

The Palestinian Strategic Report

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Chapter Six

The Land and the Holy Sites

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The Land and the Holy Sites

Introduction

The year 2009 constituted a clear manifestation of the saying, “Jerusalem is the essence of the conflict,” and that is so on the Israeli level. For it was clear that, for the Israeli decision-maker, and since the end of the GS war, Jerusalem has become the priority. It has become clear that, for the occupier, the main front in the war he is waging is Jerusalem, unless he was engaged in a military confrontation at a front on his northern or southern borders.

The saying “Jerusalem is the essence of the conflict” remains the dominant theme in the consciousness of the two warring camps, whether on the theoretical and literary level, or on the practical and applied level; even if the two camps differ in their ability to apply this saying and turn it into systematic projects and programs, hence, to a reality on the ground. The Israeli project aimed at turning Jerusalem into a Jewish city, in its religion, culture and population, commonly known as the Judaization project, is most efficient and competent at drawing up plans and programs, and utilizing all capabilities and potentials to translate them into facts. This is made clear, first, in the occupation, second, in ethnic cleansing of the western part of the city, and then in the settlements, excavations, the Wall, and other manifestations of Judaization. Nonetheless, and since 1967, the occupation has been confronted by spontaneous reactions from the Palestinian inhabitants who had remained in the eastern part of the city, and who had managed to adjust to its various schemes and programs with creative reactions, in which they mainly relied on their steadfastness and domestic ingenuity. Thus, for the past 42 years, they prevented resolving the matter of the city’s identity in the manner wished for by the occupation.

This chapter attempts to review the most important developments and challenges related to Palestinian land and holy sites, especially in East Jerusalem and the rest of the WB. It is clear that Israel continued to adopt the same policies and methods that it pursued in past years, unaffected by the course of the peace settlement track, nor by the fact that the PA had fulfilled all its political and security commitments.



Rather, the year 2009 witnessed more actions aimed at Judaizing Jerusalem and at settlement expansion, meanwhile placing more constraints on the Palestinians in their land, water resources, livelihoods and movements.

First: Islamic and Christian Holy Sites

The phrase “the Jewishness of the state” has dominated the Zionist mind, in all its various factions; then on 31/3/2009, Benjamin Netanyahu’s government came to build on the style of Ariel Sharon’s past governments in embracing the efforts to gain the Jews the “right” to pray at the “Temple Mount.” For the most prominent challenge to the alleged Jerusalem’s Jewish identity is the absence of any Jewish holy site, in the form of a building, temple, or historical location of any importance. This drawback causes the Zionist mind to sense genuine failure in formulating the city’s new identity, in spite of what has been accomplished in it in its favor. Thus, the Israel Ministry of Tourism itself uses pictures of *al-Aqsa* Mosque and its golden dome, of the Church of the Holy Sepulcher and of various other churches in the Old City, in order to promote tourism in Jerusalem. During 2009, efforts were concentrated on producing authentic infrastructure for “Jewish sacred sites” inside the Old City, whether by building synagogues above ground, such as Ohel Yitzhak (Tent of Isaac) Synagogue facing al-Silsilah gate, the Hurva Synagogue in al-Sharaf neighborhood, “the Jewish Quarter,” or by an integrated network of excavations in which fabricated Jewish shrines are being built, to be open later for visitors.

1. *Al-Aqsa* Mosque

a. Changes in the Israeli Political Stance toward *al-Aqsa* Mosque

During 2009, the government’s embracement of the concept of achieving a Jewish presence in the “Temple Mount” was consolidated. It became an undeclared objective of the government and part of the Jewish consensus on Jerusalem. Thus, an opinion poll conducted by the Hebrew *Yedioth Ahronoth* newspaper confirmed that 64% of the Hebrew state’s Jewish population is in favor of rebuilding “the Third Temple.” The rate of approval varied between 98.5% for religious Jews, 47% for secular Jews and 91% for the public in general, made up of individuals who do not classify themselves in either camp.¹

Perhaps Netanyahu’s rise to power in itself represented the most important political threat to *al-Aqsa* Mosque, for he is the only prime minister who had announced official approval of the notion that Jews should be allowed to pray in “the Temple Mount”; as in one of his cabinet communiqués in 1996, he made a promise to “guarantee the right of the Jews to pray in their holy places.”² This government’s gravity became clear when, on 23/6/2009, the Internal Security Minister Yitzhak Aharonovitch stormed the mosque’s courtyards and prayer area. Aharonovitch is considered the highest official to storm into the mosque since its occupation; for when Sharon did the same, he was at the time the leader of the opposition.³ The gradual development of the idea of a Jewish presence inside the “Temple Mount” led to changing it from being an isolated idea supported by small religious parties and radical settlement societies that had no political representation before the year 2000, to becoming, during 2009, a principle idea in Jewish political circulation. On 27/7/2009, a full day of discussion in the corridors of the Knesset was dedicated, during which they discussed “ways to consolidate Israel’s dominance and mastery over the Temple Mount.”⁴

b. Excavations and Constructions under *al-Aqsa* Mosque and in Its Perimeter

The period between 21/8/2008 and 21/8/2009 has witnessed the uncovering of five new excavation sites; four of them are located south of *al-Aqsa* Mosque and one to its west, which lets the number of excavation sites, under and around the mosque, comes to 25 sites,⁵ according to the following table:

Table 1/6: Excavations Under and Around *al-Aqsa* Mosque⁶

Direction	Type of excavations	Number
South	Active excavations	7
	Completed excavations	4
West	Active excavations	4
	Completed excavations	9
North	Active excavations	1
	Completed excavations	0
Total		25

Thus, the number of completed excavations that are open to visitors has reached 13, while the number of active excavations is 12, knowing that these numbers designate those excavations that were officially made public. It is certain that there are a number of undeclared excavations, which normally would not be officially announced until the completion of their first stage.⁷ The hollow cavity below *al-Aqsa* Mosque is today more like an integrated city, with multiple entrances, passageways and landmarks. Perhaps reducing the excavations' issue to numbers and digits does not serve to understand their reality (see map 1/6).

Developments in the periphery of *al-Aqsa* Mosque were not confined to excavations, they were extended to include the building of a number of structures, through which the occupier tried to translate the concept of the city's Jewish sanctity into buildings and landmarks. The most conspicuous location on which work was carried out during 2009 was the Mughrabi Gate bridge, where Israel continued to prevent the Jordanian endowments' technical crews from entering it or taking any measurements of it, in order to hinder the presentation of any Jordanian project to the World Heritage Committee of the UNESCO. The Israelis hope that the "Israeli plan," which aims to change the shape of the bridge, connect it to the Jewish prayer yard beside Western Wall and destroy the Islamic relics underneath, becomes the plan of a *fait accompli* that the committee will approve for lack of an alternative. As for the most prominent structure that saw development during 2009, it is the Hurva Synagogue, which is a huge synagogue, situated in al-Sharaf neighborhood, to the west of *al-Aqsa* Mosque. It is four stories high, on top of it, there is a huge dome equal in height to that of the Church of the Holy Sepulcher. It hides al-Qibli Mosque completely from view, for the one looking at it from a western vantage. This synagogue is considered the biggest Jewish landmark planned to be constructed in the Old City; knowing that third of its cost was financed by the Israeli government.⁸ The work on it has been completed, and it was inaugurated on 15/3/2010.⁹

Hurva Synagogue



Table 2/6: Construction and Expropriation Around *al-Aqsa* Mosque¹⁰

Type of violation	Number
Construction	6
Expropriation	2
Already built constructions	4
Total	12

c. Jewish Presence Inside *al-Aqsa* Mosque and Interference in Its Administration

The repeated storming of *al-Aqsa* Mosque aims at turning the Jews' claim of having the "right" to enter it into an established fact, accepted by the city's inhabitants as well as by the Arab and Islamic consciousness. These storming incidents are carried out by three main parties: settlement groups, and official and security parties; in the period between 21/8/2008–21/8/2009, their total number came to 43 incidents.¹¹ The most notable of the security storming incidents took place on 11/6/2009, and was more like a maneuver to close the mosque's courtyard for a period of several hours;¹² there was another incident on 18/8/2009, which constituted a real maneuver, similar to a state of emergency, during which the Israeli soldiers would be compelled to scale the southern and western outer walls of the mosque, in light of the worshippers' closing of the mosque's doors from the inside.¹³ The most important conclusion that can be drawn from these security maneuvers is that, for the security forces, which are an executive apparatus, to reach the stage of training to shut and encircle the mosque's courtyards and to intervene inside whenever necessary, suggests that the decision to change the status quo inside the mosque's area has been taken on the political level, in anticipation of the right moment to implement it.

In the second half of 2009, storming incidents by radical Jews, who are protected and reinforced by the Israeli police, began to take an unprecedented escalatory direction. These incidents were in an attempt to allow performance of communal prayers by hundreds of Jewish religious extremists, during daytime hours while the Israeli police was providing them with protection squads, whose number equals or surpasses that of the extremists. The days of 28/9/2009, 5/10/2009 and 25/10/2009 witnessed sizeable repeated storming incidents of this kind. During the one that took place on 3/10/2009, the mosque and those guarding it were placed under



siege for eight straight days.¹⁴ While on 25/10/2009, the storming forces carried out unprecedented assaults, burning the mosque's main electrical transformer, and shutting the doors of al-Qibli Mosque, with the worshippers inside; thus exerting total control over all the courtyards.¹⁵

The fact that the worshippers and public leaders, from Jerusalem and the territories occupied in 1948, stood guard inside had a profound impact on frustrating these storming incidents and keeping them from achieving their goals. It formed a state of real pressure on the occupation and on attracting the media's attention to the mosque's courtyards, through confrontations and continuing to keep guard. During these periods, the mosque constituted a symbol for an unprecedented public response, the like of which Jerusalem and its outskirts had not witnessed since *al-Aqsa Intifadah*, and for an external reaction not witnessed by the region for a long time. Thus, on 5/10/2009, Sheikh Yusuf al-Qaradawi made a call to turn Friday 9/10/2009 a day of Arabic and Islamic anger in solidarity with *al-Aqsa* Mosque, following which there was public demonstrations in several countries.¹⁶ Furthermore, on 8/10/2009, Jordan's King 'Abdullah II warned that "attempts to change the situation in the city could destabilize relations with Jordan."¹⁷ These developments prompted *The Daily Telegraph* correspondent in the occupied territories to entitle his article "Fears of Third Intifada as Tension Grows in Israel" in his comments on calls for strikes inside Palestine, and the call by Sheikh al-Qaradawi and its reverberations inside the occupied territories.¹⁸ The occupiers realized how far and wide the effect of this guardianship of the mosque is, and the reactions it entails. Therefore, after these events had ended, they started issuing individual decrees calling for the expulsion of the personalities and activists who led this guardianship in the mosque during its siege, they also arrested and detained a great many of them.¹⁹

2. Jerusalem's Islamic Holy Sites

In addition to the assaults on *al-Aqsa* Mosque, Israel also targeted the rest of the Islamic holy sites in the city; these attacks were directed against:

a. The Cemeteries

Excavations and constructions continued in the Ma'man Allah (Mamilla) Cemetery with the aim of building the Center for Human Dignity—Museum of Tolerance Jerusalem (MOTJ). In addition, attacks continued on al-Rahmah Gate

Cemetery, which is adjacent to the eastern wall of *al-Aqsa* Mosque, where, on 21/7/2009, a number of Jewish societies and personalities submitted a request to the Supreme Court to confirm this cemetery as a public garden, and to start turning 1,800 square meters of its area into a public park. The documents that *al-Aqsa* Foundation for Endowment and Heritage viewed showed that the court had granted this request.²⁰

b. The Mosques

Israel continues to close a number of mosques in the Old City and forbid prayers in them. The most noted of these mosques, which came under real attack during 2009, was the small ‘Umari Mosque in al-Sharaf neighborhood, on parts of which the construction of the Hurva Synagogue is taking place.

3. Jerusalem’s Christian Holy Sites

Jerusalem’s Christian holy sites are being subjected to an Israeli methodical assault, focused on benefiting as much as possible from the properties of various Christian churches in the city. The Israeli authorities view the Orthodox Church in particular, as the “goose that lays golden eggs.” It is the church of the Greek clergy who colluded with the occupation to pass to it strategic lands and real estates, such as the lands on which the Knesset building stands, that of the Prime Ministry building, that of the Ma’ale Adumim settlement, the biggest in East Jerusalem, and that of the Har Homa settlement which is located on Jabal Abu Ghneim, in addition to the Israeli detention and interrogation center at the Russian Compound (Moscowbiya), which used to be a guest house for Russian pilgrims, and the lands of Omar Square at the western entrance of the Old City, facing Jaffa Gate (*Bab al-Khalil*).²¹ Developments during 2009 were centered on four tracks:

a. Developments in the Omar Ibn al-Khattab Square Deal

On 18/3/2005, an article in the Hebrew *Maariv* newspaper revealed a deal made between the Orthodox Church and Jewish investors, according to which the Church leased 2 hotels and several stores in Omar Ibn al-Khattab Square near Jaffa Gate, west of the Old City, to Jewish investors. It was leased for 198 years, in exchange for an amount, estimated at the time to be \$130 million,²² knowing that these properties were in fact already rented to Jerusalemite families and merchants. The repercussions of this issue, as well as the exceptional efforts exerted at the time by the Orthodox congregations in Palestine and Jordan, led to the unprecedented

dismissal of the Orthodox Patriarch Irineos I and to obtaining a commitment from the new Patriarch Theophilos III to revoke the deal and stop any future passing of other property to the occupation.

However, the new Greek Patriarch did not keep his promise and did not take the necessary actions required of him to annul the deal. Moreover, he did not refrain from accepting the sums paid to the Church by the Jewish investors as rent for these properties. This prompted the Jewish investors in 2008 to take advantage of the situation and file a complaint with the occupation's courts against the Church and the Palestinian tenants who occupy these properties. The investors aimed at forcing the Church to officially recognize the transaction, hand the properties over to them, and keep the Palestinian tenants from making use of these properties, in addition to asking them to pay the rent due on these properties, with a retroactive effects that dates at the time of signing the transaction between the Church and the investors.

In December 2009, the different parties reached an agreement, according to which the Jewish investors would give up their lawsuit against the families renting these properties, while the lawsuit against the Orthodox Patriarchate would remain standing until these estates are handed over to the Jewish investors. In other words, the occupation's courts denied the Palestinian tenants representation as a party to this case, and confined it to the Church and the Jewish investors. This situation is expected to lead in the future to concluding a settlement between the Jewish investors and the Church at Palestinian tenants' expense, especially that, until now, the new Greek Patriarch did not express any commitment to his vow to prevent the sale of Church properties to Jewish investors.

b. The Mar Elias Monastery Deal

The executive committee of the Orthodox Conference in Palestine issued a statement in which it revealed that the Greek Patriarch Theophilos III had sold a piece of land estimated at 71 donums of the Mar Elias Monastery lands, on the road connecting Jerusalem and Bethlehem, south of Jerusalem. The Patriarch concluded this deal in total secrecy. However, it was uncovered due to a dispute over the right of land use between two Jewish companies; the first claiming that the deposed Patriarch Irineos I had signed an agreement with it, according to which he gave this company the right to administer this land; while the second company presents documents signed by Patriarch Theophilos III that confirms its

purchase of these lands on 28/4/2009. In a meeting on 6/8/2009, the Holy Synod approved the right of the second company to the land and ratified Theophilos III sale of it.²³ The publicization of the deal caused angry reactions from the Orthodox Church congregations in Palestine and Jordan, most prominent of these was the announcement by the Council of Arab Orthodox Organizations in Palestine that it is boycotting Patriarch Theophilos III because he did not keep his commitment to the promises that he had made to the Palestinian and Jordanian governments on the eve of his election.²⁴ This decision prompted a great many Arab clerics and members of the Orthodox Church congregation to boycott Jerusalem's Patriarch during Christmas celebrations in Bethlehem, including boycotting the Christmas mass celebrated by Theophilos III,²⁵ and in which the PA lowered the level of its representation, with the absence of the Palestinian President Mahmud 'Abbas who settled for sending Tayyib 'Abd al-Rahim, secretary-general of the Palestinian presidency, to represent him.²⁶

This deal revealed the continuation of the Greek clergy in their policy of selling Church endowment lands to Israel, in spite of all the promises that Theophilos III had made at the time of his assuming his post. Furthermore, it contributed to confirming doubts that Patriarch Theophilos III had struck a deal with the occupation to complete the sale of Omar Ibn al-Khattab Square real estates. It is worth mentioning here also that the reactions of the PA and the Jordanian government were much less than their reactions toward passing on the Church endowment lands in the past; as they did not exert any genuine pressure on the Patriarch and did not threaten to withdraw their recognition of him; they merely expressed their condemnation, and called on the Patriarch to stop the transaction.

c. Constructions in the Western Wall of the Holy Sepulcher Church

During 2009, Israel's attacks were not confined to attempts to control Church endowments, in collusion with the Greek clergy; this year witnessed an assault of the most sacred Christian Holy Site in the city. That took place when Israel Antiquities Authority (IAA) began, on 23/11/2009, to carry out excavations and restoration operations near St. Mary's Gate in the western wall of the Church of the Holy Sepulcher; it was said that the aim of these operations is to reopen the closed Mary's Gate,²⁷ without consulting the Church or even coordinating with it. Following these operations, the Jordanian government called the Israeli ambassador there and handed him a protest note, demanded putting a stop to the operations and

a return of things to the way they were before.²⁸ What is striking here is that the Greek Patriarch and clergy did not protest the operations that the Israeli authorities had carried out in the Church, in spite of the fact that these operations represented a clear infringement on their authority.

d. The Rise in the Efforts to Isolate the Arab Clergy in the Orthodox Church

For centuries, the Greek clergy have been holding a monopoly on the decisions of the Orthodox Church in Jerusalem, as well as on managing its affairs and properties. The Greeks endeavor to keep the Arab clergy from becoming members of the Holy Synod or reach other sensitive positions in the Church. They work on removing the Arab clergy from their posts and constraining them, in particular those who express their opposition to the directions give by the Patriarch and the Holy Synod, to whom most authorities are entrusted, and the overwhelming majority of whom are Greek clergy; in clear violation of the Jordanian law issued in 1958 that regulates the Church's work.²⁹

On 17/11/2009, and in the framework of the Greek clergy's endeavor to restrain the Arab clergy, Patriarch Theophilos III dismissed the Archimandrite 'Atallah Hanna from his post as vice chairman of the Orthodox Church Court,³⁰ in a measure that was met with widespread condemnation from the Orthodox authorities and institutions. On 26/11/2009, hundreds from the Orthodox congregation organized a sit-in in Amman, to object to the patriarch's decision. However, he did not back down, and insisted on dismissing 'Atallah Hanna from his post.³¹

4. Islamic and Christian Holy Sites in the Rest of Historic Palestine

a. The WB

During 2009, the WB mosques were subjected to 15 attacks, most of which took place in Hebron, against the Ibrahimi Mosque. The most violent one occurred at dawn of Friday 11/12/2009 in Yasuf village,³² when armed settlers torched the Grand Hasan Khadr Mosque in the village located east of the city of Salfit, north of WB, leading to the burning of a large part of it.³³ In the following, we will cite briefly the most important of these attacks.³⁴ We start with the infringements on al-Ibrahimi Mosque, when on 9/4/2009; the Israeli forces announced a two-day closure of the mosque. They also shut down the mosque in the face of worshippers for a whole day on 12/4/2009, 18/8/2009 and 23/9/2009. The occupation kept the

worshippers from entering it on 28/7/2009, while they stormed it on 25/9/2009. In another attack, a settler tried on 10/1/2009 to break into Kfar Qaddoum Mosque near the city of Qalqilya, firing bullets into the air to frighten the worshippers in it. Then on 2/6/2009, Jewish extremists threw a dead pig on the entrance of Nabi Elias Mosque in Qalqilya, and on 27/7/2009, some radical settlers broke a window in the Prophet Abraham Sanctuary in Hebron. Furthermore, on 11/12/2009, groups of settlers torched Yasuf Mosque near the city of Nablus.

b. The GS

During the Israeli aggression on GS that lasted 22 days, starting on 27/12/2008 and ending on 18/1/2009, the Israeli forces targeted 152 mosques, completely demolishing 45 of them, and causing partial damage to 107 others.³⁵

c. The Territories Occupied in 1948

Mosques and cemeteries in the territories occupied in 1948 were subject to six main attacks that went as follows:³⁶ the first attack took place on 9/1/2009, when a group of radical settlers tried to burn the Sea Mosque in Tiberias; followed by another attack on 9/5/2009, when tens of radical Jews wrote racist slogans on the walls of al-Manshiyyah Mosque in the city of Acre. As for the third attack, it took place on 23/5/2009 when the Israeli police prevented the residents of Acre and al-Shaghura from restoring Prophet Yusha (Joshua) Mosque; followed on 21/6/2009 by a permission from Israel's Supreme Court to build cow pens in the cemeteries of the al-Barwah village, made deserted by the expulsion of its people. On the following day, 22/6/2009, the Supreme Court gave a similar permission for the cemeteries of the equally deserted village of Ajzam. The last attack happened on 18/8/2009, when the Israeli authorities tore down the southern wall of al-Naqib cemetery in Lod.

Second: The Jerusalemites' Suffering³⁷

For the occupier, the demographic battle constitutes the most difficult battleground in his war to Judaize the city, for it does not fall within a scope that can be controlled simply through decrees, measures and confiscations, the same as lands and properties. Largely in this arena, the battle's outcome is controlled by the vitality and energy of the other party in the battle and his ability to persist and

survive, or rather to multiply, in spite of the occupation's circumstances. This could perhaps be the most prominent point of strength of the Jerusalemite society since 1967 and until today. The Israeli leaders today, and in particular those responsible for the plan to Judaize Jerusalem, are aware that the demographic balance presents the most crucial threat to this plan, for it is the matter that lets them feel the difficulty—or rather the impossibility—of realizing this Judaization plan. This challenge was a principle incentive for drawing up a comprehensive structural plan for the city, known today as “Jerusalem 2020.” This plan sets aside a special chapter for discussing the demographic balance between various population groups, maintains that, within present expectations, and by 2020, the Arab ratio of the total population of the city will reach 40.2%. This plan defines a number of policies and the areas where intervention by the state should be adopted in order to lower the ratio of the Arab population to the level determined by previous governments, so as to keep the ratio of the Jews no less than 70% of the city's population.³⁸

1. The Demographic Battle's Reality

After their occupation of the western part of the city in 1948, Zionist gangs executed a comprehensive ethnic cleansing of Jerusalem and its villages. They expelled the Palestinian residents from the parts of Jerusalem that they had occupied, which represented at the time 87% of the city's area. According to the 1948 census, only 1,100 Arabs remained in the city, representing 1.3% of the occupied area's population.³⁹ However, in 1967, when the whole city came under occupation, the occupation forces could not execute a similar ethnic cleansing, due to a number of historic and subjective circumstances. Soon after the occupation, they conducted a census of the population from which they excluded all those residents who were out of the city at the time. Thus, they counted 68,800 Palestinians, most of whom live in the eastern part of the city with its altered boundaries, and 197,700 Jews, gathered in its western part. This meant that the population balance in the city at the time indicated the presence of 25.8% Arab residents, versus 74.2% Jewish residents.⁴⁰ At the time, the occupier counted on being able, in the long run and by systematic planning, to attract Jews to the city; and by applying systematic pressure on the Arab residents, to push them to voluntary emigration. Thus, he would be able to alter this demographic ratio in favor of the Jews; and with that, the city will become a pure Jewish capital for a pure Jewish state, as was the hope of the Zionist plan. Yet, over 40 long years, that were the stage for long-range systematic

planning, the imbalance in the ratio increased in the Palestinian inhabitants' favor, to become 34.8% for Palestinians against 65.2% for the Jews.⁴¹

Over the last four decades, not a year passed in which the Jewish population growth surpassed that of the Palestinians,⁴² with the exception of the year 1990. This Jewish population growth declined gradually from 2.6% in 1978 to 0.9% in 2002, at the peak of *al-Aqsa intifadah*, only to improve slightly and reach 1.3% in 2007,⁴³ which is lower than the general average of the Jewish population growth of that year in Israel, which reached 1.6%. The real predicament of the Israeli planners is that this increase includes the natural increase in population added to the number of immigrants coming from abroad. Almost since 1980, statistics showed that the resultant of the migration from and to the city was negative, denoting that, on the level of internal migration, Jerusalem was, and still is, an expelling city for Jewish residents. For during 2007, the number of migrants from the city reached 17,600, while that of the migrants to the city came to 11,200 persons. This makes the result of the internal migration negative by 6,400 persons. If we add to this the arrival of 3,200 Jewish immigrants from outside the country with the aim to settle in Jerusalem, the final resultant of immigration would register a decrease of 3,200 immigrants.⁴⁴ Furthermore, the population vital indicators impart a continuance of the Palestinian population growth in Jerusalem, against a decrease of that of Jews. The average age of Muslims in the city is 18.7 years, while that of the Jews is 25 years. We should mention here that the average age of the residents of East Jerusalem's settlements is higher than the general average, reaching 31.2 for the Gilo settlement residents and 34 for the East Talpiot residents.⁴⁵ As for the average number of family members in the city, it is 5.2 for Arab families, corresponding to 3.3 for Jewish families.⁴⁶

Faced with these facts, the occupation state's decision-makers have adopted several measures to contain the Arab population growth, with the aim of lowering the Arab population ratio from 34.8% to a maximum of 30%, during a period of no more than 10 years. To realize this difficult objective, the occupation state has adopted three strategic solutions, the first: activating the policy of expelling Arab residents; the second: activating the measures of bringing in Jewish residents, these two measures will be discussed in the next section; and the third: changing the municipal boundaries to coincide with the Wall's path designed to keep out the largest possible number of Arab residents, and to include the largest possible number of Jewish residents; this will be discussed in the context of the battle over the land.

2. The Attempts to Expel the Palestinian Residents

a. Withdrawing the “ID Cards”⁴⁷

Since the occupation of the city in 1967, the Israeli authorities have been adopting a policy of withdrawing the Jerusalemites’ blue ID cards. However, in the past, the pace of withdrawing the ID cards was not sufficient nor did it contribute effectively to limiting the Palestinian population growth in the city; in spite of the fact that the occupier was betting on it as one of his most effective weapons in this context. For the number of ID cards withdrawn between 1967 and 2007 is 8,558 cards, while the number of those withdrawn during 2008 alone reached 4,577 cards. This means that the cards withdrawn in 2008 represents 34.8% of the total number of cards withdrawn since the city’s occupation, the number of which reached 13,135 cards withdrawn over a period of 41 years.⁴⁸

This development is likely to continue in the foreseeable future; as, following the announcement of the new municipal limits that coincide with the Wall’s path, the Municipality of Jerusalem will proceed to withdraw the blue resident cards from the Palestinian residents isolated outside the Wall, considering them as living outside the city. Thus, the law of “Jerusalem, the center of life” applies to them, which imposes on Jerusalem’s residents to prove, by any manner possible, that the city is the center of their lives, so that they would preserve the right to reside in it.

b. Mass Expulsion

Following the city’s occupation in 1967, the Israeli authorities applied a policy of mass expulsion in Jerusalem, but only once; and that was against the Moroccan Quarter residents, whose houses were razed to the ground and turned into a prayer area for the Jews. The Israeli authorities’ urgent need to limit the Palestinian population growth brought to the fore this policy, in spite of its complexity and the heavy toll it extracts internally and internationally. Actually, the occupation’s Jerusalem Municipality started to implement this policy in November 2008 against the residents of Sheikh Jarrah neighborhood, followed by al-Bustan neighborhood in February 2009. Then mass warnings came in succession threatening hundreds of Jerusalemite families. We shall discuss the mass evacuation decrees in detail in the next section.

c. Fragmentizing and Encircling Palestinian Residential Blocks

The occupier realizes that mass evacuation will not allow him to expel 281,800 persons, the estimated number of the city's Palestinian population in 2010,⁴⁹ because it is a difficult procedure. It will certainly be confronted with real resistance from the inhabitants of these neighborhoods and will provoke international media and political pressure. Realism imposes the necessity to study the best available methods to benefit from this policy and allow it to succeed. That is why the occupier resorted to restricting the scope of his actions and narrowing down his objective, so to make it more realizable. Therefore, instead of Judaizing all of Jerusalem's neighborhoods, he began to concentrate his efforts on those neighborhoods nearest to the Old City, which represent its Arabic embracing arms, from Sheikh Jarrah to the north, al-Suwaneh and Shiyah to the East, and Silwan to the south. Thus, we find that he uses the evacuation policy to isolate them from their surroundings, and to deal with a population block of no more than one third of the city's Palestinian residents, concentrated in the Old City and its adjacent neighborhoods, which he would then surround with a crescent of Jewish population blocks connected to West Jerusalem. Thus, he would leave the bigger population blocks in the city isolated from the center, particularly Beit Hanina and Shu'fat to the north that, alone, house almost 70 thousand Palestinians, and represent together the center of the heaviest population density in Jerusalem, in addition to Sur Baher and Beit Safafa to the south.

d. Housing Restrictions

Limiting housing opportunities is one of the most effective means used by the occupier to limit population growth. The area available for construction in Jerusalem, according to the current building regulations, does not exceed nine thousand donums of the 72 thousand donums that make up the area of the eastern part of the city.⁵⁰ Anyway, building in these areas requires permits, which may take on average three years to obtain for a single apartment, with an average cost of \$300 for each meter square.⁵¹

As for the number of building permits granted annually to Arab residents, it does not exceed, on average, 200 permits. So in the period extending between November 2007 and November 2009, the Israeli authorities granted the Jerusalemites only 400 building permits, compared to more than three thousands given during the same period to Jewish settlers in East Jerusalem,



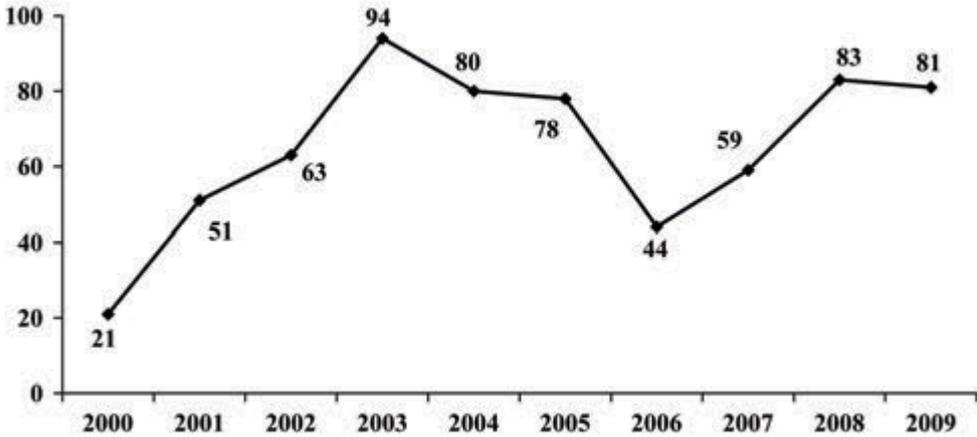
apart from the Israeli government settlement projects.⁵² The restrictions placed on building permits left no choice for Jerusalemites other than to build on their lands without waiting for permits from the Israeli authorities. This has produced a creative phenomenon of defying the occupation, which became evident in the presence of 15 thousand unauthorized homes in the city.⁵³ Although these homes are threatened with demolition at any moment, and although their owners live in constant worry about their future and that of their homes, the unauthorized buildings were one of the principle reasons that allowed Jerusalemite society to survive, continue and grow in numbers, to the extent it has reached today.

The cruelest measure that falls under housing restrictions is house demolitions that focus on unauthorized houses. Furthermore, the Israeli authorities apply the policy of forcing the house’s owner to tear it down himself, or they tear it down and force him to pay for the demolition expenses as well as fines. It seems that the Israeli authorities have concentrated their efforts in 2009 on imposing and implementing this measure, thus forcing the residents to tear down, with their hands, about 23 of their properties.⁵⁴ This measure serves to achieve the housing objectives of the structural plan “Jerusalem 2020,” which considered intensifying punishment measures against unauthorized building phenomenon a necessary and effective way to limit the Palestinian housing expansion.⁵⁵ As for the number of demolished homes during 2009, compared to previous years, it was as follows:

Table 3/6: Demolished Houses in Jerusalem 2000–2009⁵⁶

Year	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	Total
No. of demolished houses	21	51	63	94	80	78	44	59	83	81	654

Demolished Houses in Jerusalem 2000–2009



In spite of the gravity of the policy of house demolitions and its intensification in Jerusalem, it remains inadequate in dealing with the phenomenon of unauthorized construction, as those responsible for Judaizing the city had hoped. The numbers above tells that the annual average of demolished houses in Jerusalem comes to 66.2 houses. Simple arithmetic tells us that demolishing houses at this rate requires 241 years before the Israeli authorities are able to remove them all. This is so if we suppose that demolished houses did not get rebuild, which is not a realistic supposition. In spite of the reservation with which most Palestinian and Arab circles view these numbers, the Israelis realize their importance and deal with them in all seriousness. That is why they demand finding effective and harsh measures to the phenomenon of unauthorized construction; mass expulsion is one of these measures. Furthermore, enticing the owners of these houses to obtain permits, thus, thrusting them into a legal maze, collecting exorbitant fees and fines from them are but some of the proposed solutions backed by the mayor of Jerusalem.

Map 2/6: Containing Palestinian Neighborhoods in and Around Jerusalem's Old City 2008



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

3. Attempt to Promote Jerusalem as a Jewish Residential Center

Over the last four decades, attracting Jewish residents to Jerusalem constituted the biggest failure of those in charge of the Judaization plan, since the resultant of the Jewish internal migration from and to Jerusalem came out negative, seeing that from 1980–2007, 105 thousand Jews left the city.⁵⁷ The “Jerusalem 2020” plan has diagnosed this crisis and placed the promotion of the city as a Jewish residential center among its main objectives. To achieve that, the planners and decision-makers will strive to provide low cost housing for young Jewish married couples, to execute transportation and infrastructure projects that would connect the eastern settlements to the Jewish housing center in the city’s west, and to work on moving what is called “the institutions of the Jewish people” to Jerusalem; which includes ministries, governmental departments, and the headquarters of the army command, the police force, and the Israel Border Police, in addition to the main headquarters of international and civil organizations, embassies and consulates. Furthermore, they will try to instill Jerusalem’s standing in the young generation, increase the number of trips and tours to it, and add tourist attractions to it.⁵⁸

The election of right-wing Nir Barakat from the Kadima Party to the presidency of Jerusalem’s municipality gave a strong thrust to the efforts of promoting Jerusalem as a Jewish residential center. He considers consolidating Jerusalem’s Jewish identity one of his main objectives, without allowing this objective to become a push and a restriction factor for secular residents, unlike his religious predecessor Uri Lupolianski. Thus, during his tenure, work was resumed on the light rail system, but at a quicker pace, after having stopped during his predecessor’s tenure, due to protests by religious Jews that the train will run on Saturdays.⁵⁹ Furthermore, he began to build housing for young married couples in the far west of the Adumim Bloc, in a manner that would bring life back to this area that had failed to attract Jewish residents because of its distance from the city’s Jewish center.⁶⁰ He also started to concentrate on successful apartment complexes within the city and encourage moving there, as in the settlements of Gilo and Har Homa south of the city. These pursuits have been further consolidated with the arrival of Benjamin Netanyahu to the seat of government in 2009.



Third: The Settlement and Judaization Process in Jerusalem

The year 2009 has witnessed a sharp escalation in the struggle over land in Jerusalem. This escalation and the targeting of Jerusalem were clear when, in November, Benjamin Netanyahu, the Israeli Prime Minister, excluded Jerusalem from his declaration of a 10 month moratorium on settlement building in the territories occupied in 1967. This escalation reached its peak when, on 18/12/2009, he appointed in his office a special coordinator to coordinate matters between him and the Municipality of Jerusalem to facilitate and speed up house demolition operations in it, at the forefront of which were the houses of al-Bustan neighborhood, south of *al-Aqsa* Mosque.⁶¹

The intensity of the struggle over land in Jerusalem and its tools vary with the distance of how far from or near to the city's center, represented by the Old City. In the following, we will shed light on this struggle based on dividing Jerusalem's regions according to this criterion.

1. The Old City

Jerusalem's Old City is the city's center. It is situated on the borderline between its eastern and western parts. It has an area of less than one kilometer square (only 871 donums). In 2007, some 36,965 persons lived there; of these, 33,109 were Palestinians and 3,856 were Jewish settlers.⁶² The number of Palestinian residents of the Old City decreases at a rate of 0.2% annually, while the corresponding rate of decrease for the Jewish residents is 0.1% annually.⁶³ According to this rate of decrease, it is expected that, by the end of 2009, the number of Palestinians in the Old City will be 32,977, while that of settlers will reach 3,848 for the same year. The Old City is considered the most densely populated region of Jerusalem, as the average number of family members in a household in Arab neighborhoods is 5.7, while that in the Jewish Quarter is 4.2; knowing that the average area of a house in the Arab neighborhoods is 43 square meters, while that of a house in the Jewish Quarter is 71.8 meter squares.⁶⁴

Jerusalem's Old City is divided into four main quarters: the Muslim Quarter, the Christian Quarter, the Armenian Quarter and the Jewish Quarter. According to the figures of the Jerusalem Institute for Israel Studies, Islamic endowments own 24% of the Old City's properties and lands, the Christian Church endowments

own 29%, and 28% are owned by private Palestinians, most of which are family endowments; while Israel has appropriated the remaining 19% of them.⁶⁵

Since it took control of Jerusalem's Old City in 1967, Israel has been facing the dilemma of realizing a Jewish presence in this town, which is largely owned by Palestinians and is full of Palestinian residents. To confront this dilemma, Israel has adopted a systematic policy that follows two parallel tracks:

The first track: reducing the area owned by Palestinians; and that by tearing down Palestinian homes in the Old City, or freezing them and preventing disposal of them. The first manifestation of this policy was the tearing down in June 1967 of Moroccan Quarter, which is adjacent to the Western Wall, freezing Palestinian properties and preventing them from reaping any gain from them. That was achieved by applying the Planning and Building Law, which classifies large parts of the Old City as archeological sites or green areas, which mean that the Palestinians cannot build any new property, restore any existing one, or utilize any piece of land in these areas without the "state's" permission.

To date, the Israeli authorities continue to employ the same policies against Palestinians in the Old City. Thus, in 2009, they demolished 11 homes in Jerusalem's Old City that used to house 66 Palestinians, and issued orders to demolish 80 others. The policy of demolishing houses in the Old City does not only affect property and land distribution; it has great bearing on the demographic balance in it as well, since the Old City is considered the most densely populated area of Jerusalem, especially the Muslim Quarter in which the average number of family household members is 6.9 individual.⁶⁶ Furthermore, in light of the Israeli authorities' ban on building and restoration, the occupants of every demolished house will necessarily move outside the Old City.

In monitoring the policy of property freeze and denying making use of it, the Jerusalem Center for Social and Economic Rights (JCSER) issued on 1/5/2009 a report in which it revealed that the Israeli authorities forbid carrying out all forms of restoration and maintenance works on about 1,500 properties in the Old City. Furthermore, they impose severe restrictions on Palestinian construction within the Old City, and ban any additions to existing buildings.⁶⁷

On 5/2/2010, the Hebrew weekly *Yerushalayim* newspaper revealed plans to intensify the restrictions placed on building in Jerusalem's Old City. The newspaper confirmed that, lately, the Planning Department of the Municipality of Jerusalem

has prepared a comprehensive plan for offering building permits in the Old City, stipulating the formation of a new committee to study every request for a building permit inside the walls of the Old City. It also decreed the imposition of restrictions on additions to standing structures and on building new ones, specifying special guidelines for their architectural design, considering all the area within the walls a construction zone, and permitting building only according to the detailed design.

The second track: expanding the area owned by Jews. As the space in the Old City is limited and fully occupied, any addition to Jewish property necessarily means seizing Palestinian property. Israel has followed different methods in gaining control of Palestinian properties, the most effective of which were property confiscations for the benefit of public utilities. Israel began a series of confiscations in the Old City in 1967, when it laid hands on an area close to 116 thousand meter squares (116 donums) in the south of the city, by applying the Land Law Order (acquisition for public projects). This area included the Jewish Quarter, al-Sharaf neighborhood, al-Midan neighborhood, al-Qara'in neighborhood, parts of al-Jawa'nih neighborhood, in addition to Hosh al-'Asali, Hosh Nimr and Hosh Khammarah, all of which are known today as "the Jewish Quarter."⁶⁸

During the following decades, the Israeli authorities resorted to other methods less politically costly than the method of mass confiscations. They provided legal and political cover to settlement societies, enabling them to control the properties of the Old City by exploiting legal loopholes in their registration and in determining their ownership, or by tempting their owners to sell them in exchange for huge sums of money.⁶⁹ Moreover, with the support of the Israeli authorities, Jewish settlers were able to seize many real estates in the Old City, until by the beginning of 2009, they had gained control of more than 50 buildings in different parts of the city, in which about one thousand Jewish settlers reside.⁷⁰

The Ateret Cohanim (lit. crown of the priests), supported by wealthy Jews and Zionist Christians of the US, is considered the most active of the societies working to control the Old City's houses. The Hebrew *Haaretz* newspaper published reportage on the activities of the Ateret Cohanim in which it revealed that this institute has been buying Arab properties in East Jerusalem.⁷¹ The last of these buildings was the house of the Abu Jabir family in al-Sa'diyyah neighborhood in the Old City's Islamic Quarter. It was occupied by settlers from the Ateret Cohanim on 2/4/2009, with the support of the Israeli police. The settlers are living in this

house in spite of the fact that the Israeli courts did not make a decision regarding the dispute between the property's owners and the institute.

On 12/9/2009, the *Haaretz* newspaper also revealed the existence of a secret bulletin distributed by Ateret Cohanim to its financiers and contributors, which contains details about the houses owned by the institute in the Old City and the Arab Quarter. The bulletin shows that the society owns 26 houses in the Old City, among them six houses offered for sale to wealthy Jews in the US and Israel for a price of no less than \$1.5 million per house.

2. The Neighborhoods Embracing the Old City

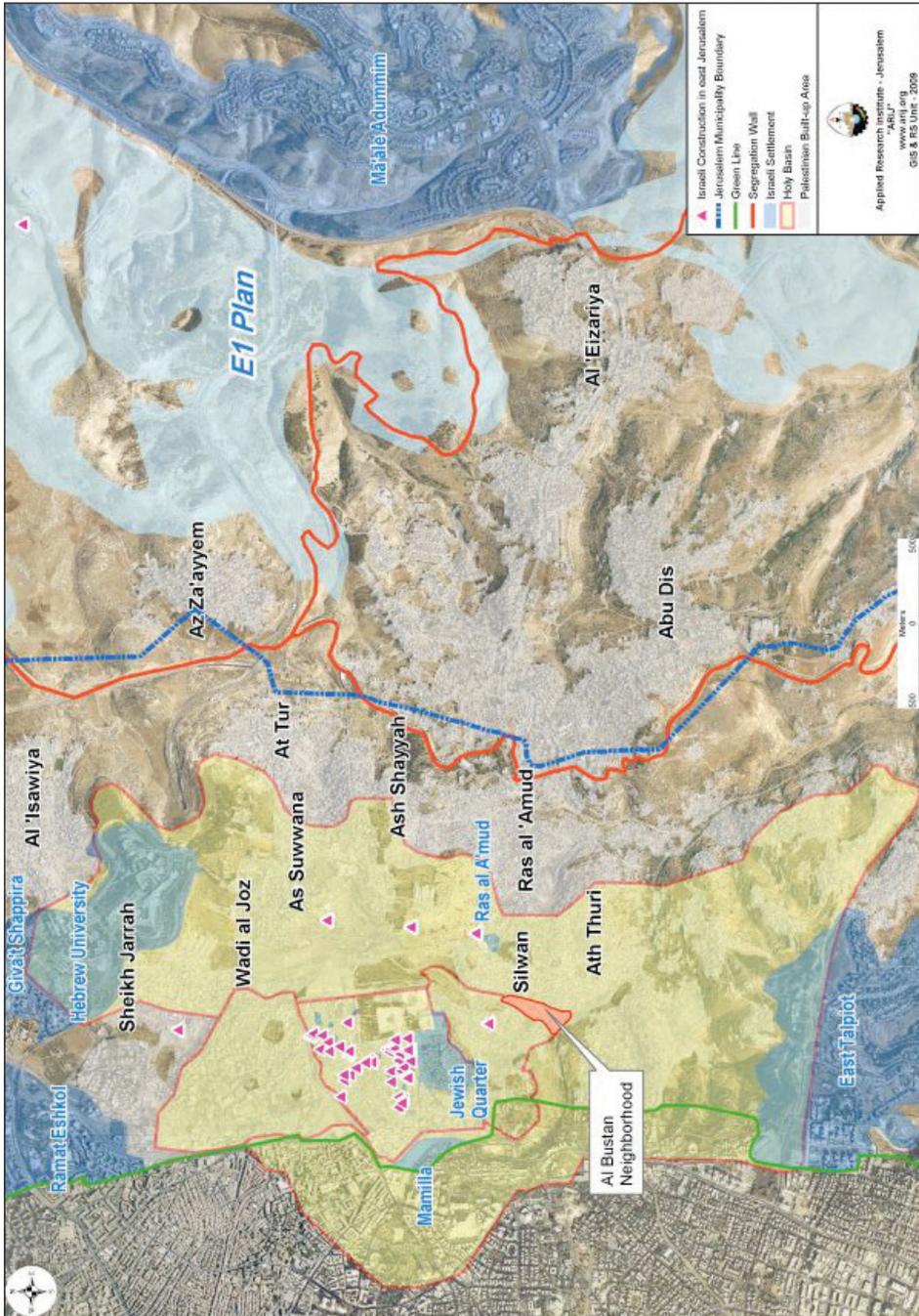
By this term, we mean the neighborhoods that are close geographically to the Old City and have direct contact with it. These neighborhoods are Herod's Gate (*Bab al-Sahira*), Wadi al-Joz and Sheikh Jarrah in the north; the Silwan suburb neighborhoods (Wadi Hilwah, al-Bustan, al-'Abbasiyah, etc.), Ras al-'Amoud and al-Thawri in the south; the neighborhoods of al-Tur, al-Suwaneh and Shiyah in the east; as for the west and southwest, the town is bordered by neighborhoods having a Jewish majority.

This area (the area embracing the Old City) is today considered one of the hottest confrontation points in Jerusalem. Israel exerts the greatest portion of its effort to control Jerusalem's neighborhoods, in spite of the political pressure that this has caused and continue to cause Israel in the international arena. This is due to the following reasons:

- a. Judaizing the town's center (the Old City and its environs, or what Israel calls the "Holy Basin"), expelling the Palestinian inhabitants to the outskirts, and then separating this center from the Arab neighborhoods in the outskirts by a settlement crescent that surrounds the Old City from the north, the east and the south, and connects to West Jerusalem by a number of bypass roads.
- b. Cutting direct geographical connection between the Jerusalemites, the town and the mosque, paving the way for the area's population to be replaced by a Jewish presence, considered a necessary condition for the success of the religious and cultural Judaization plan for Jerusalem.
- c. Pushing the Old City's residents, under pressure from the settlers and their attacks and because of the limited and fixed housing area, to leave the city and allow Jewish expansion in it, which, until today, continues to move at a slower pace than the Israeli state had hoped for.



Map 3/6: The Threatened Neighborhoods in the Immediate Area Embracing the Old City (The Holy Basin)



In the neighborhoods embracing the Old City, the Israeli state works according to an extended plan aimed at developing the “Holy Basin.” This plan includes projects to build settlement concentrations, biblical gardens, and touristic ancient shrines, with a preliminary cost estimated at \$100 million.⁷² The neighborhoods of Sheikh Jarrah in the north and al-Bustan in the south are considered today primary regions of activity for this plan.⁷³ In the following, we will shed light on the Israeli activities in these neighborhoods, and on the projects that he is trying to execute and their development during 2009:

a. The Sheikh Jarrah Neighborhood

• Geographic Location

The Sheikh Jarrah neighborhood is located north of the Old City in occupied East Jerusalem. To the north, it borders al-Masharif Mountain; to the east, there is the campus of the Hebrew University in Jerusalem; and to the west, there is the settlement of Ramat Eshkol. This neighborhood’s location is the main reason for this current settlement offensive against it. For, from the Israeli point of view, it separates the Hebrew University from its Jewish surroundings, represents an obstacle to Jewish geographical connection between Jerusalem’s east and west, and overlooks the main road that connects the E1 settlement block, located in East Jerusalem to West Jerusalem. Moreover, according to the “Holy Basin” plan, it is decided that this neighborhood should represent the northern boundary of what is called “the Jewish heart” of the city.

Jewish planners have chosen to start the plan to Judaize the area embracing the Old City from this neighborhood for a number of considerations. Most prominent among them is the presence of legal loopholes in the registration of some of its properties and in the determination of their owners’ identities, the small number of its inhabitants when compared to other neighborhoods, and the large size of its buildings. Furthermore, they view the experiment of mass expulsion in this neighborhood as an indicator of the experiment’s success or failure. Because if they fail to achieve their goals in the presence of all these advantageous factors, they would not be able to succeed in more crowded neighborhoods with smaller and legally registered properties, such as al-Bustan neighborhood.⁷⁴ This neighborhood is sought after because of three hot focal points: the Sheikh Jarrah Housing, the Shepherd Hotel, and Karm al-Mufti.



• Settlement Ambitions

The Sheikh Jarrah Neighborhood Housing: the Sheikh Jarrah model housing consists of 28 housing units. Its land was originally owned by the Jordanian government. However, at the beginning of the fifties, Jordan donated it to UNRWA to build on it 28 housing units to shelter a number of Jerusalemite families who had sought refuge there after having left the Qatamon neighborhood in the city's west. Then the agreement stipulated that after three years, i.e., on 15/10/1959, the ownership of the properties would go to the refugee families residing in them.

The occupation's attempts to infiltrate the neighborhood began in 1972, when a number of Orthodox Jewish settlers claimed their ownership of the land on which the Sheikh Jarrah housing stands, situated in the western part of Sheikh Jarrah neighborhood that has an area of 18 donums. They brought legal action before the Israeli courts to corroborate their ownership, claiming that this land was originally a Jewish cemetery, taking advantage of the absence of any document that would prove the ownership of this housing's land in the Ottoman registers. In 1996, they reached a settlement in court that proves their ownership of the land, but considers the people living there protected tenants. In the beginning of 2008, the religious settlers sold the land to a big investment company called Nahalat Shimon, which, in turn, presented a plan to build 200 settlement units in place of the existing Sheikh Jarrah Housing that contains 28 houses.⁷⁵

According to the new plan, the occupation authorities officially served notification to the 28 houses' residents to the effect that they should vacate their homes in preparation for their demolition, in order to start the project of building the new settlement units. Indeed, the residents' expulsion began on 9/11/2008, when the Israeli police evicted the family of Um Kamel al-Kurd from their home in the Housing. Shortly after their eviction, the family erected a protest tent in the place, which later became a center for the resistance activities in Jerusalem. However, the Israelis succeeded in removing it after tearing it down more than seven times, and exerting pressure on the owners of the land on which it stood. On 2/8/2009, the Israeli police evicted the 53 members of the families of al-Ghawi and Hanoun from their homes in the Housing. In addition, similar to what al-Kurd family had done, the two families took residence in tents close to the Housing, however, the occupation didn't succeed in removing them. On 3/11/2009, the Israeli police helped a group of settlers occupy the house of Rifqa al-Kurd in the same Housing, the event that ended the year 2009 with eight homes evicted by the Israelis of the 28 in the

Housing. This can be considered a relapse in the efforts of the occupation that used to suppose that, of all the others, this land is the easiest prey, and a most suitable start for the Judaization process of the neighborhood and all its surrounding area. Yet simultaneously, it succeeded in imposing a state of isolation on the protest activities in this neighborhood by repeatedly tearing down protest tents, keeping away resistance symbols, preventing them from visiting the area, and arresting a number of activists responsible for the protest tent. If no help comes to these isolated families thrown in the open, their steadfastness will not hold.

The Shepherd Hotel: the Shepherd Hotel is situated in the northern part of Sheikh Jarrah neighborhood. It was originally owned by Hajj Amin al-Husayni, Jerusalem's Mufti and head of the Supreme Islamic Council during the British mandate. In 1985, the occupation state claimed its ownership of the hotel, basing on the Absentees' Property Law and on its capacity as the Custodian of the Absentees' properties, (in spite of the fact that Hajj Amin al-Husayni's heirs were born in Jerusalem, and they did not leave it either in 1948 or in 1967). It procured an order to tear it down so to establish a settlement complex on its land consisting of 90 residential units. Following a long silence, the year 2009 witnessed a revival of this issue; as, on 7/7/2009, the occupation's Jerusalem Municipality certified the preliminary plan to establish a settlement outpost consisting of 20 residential units in place of the hotel. Sources in the Municipality claimed that the Jewish millionaire Irving Moskowitz had purchased the hotel along with the land on which it stood from the Custodian of the Absentees' properties; subsequently, he is presenting a regulatory plan for a land that he owns, and there is no justification for rejecting his request.⁷⁶

Karm al-Mufti Land: this land is situated in the middle of Sheikh Jarrah neighborhood; and from the east, it is adjacent to Sheikh Jarrah Housing. It has an area of 20 donums and it is owned by the Arab Hotels Company of East Jerusalem. Since they took control of East Jerusalem in 1967, the occupation authorities announced their intention to expropriate this land. In their planning and zoning schemes, they classified it as a green and open space, where building on it and making use of it are not allowed. In 2000, the land's owners submitted a request to the Jerusalem Planning and Building Committee for building a hotel, a convention center and a cultural center on their land. At the time, this department acknowledged that the request presenter held the ownership right to the land. The Israeli Interior Ministry allowed the Arab company to go ahead with its construction plans, after



its ownership of the land was established. However, it became known later that the Land Registration Department in the occupation authority had granted the American Jewish millionaire Irving Moskowitz permission to present a design to build 250 settlement units on the same land, i.e., Karm al-Mufti Land, two years before it gave permission to the Arab Hotels Company of East Jerusalem to build a hotel on it, that is in 1998.⁷⁷

In June of 2000, after the plans of Moskowitz and Ateret Cohanim were revealed, the lawyer of the Palestinian company submitted to the Jerusalem Planning and Building Committee a request to reject Moskowitz' request because its presenter does not own the land, as it is owned by the Jerusalemite company. At that time, the lawyers were informed that the request has been dropped.

At the end of 2006, the Arab Hotels Company of East Jerusalem obtained a ruling from the Magistrates' Court ordering the eviction of a Palestinian who had seized the land by force. However, on the date set for eviction, the Amidar Company, in the name of the Israel Lands Administration (ILA), presented the court with a request to stop the eviction order. It became known later that this Palestinian was working for Ateret Cohanim.

Few months later, and in March of 2007, the ILA issued an order to expropriate the Karm al-Mufti Land, and proclaimed that it had rented it years ago to Ateret Cohanim to "cultivate it"; and that was in exchange for a very trivial amount of no more than \$10 per donum, while the real value of the land is estimated at tens of millions.⁷⁸ The year 2009 did not record any development worth mentioning regarding the matter of this land; however, it is clear that it is closely linked to that of the Shepherd Hotel, because the plan for the settlement complex shows that it extends over all the area of Karm al-Mufti and that of the Shepherd Hotel as well. It is likely that this matter will be brought up once again during 2010; actually, work on the settlement to be established on this land may start in 2010.

b. Al-Bustan Neighborhood

• The Geographic Location

Al-Bustan neighborhood is located in the middle of the Silwan Suburb, south of *al-Aqsa* Mosque, bordered on the north by Wadi Jahannam, from the south by al-Thawry neighborhood, from the east by the Silwan neighborhood, and from the west by Wadi Hilwah neighborhood. This neighborhood has an area of 70 donums,

and forms part of Basin 29986, according to the British mandate organization. The ownership of all this neighborhood's lands and properties is purely Palestinian Jerusalemite. From the Israeli point of view, it constitutes an extension of the "City of David," which is being built by settlement organizations in collaboration with the Israeli government, at the base of Wadi Hilwah neighborhood.⁷⁹

• Settlement Ambitions

On 11/11/2004, Uri Shitrit, Jerusalem's Chief engineer, issued a directive to demolish all of al-Bustan neighborhood's buildings to enable expansion of the "King's Valley" archeological park. In early 2005, the municipality began to carry out the directive, and residents of the neighborhood began to receive demolition orders and charges filed against them for building without a permit. In fact, during that year, the municipality demolished two houses in the neighborhood.

However, by the end of 2005, the occupation government retracted the plan after coming under international pressure. In addition, al-Bustan neighborhood residents presented a petition to the Attorney General of the occupation government demanding a halt to the destruction of the neighborhood. Subsequently, Jerusalem's mayor announced the retraction of the plan and allowed the residents to propose a plan that meets their development needs. In August 2008, the neighborhood's residents presented their plan to the Jerusalem Municipality. However, Jerusalem municipal engineer, Shlomo Eshkol, informed them that the plan they had presented would not be considered in the immediate future, and that the municipality was proceeding with the plan to build a "national park" on the site. He made them an offer of willingly vacating their homes in exchange for getting paid compensations or being relocated to another area of Jerusalem, such as Beit Hanina in the City's north. The neighborhood's residents rejected this offer outright. The Jerusalem Municipality informed them later of its rejection of the plan that they had presented. On Saturday evening of 21/2/2009, the municipality handed 134 Jerusalemite families, consisting of 1,500 persons and living in 88 buildings in al-Bustan neighborhood, orders to vacate their homes in preparation for their demolition and the establishment of a public garden in their place called "King David Garden."⁸⁰

This mass notification stirred political reactions that brought pressure to bear on the Israeli authorities, in particular from Jordan, EU and the US. It also stirred public reactions in Jerusalem and in some Arab countries. To absorb the shock,



the Israeli authorities postponed the execution of the eviction orders. Then, after political pressures had died down, and in July of 2009, Israel transferred the ownership of 14 of the 88 buildings, which occupy an area of 28 donums, to a Jewish settlement organization to start building the Biblical Park.⁸¹ So in the future, when the occupation faces difficulties in vacating homes, it will resort to turning the matter into a dispute over ownership that the occupation courts would resolve partially, in a way that would let the matter of taking over the neighborhood pass quickly without political or media fanfare.

c. Other Plans Affecting the Other Neighborhoods that Embrace the Old City

In early 2009, Ateret Cohanim submitted a plan to the Jerusalem Planning and Building Committee to build a Jewish neighborhood, having an area of six donums, on the ruins of more than 60 homes in Batn al-Hawa neighborhood in the town of Silwan, south of *al-Aqsa* Mosque.⁸²

On 5/3/2009, and after less than a month of delivering the demolition orders for al-Bustan neighborhood, the Israeli authorities handed over new eviction and demolition orders for 34 apartments in the adjacent al-‘Abbasiya neighborhood, south of *al-Aqsa* Mosque.⁸³

Later, and on 27/4/2009, the Hebrew newspaper *Haaretz* reported that the Jerusalem Municipality has begun building a new housing quarter in the heart of the town of al-Sawahra, south of Jerusalem. It added that the plan involved the construction of three building, comprising 62–66 apartments. It pointed out that the building plan was approved in 2000, when the past Prime Minister Ehud Olmert was Jerusalem’s mayor and encouraged Jewish settlement in the heart of Palestinian neighborhoods. When done, the Jewish quarter will be part of the southern belt that isolates the neighborhoods embracing the Old City.

Furthermore, in June 2009, the occupation approved the establishment of a commercial center and a huge hotel on a 23 thousand square meters (23 donums) in Herod’s Gate neighborhood, adjacent to the northern walls of the Old City.⁸⁴ Then on 18/11/2009, A cornerstone was laid to mark the construction of 105 new housing units in the settlement of Nof Zion in the east Jerusalem neighborhood of Jabel Mukaber, in Silwan, south of *al-Aqsa* Mosque. With this new expansion, this settlement will become connected to the East Talpiot settlement.⁸⁵

On 31/12/2009, Al-Maqdese for Society Development (MSD) revealed a map issued on 28/12/2009 by the Jerusalem Municipality. By this, the Municipality plans to demolish hundreds of Palestinian residency buildings in Silwan and other neighborhoods as Al-Bustan, and Al-Thouri, south of *al-Aqsa* Mosque. The map shows that 224 residency buildings in East Jerusalem that are threatened with demolition by Jerusalem Municipality, while 88 residency buildings will be demolished in al-Bustan neighborhood.⁸⁶

3. Municipal Boundaries

Since its occupation of Jerusalem was completed in 1967, Israel began its quest to turn the city, with all its aspects, into a purely Jewish capital. The first concern that preoccupied the Zionist planner was the way to expand Jerusalem's borders to the east, in order to annex as large an area as possible from the recently occupied territories, while keeping the greatest number of this land's inhabitants outside these borders. The other consideration was his concern about security. The Jerusalem Municipality's map, showing an area of 142 km² for the two parts of the city, came primarily to fulfill these two criteria. Thus, the occupation annexed the heights that surround the city and all the roads and entrances leading to it, and excluded the areas and concentrations with high Palestinian population density. Thus, in the City's north, it annexed Beit Exa and Bir Nabala, which have few Palestinian residents, while it excluded in the south, the city of Bethlehem and the two towns of Beit Sahour and Beit Jala, because of their high Palestinian population density.⁸⁷

Nevertheless, Israel was not able to achieve its goal of having a city with an absolute Jewish majority. Furthermore, all the means employed, of expulsion, home demolitions, deprivation of services, and imposition of taxes did not succeed in achieving this goal either. Thus, and toward the end of the nineties of the last century, the occupation proposed once again the idea of changing the outline of the city's limits. Several proposals were made in this respect (Greater Jerusalem, Metropolitan Jerusalem, etc.).⁸⁸ Until there came the Separation Wall "Jerusalem envelope," the building of which started during Ariel Sharon's government in 2002, to draw the awaited final outline of the city's boundaries in a way that would include the Adumim settlement bloc in the east, the Giv'on bloc in the northwest, and the Etzion bloc in the southwest. These blocs dominate an area estimated at 161 km², meaning that their size exceeds the original size of Municipal Jerusalem, while the total number of settlers living in them do not exceed 69,900 settlers.



Today, Israel strives to consecrate this annexation and consolidate Jerusalem's new city limits. It is intensifying construction in these settlements and connecting them to Jerusalem's center by way of a transportation network that includes highways, light rail and buses, to facilitate movement from and to settlements.

During 2009, a report by the Negotiation Affairs Department revealed that the Israeli government has approved a plan to build a tunnel in the region of East al-Sawahra, which would connect the Ma'ale Adumim bloc to the settlements south of Jerusalem through the Eastern Ring Road, and asserted that this tunnel would be parallel to the Mount of Olives tunnel, which will connect the Adumim bloc in the east directly to West Jerusalem, to facilitate the movement of settlers and settlement expansion.⁸⁹

On 7/5/2009, a report by the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs-occupied Palestinian territory (OCHA-oPt) revealed that the Israeli authorities intend to build a new settlement with 20 thousand housing units south of occupied Jerusalem; in addition to building seven thousand new housing units in the settlements of Bat Ayin and Geva'ot in the Etzion settlement bloc.⁹⁰ Allegra Pacheco, Deputy Chief of OCHA-oPt said that they had gathered information that indicated that Israel plans to build about 30 thousand new settlement units in WB and Jerusalem.⁹¹

On 23/10/2009, Dr. Hassan Khater, the secretary-general of the Islamic-Christian Front for Defending Jerusalem and its Holy Sites declared that the occupation state has allocated more than \$50 million for the expansion of Ma'ale Adumim and Har Homa settlements.⁹²

In January 2010, the Hebrew newspaper *Yerushalayim* reported that Planning and Building Committee of Jerusalem Municipality made a decision to turn 660 donums of al-'Isawiyah town lands, north of the neighborhoods embracing Jerusalem, into a national Biblical garden, and that through a measure that denied the town the ability to expand and build on its own lands. If we link this news to that of reviving the "Eastern Gate" settlement project, planned to be built on the lands of 'Anata, al-'Isawiyah villages, and al-Za'im and al-Tur villages, on a two thousand donums area, consisting of four thousand housing units,⁹³ it becomes apparent to us that the occupation state has taken a

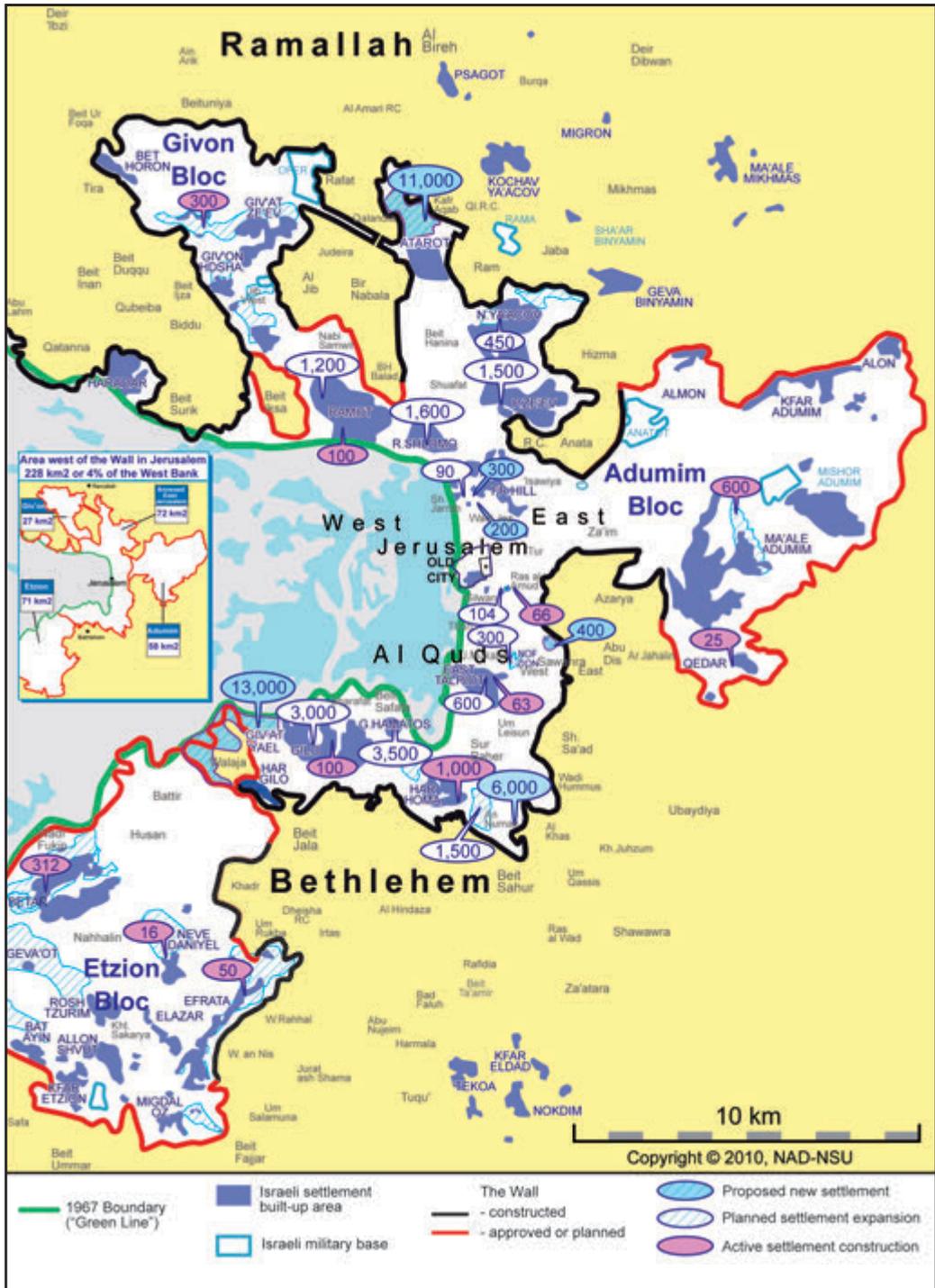
significant step toward tightening the settlement belt around the neighborhoods embracing the Old City from the north and the east, where it will achieve a full land connection between the E1 bloc and the campus of the Hebrew University. When this project is complete, and if the occupation continued work on it, communication between Palestinian neighborhoods in the north of Jerusalem (Beit Hanina, Shu'fat) and the neighborhoods embracing the Old City would become almost completely severed.

All these plans and developments in the state of the settlements, when added to the fact that work has been completed on most sections of the Separation Wall around Jerusalem, will not leave room for talks about exchanging lands in the city in any future peace settlement between the PA and Israel. That is because the Palestinian neighborhoods at Jerusalem's periphery will not only be surrounded by the Separation Wall, they will be completely cut off from the Old City and the neighborhoods surrounding it. They will become more like besieged vesicles, without any geographical connection to their external Palestinian surroundings, and with no connection between them and Jerusalem's center. So how can one imagine the PA having control over neighborhoods that are completely cut off one from the other? Rather how can it achieve a connection between the WB and the Jerusalemite neighborhoods at the city's periphery inside the Separation Wall?

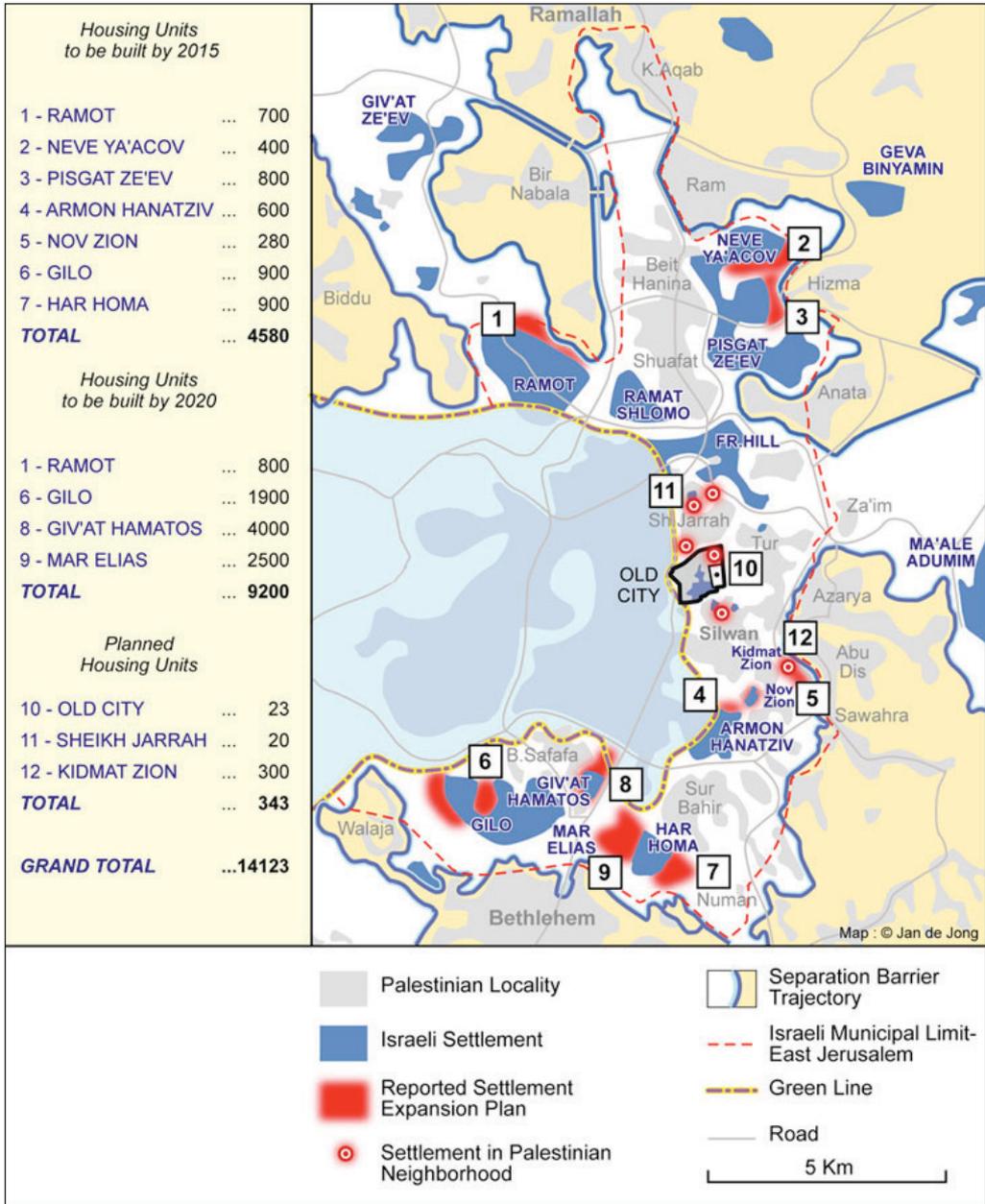
In view of the facts on the ground, what we are witnessing is the Israeli authorities having established a reality in Jerusalem that practically will not be part of any discussion regarding any future peace settlement with the PA; no matter what size are the pressures that may be exerted on Israel or the amount of hope that the Palestinian negotiator may place on a future exchange of land that disregards the reality on the ground. Furthermore, any intended "exchange" will not mean in reality more than facilitating passage between the besieged housing vesicles inside Jerusalem and their external surroundings in WB, through checkpoints that are under the complete control of Israel, opening their gates at will.



Map 4/6: Settlement Activities in Jerusalem, March 2010



Map 5/6: Reported Settlement Expansion Plans in East Jerusalem, November 2009



Fourth: The Struggle over Jerusalem's Cultural Identity

1. Judaizing Names and Landmarks

Since its occupation was completed in 1967, Jerusalem did not witness a campaign to change its names and landmarks such as the one that took place during 2009. This came in parallel with the rise in calls by Israeli politicians to consolidate the Jewish character of the state. The Judaization campaign in Jerusalem rose in intensity in view of the occupation's endeavor to decide its fate unilaterally, seeing that the Arab-Islamic character remained dominant in the city in spite of the passing of 43 years since completing its occupation.

To be sure, Israel's efforts focused on Judaizing the names and landmarks of the Old City that represents the main cultural symbol of Jerusalem, whether in its names, landmarks, or in its architectural style. In a report it published on 11/3/2009, *Al-Aqsa* Foundation for Endowment and Heritage observed unprecedented projects of Judaization and change in the Old City,⁹⁴ which included its walls, gates and inner-city neighborhoods, its adjacent surroundings and *al-Aqsa* Mosque. The most noticeable of these projects: finishing work on a garden and a public park under the name of the army road, adjacent to the northwest corner of the Old City; establishing a similar park at the farthest northeastern corner of the town; and, in Herod's Gate area, new paving was done with Herodian-style blocks, which the occupation claims were prevalent in the era of the "Second Temple."⁹⁵

This is in addition to restoring once again David's Gate in the "Herodian style," ending work on turning a number of areas around the Old City's walls into public "Biblical parks," announcing the start of restoration and development works on Jaffa and Herod's Gates so they would also acquire in their architectural design the "Herodian style," and the announcement of a plan to change the features of the properties and shops along al-Wad Street, west of *al-Aqsa* Mosque.

In its report, *Al-Aqsa* Foundation for Endowment and Heritage indicated that the occupation authorities charged the tasks of executing the projects of Judaizing the landmarks to a number of bodies. The most important bodies are the Jerusalem Municipality, the Jerusalem Development Authority (JDA) and IAA, and earmarked almost \$150 million for implementing these projects.

On 5/4/2009, the Israeli authorities stole one of the biggest ancient stones in the region of the Islamic Umayyad palaces in the southeast corner of *al-Aqsa* Mosque, and placed it in the “Archeological Garden” facing the Israeli Knesset, claiming that it is one of the stones used in the building of the “Second Temple.”⁹⁶ In December 2009, Israel started excavations in the space facing the Umayyad palaces area; its vehicles gathering all the Islamic artifacts that they could find in the place and transporting them to garbage dumps near the Ma‘ale Adumim settlement, east of occupied Jerusalem.⁹⁷

On the level of Judaizing names, and on 13/7/2009, Yisrael Katz, the Israeli Transportation Minister, gave orders to change the names of towns and cities written on signs and billboards, scattered in the main streets and roads, over the entire territories occupied in 1948.⁹⁸ This decree stirred strong public and political condemnations from 1948 Palestinians; but that did not stop its implementation. On 19/7/2009, Dr. Hassan Khater, the secretary-general of the Islamic-Christian Front for Defending Jerusalem and its Holy Sites, declared that Israel had indeed changed the names of thousands of places and archeological landmarks in Jerusalem.⁹⁹ Some of the most prominent names that the occupation has changed during the last year were: using the name “Yerushalayim” in place of Jerusalem on all the road signs in Israel, changing the name of Wadi Hilwah Street, south of *al-Aqsa* Mosque, to “Ma‘ale David,” and Wadi al-Rababi, south of *al-Aqsa* Mosque to “Valley of Hinnom,” then it started to change the names of streets and neighborhoods in the periphery of *al-Aqsa* Mosque.

Moreover, 2009 witnessed a noticeable development on this plane, as Hebrew names of numerous places began to replace Arabic names in the maps of the two websites on the Internet Wikimapia and Google, including the name of *al-Aqsa* Mosque, the main name of which became the “Temple Mount” and not *al-Aqsa* Mosque or the Noble Sanctuary (*al-Haram al-Sharif*).

2. Promoting Jerusalem as a Jewish City

In the framework of their endeavor to efface Jerusalem’s Arab and Islamic identity, the Israeli authorities are working on promoting the city as one with a common Judeo-Christian history; doing that by connecting various Jewish tourist sites to Christian archeological and religious sites. For that end, the Israeli authorities exert total control over the sector of tourist guidance in Jerusalem. Therefore, they do not allow tourist guides to work except under their supervision,



organizing tours of the city along a track that disregards Islamic holy sites,¹⁰⁰ and depicts Islamic presence in the city as contingent and separate from that of the Christian and Jewish presence.

The Israeli authorities are also working on promoting the “Jewishness” of the city by holding year round festivals and celebrations on Jewish religious and national occasions and holidays. On 7/3/2009, Reuven Pinsky, Jerusalem Development Authority Director, announced the Municipality’s endeavor to celebrate festivals throughout the year for the sake of bringing in tourists at different times and not only during preferred seasons, which extend to July, August and the holidays. Plans for the coming years include investment of eight million Shekels (\$1.93 million) to promote the city touristically the year round.¹⁰¹

The most notable festival of 2009 was that during the period 10–16/6/2009 and was entitled The Jerusalem Festival of Light 2009. The Jerusalem Municipality, East Jerusalem Development Company and the Ministry of Tourism in Israel were among the organizers and the festival was attended by thousands of tourists. It featured noisy musical and religious celebrations in the square adjacent to the southern wall of *al-Aqsa* Mosque, in the region of the Umayyad palaces, in addition to light shows at the city gates and in Jerusalem’s citadel in which Jewish symbols were heavily displayed.¹⁰²

3. Jerusalem, the Capital of Arab Culture

In 2006, and during the 15th session of the Arab Culture Ministers Council in Muscat, the Iraqi Minister of Culture asked that Baghdad’s turn, as the Capital of Arab Culture scheduled for 2009, be postponed until 2013, in view of the city’s current circumstances. Immediately after, the Palestinian Minister of Culture at the time, Dr. ‘Atallah Abu al-Subh suggested that Jerusalem be chosen as the Capital of Arab Culture for 2009, the assembly agreed to this suggestion unanimously.

In March of 2009, the PA and Jerusalem’s civil leaders started activities inside the city to celebrate Jerusalem as the 2009 Capital of Arab Culture. However, Israel used force to ban all activities related to the event, after the Israeli Internal Security Minister Avraham (Avi) Dichter had signed a decree prohibiting the PA from conducting celebrations on this occasion.¹⁰³ On 21/3/2009, on the day the celebration was scheduled to start, the Israeli forces

raided the Burj al-Laqlaq area in Jerusalem's Old City and arrested a number of those in charge of Jerusalem's celebration as the Capital of Arab Culture. Furthermore, one day before the opening, Israeli authorities spread more than two thousand policemen all over the city to halt any activities related to the celebration.

On 23/3/2009, concurrently with the announcement in Bethlehem of the start of the celebration, the Israeli forces stormed the tent of Um Kamel al-Kurd in Sheikh Jarrah neighborhood and arrested Sheikh Ra'id Salah and a number of Jerusalemite personalities to keep them from announcing the launching of the Jerusalemite people organization to celebrate Jerusalem as the Capital of Arab Culture.¹⁰⁴ On the same day, the Israeli forces broke into eight Jerusalemite institutions that were organizing events on this occasion, arrested about 20 Palestinians, prevented gatherings of schoolchildren, and made threats against any person who tries to participate in these celebrations.¹⁰⁵

The Israeli authorities continued their policy of prohibition and arrest throughout the year. They also prevented the convening of a press conference by the Jerusalemite people organization that was to be held on 28/1/2010 in the Legacy Hotel in Jerusalem, in which it planned to declare Jerusalem a permanent Capital of Arab Culture, and to call for its twinning with Doha, the Arab Culture Capital for 2010.¹⁰⁶

In an attempt to confront the Israel's constraint and repression of any activity related to celebrating Jerusalem as the Capital of Arab Culture, a group of civil society institutions and bodies in Lebanon, Jordan and Syria established the Civil Campaign for Celebrating al-Quds the Capital of Arab Culture 2009. The idea behind this campaign was to move the celebration of Jerusalem from Jerusalem itself to all the Arab capitals. This campaign has organized thousands of activities and events in Arab countries, in particular in Syria, Jordan and Lebanon. The most notable of these activities were the Jerusalem award for literary and academic distinction, marches of departure to the Blessed *al-Aqsa* Mosque, al-Salahi Scene Festival in Damascus, and a day of solidarity "Greetings to Jerusalem," which was held simultaneously in Syria, Jordan, Lebanon and GS.



Fifth: Solidarity with Jerusalem Events

The public and official interaction with Jerusalem is an indication of the extent of the Arab and Muslim interest in the City's suffering, and its standing in their priorities as peoples and regimes. Simultaneously, it is an indicator for the occupier, through which he can measure his ability to go ahead with his Judaization plan, for he often links the Judaization measures and size to the size of the objections that these measures may stir in Palestine, the region, and the Arab and Muslim world. The lesser the solidarity and reactions are, the more the occupier add to his Judaization measures and their speed.

The Palestinians are always at the forefront of any reactions to events in Jerusalem. The actions taking place outside of Palestine were always directly proportional to the size and fierceness of the confrontations in the Occupied Land. This equation was consecrated all through the occupation years. However, 2009 has witnessed a weak Arabic and Islamic public sympathy with events in Jerusalem, in spite of the fact that this year was one of the worst in the City's history, since its occupation became complete in 1967. The divided internal Palestinian situation and the intense pursuit of the resistance in the WB made it hard for Palestinians to confront in a proper manner the assault to which Jerusalem is being subjected. This reflected negatively on public sympathy with Jerusalem, in both the Arab and Islamic worlds, with the exception of Turkey in which official and public interest in Jerusalem's plight have risen during 2009.

On the Arabic level, the year 2009 did not register any events, stances, or large scale public demonstrations of solidarity with Jerusalem, with the exception of three main events. The first took place in September 2009, when the Civil Campaign for Celebrating al-Quds the Capital of Arab Culture 2009 organized marches of departure to the blessed *al-Aqsa* Mosque, with the participation of thousands in Lebanon, Syria and Jordan. These events included organizing big marches aimed at performing prayers at the closest border point to occupied Palestine. These marches constituted a new form of rallying the public and creating an impact. The second event took place in October 2009, the month that witnessed repeated storming of *al-Aqsa* Mosque by ultra-Orthodox Jews and the occupation security forces. These events resulted in public protests in a number of Arab countries, the biggest of which took place in Yemen, Algeria and Sudan, following a call by

Sheikh Yusuf al-Qaradawi on 5/10/2009 to make the following Friday, 9/10/2009, a day of anger in support of *al-Aqsa* Mosque and the holy sites. The third event was the al-Quds International Forum, organized by the Jerusalem committee's Bayt Mal al-Quds Acharif (Jerusalem's Treasury) Agency," held in the Moroccan capital Rabat on 28–29/10/2009.

On the Islamic level, sympathy with events in Jerusalem was no larger or more effective, with the exception of the activities that Turkey has witnessed, as two conferences were held in Istanbul in April and May in support of Palestine and Jerusalem, in which some Jerusalemite personalities and delegations participated, in addition to Sheikh Ra'id Salah. On 5 and 27/10/2009, Istanbul was the setting for great demonstrations, during which the Israeli Consulate in the city was surrounded in protest of the repeated storming of *al-Aqsa* Mosque by religious extremists and Israeli security forces.

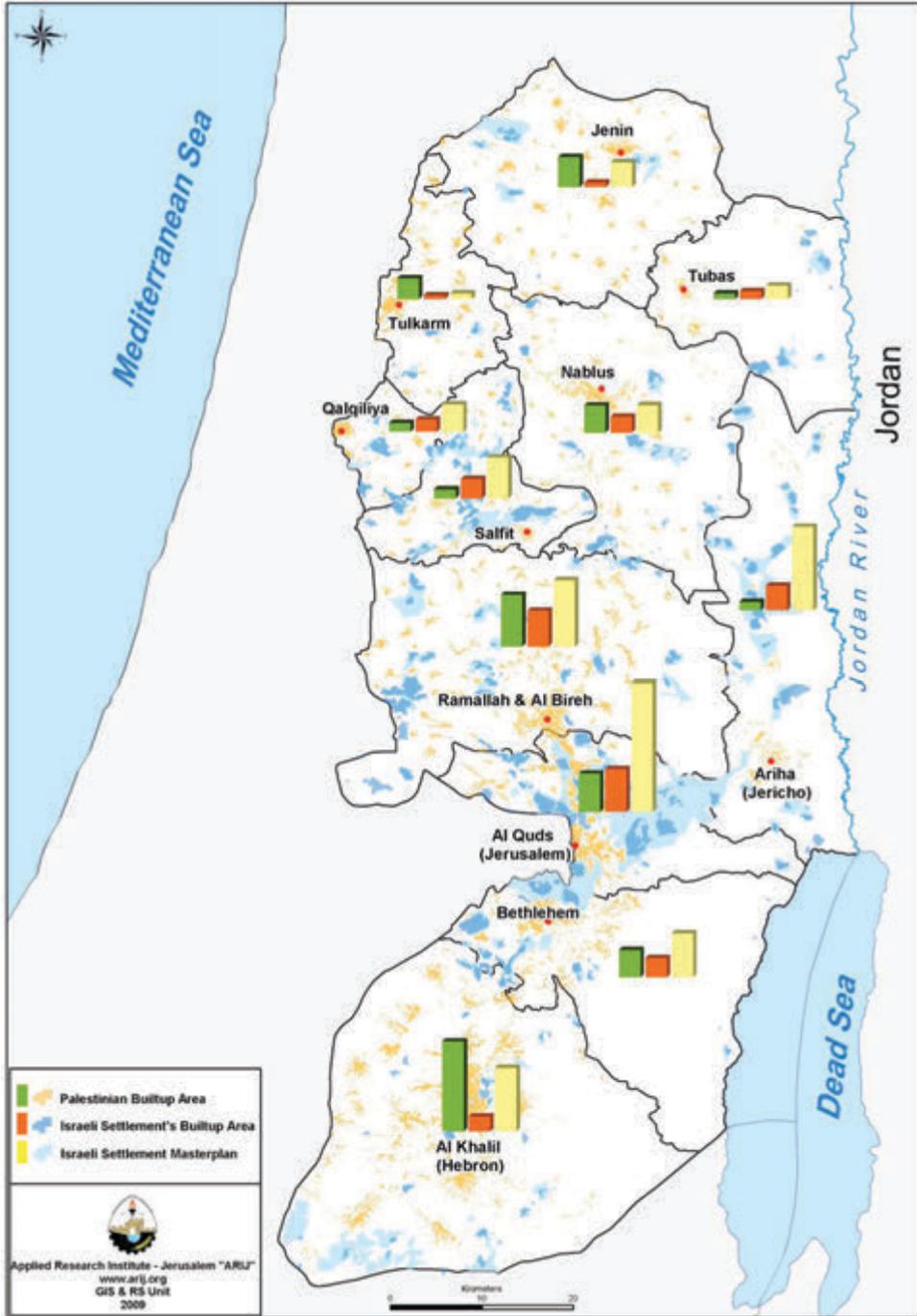
Yet in general, the Arabic and Islamic interaction with Jerusalem's cause was below what is needed, for neither its magnitude nor its impact reached a level that would deter the occupation from going ahead with its plan to Judaize the city and dominate it. It was mainly confined to sympathy with *al-Aqsa* Mosque and what it is being subjected to, without paying attention to what Jerusalem's residents are subjected to, and what is happening to the city of growing settlement, expulsion and laying hands on Palestinian properties; in spite of the fact that these actions may have an impact on the future of the struggle in Jerusalem, equal in size to storming and assaulting *al-Aqsa* Mosque.

Sixth: Israeli Settlement Expansion

The Israeli occupation authorities were greatly successful in imposing the existence of settlements on the WB, specifically in the governorates that are considered of strategic importance to Israel. In five of the 11 Palestinian governorates, the areas occupied by Israeli settlements exceed the area populated by Palestinians. These governorates are Jerusalem, Jericho, al-Aghwar, Qalqilya, Salfit and Tubas.¹⁰⁷



Map 6/6: Israeli Settlements Built-up Area Versus Palestinian Built-up Area in WB Governorates



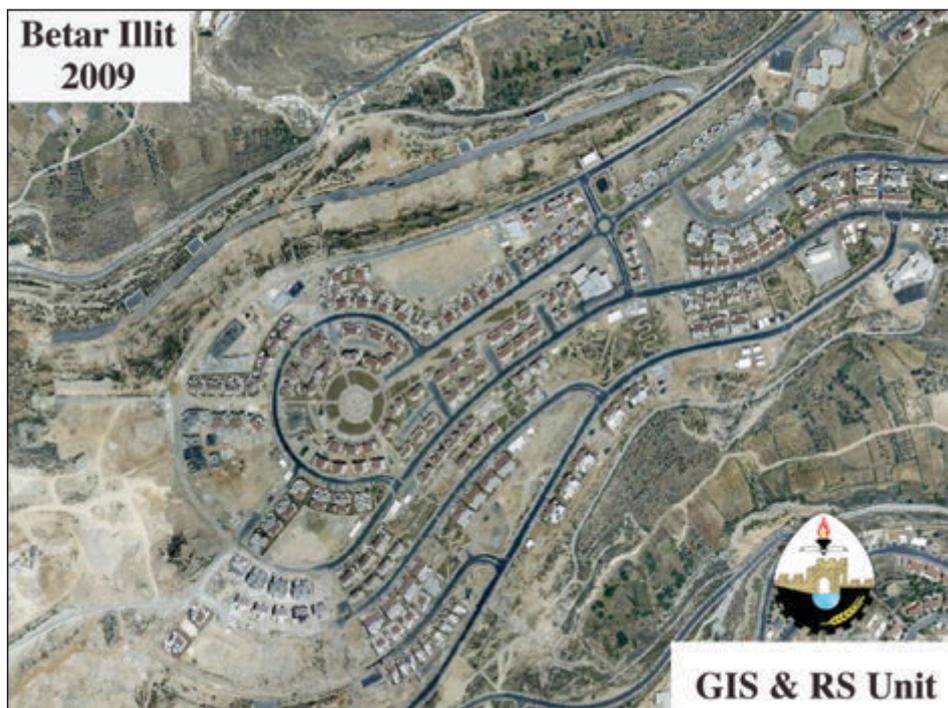
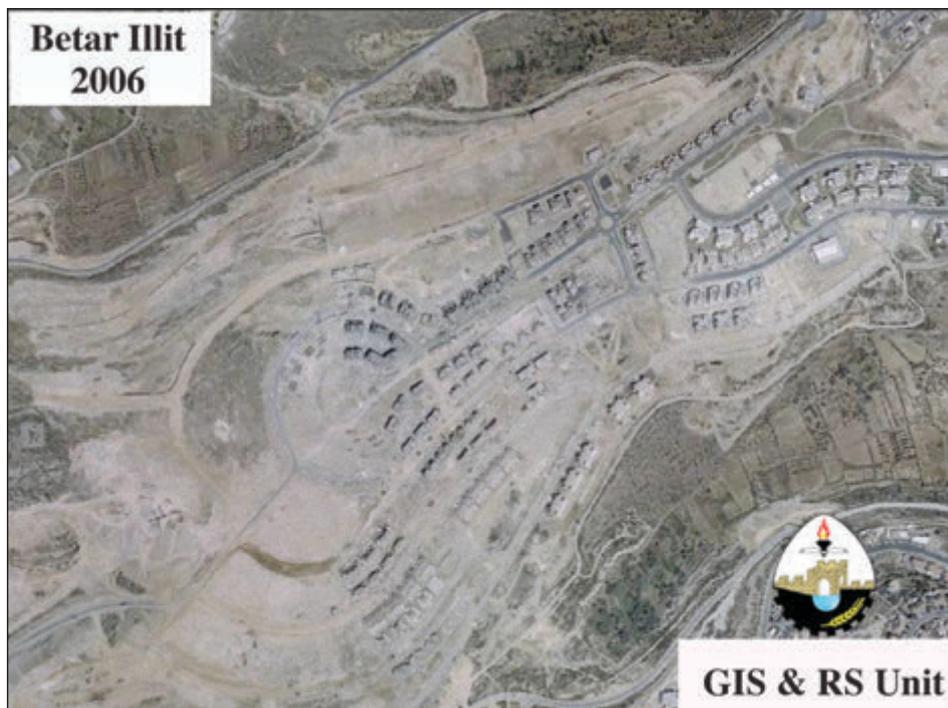
Since the start of the peace process in 1993, Israeli settlement in the WB intensified in an unprecedented manner; as the number of settlements and settlers multiplied to total today 199 settlements and more than 580 thousand Israeli settlers, including 236 thousand settlers residing in 34 Israeli settlements in East Jerusalem.¹⁰⁸ Moreover, the areas occupied by settlement construction during that period have grown from 69 km² (1.2% of the WB total area) to 189 km² (3.3%) in 2009.¹⁰⁹ Today, settlement jurisdictions cover more than 40% of the WB area.

Of the people living in these settlements, more than 50% belong to the far-right forces; they concentrate in the governorates of Jerusalem, Bethlehem, Qalqilya, Salfit, Tubas, Ramallah, Nablus and Hebron. The growth and rise of these forces affect greatly the settlement plan, as they have come to be described as “a state within a state.” The orthodox settlers have turned into an independent group, capable of changing the negotiation rules in the political arena. This made Israeli withdrawal from the WB, according to any settlement reached, a matter of the utmost difficulty; even if the issue is related only to settlements outside the Wall, or to other settlement locations and outposts.

Furthermore, Israeli settlements in the WB have witnessed unprecedented activities during the years (2006–2009), as the construction pace in them has escalated, in spite of repeated warnings by the American administration to Israel to stop settlement building in the WB.

The study conducted by ARIJ in August 2009, accompanied by an analysis of satellite photos taken during the period 2006–2009, indicates that Israel is proceeding with its settlement expansion plans in a race with time, to let it become a fait accompli on the Palestinian soil. In fact, it has built in the Israeli settlements west of the Wall 311 new caravans and 1,416 new buildings, each consisting of several stories. This is in addition to 644 new caravans and 371 new buildings in the Israeli settlements east of the Wall.¹¹⁰ From what preceded, it is apparent that Israel has focused on building in the Israeli settlements situated west of the Wall more than in those to its east; which makes clear its intention to consolidate its control over the settlements west of the Wall, which number 107 and contain more than 80% of the total number of Israeli settlers in the WB, and to assert its control over the Western Segregation Zone, when the building of the Wall is completed. The Israeli settlements in each of the following governorates: Jerusalem, Bethlehem, Ramallah, Salfit and Qalqilya, had the largest share of settlement construction, in comparison to the rest of the governorates in the WB.

An Example of Israeli Settlement Expansion 2006–2009



As for what concerns building expansion in Israeli settlement, the Israel Ministry of Construction and Housing, the Israel Lands Administration and Jerusalem's Municipality issued building permits and tenders for a total of 30,541 new settlement units inside the Israeli settlements in the WB; most of which are centered in the Israeli settlements west of the Wall, specifically, those situated in the governorates of Jerusalem and Bethlehem, which witnessed the granting of permits for 18,190 and 7,649 new settlement units respectively.¹¹¹ Furthermore, the Israeli plans have focused on the Israeli settlements situated within the Israeli Jerusalem Municipality, which was illegally expanded in 1967, at the expense of a number of Palestinian population concentrations east and south of Jerusalem.¹¹²

Among the proposed tenders, there is a plan to build a new settlement neighborhood, northwest of the Efrat settlement south of Bethlehem. In February 2009, the expropriation of more than 1,700 donums of the lands of Khirbet al-Nahlah, al-Khadr and Artas, south of the Bethlehem Governorate, was announced, under the designation of Israeli state-owned lands, for building 2,500 settlement units in the new settlement neighborhood of Givat HaEitam.¹¹³ Moreover, the building of another neighborhood was also announced, to be composed of 1,400 new settlement units, situated one kilometer away from Adam settlement (Geva Binyamin), and would accommodate the settlers of the Migron outpost,¹¹⁴ who number about 200. The Israeli government also proposed a plan to build a new settlement in al-Aghwar region that contains 20 new settlement units in Maskiot settlement, as part of a building plan that includes 180 settlement units that the Israeli government had proposed during 2006, in a step aimed at accommodating more Israeli settlers there.¹¹⁵

During 2009, Israel finished all the preparations for the infrastructure required for the settlement neighborhood in area E1, east of Jerusalem. It started implementing the construction plan, in spite of opposition from the US and the world community to it for 10 years. On 7/9/2009, the groundbreaking ceremony for plan E1, east of Jerusalem took place, attended by some Israeli cabinet ministers, members of the Israeli Knesset, the mayor of Ma'ale Adumim, and the leaders of the settlement Yesha Council. Plan E1 includes the building of 3,900 new settlement units to accommodate 15 thousand Israeli settlers, on 12,500 donums of the lands of al-Tur, al-'Isawiyah, 'Anata and al-'Ayzariyah villages, east of Jerusalem.¹¹⁶

On 18/11/2009, there was another groundbreaking ceremony for the second phase of the Nof Zion settlement, situated on the lands of Silwan, south of



Jerusalem, which will include the construction of 105 new residential units in the settlement. The area on which Nof Zion, with all its four stages, will stand is 1,866 donums. It comprises the construction of 475 settlement units on the lands of Silwan and neighboring villages. At the end of 2009, more than 60 Jewish families were residing in the settlement neighborhood of Nof Zion.¹¹⁷

It is worth mentioning here that, since Netanyahu came to power in Israel toward the end of March 2009, the building of more than 19,100 residential units was approved,¹¹⁸ 81% of them in Jerusalem, and the rest in other settlements in the WB. The Israeli authorities have decided to expand the area of Nirit community inside the occupied WB territories, by building a new residential neighborhood by the name of Nof Hasharon, which, according to Israeli claims, will be part of Alfe Menashe settlement, situated northeast of the new settlement neighborhood¹¹⁹ (see map 7/6).

Oftentimes, Israel has sought to carry out its plans regardless of the peace settlement track; for it considers that, whatever concessions it makes in the occupied WB and GS will be tantamount to surrendering “its legitimate rights” in historic Palestine. Indeed, since the start of the peace process with the Palestinians in 1993, Israel has pursued unilateral steps as it proceeded to make geographical changes on the ground, contrary to what was agreed upon, which is that neither the Israeli nor the Palestinian parties would take steps that would effect changes in permanent status issues (Jerusalem, settlements, borders, water and refugees), which is exactly what Israel did, as it continued settlement building in the WB and Jerusalem. It intentionally imposed new political boundaries by building the Separation Wall, expropriating vast areas of Palestinian lands, seizing groundwater resources in the WB and bringing them under its control, in addition to dismissing the refugees’ right of return to their homeland.

Map 7/6: The New Settlement Neighborhood Nof Hasharon



— Segregation Wall — Armistice Line 1949 (Green Line) — Israeli Settlement



Map 8/6: Israeli Outposts According to the Date of Their Establishment



The epidemic of Israeli settlement outposts, which began to spread in various regions of WB since 1996, has acquired different dimensions since that time. It started with a “Sharonist” call to Jewish settlers to lay hands on sites on Palestinian hills and heights, to prevent handing them over later to Palestinians, within the framework of a future settlement between the two sides. Although the successive Israeli governments in the years 1996–2009 did not enter them in the Israeli classifications under what is called “lawful settlements,” they provided them with a security as well as logistic cover for their existence and continuance, specifically after 2001, when Ariel Sharon came to power and gave free reign to these outposts. According to the latest field readings and analysis of aerial photos (June 2009) by ARIJ, the number of these Israeli outposts has reached 232.

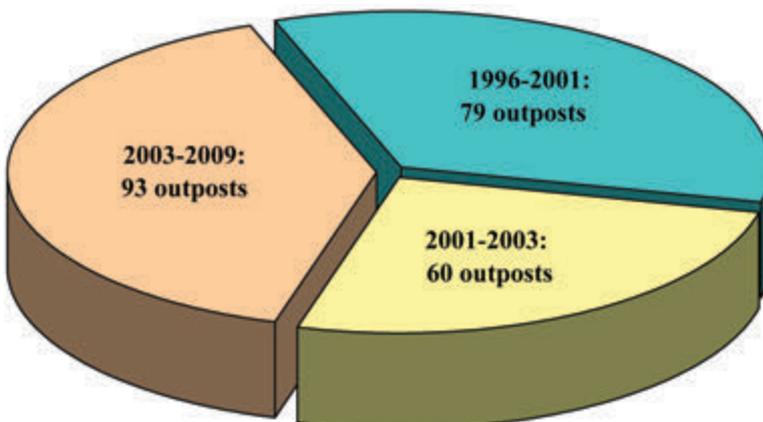
The settlers have established 60 new outposts during the period 2001–2003. The following table indicates the number of outposts established during 1996–2009.

Table 4/6: Number of Outposts Established During 1996–2009¹²⁰

Period	No. of outposts
1996–2001	79
2001–2003	60
2003–2009	93
Total	232

Source: the database of the Geographic Information Systems Unit for 2009–ARIJ.

Number of Outposts Established During 1996–2009



The talk about vacating outposts has become a political ritual practiced by every new Israeli government. Therefore, while there is talk about evacuation in certain regions, permission is given to establish new outposts and expand settlements in other locations. Israel's policy has become that of concentrating settlement expansion operations and establishing outposts in the regions situated behind the Wall that Israel is striving to annex after the Wall's construction is completed. Correspondingly, Israel will allow vacating some settlement outposts in other locations, which were established with the aim of using them for bargaining later, and that is what is taking place today.

All along, Israel sought to deceive the world concerning the truth about settlement outposts, whereas it tried to give legitimacy to some of them by issuing ministerial reports classifying some of them as legitimate and others as illegitimate. In effect, all of these outposts, the same as the settlements and all what is Israeli in the occupied Palestinian land, are illegitimate. They were built on confiscated Palestinian lands with the help and cooperation of various Israeli ministries that, under different claims, keep on providing these outposts with the necessary funds to support them.

It should be mentioned here that the number of these settlement outposts' residents is not made public. However, unofficial statistics issued by the Israeli Peace Now movement state that their number exceeds three thousand settlers.

Seventh: The Israeli Bypass Roads

Israel has intensified its settlement activities in WB and GS throughout its decades of continuous occupation. Almost 120 km², a ratio of 2.2% of the WB area, were expropriated,¹²¹ for building a network of bypass roads, having a length of more than 800 km, to connect Israeli settlements with one another and with Israel. This has contributed to the isolation of Palestinian population concentrations from one another, and to their segmentation. It is worth mentioning here that the real threat of bypass roads is multiplied because of the presence of what is known as the buffer zone that the Israeli army imposes along these roads, usually consisting of 75 meters on either side of the road.

This designation of bypass roads started to appear with the advent of the Oslo Accords in September 1993, to indicate roads built by the Israelis in the occupied

Palestinian territories to link Israeli settlements with one another, with Israel, and with military bases present in the WB.

These bypass roads are divided into three categories:

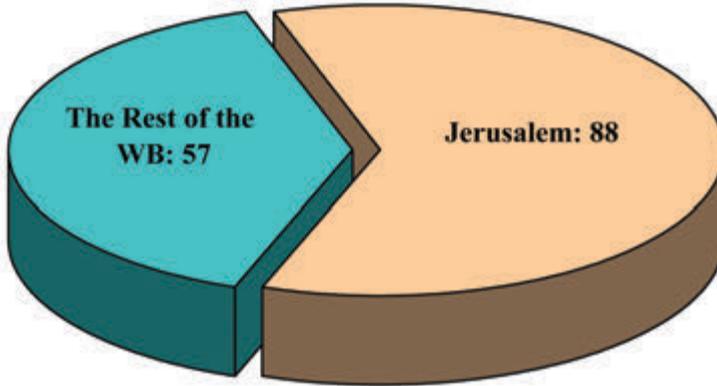
- Roads subject to exclusive Israeli use; and Palestinian traffic on them is completely prohibited.
- Roads that Palestinians may use, but with restrictions or requiring special permits issued by the Israeli Civil Administration.
- Roads that Palestinians may use, but with restricted access at their entrances, due to checkpoints (military barricades) of the Israeli occupation forces.

Eighth: Palestinian House Demolitions

During 2009, the Israeli occupation forces demolished more than 145 Palestinian houses in the WB governorates. Most of these demolitions were centered in the Jerusalem governorate, under the pretext of having been built without a permit, specifically in the villages of East Jerusalem, as Jerusalem falls within the methodical Israeli policy of seeking to Judaize the city, dispossess it of its Palestinian inhabitants and deny them the right to build. Moreover, other WB governorates suffered from the Israeli aggressive attack on Palestinian construction, once again under the pretext of lack of permits. This is so because these houses are located in Area C, which is, according to the interim agreements with the PA, an area placed under Israel's total control. Furthermore, during 2009, the Israeli occupation forces sent notices to the owners of more than 1,450 Palestinian houses, either to stop work on their construction, or face evacuation or demolition; most of these houses were in Jerusalem.¹²² Among Israel's plans for Jerusalem, there is one aimed at the expulsion of more than 1,500 Palestinians from al-Bustan neighborhood in the city, for the sake of building the historic "City of David" on the ruins of their homes, and at the forced expulsion of the Hanoun and al-Ghawi families, consisting of 53 individuals, from their homes in Sheikh Jarrah neighborhood in Jerusalem, because some Jewish groups claim that they own the land and the houses on it.



Number of Homes Demolished in WB During 2009



According to conservative estimates issued by OCHA-oPt, no less than 28% of Palestinian homes in occupied East Jerusalem are threatened with demolition, on the pretext that they violate the Israeli zoning requirements, which means that the homes of more than 60 thousand Palestinians are threatened with demolition at any moment.¹²³

Ninth: The Separation Wall

In September 2007, it was revealed that changes in the Wall's path in WB were approved in April of the same year,¹²⁴ contrary to what was approved in April 2006. This has happened in spite of the fact that three years had passed since the decision by the Hague International Court of Justice was issued in 2004 that upheld the illegality of the Israeli Separation Wall, and recommended that Israel removes the Wall and compensate the Palestinians for the damages they had incurred due to its construction.¹²⁵ Obviously, the high-level political meetings between the Israeli and Palestinian sides had no effect on restraining the plans of the Israeli army, which continued with its unilateral measures, disregarding all that is going on in the political arena. Whereas the new changes revealed an addition to the area isolated behind the Western Wall, which has become 733 thousand donums, meaning that there is an addition of 32.1% (178 thousand donums) to what it was in 2006. The

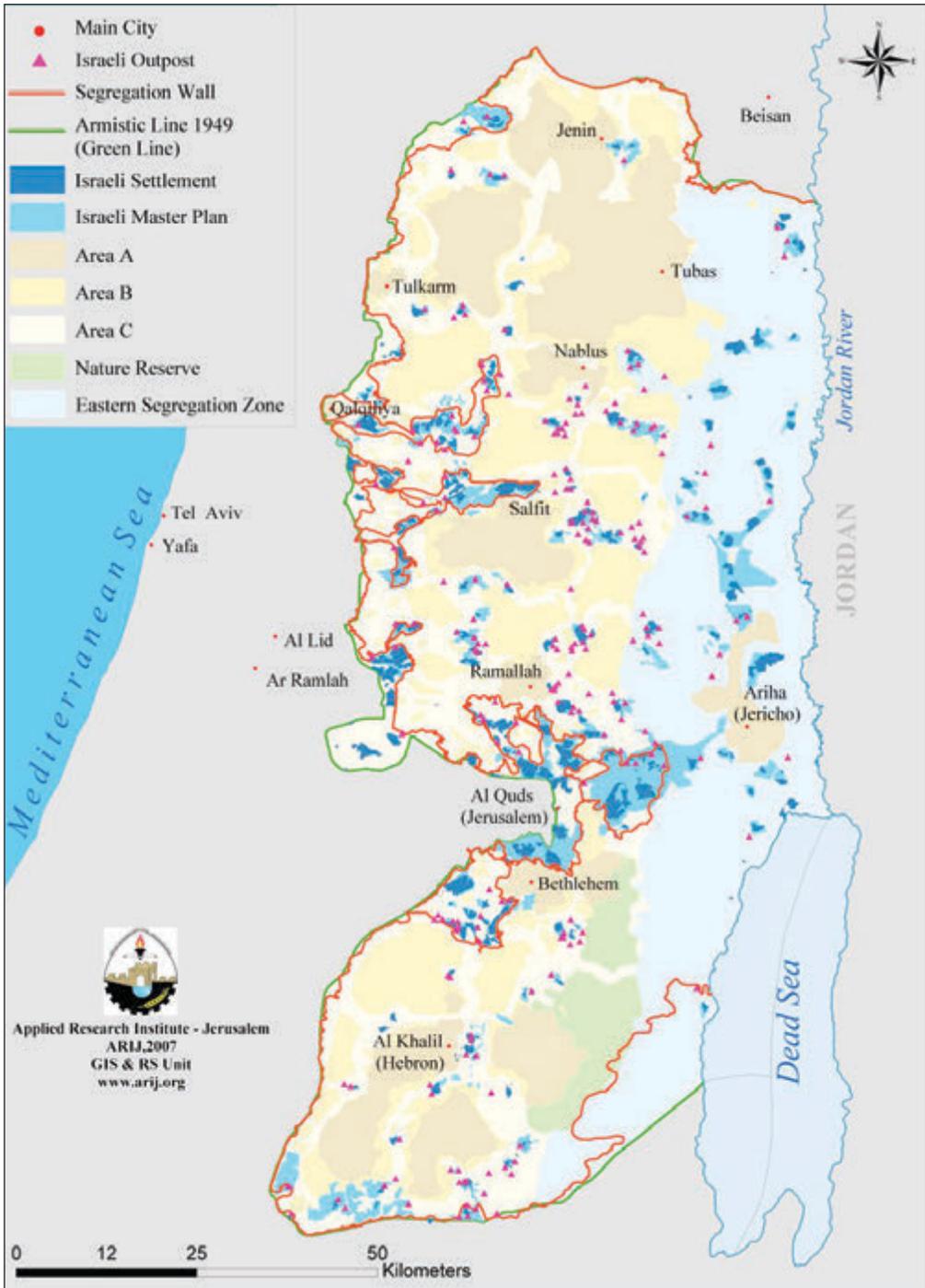
Wall's new path increased its length by 67 km (9.5%) more than it was in 2006, to make it 770 km.

The new changes in the Wall's path, as well as the area of lands isolated behind it, took place in two regions: the first is situated in the southeast of WB in an area south of the Jordan River Valley, alongside scenic areas in the south of WB. This is where an extension of the Wall was approved, from south of Hebron governorate to a northeastern direction, following which 53.5 km were added to the length of the Wall there. Consequently, 153.78 million donums were isolated between the new extension of the Wall and the Green Line. Furthermore, this new addition to the Wall's path has caused the isolation of a part of the Dead Sea region, where 71 km (37%) of a total of 194 km were isolated, which is the total area set aside for Palestinians there. It should be pointed out here that, in the past, the Israeli army had closed the road leading to the Dead Sea areas to Palestinians. As for the second change, it was made in the northwest of Ramallah, where a section of 13.5 km length was added, in order to join the Nili and Na'aleh settlements and isolate a further 4,140 donums area.¹²⁶

A report issued by OCHA-oPt revealed that 35 thousand Palestinians, who carry WB identity cards and live in 34 residential concentrations, would find themselves living in the space between the Wall and the 1948 borders. In this respect, it pointed out that 26 thousand Palestinians in eight concentrations in Bir Nabala, 'Azzun and al-Zawiya will be besieged from all sides by the Wall, which will cause entire families to be separated from their relatives, will delay school and university students from their classes in Jerusalem, and will keep Muslims and Christians from reaching their holy sites in the Sacred City.¹²⁷

The changes that the Israeli army is continuously making on the ground indicate its indifference to all that goes on in the political arena, rather its disregard of all the agreements signed between the state of Israel and the PLO. Moreover, the changes made by the Israeli army come in the context of the policy of taking bites out of the Palestinian land, one piece at a time, taking advantage of the fluctuations in the political conditions in the Palestinian arena and the changes in the international climate which is charged with tension. The aim is to draw the borders of Israel by applying the policy of *fait accompli*, and apart from any calls for bilateral, regional or international talks to discuss ways of solving the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. Even if these talks are to take place, they will be based on facts on the ground.

Map 9/6: The Wall's Path According to the Israeli Plan, April 2007



It is worth mentioning here that work on the construction of the Wall was mostly suspended during 2009, for the Israeli army did not add any new sections to it; thus, it stands as it was in 2008. Nevertheless, the preparatory construction works continued, even if at a slower pace, since the army kept on preparing the infrastructure needed for erecting the cement wall or the separation fence in various regions, among them Bethlehem and southern Hebron. In general, these preparatory works did not cause direct damage to the inhabitants' properties, yet at times, some of these inhabitants were denied free access to their lands.

Tenth: Uprooting Fruit Trees

The extent of Israeli violations has widened to affect the agricultural sector, which is a key pillar of the Palestinian economy. For, in addition to the confiscation of thousands of Palestinian agricultural lands, the uprooting of fruit trees and the destruction of agricultural produce constituted the harshest Israeli violations against the Palestinian people in 2009. According to statistics prepared by ARIJ, during 2009, more than 14 thousand fruit trees were uprooted, razed or burned by the Israeli occupation army and settlers; and most of that took place in the northern governorates. This is in addition to similar acts of dredging, destruction and uprooting of fruit trees in GS.

Attacks by Israeli settlers (the settlements' residents) on Palestinian farmers during the olive-picking season increased, reaching in 2009 their ugliest forms, such as burning fruit trees with chemicals, uprooting them, stealing crops in areas adjacent to settlements, and engaging in scuffles with Palestinian farmers, within earshot and view of the Israeli army. This caused a decline in harvests, making them insufficient for covering the basic needs of the Palestinians in the WB, and augmentation in the losses of Palestinian farmers who subsist on their revenues from olive harvest.

The negative effects of confiscating agricultural lands and uprooting fruit trees are not confined to the agricultural sector and the farmers; they also cause grave environmental damage, such as increase in the rate of air pollution and soil erosion, as trees play a major role in protecting the environment and preserving the natural balance of the ecosystem around them.

Eleventh: Palestinian Water Rights

Since 1967, Israel has endeavored to consolidate and expand its control of Palestinian water resources, through its occupation of GS and WB. Thus, it imposed restrictions on the Palestinians' use of water and declared the lands adjacent to the Jordan River closed military areas. Furthermore, Israel consumes 82% of the quantities of the annually renewable water resources from the groundwater basins of the WB, in order to meet one quarter of its needs, while the water consumed by Palestinians constitutes 17% of this renewable quantity.

Water in the WB and GS is available from two main sources: surface water represented by the Jordan River, groundwater from the Coastal Aquifer Basin in GS, and the WB basins made up of three main ones: the western basin, the northeastern basin and the eastern basin.

Israel continues to exploit the Jordan River waters through projects, unilaterally executed, and in a manner that severely violates the water rights of Palestinians and of countries bordering the river. Most prominent of these projects is Israel's National Water Carrier, through which Israel divert water from the Tiberias Lake to the Negev Desert, in addition to King Abdullah Canal used to be known as the East Ghor Main Canal, causing the amount of water flowing into the river to be diminished from 1,250 million cubic meters (MCM) annually at the beginning of the fifties of the twentieth century to no more than 200 MCM a year of low quality and high salinity water.¹²⁸

It should be mentioned that the Jordan River basin covers about 50% of the water needs of each of Israel and Jordan, while it covers only 5% of the total water needs of Syria and Lebanon. Thus, every time one of the Arab countries overlooking the Jordan River tries to increase its consumption of its waters to satisfy the needs of its citizens, it finds Israel lying in wait for it.

As for groundwater, a total estimated recharge of 679 MCM of the three shared aquifers (the western, northeastern and eastern basins) is allocated between Palestinians and Israeli users, within Israel and in the WB,¹²⁹ knowing that the western basin is considered the biggest among them. It is worth mentioning that 80% of the areas that feed this basin are situated within the limits of the WB, while 80% of the storage areas are located within the limits of the land seized by Israel in 1948, the fact that lets this basin be shared by the WB and Israel.

Map 10/6: Proposed and Implemented Plans for Utilizing the Jordan River Waters



Most of the regions that feed the northeastern basin are situated in the WB, while the waters of the eastern basin are considered national Palestinian waters, as this basin is not connected to any of the aquifers in common with Israel, and the areas feeding this basin are found only in the WB.

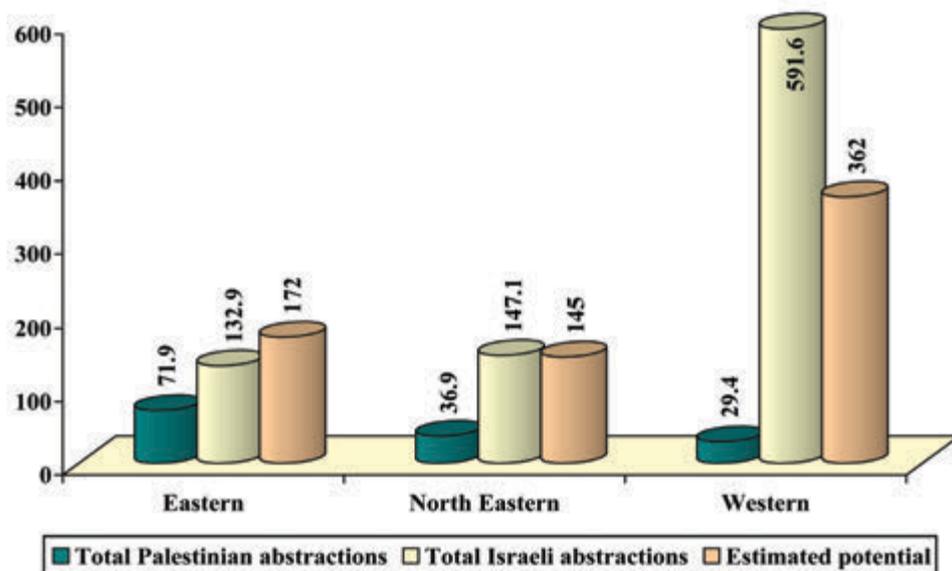
In spite of these facts, the Israelis consume the largest portion of these basins' waters. Table 5/6 shows the estimated potentials of the aquifers, and the difference between the quantities abstracted by the Israelis and by the Palestinians.

As for GS, the matter goes beyond that, as Israel's abstraction of the Coastal Aquifer led to a sharp drop in the level of the groundwater and deterioration in the water's quality. Studies indicate that the salinity levels in the aquifer have become higher than the rate recommended by the World Health Organization (WHO) of 250 mg/l.

Table 5/6: Abstractions from the Three Shared Aquifers Within WB and Israel 1999 (MCM)

Aquifer	Total Palestinian abstractions	Total Israeli abstractions	Estimated potential
Eastern	71.9	132.9	172
North eastern	36.9	147.1	145
Western	29.4	591.6	362

Abstractions from the Three Shared Aquifers Within WB and Israel 1999 (MCM)



Due to Israel's over-extraction of the underground basins and the restrictions it imposes on digging wells or rehabilitating them, Palestinian abstractions have actually declined over the last 10 years. Contrary to expectations under Oslo II article 40, the water actually abstracted by Palestinians in the WB has dropped from 138.5 MCM in 1999 to 113.5 MCM in 2007.¹³⁰ The figures of the Palestinian Water Authority (PWA) show that the Palestinian extraction in 2008 reached 84 MCM, with the reduction was due to operational problems for some wells and a drop in the level of the water table, caused by Israeli over-extraction and low annual rainfall.¹³¹

**Table 6/6: Palestinian Abstractions from the Three Shared Aquifers
1999 and 2007 (MCM)¹³²**

Aquifer	Article 40 allocation	1999	2007
Western	22	29.4	27.9
North eastern	42	36.9	26.8
Eastern	74.5	71.9	58.8

Yet, under the Oslo II, an extra 28.6 MCM per year was to be allocated to Palestinian needs to be drawn from the eastern aquifer. However, Israel did not honor its commitment and supplied the Palestinians with only 15 MCM. It should be mentioned here that there are doubts whether there is the potential of drawing the agreed upon water quantities from the eastern basin, because of the drop in surface water level by an average of more than 25 meters a year, the fact which warns of danger regarding the amount of renewable water resources in this basin.

Due to Israel's water policy, the gap has widened between available water quantities and the increase in demand for water, due to the increase in population and urban development in all Palestinian regions. Thus, most Palestinian areas still suffer from great deficiency in water supplies; as no change worth mentioning has occurred in the quantities of water available for Palestinians since the Oslo Accords, see the following table:



Table 7/6: Averages of Water Supplies and the Deficient Quantities (MCM)¹³³

Year	Available quantity	Deficient quantities	Actual deficient quantities
2005	75	41.18	-
2006	79.3	42.18	-
2007	84.5	33.98	61.46
2008	88.58	34.64	62.38

During 2008, the Palestinian's average daily consumption of water did not exceed 73 liters. This is considered a low quantity, as it does not exceed 53% of the internationally recommended minimum, which is 150 liters per person per day. It should be noted that more than half of the rural Palestinian concentrations have an average consumption of no more than 50 liters per person per day. The great disparity in the availability of water resources, between the WB and GS on the one hand and Israel on the other, becomes clear when we know that the quantity of water consumed by an Israeli is estimated to be four times that of a Palestinian, as the daily share of the Israeli individual is 300 liters of water. During 2008, the quantity of water supplied to Palestinians in the WB governorates came to about 88.5 MCM; while based on the internationally recommended minimum, the needed quantity of water is about 121 MCM.

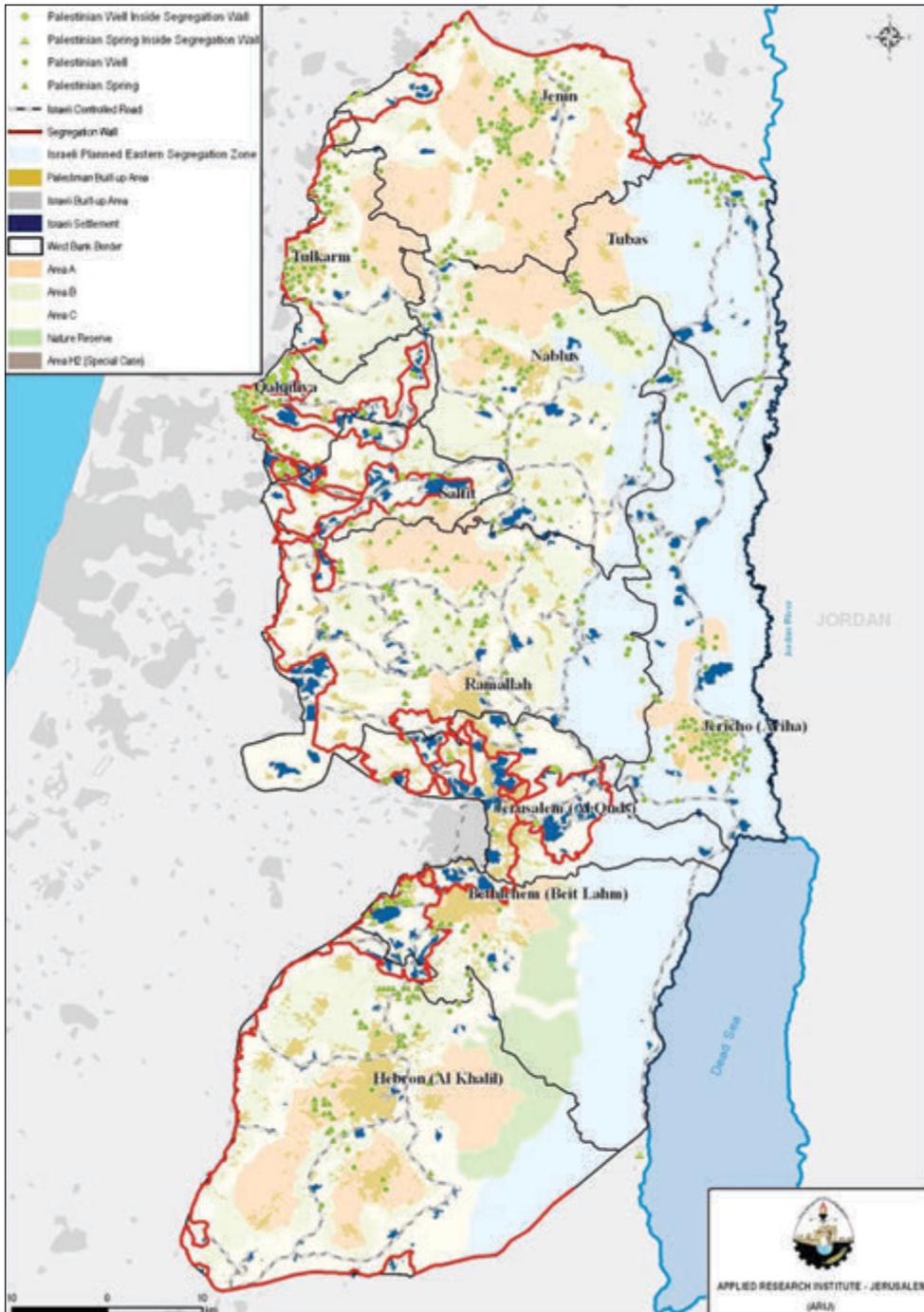
It is noticed that the WB governorates do not depend totally upon their own water resources in supplying the inhabitants with the needed quantities of potable water. This is due to the insufficiency in the water quantities produced from groundwater wells and springs, in addition to the lack of any other sources of supply. That is why, the PWA resorts to buying additional quantities of water from Mekorot, Israel's National Water Company, to make up for the shortages in the quantities of water supplied. It should be mentioned here that purchased water comes from three main sources: the wells of the WB Water Department, which are Palestinian wells that remain under the administration of the Israeli side; the Israeli wells that were dug in the WB after its occupation in 1967, and Mekorot from inside the Green Line. It is noticed that since the signing of the Oslo Accords, there has been an increase in the water bought from Mekorot, as it came in 2008 to more than 53% of the total supply of water.

On the other hand, more than 9% of the WB residents living in 134 Palestinian concentrations still lack public water networks. In addition, 15% of those residents served by the water network do not get water supply services, so they depend upon traditional methods of obtaining water, such as buying water from water tankers, collecting rainwater, or drawing water from nearby springs.

On the level of developing and administering water resources, the PA was not able to manage fully its resources. For according to Article 40 of the Oslo Accords, all development projects of the water and sanitary drainage sectors inside WB and GS are subject to the approval of the Israeli-Palestinian Joint Water Committee (JWC). However, and since its formation, this committee has come under much criticism, as the final say regarding work projects concerning the water sector in the Palestinian occupied territories, in particular areas B and C that are under Israeli control, belongs decidedly to the Civil Administration Staff Officer for Water Affairs, who relies in his decisions on the authority of Israeli departments for the approval of any plan. Accordingly, the Palestinian side was barred from carrying out its commitments, as, since the Oslo II was signed, only about 57% of the Palestinian plans presented to the JWC were approved, while 143 plans were either not settled or frozen, and 22 others were rejected. The latter were to improve the services of the main infrastructure of the Palestinian population concentrations. The JWC did not approve those plans, for security or technical reasons, as it claims. As for the projects related to digging wells, 65 of 202 projects were approved; yet, only 38 projects were actually implemented. While the Israeli water projects for the illegal settlements in the Palestinian territories do not need the approval of the JWC, as Israel had kept for itself the responsibility for the water and drainage networks in the WB settlements during the transitional period.

On the other hand, security and military restrictions imposed by Israeli authorities on the WB territories represent a real obstacle to the Palestinians' ability to manage and use their water resources. For Israel started the building of the Separation Wall in order to swallow 13% of the WB area, including the Palestinian water wells and springs there; the fact that will prevent the Palestinians from using them, or will place severe restrictions on their usage. Thus, 31 artesian wells that produce 4.5 MCM per annum will be isolated. This is in addition to Israel's control of the eastern areas of the WB, which it declared closed military areas, knowing that these areas contain 105 artesian wells and 30 springs (see map 11/6).

Map 11/6: Palestinian Wells and Springs Isolated Behind the Separation Wall and the Eastern Isolation Region



Consequently, lack of coordination, the practices of the JWC, the laws laid down by the Israeli Civil Administration regarding planning and investment, in addition to security and military restrictions imposed by Israel, led to deterioration in the water situation, inability to develop water resources and provide services to the Land's children, the Palestinians.

Twelfth: Israeli Military Roadblocks

On 16/9/2009, the Israeli occupation army announced that it has begun removing 100 military roadblocks in the WB, in accordance with the directives issued by the Israeli Defense Minister Ehud Barak,¹³⁴ and in the wake of a security assessment conducted by the commander of the Israeli Central Command, and the Chief of Staff of the Israeli army, Gabi Ashkenazi. The Israeli occupation army military spokesperson claimed that the “decision is a continuation of the government policy to improve the economic situation in the region while maintaining the operational flexibility of the Israel Defense Forces and security forces.”

The truth of the matter is that what Israel is doing is a mere media political ploy, seeing that the checkpoints that Israel had claimed having removed remain in place. However, their administrative category has changed, as they have become known as Flying (random) Checkpoints. Thus, by the end of 2009, the number of Israeli roadblocks of all kinds was 617, of which there are 78 fixed checkpoints, 17 flying checkpoints, 71 observation towers, 113 agricultural gates, 155 concrete roadblocks and iron gates, and 183 earthmounds.¹³⁵

All these roadblocks contribute directly to limiting the Palestinian citizens' freedom of movement between cities, or toward their agricultural lands, in particular those situated at the Wall. The Wadi al-Nar checkpoint, known as the Container Checkpoint, where prevention of transit cuts the north and the south of the *WB* off from each other, constitutes the greatest obstacle to the Palestinians' freedom of movement.

A report prepared by the Palestinian Centre for Human Rights (PCHR) indicated that 65% of the main roads that lead to 18 Palestinian communities in the WB are closed or are controlled by the Israeli army. It must be noted here that there are around 500 kilometers of restricted roads across the WB.¹³⁶



Thirteenth: The GS and the Israeli Occupation

In past years, the GS governorates were subjected to repeated Israeli invasions and attacks, in particular after the outbreak of the second *Intifadah* on 28/9/2000. Then matters got worse, with siege, war and destruction, after Hamas won the elections in early 2006 and took control of the GS in the middle of 2007.

1. Destruction of Agricultural Lands

In an analysis of what followed the war on GS waged by Israel, from 27/12/2008 and until 18/1/2009, reports indicate that the Israeli massive air raids, the destruction and devastation inflicted by Israeli vehicles and bulldozers, and the overall military operation against the Sector, caused the destruction of about 57 km² of the GS agricultural lands totaling 196 km², a ratio of 29%.¹³⁷

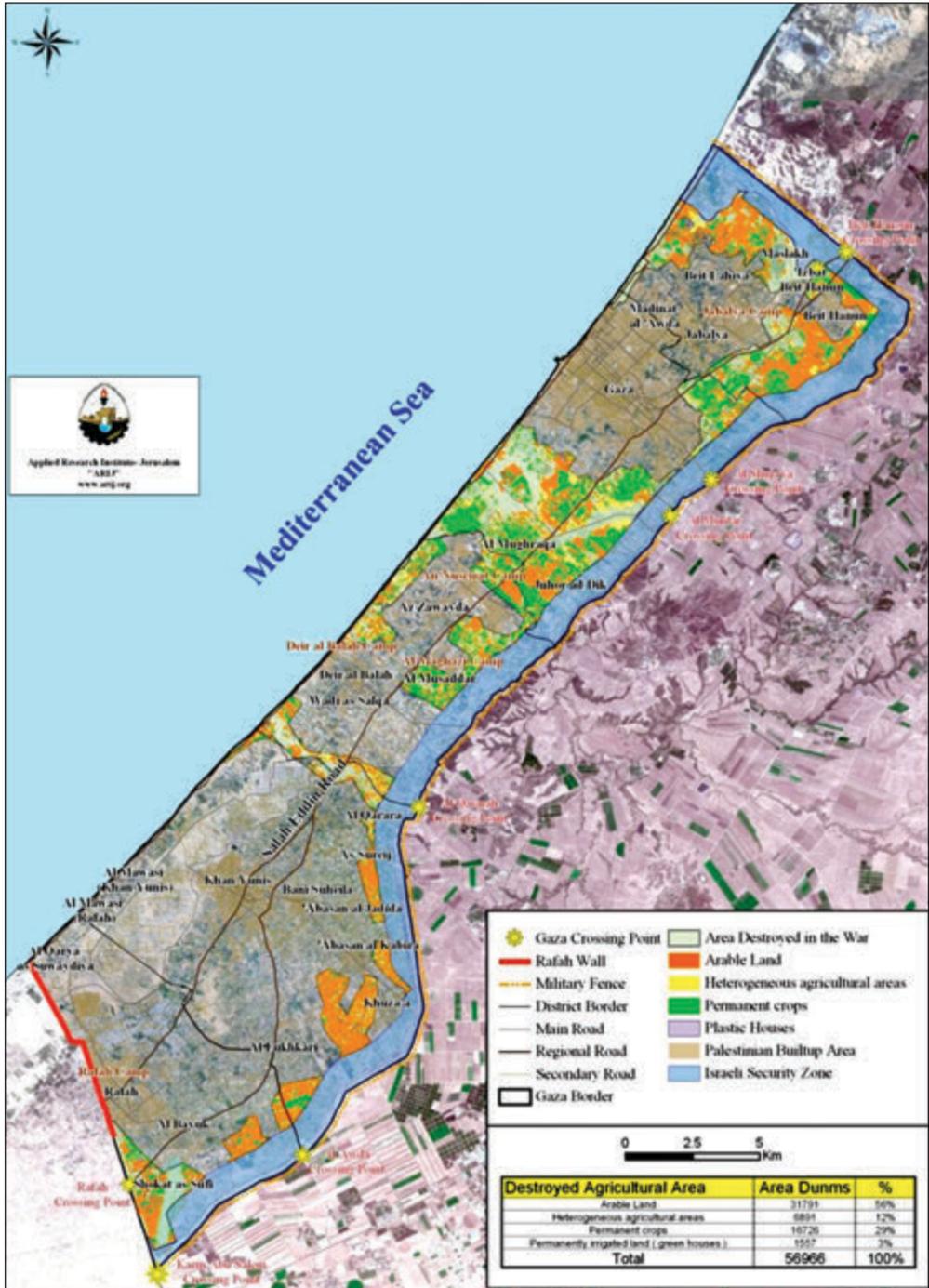
2. Destruction of Infrastructure

During Israel's offensive against GS, in the period between 27/12/2008 and 18/1/2009, Israeli aircrafts and bulldozers destroyed 5,356 Palestinian houses, comprising 7,878 residential units, and made thousands homeless; and that according to a report by the PCHR in 2009.¹³⁸ The number of Palestinian buildings that sustained heavy damages owing to the latest Israeli aggression amounted to more than 16 thousand buildings, most of them located in the northern and central governorates; this is in addition to the destruction of numerous schools and industrial, commercial and public establishments.

3. Israel's Control of More than 24% of the GS Area

On 28/6/2007, the Israeli occupation forces announced the redrawing of the buffer zone along the northern and eastern borders of GS, along a length of 58 km,¹³⁹ as the security zone was enlarged for the second time, and unilaterally on the part of Israel, for a distance of 1.5 km on the Palestinian side, along all the borderline of GS, starting from the far northwest and ending with Karm Abu Salim crossing in the southeast.

Map 12/6: Agricultural Areas Destroyed by Israel During Its Last Invasion of GS



This change comes in violation of the Oslo Accords of 1994 between Israel and the PLO, following which it was determined that the width of the buffer zone is to be 500 meters and its length 58 km, starting with the GS northwest borders and ending with the region of eastern Rafah in the south. However, after the outbreak of the second *al-Aqsa Intifadah* in 2000, Israel enlarged the buffer zone, adding variable widths that were determined in September 2005, following the withdrawal (redeployment) of Israeli troops from GS, letting the buffer zone widths vary between 600 and 1,000 meters.

Following this withdrawal (redeployment) in 2005, Israel designed a plan to establish a security buffer zone, having a width of five kilometers, along the entire borderline surrounding the GS. This measure required the evacuation of Palestinian residential areas north of GS, among them, Beit Lahia and Beit Hanoun. However, the plan was not executed, until the Israeli occupation forces returned to it at the end of June 2007, after a new decree was issued for this same plan.

In an analytical study carried out by ARIJ, it was shown that the area of buffer/ security zone that Israel plans to establish along the borderline in GS will appropriate 87 km² of land, of which Israel had taken tight control of 29 km² immediately after the Oslo Accords were signed between the Palestinian and Israeli sides in 1994. These were widened later to 61 km², following the Israeli withdrawal (redeployment) in 2005. If the Israeli plan came to be realized, Israel will be in control of 24% of the GS area of 362 km². The remaining 275 km² would belong to the Palestinians who number around 1.5 million people, making their population density 5,447 persons per km², which is the highest in the world.

Map 13/6: Buffer Zone Under Israeli Control in GS



Conclusion

During 2009, the Israeli authorities continued with an accelerated pace to apply their policy of Judaizing Jerusalem and taking control of *al-Aqsa* Mosque. Lately there were many fears that the occupation is preparing to partition *al-Aqsa* Mosque between Muslims and Jews. A big rise in the number of storming incidents carried out by Jewish religious extremists, officials and Israeli security agencies of the mosque was recorded. Furthermore, the year 2009 witnessed an accelerated pace of excavations below the Mosque and in its periphery, as the number of excavation sites has reached 25.

The sufferings of the Jerusalemites continue to multiply, through denying them building permits and demolishing their homes. Thus, there are about eight thousand homes threatened with demolition, among them hundreds of homes in al-Bustan neighborhood; all of that fall within the plan to make way for building the historic “City of David.”

Furthering the pace of settlement building, particularly in Jerusalem since Netanyahu came to power and approved the building of more than 19,100 residential units, 81% of them in Jerusalem’s settlements, points to the gravity of the Judaization plan being implemented. Moreover, the existence of 199 Israeli settlements in WB, including 34 in East Jerusalem, in addition to 232 Israeli settlement outposts, indicates the extent of the difficulty facing any peace settlement leading to the establishment of a genuine contiguous Palestinian state, having actual sovereignty over its territories.

Thus, the Judaization plan and the changes in the features of the land and in the population, particularly in Jerusalem, continue at a rapid pace, in a race with time, in order to impose the final form of any political settlement. While simultaneously, the PA’s performance remains confused in the face of these challenges. Moreover, Arabic and Islamic weakness, added to international indifference, encourage the Israeli side to go ahead and commit more acts of aggression against the land and the holy sites.

Endnotes

- ¹ *Yedioth Ahronoth*, 30/7/2009.
- ² Muhammad 'Awwad, *Iqamat al-Haykal al-Maz'um: I'lan al-Harb al-Diniyyah* (Building the so-Called Temple: Declaring a Religious War) (Amman: The Royal Committee for Jerusalem Affairs, 2004), p. 57.
- It seems that Netanyahu has learned some of Sharon's realism in this respect. Thus, the policy communiqués of his current cabinet are devoid of any commitment regarding "The Temple Mount." He actually denies the existence of such excavations, as he did on 12/10/2009, although he stressed in his speech on 21/5/2009, on "Jerusalem Day" which is the anniversary of Jerusalem's unification, that the "mountain of the Temple of the Almighty will be firmly established as the head of the mountains, and it will be exalted above the hills, and all the nations will stream to it." At Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 21/5/2009, http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/Government/Speeches+by+Israeli+leaders/2009/Address_PM_Netanyahu_Jerusalem_Day_21-May-2009.htm
- ³ Site of Al Quds City, Al Quds International Institution, 23/6/2009, <http://www.alquds-online.org/index.php?s=7&ss=news&id=2401>
- ⁴ Wafa, 26/7/2009, <http://arabic.wafa.ps/arabic//index.php?action=detail&id=46990>
- ⁵ 'Abdullah Ibhais et al., *'Ayn 'ala al-Aqsa: Taqrir Tawthiqi Istiqra'i Yarsud al-I'tida'at 'ala al-Masjid al-Aqsa fi al-Fatrah bayna 21/8/2008–21/8/2009* (An Eye on al-Aqsa: A Deductive Documentary Report that Monitors the Attacks on al-Aqsa Mosque during the Period 21/8/2008–21/8/2009) (Beirut: Al Quds International Institution, 2009), p. 51.
- ⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 28.
- ⁷ The Israel Antiquities Authority (IAA), in its Hebrew and English language websites, announces most of the details of these excavations, which are now available on-line in a refereed e-journal, under the title *Hadashot Arkheologiyot – Excavations and Surveys in Israel*. It usually does not keep these excavations a secret on purpose; however, the Arab media does not usually reach such sources, subsequently titles such as "uncovering" "new" excavations are abundant in it, every time new developments take place in these excavations. Moreover, the IAA opens the door for archeologists, professionals and amateurs, from inside and outside the state, and gives them the opportunity to observe the work done on these excavations, in exchange for a certain amount of money. Furthermore, it relies on this income as one of its sources for financing these excavations. For more information, one can refer to this periodical's site on the Internet, www.hadashot-esi.org.il
- ⁸ *The Jerusalem post*, 28/3/2008.
- ⁹ This same article indicates that this date agrees with an old "prophecy" by a Jewish rabbi in the 18th century, in which he foresaw the date of rebuilding "The Third Temple," depending on the completion of the third construction of this synagogue, in: *Haaretz*, 30/11/2009, <http://www.haaretz.com/hasen/spages/1131599.html>
- ¹⁰ 'Abdullah Ibhais et al., *op. cit.*, p. 28.
- ¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 94.
- ¹² Al Quds City, 11/6/2009, <http://www.alquds-online.org/index.php?s=news&cat=&id=2328>
- ¹³ Site of PLS48.NET, 19/8/2009, <http://www.pls48.net/default.asp?ID=49910>
- ¹⁴ Al Quds City, 11/10/2009, <http://www.alquds-online.org/index.php?s=7&ss=news&id=3366>
- ¹⁵ Al Quds City, 25/10/2009, <http://www.alquds-online.org/index.php?s=news&cat=&id=3470>
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- ¹⁸ Adrian Blomfield, Fears of Third Intifada as Tension Grows in Israel, *The Daily Telegraph* newspaper, United Kingdom (UK), 8/10/2009, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/middleeast/israel/6274959/Fears-of-third-intifada-as-tension-grows-in-Israel.html>
- ¹⁹ These expulsion orders affected Sheikh Kamal al-Khatib, the deputy leader of the Islamic Movement in 1948 occupied Palestine, Sheikh ‘Ali Abu Sheikha, consultant to the Islamic Movement on Jerusalem Affairs and *al-Aqsa* Mosque, Sheikh ‘Ikrima Sabri, Chairman of the Supreme Council of Islamic Law and the preacher of *al-Aqsa* Mosque, Sheikh Mustafa Abu Zahra, a member of the Chamber of Commerce in Jerusalem, and the leader Hatim Abd al-Qadir, Fatah’s Jerusalem Affairs Liaison, in addition to the decisions made before this period of expelling Sheikh Ra’id Salah from Jerusalem’s Old City, and then from all of Jerusalem.
- ²⁰ http://www.foraqsa.com/content/news/archive.php?subaction=showfull&id=1248545915&archive=1249204342&start_from=&ucat=1&
- ²¹ Media and Information Department in Al Quds International Institution, “Al-Quds... the Harvest of Forty Years,” Al Quds International Institution, 2008, pp. 16-18, <http://www.alquds-online.org/org/userfiles/pdf/Ma3ared/Hasad%2040%20-%20English.pdf>
- ²² See Donald Macintyre, The Man Who Sold Jerusalem, *The Independent* newspaper, London, 10/5/2005, <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/the-man-who-sold-jerusalem-490146.html>
- ²³ Al Quds City, 9/8/2009, <http://www.alquds-online.org/index.php?s=news&id=2874>
- ²⁴ *Alquds*, 7/1/2010.
- ²⁵ Site of SQLB-Church.com, 14/1/2010, <http://sqlb-church.com/archives/974>
- ²⁶ *Asharq Alawsat*, 6/1/2009.
- ²⁷ *Felesteen*, 4/12/2009.
- ²⁸ Al Quds City, 4/12/2009, <http://www.alquds-online.org/index.php?s=news&id=3770>
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- ³⁰ Rivalry between Arab, Greek Clergymen Resurfaces, *The Jordan Times* newspaper, Amman, 17/11/2009, <http://www.jordantimes.com/?news=21655&searchFor=Theophilus>
- ³¹ Orthodox Congregation Continues Protests Over Church Leadership, *The Jordan Times*, 27/11/2009, <http://www.jordantimes.com/?news=21946&searchFor=Theophilus>
- ³² *Felesteen*, 17/8/2009.
- ³³ Ma’an, 11/12/2009.
- ³⁴ International Solidarity Movement, Israeli Violations Against Islamic and Christian Holy Sites in Palestine During 2009 (Arabic), published in the site of Palestine Network for Media and Information under the title The Holy City: the Most Targeted in the WB, and Serious Violations Against Gaza’s Holy Sites (Arabic), 3/1/2010, <http://palst.ps/news.php?action=view&id=1216>
- ³⁵ The General Framework for the Mechanism of Rebuilding Gaza (Arabic), site of Ministry of Public Works and Housing, Palestinian National Authority, February 2009, <http://www.mpwh.ps/wp-content/uploads/reconstruction.pdf>
- ³⁶ International Solidarity Movement, Israeli Violations Against Islamic and Christian Holy Sites in Palestine During 2009 (Arabic).

- ³⁷ “Jerusalem Institute for Israel Studies” constitutes the only source for the city’s detailed field statistics. It studies the statistical indicators issued by the Israeli Central Bureau of Statistics, and adds to them the results of its own surveys. However, it is slow in releasing information, as it issued in 2009 its annual Statistical Yearbook for 2008, which in turn discusses the statistical indicators of 2007, the fact that compels us to cite in this study the figures of 2007.
- ³⁸ “Chapter 7: Population and Society,” in *Local Outline Plan Jerusalem 2000*, Prepared for Jerusalem Municipality, by Planning Administration, City Engineer, City Planning Department, cited from: The Palestinian Counseling Center (PCC), http://www.pcc-jer.org/arabic/Publication/jerusalem_master_plan/jerusalemplan_eng.html
- ³⁹ The Jerusalem Institute for Israel Studies (JIIS), *Statistical Year Book of Jerusalem 2008* (Jerusalem: JIIS, 2009), table III/1, http://jiis.org/.upload/yearbook/2007_8/shnaton%20C0106.pdf
- ⁴⁰ *Ibid.*
- ⁴¹ *Ibid.*
- ⁴² *Ibid.*, table III/4, http://jiis.org/.upload/yearbook/2007_8/shnaton%20C0406.pdf
- ⁴³ *Ibid.*, table III/3, http://jiis.org/.upload/yearbook/2007_8/shnaton%20C0306.pdf
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- ⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, table III/11, http://jiis.org/.upload/yearbook/2007_8/shnaton%20C1107.pdf
Remark: The median age of the city’s Jewish residents tends to increase, as it went up by 0.7 points during the period 1997–2007, while that of the Palestinians tend to decrease, as it went down by 0.8 points during the same period.
- ⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, table III/17, http://jiis.org/.upload/yearbook/2007_8/shnaton%20C1706.pdf
- ⁴⁷ The Jerusalemites do not carry “ID Cards” in the sense of proving their citizenship, they rather carry permanent residency cards that allow them to live and work in Jerusalem and in the occupied territories of 1948. These residency cards are renewed every 10 years, approved by the Israeli Interior Minister. Calling them identity cards does not serve to clarify this unique and unjust legal status.
- ⁴⁸ *Haaretz*, 2/12/2009.
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- ⁵¹ Ya’qub ‘Awdah, *al-Haqq fi al-Sakan* (The Right to Housing) (Jerusalem: The Civic Coalition for Defending Palestinians’ Rights in Jerusalem, September 2008), p. 8.
- ⁵² Israel: Stop East Jerusalem Home Demolitions, site of HRW, 6/11/2009, <http://www.hrw.org/en/news/2009/11/06/israel-stop-east-jerusalem-home-demolitions>
- ⁵³ Musallam Abu Helu, op. cit., p. 8.
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As for the year 2009, see Home Demolitions in Jerusalem During 2009 (Arabic), MSD.
- ⁵⁷ JIIS, *Statistical Year Book of Jerusalem 2008*, table V/1, http://jiis.org/.upload/yearbook/2007_8/shnaton%20E0107.pdf

- ⁵⁸ “Chapter 7: Population and Society.”
- ⁵⁹ For further information see *Yedioth Ahronoth*, 25/8/2008, <http://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-3586852,00.html>
- ⁶⁰ *Alquds*, 23/10/2008, <http://www.alquds.com/docs/pdf-docs/2008/10/23/page34.pdf>
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This Report

The Palestinian Strategic Report 2009/10 is the fifth in a series of annual resourceful scientific studies. It discusses the developments of the Palestinian issue in this period, in an objective and comprehensive manner. The meticulous analytical reading of events tries also to foresee the future. This Report has become a basic reference in Palestinian studies, it is a must to all those concerned.

An outstanding team of 14 academics and experts contributed to this Report in eight chapters. They covered the internal Palestinian situation, the Israeli scene and the Israeli-Palestinian relations, the Arab, Muslim and international stances toward the Palestinian issue. This Report focuses also on the issue of Jerusalem and the holy sites, whereas, the demographic and economic indicators are studied and analyzed in two separate chapters.

Undoubtedly, this Report is a serious addition to the field of Palestinian studies.

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