed by the Israeli authorities on some Palestinian villages like Borin, Kafr Qaddum and Kafr Qallil; within their policy of economic sanctions.<sup>102</sup> The uprooted trees during the year 2008 totaled more than 2,200 trees.

### *Fifth: Water supply in the WB and GS*

The issue of water is an extremely sensitive geopolitical issue in the Middle East, as water security is an important component of national security. This reality, coupled with an increase in water consumption as well as urban and economic development, triggered Israel to place the water issue within the red line that cannot be superseded in the treaties that it concluded with the Palestinians. Thus, digging of wells at certain depths was prohibited in these treaties, which also strictly regulated the pumping of water; this created a serious water crisis for the Palestinians, particularly so because of the meager rainfall during the past years and the increasing consumption needs.

The mountainous limewater and the coastal sandy water constitute the most two important sources for the interior waters in both the WB and GS, where the mountainous reservoir is divided into three interior basins: the western, northern-eastern and eastern. While Israel shares with the Palestinians the first two basins, the third is entirely situated in the WB. Hence, the rainfall accumulation was, and is still, an important source of water supply in the WB.

The 2008 surveys showed that 123 localities (22.9%) in the Palestinian Territory, with 177,275 persons, have no public water network, all of them in the West Bank.<sup>103</sup> The survey data also showed that 116 population centres in the WB and GS, inhabited by 454 thousand persons (i.e. %12.1 of the total population in

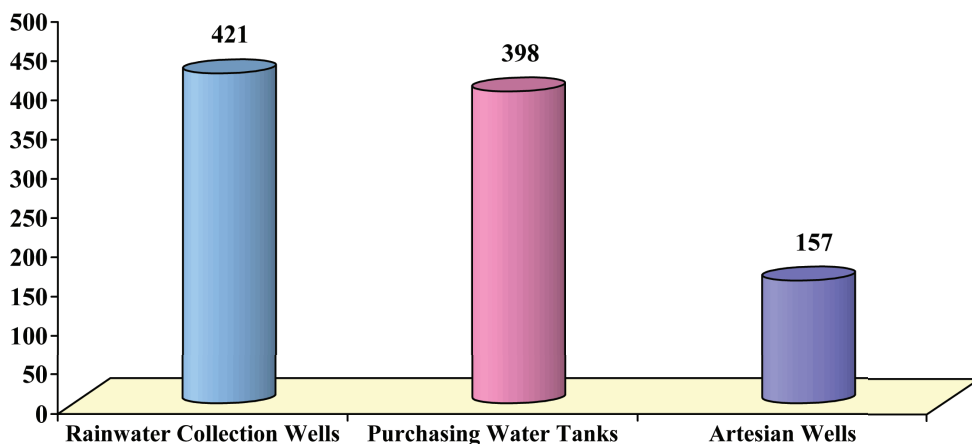


the Bank and the Strip) get their water supply from the Israel's National Water Company (Mekorot); of these, 110 of the connected localities are in the WB and 6 localities in GS. Another 112 of the connected localities to the public network in the West Bank obtain water through the West Bank Water Department.<sup>104</sup> The results indicate that 157 localities in the Palestinian Territory depend on ground water wells as an alternative to the public water network. And 421 localities in the Palestinian Territory depend on rainwater collecting wells as an alternative to the public water network,<sup>105</sup> and 398 centres depend on purchased water reservoirs as an alternative to the public network.<sup>106</sup> The household environment survey conducted in 2008 showed that 88.2% of the families in the WB and GS live in houses connected to the public water networks, more specifically 84.2% of the WB families and 97% of GS families.<sup>107</sup>

**Table 6/6: The Alternative Water Sources for the Public Water Network and Governorate in WB and GS<sup>108</sup>**

Water source	Population territory
Rainwater collection wells	421
Purchasing water tanks	398
Artesian wells	157

**The Alternative Water Sources for the Public Water Network and Governorate in WB and GS**



According to a report issued by the PCBS, the amount of water bought from Mekorot was estimated by 48 million cubic meters, while the available amount of water in the WB and GS was, according to the latest available statistics, 335.4 million cubic meters. The water supply allocated for the household service was 175.6 million cubic meters, distributed as 85.5 million cubic meters for the WB and 90.1 million cubic meters for GS. The average daily amount per individual of the household water was 135.8 liters, with the lowest being 46.6 liters per individual per day in Tubas governorate.

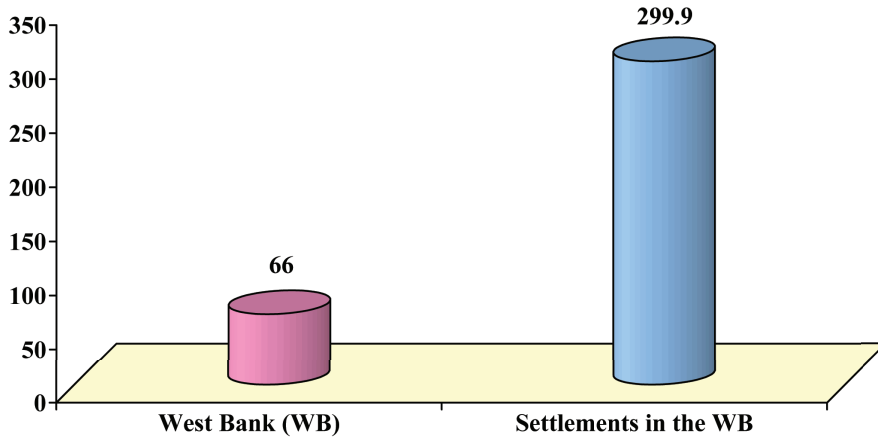
A report issued by the World Bank on the water in the WB and GS revealed that the Israeli individual gets four times the amount of water compared to the Palestinian individual in the WB and GS.<sup>109</sup> The head of the Palestinian Water Authority, Dr. Shaddad al-‘Attili, said that the annual amount of renewed rain water in the water basins of the WB ranges between 700 and 800 million cubic meters, of which the Palestinians consume 100 to 120 million cubic meters, and the rest is consumed by the Israelis, according to al-‘Attili.<sup>110</sup> This indicates that about 500 thousand Israeli settlers in the WB consume daily around 143 million liters out of the total amount of water in the WB (see table 7/6).

**Table 7/6: Comparing the Average Water Consumption per Individual between the Israeli Settlers and the Palestinians in WB<sup>111</sup>**

	<b>Amount of water consumed daily (million liters)</b>	<b>Average per individual (liters)</b>
<b>West Bank (WB)</b>	155.14	66
<b>Settlements in the WB</b>	142.7	299.9



### Comparing the Average Water Consumption Consumed Daily per Individual between the Israeli Settlers and the Palestinians in WB (liters)



The pollution of the sources of water caused by the sewage water from the Israeli settlements in the WB continues to be a major problem for the water sector in the WB, as it deprives thousands of Palestinians from having the bare minimum of healthy water.

Besides, the strict inhumane Israeli siege of the GS deprives the Palestinians there from their basic needs of water; for it blocks the supply of the energy needed to operate the water purification stations and the sewage system, or even to maintain them, which threatens the eruption of an environmental crisis.

The head of the Palestinian Water Authority, Dr. Shaddad al-‘Attili, described the water situation in Gaza as catastrophic. Al-‘Attili noted that GS depends on underground water and that only provides 50 million cubic meters of drinkable water, while the GS needs more and actually takes 165 million cubic meters, of which part is from the salty sea water, and about 30 million cubic meters is derived from the sewage water that mixes with underground water. Al-‘Attili revealed that 70% of diseases in the GS are caused by the polluted water.<sup>112</sup> In the same vein, results of the Household Environment Survey 2008 indicated that 45.6% of the families in the WB and GS consider the water to be good. This percentage varied significantly between the WB (64.3%) and GS (13.8%). In both areas however, this percentage is in deterioration, where earlier 67.5% of the families used to consider the water good.

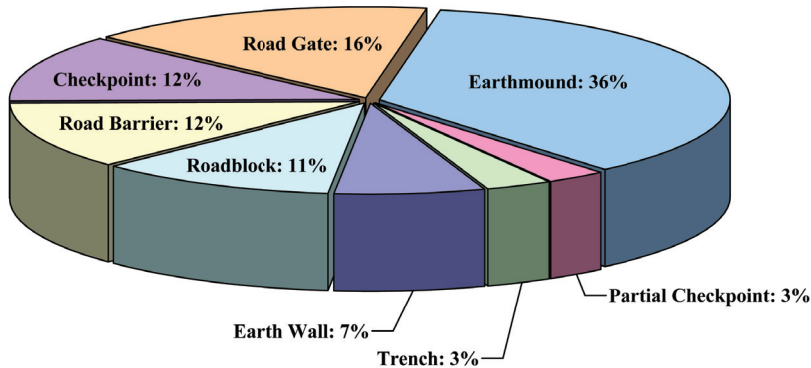
It is expected that during the coming five years, more than 400 thousand Palestinians would suffer from a shortage in water supply, by about 80 million cubic meters in drinking water, 20 million cubic meters in agriculture, and 30 million cubic meters in tourism and industry. By the year 2010, the total Palestinian shortage of water supply is expected to reach 280 million cubic meters,<sup>113</sup> which indicates that a really serious water crisis is in the making for the Palestinians in both the WB and GS.

### *Sixth: The Closure Obstacles and Checkpoints*

The Israeli occupation authorities continued to restrict the movement of the Palestinians in the WB through many barriers and checkpoints.

During the period 4/9/2007 to 11/9/2008, the number of closure obstacles increased from 566 to 630 blocking internal Palestinian movement, including 93 staffed checkpoints, and 537 unstaffed obstacles (earthmounds, roadblocks, road barriers, etc), this does not include 69 obstacles located in the Israeli-controlled area of Hebron (H2).<sup>114</sup>

**Closure Count by Type of Obstacle (September 2008)<sup>115</sup>**



While the average weekly random or flying checkpoints had decreased from 133 during the period January-August 2007 to 66 during its counterpart 4/9/2007-29/4/2008,<sup>116</sup> it rose to 89 weekly random checkpoints during the period 30/4/2008-11/9/2008. Similarly, out of the 72 main routes leading to 18 of the most populated cities and towns in the West Bank, 53 or almost three quarters of them (73.6%) are either blocked (by an obstacle or by the Barrier) or controlled



by an Israeli checkpoint. In addition, of the 51 secondary routes into these cities and towns that were newly constructed or developed over time as alternatives to main routes, almost half of them (24) were subsequently blocked or controlled by a checkpoint.<sup>117</sup>

The UN OCHA report on the Israeli closure obstacles in the WB after eight years of imposing this policy concludes that what was once justified by the Israeli authorities as a short-term military response to violent confrontations and attacks on Israeli civilians, appears to be developing into a permanent system; a system, which is fragmenting the West Bank territory and affecting the freedom of movement of the entire Palestinian population.<sup>118</sup>

Commenting on the so-declared “goodwill gesture” of the Israeli Government, headed by Olmert, to ease the movement of the Palestinians in the WB by removing one hundred unstaffed obstacles during the period March-September 2008; the OCHA office reported that of these obstacles, 25 were previously mapped and counted by OCHA and their removal confirmed. Five obstacles that had been mapped and counted by OCHA, were not removed in practice, despite the Israeli announcement. The remaining 70 obstacles, were either considered insignificant and therefore not mapped or counted by OCHA, or had already been removed in the past. The office also reported that with the removal of one of the major military staffed checkpoints, allowed over 50 thousand Palestinians living in two Barrier enclaves (Bir Nabala and villages south of Road 443) to travel to and from Ramallah without delay... Additionally, three main routes, which had been permanently closed, were opened for Palestinian traffic without dismantling the physical infrastructure. However, the report drew attention to the fact that these actions impact remains limited geographically because it does not reduce the larger territorial fragmentation of the West Bank. In addition, past experience demonstrates that in places where an easing instead of a removal has been implemented (meaning that the infrastructure was kept intact), restrictions are likely to be re-imposed for temporary periods of time.<sup>119</sup>

## *Conclusion*

The Israeli institutions that were concerned with the judaization and the settlement activity continued to actively pursue their consistent and persistent policy aimed at profoundly changing, actually counterfeiting, the history in

Jerusalem; and at imposing a Jewish character on the predominantly Islamic-Christian character of the holy city.

Through a close look at the Israeli operations of judaization and settlement, one can clearly observe the dangerously accelerated pace of settlement, confiscation of land and excavations beneath *al-Asqa* Mosque, particularly in the aftermath of Annapolis conference of 27/11/2007 that aimed at striking a final settlement before the end of 2008. Apparently Israel had exploited negotiations with the Palestinians to endorse its own settlement and judaization plans.

The Israeli illegal measures and expropriation of land and property was not limited to seizing what is above the ground through confiscation of lands in the interest of the separation wall and the establishment of settlements but extended to the counterfeiting of history and changing what is beneath the ground; i.e. the Islamic archeological relics as the excavations beneath *al-Aqsa* Mosque continue at high pace. Yet more, Israel has been stealing the water of the WB for the sake of developing the Jewish settlements there.

In light of the above, it seems that the Israeli establishment, with its different departments and orientations, is heading towards the implementation of its plan of dominating Jerusalem, depopulating it from its original inhabitants and to transfer it into a Jewish city. Hence, it is expected that the settlement operations will further accelerate, particularly with the forthcoming right-wing government in Israel, who declared on more than one occasion its settlement and judaization intentions. The coming few years are extremely crucial for the fate of Jerusalem, and for a probable establishment of a Palestinian state. It is therefore essential to commend the steadfastness of the Jerusalemites in the holy city, and the appreciated efforts of the societies and institutions that work for the interest of saving or at least preserving the city against the tremendous Israeli pressures and illegal measures. Having said this, it is important to highlight the extensive conspiracy against Jerusalem and the future of the Palestinian issue at large. This requires the intensification of the Arab-Islamic efforts and the rally of the Arab-Islamic street to confront the Israeli plans. It is unacceptable for the seemingly endless Palestinian-Palestinian and Arab-Arab differences to continue while the judaization of the holy city in particular and Palestine in general is being imposed.





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## This Report

The Palestinian Strategic Report 2008 is the fourth in a series of annual resourceful scientific studies. This Report aims at monitoring the Palestinian issue through an informative and analytical approach. The Report covers the Palestinian internal political situation, the Israeli scene and the Israeli-Palestinian relations. It focuses on the Arab, Islamic, and International stances towards the Palestinian issue, in addition to the issues concerning the Land and holy sites. The Report also analyzes the Palestinian demographic and economic indicators. Hence, it provides a comprehensive meticulous reading of the current situation.

This Report is distinguished for its updated information till the end of 2008 and for its outstanding team of academics and experts.

Despite the heat and sensitivity of the issues discussed, the Report did its best endeavors to be professional, scientific and objective. Thus, this Report is an unequivocal addition to the area of the Palestinian studies.

## The Palestinian Strategic Report

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