



# JERUSALEM *my* BELOVED *city*



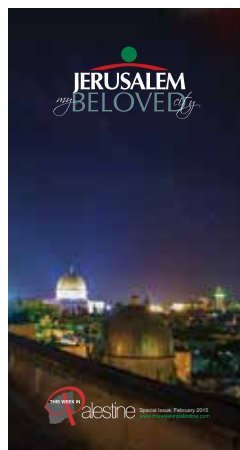
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# JERUSALEM

# my BELOVED city

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Cover: Jerusalem.  
Photo by Nabil Darwesh.



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Last, but surely not least, we would like to thank *Terry Boullata* who not only believed in us but also worked arduously to see this special issue about Jerusalem see the light. A big hug from all of us, Terry.

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*"If I forget you Jerusalem, may my right hand forget its skill." (Psalm 137)*

Jerusalem, the city where the ache seems to echo always louder and deeper. All of us love it, long for it, fight for it, and hate it all at once. Our history might be varied, colorful, and stretching for miles, but it always seems to begin and end in Jerusalem.

Jerusalem goes beyond the physical place. It is an emotional space deeply ingrained into our upbringing. It is a major part of our own Palestinian identity. It is a city that belongs to all of us, but not a city that all belong to. With the increasingly racist laws practiced by the Israeli government, Palestinians find themselves, yet again, *personae non gratae* in their own homes. Restrictions on land use and on building regulations, and the encroaching settlements that surround the city are some of what comes to mind when we talk and think about the holy city of Jerusalem. To go beyond that, Jerusalem's cultural identity as the place where all three Abrahamic religions meet and co-exist is in serious danger as the Israeli Occupation continues to push the Palestinians out, which leads to the loss of both the Christian and Muslim identity of Jerusalem, making into a Jewish-only city.

As Palestinians we cannot afford to be pushed out of our homes again, and the key to not losing one's land is to not lose sight of what is being taken and what has been lost. The key is not to forget. This is what we attempt to do in our special edition on Jerusalem. We aim to do what TWIP does best, and that is document all that is beautiful, special, horrific, and sad about Jerusalem. In this special issue, dedicated to this breathtaking city, we give you an array of fascinating articles about everything from personal stories to important observations on injustice, discrimination, and survival. We open up with "Jerusalem Blues" by Ali Qleibo, articles on challenging unlawful politics and resistance by Mona Sabella and Megan Driscoll, and hopes and challenges in the education system by Abdalqader Hussein. We also have beautiful contributions from MIFTAH and ARIJ, the Jerusalem-Ramallah Bus Company, and Bank of Palestine. You will also read about innovation, despite all the difficulties, in articles about renewable energy, building libraries, and community resilience. This issue is crowded with important information about Jerusalem that we all need to know, whether we have access to the city or not, so that we can understand the extent of suffering that is met by unfathomable perseverance. This special issue features a tribute to the late Maha Abu Dayyeh. When we first started working on this edition, Maha was still with us, and we were thrilled to choose her as Personality of the Month. It was very sad for all of us to hear of her passing. Maha was a fighter on all fronts. She fought the good fight for Palestinian women's rights and for her health with equal fervor. We have shed only a little bit of light on this Jerusalemite who was very much like her own city, an icon of perseverance.

Riyam Kafri-AbuLaban and Tala Abu Rahme  
 Content Editors



# The Jerusalem Blues

## A Portrait of the City

By Ali Qleibo



had arrived early for my daily walk with my friend Abed. I took a seat on the stairway leading to Damascus Gate and whiled away the time watching the hubbub below.

"You could not have chosen any better position from which to enjoy the city!" An aged man patronized me from under his long camel-hair overcoat, *abayeh*, as he dashed past me. I did not recognize the

presumptuous voice. "In Amman, they crave to be in your position," he added without stopping. Before I could identify him he had disappeared into the crowds entering the city gate.

Each Palestinian has his/her favorite gate through which to gain access to *al-balad*, downtown, which among Jerusalemites refers exclusively to the Old City enclosed within the Ottoman Wall. Herod's Gate has a welcoming, homey feeling and is used mostly by the residents of the area, as it extends over the eastern living quarter of the city, and the Friday pilgrims. New Gate is used by the residents of the northwestern quarter. Dung Gate is mixed and mainly used by Silwan residents. One rarely uses Jaffa Gate or Zion Gate. Saint Stephen's gate is the ceremonial gate through which the Palm Sunday procession proceeds into Jerusalem, the gate from which the Nebi Musa procession leaves to go to the sacred sanctuary outside Jericho, and the gate from which the dead are ritually carried, after the prayers in Al-Aqsa Mosque, to be buried in the cemetery outside the eastern wall. It is a favored entrance for drivers celebrating the daily sunrise prayers since it provides an expansive parking lot. Damascus Gate, which is the most beautiful and grandest, is the most favored. People, merchants and pilgrims, crowd its gateway as they enter into the Old City.



Damascus Gate has two gates; one is on street level and one lies directly beneath it. The lower gate is used exclusively as a tourist site and leads to an old Byzantine piazza that lies underneath the upper Ottoman gate.

One approaches the Old City, *al-balad*, from the Ottoman Gate, which dates from the early sixteenth century. Peasants dressed in their colorful embroidered clothes squat on both sides of the cobblestone street. They come from adjacent Palestinian villages carrying their seasonal produce.

Behind the dilapidated facades of the Mamluk and Ottoman buildings linger layers of ancient history. Underneath the twists and sharp turns of the streets, the planning of Muslim Jerusalem did not stray from the grid of the Roman city plan as revealed in the Byzantine Madaba map. The Umayyad, Crusader, Mamluk, and Ottoman architects used the Roman plan and the various structures lying underneath the city as a point of departure when redesigning Jerusalem.

One enters Damascus Gate as though entering an enchanted cave. One walks on a street knowing full well that underneath it runs another street, from another period. It is dizzying, for the foundations of the Jerusalem homes are deeply rooted in Palestinian history throughout the ages.

The heart of Jerusalem beats in Al-Waad Street. On Fridays, the street becomes crowded with peddlers, beggars, and people on their way to pray. "From God's bounty give me." The litanies of the beggars pleading for charity resonate with the staccato advertising calls from the boisterous shopkeepers and peddlers, each pushing his merchandise. Bells from the belfries and calls to prayer from the mosques mix with music from the cafés and shops, and that of the haggling of shoppers and salesmen in a rapturous cacophony.





Going into Al-Aqsa. Artwork by Ali Oleibo.

Smoke rises from the grill of the kebab vendors. Through the smoke, Jerusalem exudes an unmistakably oriental air. The vendors, the beggars, and shoppers become figures within a tableau that recreates the magical splendor of Cairo, Baghdad, and Istanbul as depicted in *One Thousand and One Nights*.

Jerusalem flashes infinite pictures. One closes one's eyes and its silhouette appears; light and shadow, day and night, sun and moon. Myriad moss-clad domes, like prehistoric turtles, perch on winding alleys, and weathered building-fronts huddle around the majestic Dome of the Rock.

The Cotton Market, the covered bazaar, provides the most spectacular entrance to Al-Aqsa Mosque. The long dark tunnel leads to a staircase in deep shadow. As one stands on the dark landing, the gold of the Dome glistens in the bright sunlight. Climbing the dark steps, one is overwhelmed by the glow outside. Slowly the eyes adjust to the light, shining above one's head. Through the small open entrance in the giant, leaf-green, painted gate, the deep-green pine tree, the silver-

green palm tree, and the blue ceramics that cover the walls of the Dome of the Rock come in a sacred symphony of blue, green, turquoise, ochre, and gold.

The simple design and intricate arabesque decoration of the Dome of the Rock is a joy to the eye. But the artistic greatness diminishes compared to the feeling of being in the place where the Prophet Mohammed, may his name be blessed, led all the biblical prophets in prayer before his transfiguration during that pivotal evening *Lailat al-Isra' walMi'raj* – The Night Journey.

This is when the doctrines of Islam, related to prayers, are believed to have been revealed; hence the oft-quoted Qur'anic verse, "Blessed be He who transported His slave by night from Al-Haram Mosque to Al-Aqsa Mosque whose environs we blessed."

To the Holy Rock, Al-Quds, the Muslims first prostrated themselves in prayer. Henceforth, Al-Aqsa Mosque came to be known as the first *qibla*, direction of prayer, and the third noble sanctuary in Islam.

From the top of the Mount of Olives, Jerusalem appears like a mirage at the foothill of the mountain with its glorious minarets and proud steeples embracing the sky, enclosed within the city wall. The houses inside the walls seem sculpted from the mountains. Once inside one cannot avoid the deep sensation that the mountaintops are encroaching upon and enclosing the city from everywhere.

In fact, Jerusalem is built on a number of mountains that surround Al-Waad and Souq Khan al-Zeit streets. There is no escape. One has to climb up and down the stairs whenever one wanders inside the Old City. This kind of stairway, connecting the various parts of the city, is called *aqabet* (i.e., obstacle). Jerusalem's labyrinthine alleys challenge us with these "obstacle stairways": Aqabet Darwish, Aqabet Risas, Aqabet al-Batteekh, Aqabet al-Sheikh Lulu, Aqabet al-Qirami, Aqabet et-Tikyeh, and Aqabet al-Saraya. All these "aqabat" are stone-paved stairways.

Jerusalem haunts me; sparks of light, images flicker, and a river of sadness flows, flooding the covered passageways embracing memories. Each of us carries an archetypal map of Jerusalem within our heart that corresponds to subjective visual imagery. The clarity, intensity, and proximity to the city determine our mood. Far from *al-balad*, its markets, alleys, mosques, and churches, one experiences a fall from grace: the Jerusalem blues. Jerusalemites, once severed from their city, languish in nostalgic melancholy (*al-huzon*). It is our burden, our joy, and our redemption. The vision of Jerusalem is a totalizing multifaceted experience of which each detail is a partial refraction of the whole: an open wound assuaged by its embrace once within the city walls.

Jerusalem alleviates the sense of existential loneliness. It heals and exhilarates. Sometimes, paradoxically, like feeling the Jerusalem blues, listening to Fairuz songs about Jerusalem, and feeling better. On another level, when I take a walk and stroll downtown (*al-balad*), I am aware that I am opening myself up

to the archetypal spiritual energy of the Holy City, which rises up and completely fills me, transforming my own energy, so that I at some point incarnate and actually become Jerusalem, overflowing my body boundaries and becoming one with the universal spirituality it exudes. Jerusalem is my source of inspiration. I am inside her. She is outside me. A writer and a painter, I alternately move between the two forms of expression. To write or to paint is the question.

I walk the flagstone street in Aqabet al-Qirami, past the last surviving shrine of Al-Qirami. I watch a pious lady lighting a candle and slipping it through the metal rails of the shrine window. I try to visualize the Jerusalem of the eighteenth century. I hearken to hear its echoes. Was the road paved with flagstones then? Did the streets have lights? I see my great-grandfather fumble in the shadows, cane in hand in his colorful brocaded gown and green turban on his way to the dawn prayers at Al-Aqsa Mosque.

I peer at the distant horizon through a covered passageway cascading past Aqabet al-Khaldieh towards Al-Waad Street. I focus my gaze on the nearby homes. The two cupolas on top of the

As I stand immobile facing Damascus gate, the hubbub of life within the Old City is conjured involuntarily into my mind's eyes. The existential perception of and proximity to the Ottoman wall is cognitively meaningful in relation to the city as a whole. The perceived part of the wall is a metonymic displacement of the whole. Each neighborhood, street, minaret, and steeple is a metaphor of the holy city.



adjacent house bathe in light. Behind the cupolas, a bluish mass of shadows cascade noiselessly on the other rooftops. In the distance, beyond the domes, the yellow cupola of the Dome of the Rock shines under the golden sky of Jerusalem.

Colors, sounds, and smells combine to give the city its unique character. Each neighborhood has its own distinctive scent. Even before one enters Zalatimo Pastry Shop, the smell of clarified butter and honey signal that one has arrived. The sweet aroma reaches one's nose from far away and is easily distinguishable from the hundreds of smells that saturate the commercial thoroughfares.

The first scent that assails one upon entering Damascus Gate, immediately after walking down the stairways, is that of the toasted coffee from Izhiman's Coffee Shop at the juncture of Al-Waad Street and Suq Khan el-Zeit. The aroma of freshly roasted and ground coffee dissolves into that of freshly baked bread and sweet, crunchy, warm, round *ka'ek* and toasted sesame seeds that soon merges with the pungent aroma



*The lonely way home. Artwork by Ali Oleibo.*



*Sun rise over Jerusalem. Artwork by Ali Oleibo.*

of pickles, olives, and cheese in Al-Hidmi Grocery. Gradually the smell of pickles gives way to fragrant rose water. Deep beyond Suq Khan el-Zeit, the Spice Market entralls with Jerusalem's bouquet of cardamom, coriander, cloves, cinnamon, cumin, fenugreek, nutmeg, pepper, saffron, turmeric... The lofty quarters of Jerusalem are redolent with incense. Musk oils and perfumes from Muslim sanctuaries and myrrh and frankincense from the Christian monasteries and churches rise from the city into a misty fragrant haze.

From the Mount of Olives at sunrise, a lavender cloud hangs over Jerusalem. The rising sun quickly dissipates the deep purple morning mist into deep blue that by the early morning hours turns into cerulean blue. The same panoramic vista abounds with religious symbolism. In this

image, sacrosanct to every Palestinian, the houses pile high, one on top of the other, behind a great wall that surrounds the city. In the depiction Jerusalem is a still life; a stone sculpture of domes of various shapes and volumes on top of squares punctuated by minarets, belfries, crosses, and crescents. The golden Dome of the Rock dominates the picture. To its left, the lead dome of Al-Aqsa Mosque hides behind cypress trees. In the middle of the city rises the dome of the rotunda that enshrines the Holy Sepulcher of Jesus.

The Church of the Holy Sepulcher is a complex building that contains numerous churches. Roman Catholics, Armenians, and Greeks share rights of access and partition the space – within and without, including the roof – with the Copts and Syrians.

The Saturday of Light is the most joyful ceremony. On this occasion that commemorates Jesus' resurrection, Christians of the Eastern Churches crowd into the Holy Sepulcher. Each person stands within the boundaries of his/her own sect. People stand for hours waiting for the eruption of the Holy Fire through a small window in the tomb of Jesus. At noon, the electric lights are dimmed. The Church soaks in shadows and a hushed silence hovers. Myrrh and frankincense drown the cavernous rotunda. The bells begin to ring rapturous religious melodies. All of a sudden the light flashes in the darkness. In the wink of an eye the light moves from candle to candle throughout the Church and the pilgrims become a procession of light. The aroma of burnt beeswax saturates the air. The walls of the Church resonate with traditional Eastern liturgical chants,



and the bells continue to pound. Young men, lifted on shoulders, pass the flame among the awestruck crowd. Amidst the ululation and singing, the Holy Fire, in candles and lanterns, floats overhead from hand to hand to be carried to the Eastern churches all over the earth. Holy Saturday is a Jerusalem symbol.

Like in a kaleidoscope, the Jerusalem images combine and recombine to form a repertoire of iconic images with seasonal, religious, and ethnic ritual character. Each of us carries our own Jerusalem in our heart.

The ubiquitous picture of Jerusalem from the Mount of Olives is found in the living room of every home throughout Palestine, in Jordan, and in the diaspora. On the opposite wall, beautiful Arabic calligraphy, a verse from the Qur'an, hangs in a golden frame. In other Palestinian homes hang other pictures opposite the picture of Jerusalem: icons of the Virgin Mary carrying in her arms the baby Jesus, or a cross or Saint George thrusting a spear deep into the dragon.

The picture of Jerusalem, with its soft texture and its shining surface

Jerusalem has and continues to be the center of strife. The rise and fall of the various civilizations have left infinite traces. Their remains were used as elements, absorbed and assimilated in the cultural ethos of the nations that followed. The facades of the houses, palaces, theological colleges, mosques, monasteries, churches, temples, zigzagging streets and alleys are silent witnesses to its central position as a crossroad of Judeo-Christian-Muslim spirituality.

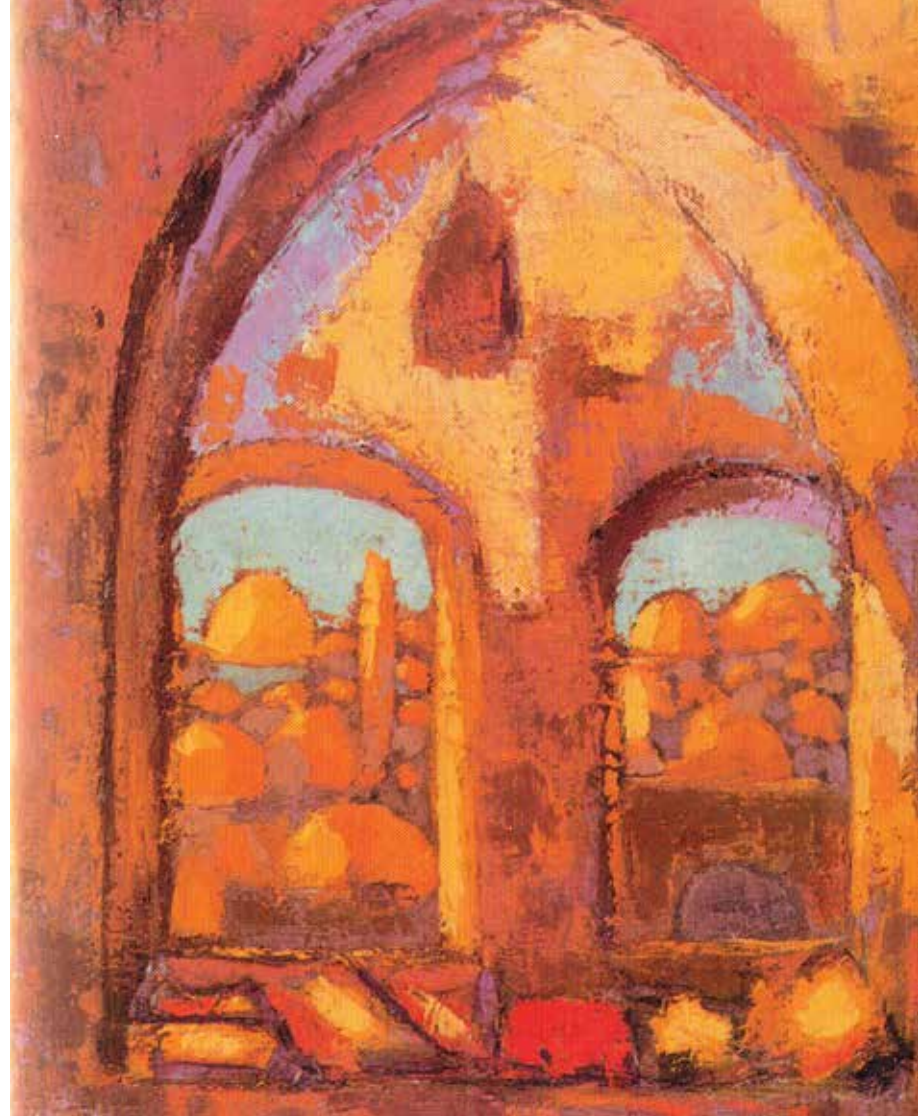


is not a still life, a city of stones. Of paramount symbolic significance, the image is of iconic value. It is the source of our being, pulsating life and warmth. It is our wound and cure. The picture of Jerusalem aligns us with a spiritual mood and energy and helps us connect to the ideas and energies it is associated with. It helps us achieve states of clarity, focus, and/or calm and helps us connect with God. Palestinians severed from their homeland endure the trauma with nostalgic melancholy. The iconic image is the palliative balm pending the return home.

The words of my friend, Abdulrahman Hashem, from Amman, eloquently sum up the feelings stirred by the first sighting of Jerusalem from Mount Scopus. "Jerusalem is the echo of a mother's voice in the ears of her baby. It is the womb of humanity."

Jerusalem floats as a vision of gold. Yellow ochre, cream, grey, pink, and red bounce off the *meleke* and *mizzi* stones and give the Holy City a magical luminescent painterly quality. Sunlight on the cream-colored limestone edifices gives them a golden ochre hue. The light reflects off the facades of sumptuous Mamluk and Ottoman edifices, dissolves the spectrum of lustrous colors, and soaks Jerusalem's labyrinthine alleys in a haze of translucent amber honey. Shades of pale blue lurk beneath the edges of the stairs, navy blue in the gaping tunnel-like doorways that becomes deep purple piling under the cavernous covered passageways. The glow of the daylight yields to night. By the time the muezzin calls for evening prayer, the stones drown in soft grey-blue under a lapis lazuli sky. By night the domed roofs huddle together under mysterious deep-purple-blue to be dispelled by the golden ochre light of sunrise.

Jerusalem remains a mirage veiled in mystery... a dream committed to a vow of silence. My vision of Jerusalem is intensely personal. Nostalgia, longing, and an unfathomable sense of loneliness envelop Jerusalem in a halo of *huzon* –



*Double window. Artwork by Ali Qleibo.*

sublime melancholy; a bittersweet refrain whose echo reverberates behind every step in Jerusalem. The energy overflows into art. The sensation coalesces into words that dissolve into pigments of light and shadow. The image solidifies into lines, volumes, and color. The feelings become a painting.

Strange how one completely buzzes with creative energy while being the creative field, the afterglow resonates and then one must renew and re-engage with Jerusalem in order to become creative energy again. In Jerusalem timeless awareness requires time. Time requires

timeless awareness. The alternative, far from Jerusalem, is the dark nihilistic abyss or unremitting, unbearable anxiety: the Jerusalem blues.

*Dr. Ali Qleibo is an anthropologist, author, and artist. A specialist in the social history of Jerusalem and Palestinian peasant culture, he is the author of Before the Mountains Disappear, Jerusalem in the Heart, and Surviving the Wall, an ethnographic chronicle of contemporary Palestinians and their roots in ancient Semitic civilisations. Dr. Qleibo lectures at Al-Quds University.*

# Challenging Unlawful Israeli Policies and Practices in East Jerusalem at the International Criminal Court

By Mona Sabella



Since the 1970s, Jerusalem has, for the most part, been shelved as a final-status agenda item in negotiations on the Palestinian state. Fast forward to 2015: the number of Israeli settlers in East Jerusalem has grown from 8,649 settlers in 1972<sup>i</sup> to more than 200,000 today. Over the years, the Israeli Occupying Power adopted policies to aid its colonialist and expansionist plans across Palestine, particularly focusing on Jerusalem. Such policies and practices have proved detrimental for the Palestinian residents of East Jerusalem and have particularly served Israel's public policy to establish a Jewish majority in Jerusalem by changing the demography of the Holy City.

If we hold to international law, partial solace can be found in a coherent framework from which we can draw that Israeli settlements, and the expansion thereof, in occupied Palestine – including East Jerusalem – is absolutely unlawful. The law of occupation, as per the 1949 Fourth Geneva Convention and the 1977 Additional Protocol I, clearly sets out that the Occupying Power is prohibited from transferring parts of its civilian population into occupied territory<sup>ii</sup> and would be in grave breach of international humanitarian law if it were to carry out such an act.<sup>iii</sup> Similarly, it

is considered a war crime under the 1998 Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (ICC) for the Occupying Power to directly or indirectly transfer its civilian population into occupied territory.<sup>iv</sup> Regardless, the Israeli government continues with its settlement expansion in East Jerusalem and the rest of the West Bank while providing unlawful privileges for settlers that include an institutionalized culture of impunity when violence is instigated against Palestinian civilians.



Panoramic view of Jerusalem. Photo courtesy of Al-Haq.



International law is clear. It recognizes the prolonged occupation of Palestine, including East Jerusalem, and is, therefore, an indispensable tool for Palestinians. Unfortunately, we have many Israeli policies to challenge in East Jerusalem and elsewhere in occupied Palestine using international law. It is not only through transferring its civilian population into occupied territory that the Israeli authority acts towards its goal to alter the status of Jerusalem, in violation of international law. Other policies can also be challenged, for example, those involving the extensive destruction and appropriation of property, not justified by military necessity and carried out *unlawfully and wantonly* in East Jerusalem. Such destruction is considered a grave breach under Article 147 of the Fourth Geneva Convention and a war crime under the ICC Rome Statute.<sup>v</sup>

During the last four years, 251 homes were subject to administrative demolition in East Jerusalem due to the lack of a required building permit from the Israeli authorities.<sup>vi</sup> These demolitions led to the forcible displacement of 839 Palestinians. You might ask: Does this destruction have a legal basis, and does it correspond to a military



necessity, or is it a deliberate and an unprovoked destruction? And if so, can we hold Israeli officials to account, particularly at the ICC, for their destruction of Palestinian homes in East Jerusalem? These are important questions, especially in light of Palestine's recent accession to the ICC Statute on January 2, 2015.

To answer the aforementioned questions, we must first clarify the responsibility of the Occupying Power. Under international law, the Israeli Occupying Power has a responsibility to administer the territory it occupies without changing the existing order. In the keeping of public order and safety, the administration of territory must

of the Palestinian population in East Jerusalem both directly and indirectly. By taking on roles such as issuing building permits, designating planning areas, and providing services for selected parts of East Jerusalem, the Israeli authority – namely the Jerusalem Municipality – restricts Palestinian growth in the city. For example, in Israel's Jerusalem "Master Plan," the Jerusalem Municipality unilaterally determines the parameters of the city to include selected Palestinian neighborhoods of East Jerusalem. Looking ahead to 2020, we see that the plan also allocates a significantly larger construction capacity to Israelis in West Jerusalem and East Jerusalem

International justice mechanisms are key for the exercise of Palestinian sovereignty over the occupied capital of Palestine.



also be carried out for the ultimate welfare of the occupied territory's inhabitants,<sup>vii</sup> and here, for the welfare of the Palestinian population. If we assess Israel's policies and practices in East Jerusalem, including that of transferring its civilian population therein, we find an inherent failure on the part of the Israeli authority to fulfill its legal obligations towards the Palestinian population and to uphold international law more generally. Such failure is exemplified in the unilateral declaration that the whole of Jerusalem, including East Jerusalem, is the "unified and undivided capital of the State of Israel," as enshrined in Article 1 of the 1980 Israeli Basic Law on Jerusalem.

Prior to the 1980 Israeli law until today, the Occupying Power has long prohibited the natural growth

settlements in order to maintain a 60 percent Jewish majority over the city as a whole.<sup>viii</sup> In implementing this plan, the Jerusalem Municipality confirms an Israeli-driven system of *apartheid* in the city.

Discrimination is also evident upon examination of water infrastructure and distribution in East Jerusalem. In a recent example, the Israeli authority has been restricting regular supply of water for over ten months in several Palestinian areas of East Jerusalem such as Shu'afat Refugee Camp. Such restrictions contradict Israel's responsibility to adhere to the welfare of the occupied population in East Jerusalem, which would require – at the very least – consistent access to water. It would also require an ability to build houses and infrastructure and



Old City of Jerusalem. Photo by George Azar.

to expand naturally. But with only 50 to 100 building permits granted per year to Palestinians and the considerable expense of applying for a permit or purchasing land in East Jerusalem, the Israeli system prevents Palestinians from natural growth. This is in stark comparison to the growth in the settlements of East Jerusalem, where housing units are available for Israeli settlers on demand and at lower costs that are tax deductible.

As one travels through East Jerusalem, the impact of the Occupying Power's

unlawful and discriminatory housing system is palpable: sizeable swaths of land extend horizontally for the expansion of settlements, while Palestinian neighborhoods in East Jerusalem only extend vertically – often without the required permits – due to a limited space to grow. With a lack of building permits in East Jerusalem, Palestinians therein are virtually left with two choices. One would be to move to the "other side" of East Jerusalem, beyond the Annexation Wall where there is no control on building, and the other





Jerusalem Wall. Photo by Nabil Darwish.

would be to continue building homes in the Israeli-monitored side of East Jerusalem without an Israeli building permit, risking a home demolition.

The “other side” of East Jerusalem is an unlawful Israeli construct created after the strategic divide of East Jerusalem through the building of the Annexation Wall with an associated regime of checkpoints and settlements that cut through the eastern part of the city. This created a trap where nearly 150,954<sup>ix</sup> Palestinian Jerusalemites found themselves not only physically cut off from the rest of East Jerusalem but also cut off from basic services

such as garbage collection and phone services – despite paying equal taxes as other Jerusalemites. This has also created a divide between families and communities within East Jerusalem, and effectively prevented some families from sending their children to schools and social activities in parts of East Jerusalem where Palestinians still receive greater access to services and in the city as a whole.

The choice to move to “the other side,” where the living costs are relatively lower, is a risky move for Palestinian residents of East Jerusalem. While these areas are much less expensive

and involve easier access to the rest of the West Bank, there is a looming danger that one day the Occupying Power would, at its own discretion, entirely seal them off and revoke the Jerusalem residency of all Palestinians living therein. This would mean that these Palestinian residents of East Jerusalem would no longer be able to travel into significant parts of the city without an Israeli permit. Access to key healthcare facilities and holy sites such as Al-Aqsa Mosque and the Holy Sepulcher would also be prohibited without an acquired permit. Accordingly, many families in East Jerusalem resort to option two: to build homes without a permit in the Israeli-monitored part of East Jerusalem.

In analyzing the framework within which Israel administratively destroys Palestinian houses in East Jerusalem, the act can be viewed as unlawful and wanton in serving of Israeli public policies and *not* a military necessity. As such, one can challenge this destruction as a war crime under international law. Significantly, with its accession to the ICC Statute, the State of Palestine lodged a declaration under Article 12(3) accepting the court’s jurisdiction over crimes committed in Palestine since June 13, 2014. This means that the ICC prosecutor can now look at allegations against perpetrators responsible for crimes within its jurisdiction, including war crimes discussed in this article.

On January 16, the ICC prosecutor Mrs. Fatou Bensouda initiated a preliminary examination into the situation in Palestine, providing a vital opportunity for civil-society organizations and other experts to submit legal memorandums supported with preliminary data that would stir the examination in the right direction. While the ICC is not the only avenue for international justice given the principle of universal jurisdiction, the opportunity to engage the ICC is paramount to Palestinian efforts to hold Israel accountable for its unlawful acts in occupied Palestine, particularly East Jerusalem, and to deter further violations of international law that severely impact the lives of Palestinians therein.

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On average, more than 100 Palestinians are displaced every year as a result of house demolitions in East Jerusalem.



<sup>i</sup> Source: Foundation for Middle East Peace.

<sup>ii</sup> Article 49, sixth paragraph of the 1949 Geneva Convention IV.

<sup>iii</sup> Article 85(4)(a) of the 1977 Additional Protocol I to the Geneva Conventions.

<sup>iv</sup> Article 8(2)(b)(viii) of the 1998 ICC Rome Statute.

<sup>v</sup> Article 8(2)(a)(iv) of the 1998 ICC Rome Statute.

<sup>vi</sup> In the last four years, one punitive house demolition took place in East Jerusalem in 2014. Israel’s policy of punitive house demolitions amounts to collective punishment. The collective punishment of protected persons is absolutely prohibited under Article 33(1) of the 1949 Fourth Geneva Convention. Punitive house demolitions can also be considered a grave breach of the Fourth Geneva Convention as they fail to classify as a military necessity under Article 147 of the 1949 Fourth Geneva Convention.

<sup>vii</sup> Article 43 of the 1907 Hague Regulations.

<sup>viii</sup> The Jerusalem Master Plan 2000 (unofficial English translation can be found on the website of the Coalition for Jerusalem, [www.coalitionforjerusalem.org](http://www.coalitionforjerusalem.org)).

<sup>ix</sup> Source: The Palestine Central Bureau of Statistics.



# SUPPORTING

## Palestinian Organizations in East Jerusalem

The British Consulate General in Jerusalem is one of nine diplomatic missions in the city, located in the iconic neighborhood of Sheikh Jarrah. Few people know that in conjunction with its diplomatic and political efforts, the Consulate works to alleviate the pressures and hardships that Palestinian citizens of Jerusalem face on a daily basis.

The Consulate supports a variety of civil society organizations in East Jerusalem, extending to urban planning, legal support of residency issues, culture, arts, education, and sports. To help preserve the Palestinian character of East Jerusalem, the Consulate works through partners, two of whom describe their work below.

### The International Peace and Cooperation Center

Since 2007 the International Peace and Cooperation Center (IPCC) has been working with communities to prepare alternative master plans. These alternative plans challenge the existing approved plans and designate suitable development rights for businesses, public facilities, and housing. One immediate success of the project has been the recognition of the plans by the Israeli courts, resulting in the freezing of demolition orders within the plan's boundaries.

Long term, the plans promise to enable considerable development. In total, IPCC's outline level plans have designated 12,000 new housing units. However, before these can manifest into building permits for homeowners, the plans require approval by the District Committee

*The British Consulate General is located in the heart of East Jerusalem, in Sheikh Jarrah. Alongside its diplomatic work, the Consulate is active in the local community. In recent years, the Consulate has built strong partnerships with civil society organizations, aiming to serve residents and preserve the Palestinian character of East Jerusalem. These organizations are doing excellent work, supporting urban planning, providing advice to citizens, and promoting local culture, arts, education and sports. To celebrate these initiatives, two project partners describe their work in their own words.*

for Planning and Building. This will require significant political pressure at both international and local levels. International support for the plans is growing. Following the UK Government's lead, the Swedish, French, and Belgian governments as well as the EU have funded planning projects.

The most important support for political pressure is the community itself. A plan without solid community backing will go nowhere. Communities that are producing plans are not legitimizing the occupation, they are challenging it. Plans need to be developed

regardless of who is approving them. In the case of East Jerusalem, this need is urgent. By engaging in this process, communities can establish a level of political autonomy in the development of their neighborhoods. This local level governance will ensure the continuation of projects amid national political instability.

### Jerusalem Community Advocacy Network

The Jerusalem Community Advocacy Network (JCAN) is a Palestinian non-profit civil society organization that operates in East Jerusalem.

During 2013–2014, more than 6,800 people in Jerusalem benefitted from JCAN's individual advocacy services and legal consultations. Through

communities that face severe and systemic problems that suffocate the population of East Jerusalem: family reunification and child registration, lack of access to civil documentation and legal and bureaucratic procedures; and neglect of social welfare services and infrastructure. Legal assistance is also prohibitively expensive and frequently unreliable. The overall long-term goal of JCAN is to see a viable, strong civil society in East Jerusalem, where residents are able to obtain their rights and entitlements and advocate for themselves to change a system in which they are considered second-class residents.

JCAN works to raise awareness of rights within the communities it serves while helping individuals



Meeting at Aqqabeh neighborhood with community representatives



View from Jabal Mukabber neighborhood towards the Old City

this work, JCAN has been successful in aiding residents to secure national insurance and family reunification, and halt identity card revocation. JCAN also influences decision maker's policies and service delivery to bring them in line with international conventions on human rights. Our successes include bureaucratic procedure changes for dealing with the files of East Jerusalem residents with the National Insurance Institute system.

JCAN currently operates three centers in Jerusalem, in areas most in need: Sur Baher, Al-Tur, and Kufur Aqab. The centers serve disadvantaged

develop the skills they need to access and preserve their rights. JCAN uses the tools of community organization, social work, and legal advocacy to create empowerment at each societal level. Through its activities, JCAN raises awareness of the application of Israeli laws. It also focuses on gender-based issues affecting women that can result from unjust traditional practices in conservative communities.

*Courtesy of the British Consulate General - Jerusalem*



# Community Resilience and Development Programme



Under the leadership of the State of Palestine, the United Nations Development Programme/Programme of Assistance to the Palestinian People (UNDP/PAPP) is managing the first development program of its kind for Area C and East Jerusalem, with financial support from the governments of Sweden, Austria, Norway, and the United Kingdom.

The Community Resilience and Development Programme (CRDP) is a new initiative led by the Ministry of Planning and Administrative Development to support areas of development and state building. Unfortunately, we are in a situation where the population in Area C is facing dire living conditions. The limitations imposed by the prevailing political context pose a range of challenges to the Palestinian Government and development actors in their efforts to respond to Palestinian needs and aspirations.



Area C is considered essential for the viability of a Palestinian State, with an economic potential, if reclaimed, that exceeds US\$ 5 billion, or more than 60 percent of the current Palestinian GDP.

The CRDP, as one mechanism led by the Palestinian Government, started to address Area C, East Jerusalem, and the Seam Zone as a development potential in need of investment, rather than areas in chronic crisis. If fully funded, the project will relieve humanitarian spending from the international community to focus on more dire needs, and hopefully reduce such needs where CRDP is being implemented.

In order to do this, a wide array of partners are engaged in the programs, including communities, grassroots organizations, local and international NGOs, and local government units. Partnerships and modalities of implementation are carefully designed in order to facilitate a complementary approach and a transitional process from humanitarian interventions towards development.

Being a lead donor, along with Austria and Norway, Sweden, through the Swedish International Development Agency (Sida), initiated the program along with UNDP and the Ministry of Planning and Administrative



Damascus Gate. Photo from Palestine Image Bank.



Development, aiming to focus attention on the developmental needs of Palestinians in Area C and East Jerusalem, while protecting the viability of the two-state solution. For the Swedish Government, promoting a life in dignity and security for Palestinians in East Jerusalem, the West Bank, and Gaza is a cornerstone of its new strategy for development cooperation with the State of Palestine 2015–19. According to Maher Daoudi

### What has been done so far?

Since its inception in September 2012, the CRDP has funded 49 projects in various marginalized communities and localities in Area C and East Jerusalem with a total amount of US\$ 11 million.

Building the resilience of people is key to UNDP's strategy and mandate, as it requires partners to think beyond the humanitarian assistance framework.

So far, 20 projects have been implemented to help youth, children, and women through funding of innovative ideas. For example, a few projects supported after-school education for youth and children, in addition to provision of psychosocial services to families. An educational fund was established to link volunteerism with financial aid to university students. A medical

was funded in order to respond to emergencies in the Old City of Jerusalem.

Access to education and improvement of schools' and educational centers' physical environments has enabled more children and youth, including women, to enjoy renovated spaces and refurbished programs. An example can be vividly seen at the St. Joseph Sisters School in the Old City where two classrooms have been added and a multipurpose hall was renovated as part of the school renovation. Another example is Dar al-Aytam School, where spaces in the basement were utilized to provide more room for innovative vocational training courses.

Moreover, the tent of Burj al-Laqlaq society has been rehabilitated so as to provide unique space for social and sports activities. Finally, the CRDP is assisting the Peace Center for the Blind to upgrade its capacity to provide educational and vocational programs for the visually impaired.



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at the Swedish Consulate, CRDP is an expression of that ambition from the Swedish side.

To date, the CRDP's impact has consisted of raising the awareness of various stakeholders, including the donor community, of the importance of Area C and East Jerusalem in the implementation of the two-state solution outlined in the Oslo Accords (1993–1995). Moreover, it triggered the annual reporting process to the Ad-Hoc Liaison Committee (AHLC), in addition to the facilitation of various meetings and coordination among important actors towards aligning efforts in supporting resilience development.

The CRDP is one of UNDP's available instruments used to support the resilience of the Palestinian population, improve their livelihoods, and empower them to advance development in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem and the Gaza Strip.

CRDP, through its implementing partners, has been facilitating the provision of basic services, protection and access to natural resources, creation of job opportunities, especially amongst women, and promotion of rights in these areas.

East Jerusalem is in the core of various strategies of the State of Palestine and donors. The CRDP contributes to supporting resilience of Jerusalemites in conformity with the Strategic Multi-sector Development Plan for East Jerusalem and other sector-focused studies.



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fund was established at Al-Makassed Hospital to support Jerusalemites who have no medical insurance. New market-driven vocational courses were developed, a media and animation lab was provided at Wajdi University College, and a community-based emergency medical program, including a small emergency vehicle,

1. Sadiq, a farmer from Khirbet Jbara pumping water at his residence further to CRDP's intervention.
2. Mariam, from Abu Nowar village, developed her capacities through CRDP and is now supporting her family and community.
3. After CRDP's intervention, children are playing at a kindergarten at Abu Nowar village.
4. Children playground in bili'in.

Photos courtesy of Ventura Formicone - ©UNDP/PAPP



# Al Quds University Public Library

By Omar N. Zaro

**The establishment of a Jerusalem public library project funded by the Royal Charity Organization – Kingdom of Bahrain and implemented by UNDP's Programme of Assistance to the Palestinian People. The Project is part of the FAIR programme.**



Empowered lives.  
Resilient nations.



*Panoramic view from the second floor of the newly established Alquds University Public Library in the old city of East Jerusalem.*

Since 1967 not one Palestinian public library has been established in Jerusalem. However, there are many private library initiatives alongside school and university libraries, and there are at least four specialized private libraries that are not open to the public.

After almost 50 years of longing for a public library in Jerusalem, Palestinians can now benefit from the newly established Al-Quds University Public Library (AQUPL), created through generous funding from the Royal Charity Organization of the Kingdom of Bahrain and implementation expertise from our partner, UNDP Programme of Assistance to the Palestinian People.

AQUPL has an overall objective to reinforce the cultural role in Jerusalem by contributing towards the promotion of the Palestinian national identity through the establishment and operation of this public library. AQUPL is a three-level historical building located at Aqbat Rasas St. inside the Old City walls and only a two-minute walk from Damascus Gate. The building was restored and rehabilitated by UNDP to be used as a public library.

It is equipped with the most up-to-date computer hardware placed in a multipurpose room, as well as a quiet reading room and a cafeteria with a terrace overlooking the Old City of Jerusalem. AQUPL will be open to everyone by the end of March 2015 (Saturday to Wednesday 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.).

Al Quds University Public Library aims to contribute towards raising awareness, spreading knowledge, supporting the cultural sector, and strengthening the resilience of the local community of Jerusalem. Therefore, AQUPL will make its resources and services available to Palestinians living in the Old City of Jerusalem, and the local population at large – pupils, students, teachers, children, researchers, professors, journalists, professional associations, visiting researchers, graduates, and other off-campus users – by providing the population with restored public spaces, a variety of book collections, digital information resources, and support for accessing the best learning tools available.

The public library has the capacity to absorb around 10,000 books and will initially house approximately 3,000 books. Almost 1,000 of them are specialized books that focus on Jerusalem's history, archeology, and contemporary issues. The great team of librarians at Hind Hussein College Library, who are professional in indexing and cataloging the new books, are in the process of indexing and cataloging this huge number of



*The newly established Alquds University Public Library after UNDP's renovation works.*

books to be ready for the upcoming inauguration in March. Some of them will be working in the new public library too.

In addition to this large collection of books in printed formats, AQUPL will offer a wide scope of e-books and a specialized form of electronic scientific documents that are just as important as hard-copy books. Their purpose is to provide material for academic research and study, and they are formatted similarly to articles in traditional printed journals. Since most commercial journals are subscription-based, or allow pay-per-view access, visitors will have full access to the large existing electronic databases and the newly made available databases through the public library project.

AQUPL's action plan will include programs and cooperation projects with various institutes that aim to encourage reading. For that purpose, Al-Quds University has endorsed a new, membership-based policy to allow any member to borrow up to two books at a time, which will encourage reading and research for all. In order to enrich the quality of the services provided, Al-Quds University considers its public library to be a space to host a variety of cultural programs that include cultural events, seminars, workshops, research, lectures, and book launches and exhibitions. We have facilitated general access to these databases through an in-house-developed application that is user friendly. In addition, we will soon launch a Web portal that has been developed by our IT specialists in the university to allow access through Internet to the book catalogues (<http://aqupl.alquds.edu>).

Several activities, including group visits, have been organized in Jerusalem to raise awareness about this new library. Last month

the Planning and Development Unit at Al-Quds University organized a workshop that focused on the importance of libraries in Jerusalem as well as on our plans for the AQUPL.

Al-Quds University's vision is to contribute to the conservation and preservation of cultural identity and national belonging by inspiring knowledge through books and digital information resources. We aim to spread knowledge and support the cultural sector, as well as the educational and social development of Palestinian society as expressed by Dr. Safa Nassereldin, Vice President for Jerusalem Affairs at Al-Quds University. Al-Quds University offers a vibrant learning environment to its students whilst creating a hub for creativity, exchange of ideas, and freedom of expression and innovation of research. Its vision is to continue providing students with the best possible education with the values that make for engaged citizenship, openness to new ideas, cooperative endeavors, and respect for world cultures.

Jerusalem has been deprived of many interventions lately and needs the good will and support of everyone to encourage the steadfastness of its people. Great thanks from us to the Kingdom of Bahrain, UNDP, and all who try their best.

*Omar N. Zaro is the head of the Planning and Development Unit of Al-Quds University, Jerusalem Campus, and has been working at the university since 2011. In 2014, Mr. Zaro earned a master's degree in international cooperation and development from Bethlehem University. Mr. Zaro lives in the Old City of Jerusalem. He can be reached at [ozaro@admin.alquds.edu](mailto:ozaro@admin.alquds.edu) or [pdu.jerusalem@admin.alquds.edu](mailto:pdu.jerusalem@admin.alquds.edu).*

*Article photos courtesy of Ahed Izhiman - ©UNDP/PAPP.*

# Renewable Energy in Jerusalem:

## A Dream of Resilience and Development



Empowered lives.  
Resilient nations.



Uniting against Poverty

**By Jamil Koussa**

Over the past years, organizations in East Jerusalem have been resilient against existing challenges. Their main concern was to maintain their existence and contribute to providing quality services to Palestinians wherever they are – this is what distinguished Palestinian hospitals in the holy city. The development of organizations was a dream. Restrictions, financial challenges, lack of support, and debts are factors that have limited the efficiency and sustainability of organizations.

Drawing on this dream of development and existence, we must find solutions that mitigate and decrease financial burdens, operating expenses, and other problems. Within this comes

the importance of environmentally sustainable solutions for operating buildings such as St. Joseph Hospital in Jerusalem – solutions that can contribute to decreasing operating expenses and reinvesting the surplus in saving a poor patient's life or even in implementing our strategic plans.

St. Joseph Hospital is always in pursuit of innovation, development, and environmental preservation. As a result, we had the idea of utilizing a sustainable resource such as the sun to generate electricity through the use of solar panels. This project is the first of its kind for a public building



Photo by Shareef Sarhan - ©UNDP/PAPP.



in East Jerusalem and the second personal initiative by one distinguished Jerusalem resident.

We have always noticed the fast process of development for utilizing sustainable and innovative solutions. This vital project, with a capacity of 100 kW, will generate energy that will contribute to decreasing the consumption of electricity purchased originally from Israel. It will also contribute to our

understanding of climate change and respect for the environment.

The initiative, which is part of the FAIR programme, is generously co-funded by our friends, the OPEC Fund for International Development, a leading organization that supports the efforts of human development, especially the initiative Energy for All. The project is implemented by our partners, the United Nations Development Programme



*After installation, a worker connecting the solar panels for energy generation. Photo by Shareef Sarhan - ©UNDP/PAPP.*

(UNDP), which has played an immense role in raising awareness about new sustainable strategies that support resilience and development, while creating new opportunities for the private sector.

Consistent with our goals to create a holistic vision, this project enabled us to invest also in implementing a Building Management System and to seek new concepts such as increasing energy efficiency and rationalizing consumption. These integrated interventions were distinctive, even at the national level, as they complemented

each other.

We are proud of the hospital's achievements as one of the historical organizations in East Jerusalem, whose role is not only limited to providing high quality medical services but also in adopting valuable initiatives and determination for development. The establishment of the new maternity section will be an important step in the development of the Palestinian health sector in Jerusalem. Our ambitions extend towards achieving sustainable and effective institutions.

Our vision for development has been implemented through projects that include capacity building for our staff at the medical, administrative, and service levels. We partnered with the OPEC Fund for International Development and UNDP to develop staff capacities through a comprehensive program that can be used as a pilot to serve other institutions.

The dream of steadfastness and resilience does not eliminate the motivation towards innovation and development. No doubt, we are not less fortunate than others. Thank you

to all our friends and partners for their trust in our vision. We look forward to more creative initiatives that support our Jerusalem institutions. We were the first to introduce such initiatives, and we hope that we will not be the last.

*Mr. Jamil Mikhail Koussa was born in Jerusalem in 1961. He received his master's degree in financial management from the United States, and served as dean of the Business Management Faculty at Bethlehem University from 1991 to 1998. Since 1998 he has been director general of St. Joseph Hospital.*



# Hopes and Challenges

By Abdalqader Hussein



Is it possible for us to become a research-based society?

To answer this question, my memories take me back to the year 2003. In that year, we set a goal to develop schools in Jerusalem. Our dream was to help schools change from being mediocre to becoming excellent. We knew that most of the schools in Jerusalem were facing internal problems. They had a number of unskilled teachers, they lacked awareness of learning difficulties, they didn't recognize that teachers should diversify teaching methods, act as

facilitators in class, and adapt their teaching according to students' learning styles. They ignored the significance of art and sport classes, and most important, they lacked educational visions. In addition, the schools' infrastructure and facilities were inadequate. They also faced problems as a result of external factors. These factors included mainly the Israeli occupation measures of closing Jerusalem, which prevented teachers from reaching their schools. They also included the Israeli building-restriction policies that resulted in overcrowded schools.. Moreover, Israel had been working in every way to make life harder for Jerusalemites.

We were aware that these factors affected the normal growth and school achievement of the children in Jerusalem, but we did not realize the extent of illiteracy in the schools. In one instance, the illiteracy rate reached 40 percent at the eighth-grade level.<sup>1</sup> We had been unaware of the weaknesses in our curriculum. We hadn't realized that several texts encourage gender inequality. Neither were we aware that some texts did not reflect any knowledge of the history of Palestinian society or its current social fabric.

The information that we had gathered made us decide to work comprehensively with the schools. Through our observations in the schools, we were able to recognize how the teaching/learning process was taking place in the classrooms, and we became aware of how deep the problem was. We discovered that there were very few teaching strategies in use that respected the children's backgrounds, abilities, rights, and individual learning needs and talents. The education system was based on attaining knowledge through memorization and not on producing knowledge through research. Given that this system did not help students learn how to identify their

problems, they were unable to search for solutions or take decisions that could change their future. It was clear to us that working on the infrastructure and the teaching tools without working on the thought system would be completely ineffective in enhancing the learning/teaching process.

We were determined that changing the thought system starts by changing the process of teaching and evaluation. Changing the teaching of reading was one of the elements that we worked on. We started training based on how we believe reading should be taught. Rather than teaching students simply to read, they must be taught how to decipher what they read; rather than teaching them how to memorize, they must be taught how to understand and critique what they read; rather than listening to each other read aloud in turn, they must be taught how to benefit

from reading silently. Our observations showed that reading is not dealt with as an individual process, and teachers do not realize that instead of teaching reading during reading class, they are teaching listening.<sup>ii</sup> Given that testing reflects teaching, this teaching process can be changed if teachers change their evaluation methods. For example, in order not to teach students to memorize, teachers should not use a text for testing that they have used for teaching. Teachers can modify/doctor the texts they teach, making sure that the language they use is at the right level of their students, and then use these modified texts during testing. This will require students to read carefully and understand rather than simply memorize, and will require the teachers to teach differently.<sup>iii</sup> This process of modifying texts could also serve the teaching and evaluation of the rest of the







Science club. Photo courtesy of Faisal Hussein Foundation.

language skills. Consequently, students are also gaining higher thinking skills that could enhance their research practices especially in the fields of literature and social sciences.

Research must also become an integral part of the learning process in natural science. Our observations revealed that this was not the case in practice. Even in a science lab, the best that was done was teaching students to practice an experiment. Students must not only be taught to do experiments but also to use their experiments to develop research work. Research starts when an experiment is repeated several times, changing one variable at a time and studying its effect.<sup>iv</sup>

Observations of math classes did not show different results. Math to some extent is also taught through memorization. Students are asked to memorize concepts rather than understand and analyze them and learn their applications in everyday practices. The understanding of math could be totally changed if teaching it was based on “patterns.”<sup>v</sup> If students learn math through patterns, they will better understand it, and they will also understand the base of research work. This cannot be done unless the teachers understand that math and the various sciences are based on patterns.

What we have experienced and learned year after year has multiplied our challenges and encouraged us to continue to develop our Comprehensive School Upgrading Program, which began in 2006. Today the program includes the establishment of a development team in every school that aims to develop an educational vision, school values, and strategic planning. It also includes training Arabic, English, math, and science teachers in lesson-planning and evaluation methods and techniques, as well as raising awareness among primary school teachers about learning difficulties. Raising awareness about children’s rights and developing teaching practices that are based on these rights is part of every training session. The diagnosis and treatment of students with learning difficulties is another major component of the program, as are extracurricular activities in both the arts and sports. The renovation of the school buildings and the establishment and development of libraries and science and computer labs are also an important part of the program. These components make up the basic activities that are used to develop the general school environment. They help teachers and students become aware of students’ rights, raise the level of achievement, and pave the way for accepting new styles of teaching. But they are not enough to establish a



Art Lesson at Doha. Photo courtesy of Faisal Hussein Foundation.

generation of students who are able to make their decisions based on research, analysis, and critical thinking. To reach this goal we had to develop scientific research practices inside the schools. We have therefore added new activities to our Comprehensive School Upgrading Program. Student activities include reading contests, science research clubs, and humanities research programs. Activities that target principals and teachers include “action research” practice and training on the teaching of research methods.

This is the tenth year that the foundation has been implementing the Comprehensive School Upgrading Program. The first six years allowed us to build a common language among the schools and to set a base of relevant activities. Seventeen schools have benefited from the four years of reading contests held by the foundation. Approximately 60 percent of the students from grades three to ten have participated in each contest by reading two books in Arabic and two in English. It’s also the fourth year that the foundation has been forming science research clubs in the natural sciences. Training of teachers is the main idea behind these science research clubs. Teachers in 12 schools have been trained to establish and run science research clubs at their schools. Moreover, this is the second year that a research program in the humanities has been implemented. The main aim is to train teachers to teach their students how to develop research in the humanities. During

the first year, Arabic teachers from 3 schools were trained, and during this year, humanities’ teachers from 5 schools are being trained.

Our various programs have been accepted at all the schools we work with. Moreover, the schools have encouraged extracurricular activities, including reading and research programs. The various programs have indeed made schools friendlier in the eyes of the students. Our hopes rose when we reviewed our external evaluators’ report for 7 schools that we recently finished working with. The report showed that the students’ positive attitudes towards the relationship between the students and the school staff had gone up from 71.2 percent in 2012, the year we started, to 83.1 percent in 2014, the year we finished our work with them. It has also given us hope to know that there has been an increase in the level of satisfaction of children towards the respect of their rights, which has increased from 66 percent in 2012 to 84.2 percent in 2014.

Change is not impossible. Becoming a research-based society starts when schools encourage reading and research. Acceptance and will are there. It is the role of the social institutions and the government to support schools. Support must be provided in raising awareness and in training on how to turn the learning process into one that is research-based. It is not enough to encourage learning through projects or research; there is a dire need for trained teachers. Institutions support many aspects in the education process, but if there isn’t a vision for research-based learning, this support might make life at schools look better but will ultimately force us to remain the consumers we are today rather than the producers we should become.

*Abdalqader Hussein is the chairperson of the Faisal Hussein Foundation ([www.fhfpa.org](http://www.fhfpa.org)).*



Science club. Photo courtesy of Faisal Hussein Foundation.

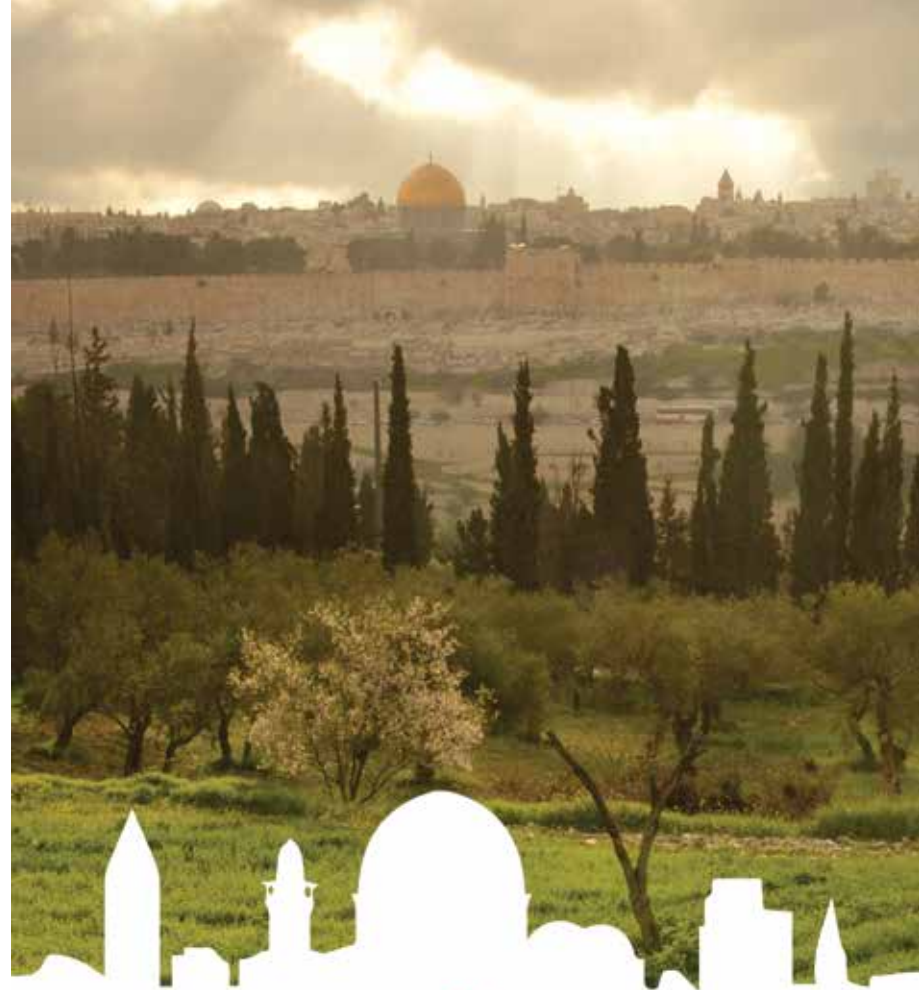
<sup>i</sup> In 2005, during a needs assessment carried out at various schools in Jerusalem, the Faisal Hussein Foundation discovered that 40 percent of the eighth-grade students in one Jerusalem school were illiterate.

<sup>ii</sup> For more information, see Dr. Mousa Khoury, *The Steps towards Reading*, Faisal Hussein Foundation, Jerusalem, 2014. In this manual, Dr. Mousa Khoury defines reading as a process of reproducing the text. He describes the oral cultures and the reading act in the cultures that are in a phase between being oral and being literal. He then explains the reasons behind weak reading comprehension skills and how reading skills should be taught. He presents several models that can be used by teachers of different grades.

<sup>iii</sup> For more information on modifying texts, see Dr. Jeanne Kattan, *Our Treasure Box*, Faisal Hussein Foundation, Jerusalem, 2014. In this manual, Dr. Jeanne Kattan explains why and how to use doctored texts. She also presents model lessons developed by the trainee teachers for teaching the four language skills. In addition, she explains what project work is and its role in giving opportunities for students to develop their confidence and independence and to work together in a real-world environment. She also includes project model lessons developed by the trainee teachers.

<sup>iv</sup> For more information, see Dima Halawani, *Discovering by Our Hands*, Faisal Hussein Foundation, Jerusalem, 2014. In this manual Ms. Dima Halawani explains the process of conducting a science club at the schools. She focuses on how to train students to conduct scientific research. She has included examples of model science club sessions that were conducted during the program, and which can be useful to any science teacher interested in creating a science club at her/his school.

<sup>v</sup> For more information, see Kawthar Atiyeh Yaseen, *Life is Patterns*, Faisal Hussein Foundation, Jerusalem, 2014. Ms. Kawthar Yassin chose to give the manual this title not only to reflect the importance of patterns in math but also to reflect the idea of basing the teaching of math on the teaching of patterns. She includes a detailed explanation of the use of patterns in teaching and offers model lessons that cater to grades one to three.



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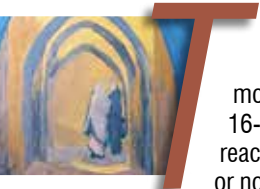
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# Demoralization and Resistance

## Israel's Unseen Policy and Jerusalem's Refusal to Abandon Its Collective Identity

By Megan Driscoll



Though never far out of sight, Jerusalem was notably at the center of much of the world's focus this year, as tensions mounted throughout the occupied city. Following the death of 16-year-old Mohammed Abu Khdeir this past July and a fierce reaction from Palestinian Jerusalemites, many pondered whether or not a third Intifada was brewing in the streets of Shu'fat, Silwan, Wadi al-Joz and elsewhere. Israel's reaction to the growing popular resistance was in turn swift and forceful. Arrest rates, home detentions, and other punitive measures have skyrocketed in an effort to quell the rise in violence. And while there has been increased attention paid to this crackdown, little has been dedicated to the underlying psychosocial impact of the occupation force's growing repression in East Jerusalem.

Historically, Israel has worked to undermine the collective identity of Palestinian Jerusalemites since it first occupied the city in 1967. Over the past four decades, the state has implemented a complex network of measures that comprehensively work to minimize Palestinian presence in Jerusalem. These have included building-permit restrictions and home demolitions, the expansion of illegal Jewish

Jerusalem from the south. Photo from Palestine Image Bank.



settlements, discriminatory provision of municipal services, the imposition of Israeli curriculum in Palestinian schools, obstacles to child registration, and an eleven-year ban on family unification. Because of these and other oppressive policies, many Palestinian families find life in East Jerusalem to be so desperate that they feel compelled to leave the city and seek better conditions in other cities. But even this decision comes at a grave cost, as Palestinian Jerusalemites come under threat of losing their *permanent residence* status – and with it, the right to live and work in Jerusalem – should they live outside, including elsewhere in the West Bank, for seven or more years.

Palestinian Jerusalemites, then, live with a persistent, unyielding anxiety over being displaced. This worry is palpable throughout the city, as nearly every household has been impacted by this threat in some manner. Jerusalemites are obligated to consider the risk of losing their residence status when applying to universities or

for jobs, when enrolling their children in school, and even when choosing a spouse. It is often an alienating process that further fragments them from the rest of the Palestinian community.

This unease is only exacerbated by the plethora of injustices that regularly occur inside the city. For example, in a 2012 study on the phenomenon of self-home demolitions in Jerusalem conducted by the Palestinian Counseling Center (PCC), findings suggested that the trauma of being forcibly transferred extends to all family members and remains long after the initial displacement. Numerous families additionally reported feeling disassociated from the national identity, as well as social abandonment and helplessness as a result. Jerusalemite children are likewise particularly vulnerable to developing long-term psychological struggles. This has led to notably high levels of school dropout, drug abuse, and child labor among Palestinian youth in Jerusalem.



Settlers takeover in the Old City of Jerusalem. Photo by George Azar.

Thus, Palestinian Jerusalemites are a uniquely traumatized community – living under extremely oppressive conditions and concurrently threatened with the revocation of the right to their homeland should they seek to escape said conditions. It is for this reason that many proclaim that simply remaining in Jerusalem is in itself an act of resistance against Israel's occupation.

As acts of resistance have escalated in Jerusalem over the past six months, so too has Israel's clampdown on the city's Palestinian population. The occupying power has dramatically increased its police presence across the area, with forces conducting stop-and-search procedures, home raids, property confiscations, and detainments at some of the highest rates since the second Intifada. The Shin Bet, police force, and military have additionally agreed to collectively establish a joint intelligence wing dedicated specifically to locating "terrorists" in East Jerusalem. Perhaps most remarkable is the new trend in punitive measures being employed by Israel, including home demolitions and residency revocations, against those convicted of terrorism as well as against their family members. This

motion has culminated in a tabled bill in the Knesset that outlines eight steps to deter terrorist activity. The bill, which focuses on collective punishment tactics, includes the deportation (to Gaza or another undetermined location) of any family member who even expresses support for a relative convicted of terrorist activity.

And while Israel contends that these ramped-up efforts are being used on the basis of security, it is blatantly evident that these new measures – just as those that preceded them – are serving the occupation's broader aim to incite fear and apathy into Palestinian Jerusalemites. The PCC's executive director, Rana Nashashibi, elaborated on this method of psychological torture over a decade ago, stating:

the weaponry of this warfare is not machine guns, tanks, and apache helicopters but methodical humiliation and demoralization which targets the Palestinian people's psyche, emotionally and cognitively. Its repercussions are intended to transcend the political and economic damage to that of long term debilitation of the individuals and collective abilities to resist and rise as a proud nation.

The occupier is thus acutely aware that for all the forceful, tangible abuse that can be exerted upon Palestinians to push them out of the city, nothing is more powerful, more effective than to corrupt the collective identity they share. Hence, these punitive tactics are a part of Israel's larger unseen policy of mass dehumanization that strives not only to stifle the current streak of resistance but also to quiet the calls for a lasting, united struggle.

But as Israel attempts to wield its mental war on Jerusalemites, what it fails to grasp is that moments of hardship appear to have the opposite

ramping up Jerusalem-based advocacy efforts, the PCC is likewise collaborating with other civil society members to devise an emergency action plan so that resources may be pooled to best respond to future threats. Of course, the PCC is just one of many organizations taking proactive steps in this time of need. Accordingly, rather than further fragmenting the population, collective mourning and subsequent responsive action have instead united and fortified the bond amongst Jerusalemites. While great efforts have been made to deplete this collective identity – particularly in 2014 – it seems now that Jerusalemites

Beneath Israel's recent escalation of rights violations in Jerusalem lies an entrenched policy of psychological warfare, intended to incite fear and corrupt the collective spirit of the



city's Palestinian community. But the resilience of Jerusalemites is stronger than ever. The year 2014 witnessed not only some of the gravest breaches of human rights but also a revival of united, grassroots action to combat the occupation's efforts to de-Palestinianize Jerusalem.

effect of what it hoped for. Instead, it is in times such as these that community support is at its strongest – whether in the streets or at the civil society level. Numerous organizations, including the PCC, for example, have come together to respond to the various needs of Jerusalem. The PCC is active in partnering with community-based groups in some of the most deeply affected areas of the city to bolster their work and psychosocial capacities to serve as sources of empowerment to neighborhood residents. In addition to

are more committed than ever to a popular-led struggle.

*Megan Driscoll works in communications and advocacy for the Palestinian Counseling Center.*

<sup>i</sup> "With Our Own Hands: A report on what happens when Israel forces Palestinian families to demolish their own homes," Palestinian Counseling Center, Jerusalem, Palestine, January 2012.

<sup>ii</sup> Chaitin, Julia, *Peace-building in Israel and Palestine: Social Psychology and Grassroots Initiatives*, Palgrave Macmillan, August 16, 2011, p. 31.

The separation Wall. Photo by George Azar.





# Jerusalem

## The Longing for Freedom



By Jad Isaac and Suhail Khalilieh



A panoramic view of the eastern part of Jerusalem.  
Photo from Palestine Image Bank.



Jerusalem – the city that witnessed the rise and fall of empires – represents religious interest for more than 3.5 billion people, more than 54 percent of the world’s population. It has a long and bloody history mixed with political controversies, and while some of the world’s cities may identify one or maybe two historical critical points during their existence, Jerusalem seems to have an endless number of them.

Soon after the occupation of East Jerusalem in 1967, the Israeli government illegally redrew the city’s municipal boundary, increasing its area from 6.5 km<sup>2</sup> to 71 km<sup>2</sup> and including areas from 28 surrounding Palestinian villages. Consecutive Israeli governments encouraged and supported, through every possible means, the transformation of Jerusalem into a city with a distinctly Jewish identity in order to stake their hold over the city. Scores of Jewish-only settlements were built in the city and on its outskirts, forcing new realities on the ground.

Israel annexed to Jerusalem only the sparsely populated parts of other Palestinian governorates and excluded the highly populated Palestinian neighborhoods, including areas identified in the UN proposed plan to be part of the “Corpus Separatum” status, which meant that Jerusalem would have been placed under the custody of an international body because of its religious significance for the three monotheistic faiths.

From this point onwards, Israel embarked on a campaign to manipulate the demographic and geographical realities of the city in order to strengthen its claim

and sovereignty over Jerusalem. To achieve this goal, consecutive Israeli governments improvised several laws to increase the number of Jews and reduce the number of Palestinians living in the city, expunge its Arabic culture and history, and evacuate the city of its Palestinian inhabitants.

To this end there was a sequence of steps that helped Judaize the city, including land confiscation, restrictions on land use, the construction of settlements, bypass roads, and the Segregation Wall, and a ban on Palestinian construction. These acts have mutated the city’s landscape and created new perceptions of the city with the intention to push the Palestinians “voluntarily” out of the city and ultimately “de-Palestinize” and “de-characterize” Jerusalem.

### Housing and restrictions on development

Planning and zoning regulations of the Israeli Municipality of Jerusalem are, according to all international standards, racist. The principal goal of these regulations is to halt East Jerusalem’s urban development. The classification of 22 percent of East Jerusalem land as “green area” (protected landscape areas), and 30 percent “without planning areas” (not included within municipal or local government land-use planning) has served to hinder Palestinian urban development plans in the city. This turned out to be part of the deceptive and manipulative Israeli overall plan to keep Palestinians from accessing and using the land, and to give the Israelis time to conclude procedures to take over land for use in settlement building. Two particular

Israeli settlements – Rekhes Shufat (Ramat Shlomo), established on confiscated lands from the Palestinian community of Shu’afat, located north of Jerusalem; and Har Homa, which is the Jewish settlement name for Abu Ghnaim Forest Mountain, northeast of Bethlehem – were subjected to such a procedure as the locations were first classified as “green areas” and later rezoned as “building areas.”

Moreover, different building rules and regulations apply, depending on whether the sites in question are in Palestinian areas or Israeli areas. For example, Palestinians were allowed only to build upwards; in other words, they could only construct additional stories to their buildings rather than build additions to already existing buildings or new buildings altogether. But even this regulation was eventually narrowed, as the municipality restricted the number of stories allowed per building. The percentage of land allowed to build on is also strictly controlled, and ranges between 35 percent and 70 percent. In contrast, no such regulations exist for settlements. Moreover, the Israeli government regularly manipulates laws and zoning areas by reclassifying “green areas” to high-density housing areas.

On May 9, 2013, the Israeli government advanced a nationwide housing plan, which was set to alleviate building restrictions and enable construction in green areas. This was not the first time such plans were put into action. It happened before when Israel re-zoned locations such as the Har Homa and Ramat Shlomo settlements. This is a direct manipulation of the city’s demography, giving local planning and building committees the power to approve large housing construction projects on private land and evacuating inhabitants. This can be done without the approval of the Interior Ministry’s planning committee for open areas and farming land, and means that the committees can decide which of

the public land areas classified as “green areas” may be rezoned for construction. Other locations – owned by Palestinians – remain under such status until a time when its ownership changes or is manipulated to meet the interest of the Jewish population in the city.

This unfortunate reality is supported by the fact that the bulk of Palestinian lands had become off limits to Palestinians following the Israeli occupation of the city and the unilateral designation of the land in Jerusalem as 22 percent “green area,” not including some 30 percent of the land within the planning system, thus making the land unusable for Palestinians. This reality is driving thousands of Palestinians out of the city to cope with the population growth outside the illegally drawn city boundary, ultimately manipulating the city’s demography and the possible future negotiations over the fate of the city.

The Israeli Local Committee at the Jerusalem Municipality will discuss Town Planning Scheme 10188 regarding Ya’ar Hashalom (Peace Forest), located between Talpiot settlement and the Palestinian community. Abu Tur is regularly used by the Elad settler organization for tours and sports activities. During previous years, Elad illegally fenced off an area and added trailers to serve as offices, storage spaces, and group lecture rooms. The Jewish National Fund (JNF) is involved in advancing the plan in order to legalize the fence and trailers by designating the Elad-controlled area as a tourism center. Ya’ar Hashalom is one of a chain of national parks designed to solidify Israeli control over the Old City Basin. In the early nineties of the last century, the Israeli Municipality of Jerusalem started to use the term “Holy Basin” in reference to the entire area of the Old City of Jerusalem and wide sectors of its outskirts, which include areas of Al-Sheikh Jarrah and Wadi al-Joz to the north, Al-Tur to the

east, and Silwan to the south. The Holy Basin is intended to enforce the Jewish character and existence in that area as the municipality intends to establish a biblical project (Ir David or the City of David) beneath Al-Aqsa Mosque and on the lands of Al-Bustan neighborhood of the proximate Silwan town and parts of the Islamic Quarter in the Old City of Jerusalem.

## Jerusalem (2000) Master Plan

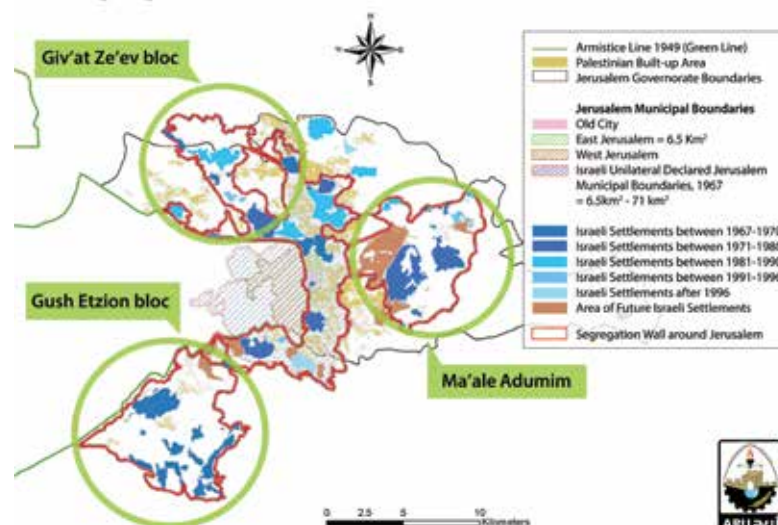
In September 2004, Jerusalem Mayor Uri Lupolianski announced the preparation of a Jerusalem master plan, with a projected duration to the year 2020. Its main objective is to “reinforce the status of Jerusalem and ensure its continuous development as the capital of Israel and the center for the Jewish people and a sacred city for all religions.” The master plan specifies the need for the construction of 43,000 new housing units for the Palestinians living in the city. Yet the plan aims for the development of only 2,300 dunums by the year 2020 in East Jerusalem, which will allow for the construction of only 9,200 apartments.

## Greater Jerusalem

“Greater Jerusalem” gained currency as a concept during the late 1970s/early 1980s, when the Israeli consecutive governments worked to consolidate the belt of settlements constructed outside the Israeli-defined Jerusalem municipal boundary and particularly outside the new definition of East Jerusalem, according to the Israeli occupation, an area expanded from 6.5 km<sup>2</sup> to 71 km<sup>2</sup>. This was the first unilateral and illegal expansion of East Jerusalem.

The belt of settlements around the newly defined East Jerusalem intended to increase the Jewish existence geographically and demographically and, more significantly, to cut the territorial continuity of East Jerusalem with its natural environment and the rest of the West Bank. Today, the belt of settlements consists of three main blocs, encapsulated with Jerusalem by the Segregation Wall, which paves the way for the second unilateral and illegal expansion of East Jerusalem.

## Changing Boundaries of Jerusalem Governorate





\*The Giv'at Ze'ev bloc - north of Jerusalem

(Population 16,000+ settlers, area 12 km<sup>2</sup>)

\*The Ma'ale Adumim bloc - east of Jerusalem

(Population 51,000+ settlers, area 72.5 km<sup>2</sup>)

\*The Gush Etzion bloc - southwest of Jerusalem

(Population 62,000+ settlers, area 73 km<sup>2</sup>)

The consequences of Greater Jerusalem fall into two correlating categories: First, geographical, as the area will stretch to exceed the current area (71 km<sup>2</sup>) of East Jerusalem by 146 percent, and the additional 175 km<sup>2</sup> that consist of 157.5 km<sup>2</sup> of settlement-blocs area and additional areas of 17.5 km<sup>2</sup>, located north of Bethlehem, and the J2 areas of Jerusalem (areas not included within the illegal Israeli municipal boundary of Jerusalem). Second, demographical change, which works simultaneously with the geographic factor to further consolidate Greater Jerusalem. The Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS) indicates that by the year 2020 Palestinian Jerusalemites will overwhelm the city population.

The second illegal Israeli expansion of the Jerusalem boundary is intended to combat the anticipated Palestinian

population dominance by adding the settler-bloc population of 127,000, in addition to the extensive increase due to planned construction in Jerusalem settlements (20,000 housing units to accommodate some 80,000 Jewish settlers) and the influx of Jewish immigrants to the occupied city.

At the same time, Israel will exclude (and ultimately revoke) the residency of Palestinian Jerusalemites who live in neighborhoods that, because of the Segregation Wall, are no longer included within the boundaries of Jerusalem; hence Kufer Aqab (population 20,000) and Shufat Refugee Camp (population 35,000).

Ultimately, this will work to maintain what Israel seeks to pretense as reality; dropping the current Palestinian population ratio of 37 percent to just about 13 percent, while increasing the Jewish population ratio to 87 percent, jumping from the current 63 percent; believing that this would impact and steer future negotiations over the fate of the city.

Currently, the population density in Jerusalem reflects the Israeli restrictions imposed on Palestinian development of their communities to cope with the population growth; so while the population density of Jerusalemites in Palestinian built-up areas outside the Israeli-defined Jerusalem municipal boundary stands at 7,633 individuals

per square meter, it jumps to 18,931 individuals per square meter within the Israeli-defined Jerusalem municipal boundary.

### Israel's future development plans

Israeli development plans in Jerusalem have not decreased at any point since the beginning of the Israeli-Palestinian "peace" process. In fact, the number of Israeli settlers in occupied East Jerusalem has increased by 111 percent since the peace process was launched back in 1993, from 140,000 settlers then to more than 296,801 today.

To this day, Israel continues to violate Palestinian rights to develop their own communities, and relentlessly drives Palestinians out of the city only to make room for more Israeli-Jewish new residents to win the demographic battle of the city. The following are the Israeli so-called development plans in occupied East Jerusalem, which are intended to further fortify the occupation grip over the occupied city. In 2005, the planning committee of the Israeli municipality of Jerusalem authorized the demolition of Shepherd Hotel, located in Karem Al-Mufti in the Palestinian neighborhood of Al-Sheikh Jarrah, and sanctioned plans to build 350 housing units, a synagogue, a kindergarten, and a clinic to serve Jewish residents.

In 1998, the Israeli municipality of Jerusalem refused to endorse the Palestinian neighborhood Master Plan for Ras Al 'Amoud, in return; Ma'ale Hazeitim settlement was sanctioned where it stands, with 133 housing units, a commercial center, a synagogue, a kindergarten, and a clinic. Since 1991 Jewish settlers from Ir David Settlement in Silwan seized more than 40 Palestinian houses by force in Wadi Hilwa. In May 2005, the Israeli municipality of Jerusalem slated for demolition 88 houses (home to more than 1,000 Palestinian residents) in

Al-Bustan neighborhood. In Jabal al-Mukaber, the Israeli local committee for planning and building approved the settlement called Nof Zion on an area of 48 dunums. It includes the construction of 100 housing units, a hotel (with 150 rooms), and a kindergarten. The E1 Plan, to be implemented on 12,500 dunums of land confiscated from the Palestinian localities of Al-Eizzariya and Abu Dis, will deny these localities their remaining expansion territory to cope with population growth. On the other hand it will fortify the Jewish presence in the area with the E1 Plan, pending 3,900 new housing units, but more importantly it will create corporal links between Ma'ale Adumim settlement bloc and Israeli settlements in Jerusalem (Pisgat Ze'ev, Pisgat Omer, Neve Ya'acov, and French Hill). Moreover the E1 Plan will constitute a physical barrier that will cut off Jerusalem from the West Bank and break the geographical contiguity of the West Bank into two separate entities, one to the north of Jerusalem and the other to the south.

### Jerusalem and the segregation plan

One of the most controversial areas being targeted by the Israeli Segregation Wall in the occupied West Bank territory is East Jerusalem, the part of the city that the Palestinians recognize as the capital of their future state. Israel is upholding its illegal claim on this part of the occupied city in accordance with the assertion that Jerusalem is the "unified" and "sovereign" Israeli capital. When Israel sought to build the Wall in the West Bank, it intended to geographically separate East Jerusalem from its natural environment of the West Bank. In addition, Israel calculated to manipulate the demographic balance of the city in favor of the Jewish population. The anticipated Wall that is set to encapsulate the city runs for 227 km, 129 km (57 percent) of which already exist, with 51 km of

## Jabal Abu Ghnaim (Har Homa) 1997 - 2014

**2205** Dunums  
400 + Builtup Area

**6500** Housing units  
30,000 + Israeli Settlers

**60,000** Pine Trees  
Uprooted



2014



cement partitions and 78 km of fence. Moreover, 76 km (33 percent) of the Wall are still in the planning phase, and 22 km (10 percent) are currently under construction. Once completed, the Segregation Wall will serve much more than its purported purpose (security). Many Israeli officials insinuated that the Wall would eventually act as a border between “Israel” and the Palestinian state. Hence, it would also identify the new municipal boundary of Jerusalem, thus confirming that Kufer Aqab (population 20,000) and Shufat Refugee Camp (population 35,000) would no longer be part of what would most probably be the new Israeli municipal boundary of occupied East Jerusalem.

to accommodate hundreds of thousands of Jewish inhabitants. Israel has also restricted the development and expansion of Palestinian neighborhoods and adopted property tax procedures to squeeze Palestinians out of the city. Today, with plans of the Segregation Wall in play to isolate Occupied East Jerusalem, Israel is making sure to exclude as many Palestinian Jerusalemites from the city for the last time. To achieve that purpose, Israel has isolated Jerusalem from the West Bank, restricting access to it with nine checkpoints, which are in reality terminals that control movement to and from the city.

Status of Israeli-implanted terminals around Jerusalem		
Terminal Name	District	Status
Petunia	Ramallah	Existing
Qalandiya	Ramallah	Existing
Ras Abu Sbetan (Hasidim)	Jerusalem	Existing
Gilo 300	Bethlehem	Existing
Mazmura	Bethlehem	Existing
Al-Walajah	Bethlehem	Planned
Al-Eizariya	Jerusalem	Existing
Anata – Shufat	Jerusalem	Existing
Hizma	Jerusalem	Under construction



The illegal Israeli settlement of Pisgat Zeev in the Westbank seen from the Palestinian refugee camp of Shufat in the outskirts of Jerusalem.

**Terminals in the Jerusalem governorate**  
**Israel draws the new gates of Jerusalem**

When Israel redrew the boundary of occupied East Jerusalem in 1967, it intended to induce procedures to maintain a Jewish majority and to win the demographic battle over the city. Over the years, Israel has constructed dozens of settlements in and around the occupied city

These terminals are distributed according to the Israeli vision of Greater Jerusalem, which encompasses lands from the Bethlehem and Ramallah districts. The following table shows the location of each terminal and its status. In the event that Israel completes its construction of the Segregation Wall around East Jerusalem, the Palestinian communities in the Jerusalem governorate would be

surrounded by a complex of walls, settlements, and roads that would eliminate any future possibility for the Palestinian communities to expand, thus jeopardizing sustainable development. The Applied Research Institute-Jerusalem (ARIJ) asserts that it is imperative that Israel comply with international legitimacy, laws, and UN resolutions, including Security Council Resolution 452 (1979), which calls upon “the Government and people of Israel

to cease, on an urgent basis, the establishment, construction and planning of settlements in the Arab territories occupied since 1967, including Jerusalem,” and to abide by Security Council Resolution 446 (1979), which “[d]etermines that the policy and practices of Israel in establishing settlements in the Palestinian and other Arab territories occupied since 1967 have no legal validity and constitute a serious obstruction to achieving a comprehensive, just, and lasting peace in the Middle East.”

*Dr. Jad Isaac is the director general of the Applied Research Institute – Jerusalem (ARIJ). He is the former dean of science at Bethlehem University. He headed the Palestinian delegation for the environmental working group in the multilateral talks and is an adviser to the Palestinian negotiating team on final-status issues.*  
*Suhail Khalilieh is the head of the Settlements Monitoring Department at ARIJ. He is a political analyst and an expert on Israeli settlements and policies practiced by the Israeli army in the occupied Palestinian territory.*





## Rabiyet Al-Quds Project

### Outstanding Residential Compound Blending with the Holy Land's Historical Architectural View

As the eternal capital of Palestine, Jerusalem has a unique social, psychological, and national status. With the growing population in Jerusalem and the complexity of securing building permits, aside from the limitation of available land, Jerusalem's housing and real estate needs are only increasing. In order to address this reality, investment in these vital sectors must not only yield positive results but also present an opportunity to support this growing population and its quest for favorable living conditions.

Today, 48,000 residential units should be built to reduce the population pressure in East Jerusalem and substantially increase Palestinian quality of life. In order to create a solution to this growing problem, the private sector must play a major role in improving housing conditions and developing the housing sector in East Jerusalem.

Palestinian landowners in East Jerusalem face many challenges that are aggravated by land ownership and registration, licensing, the high cost of land and building, the reluctance of banks to extend loans and financial services, scarce land availability for residential development by Palestinians, and the lack of a comprehensive strategy that takes into account buyers' needs. Around two-thirds of Palestinian residents in East Jerusalem (approximately 170,000 people) live in fragmented city neighborhoods.

Supporting Jerusalem and empowering Jerusalemites to reside in their hometown has always been a chief and essential objective of PADICO HOLDING, as it has sought to secure a foothold and make a significant impact in the holy city. Rabiyet Al-Quds Project, which is a housing project implemented by a subsidiary of PADICO HOLDING, aims to meet the increasing demands in the housing sector and target the acute shortage of appropriate housing. A key obstacle that faces Palestinian Jerusalemites is the lack of access to finance due to occupation-related complications. Rabiyet Al Quds plans to address this hindrance in cooperation with Cairo Amman Bank to provide long-term financing for the buyers.

Rabiyet Al Quds project consists of 22 residential buildings that spread to the south of Jerusalem, approximately 5 kilometers from the Old City, near Beit Safafa in Al-Sharfat



رابية القدس  
المشروع الإسكاني الأول  
لباديكو القابضة في مدينة القدس

area; where the magical views of the city's holy landmarks and scenery, along with the crisp, cool mountain air blends with the spectacular well-planned designs.

The project is set to be built in two phases: The first will consist of the construction of 10 buildings that offer 82 apartments, each with an average space of 125 square meters. The modern apartments will be family-friendly and include 3 bedrooms, 2 balconies, 2 bathrooms, a kitchen, and a living area. Every building will have its own separate parking level with storage areas to serve the residents of the building.

The second phase will consist of the construction of 12 additional buildings that will offer more than 150 apartments. Rabiyet Al Quds will be executed with all the required infrastructure and offer a unique design with green areas, architectural details, metallic elements, French windows, and two different types of stone, which augment the beauty of the compound.

Implementation of Rabiyet Al Quds will begin during the last quarter of 2015, and will be ready for residents by 2017. The marketing and selling processes started at the beginning of 2015.

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# A tribute to Maha Abu Dayyeh

When Maha Abu Dayyeh passed away on January 9, my brother and I lost a loving mother, many lost a loyal friend, and Palestine lost a visionary, humble, and relentless advocate. A native of Jerusalem and Beit Jala, Maha was co-founder and executive director of the Women's Centre for Legal Aid and Counseling, a leading women's rights organization that, for the past 24 years, has provided legal and social services and advocates on behalf of Palestine's women. She was also involved in numerous international initiatives and was a regular contributor to local, national, and international conversations about Palestine and women in conflict. Among Maha's most prideful moments was her central role in conceptualizing, preparing for, and launching the Palestinian Model Parliament in the 1990s, an initiative that explored ways that Palestinian women would be able to insert their voices into the budding Palestinian national discourse in the wake of the Oslo Accords.

For Maha, her work on the rights and status of Palestinian women was inextricably linked to the Palestinian struggle for national liberation. She believed that respect for Palestinian human rights required thinking about and respecting rights at the private level. Similarly, she argued that the status and experience of Palestinian women could only be improved if the root causes of their plights were addressed. These included the abusive Israeli occupation and control of Palestinian daily life, militarism, and the resulting economic and social pressures. She persuasively articulated that continuity, informed by decades of experience. Her fluency in navigating the minutiae of complex local dynamics while also thinking broadly and strategically are what made her an effective advocate on behalf of her clients and the broader movement.

Perhaps most importantly, Maha never lost sight of the individuals, the clients, and the countless women and men for whom she felt a sense of fierce protectiveness that I so often benefited from as her daughter. Many dinners were interrupted as my mother would get a phone call to troubleshoot a particularly difficult or urgent case at the center – calmly and skillfully handling the complicated dance between the Palestinian and Israeli authorities and complex familial and societal dynamics to ensure that the woman was best served. Twenty years into doing this work, she never lost her outrage or her compassion. She never got used to the stories she heard.

Maha brought her experience and perspective as a hands-on human rights defender to the international political discourse on Palestine, where she and like-minded colleagues warned against pursuing political solutions without giving thorough consideration to human security. But her political work was also fiercely independent. She resisted partisan politics in a place where they are too often dominant and seemingly required for admission to the public conversation. She secured her admission on her own terms. Though she gracefully sheltered her family as best she could, we still learned – usually after the fact – that she paid the price for her principles.

Yet her independence inspired deep respect from even the most unlikely quarters. The humbling presence of people from all persuasions, parties, and walks of life at



her funeral and wake was perhaps the most powerful testament to this. Many spoke of her calm and attentive demeanor and leadership style. Creative and strategic, she would carefully listen to others' opinions and urge everyone to speak before weighing in herself. She wasn't a big talker – but when she talked, everyone listened.

At home, we benefitted from that same leadership style. My mother was not one to separate the public positions she took from the way she lived her life. Though she was extremely protective of us, she never told my brother or me what to do, how to act, or how to think. She never judged us but watched carefully, quietly, fondly, and often quite worriedly, as we fumbled through the complexities of life here, developed our own opinions, and wrestled with our own struggles. Advice was less often dispensed than demonstrated. My mother's eminent practicality belied deep wisdom, one which I frequently sought as I faced my own challenges. I witnessed many others do the same: her friends, my own friends, her colleagues, and her family – as well as near strangers.

As I rummage through old photographs, I am struck by how expressions that I knew so well had accompanied her from as far back as her early teens. There was the warm, inviting, and elegant smile; but also a wary, defiant look that never underestimated the size of the challenge ahead of her.

In her long struggle with cancer, she was no different. Where some saw a battle, my mother saw a dance. In her final weeks, she told us not to see the many hospital visits and medical interventions as an antagonistic fight. "We need to dance," she told me in our last visit to the emergency room. And indeed, at her son's Jerusalem wedding only 11 days before her death, she overcame her weakness and late-stage cancer to do just that.

Our family is very proud of my mother. We have derived tremendous support from those who have not only shared our grief but also our celebration of her life. We hope that her spirit and her work will live on among others in Palestine – and that we may all continue her dance.

*Diala Shammass*



# MIFTAH

## Amplifies the Voice of Jerusalemites

Courtesy of MIFTAH



In 1998, the Palestinian Initiative for the Promotion of Global Dialogue and Democracy, MIFTAH was “born” in Jerusalem. Since then, it has carried its message within and beyond the city through its activities with the various sectors in Jerusalem, particularly women and youth, the effects of which are tangible to date.

From the day of its inception, MIFTAH has always raised the banner of democracy and dialogue, taking this message to every corner of the homeland, including Jerusalem. It espouses the principles of democracy and good governance in all of Palestinian society, with Jerusalem as a major demographic and geographic prominence. The organization has always sought to develop its strategy of empowering young leaders to participate in promoting principles of democracy and good governance and to raise social awareness towards the rights and duties of good citizenry. Moreover, MIFTAH has always encouraged participation in influencing policies and legislation insofar as they guarantee the protection of civil, social, and political rights.

In this regard, its role has been manifold in Jerusalem where MIFTAH has worked towards promoting the national identity of young men and women in the city through engaging them in activities, programs, and projects. For example, Jerusalemites were part of the formation of the Palestinian National Coalition for Implementing UN Security Council Resolution 1325 and are active members in MIFTAH’s Social and Political Active Palestinian Youth Network. Grounded in the vision that economic empowerment can provide the impetus for women to be empowered politically, they have also been involved in areas that focus on women’s economic empowerment through modest income-generating activities in towns and villages northwest and south of Jerusalem.



Palestinian women in Jerusalem suffer from the same legal, health, and social issues as other Palestinian women and are the victims of dual violence: violence from the society and violence perpetrated by the Israeli occupation. The violence against women in Jerusalem takes several forms, including arrest, assault, and harassment of women and their families and the obstacles to women’s free movement and travel across checkpoints, especially in areas located outside of Israel’s Separation Wall. Thus, MIFTAH involves Jerusalemite women in its awareness

activities in conjunction with the General Union of Palestinian Women, while purposely promoting the role of women’s organizations from Jerusalem in advocacy efforts applied to amplify the voices of women for peace and security at the national, regional, and international levels, as steps toward holding Israel accountable for its violations of human rights and international humanitarian law in the occupied state of Palestine, more specifically in Jerusalem.

MIFTAH’s programs have impacted the moral, psychological, and economic empowerment of youth and women’s segments in Jerusalem and have strengthened their steadfastness and sense of belonging to the city in spite of Israel’s avid targeting of their national identity and attempts to Judaize and “Israelize” the city and its inhabitants. Interventions have helped disseminate the Palestinian narrative

*Photo courtesy of MIFTAH.*



in Jerusalem, reflecting the everyday suffering of Jerusalemites and monitoring Israeli violations against them and their institutions, the latter of which are constantly being shut down or their work impeded.

Most recently, MIFTAH conducted several awareness meetings on the importance of the role of youth in political participation. Dozens of youth between the ages of 17 and 37 – including activists from organizations in the old city of Jerusalem – participated and offered their ideas on the political participation of youth and youth initiatives. The Jerusalem participants were offered the opportunity to express their issues through skits, which addressed such topics as the major drug problem and sexual harassment. This year, MIFTAH joined local coalitions to contribute to combatting these problems which are considered forms of gender-based violence.

Furthermore, MIFTAH conducted a survey of youth institutions in Jerusalem, one output of the “Active Youth for Social Change” program. The survey aimed to support the youth sector and NGOs in promoting their role in developing youth leaders active at the grassroots level in the Jerusalem area. The youth have become more aware and better informed of the problems they face and of their own needs and interests, and are more confident in dealing with these problems. MIFTAH has given youth a platform from which to express themselves in light of the critical challenges they face as Palestinian youth in Jerusalem. Cooperation was strengthened among the Jerusalem organizations in terms of empowering and supporting youth in Jerusalem.

This has always been our role and strategy at MIFTAH in working with all Palestinian sectors, including Jerusalemites who have, over the years, received support from MIFTAH and who will continue to get support

“We are the only people on Earth asked to guarantee the security of our occupier ... while Israel is the only country that calls for defense from its victims.”

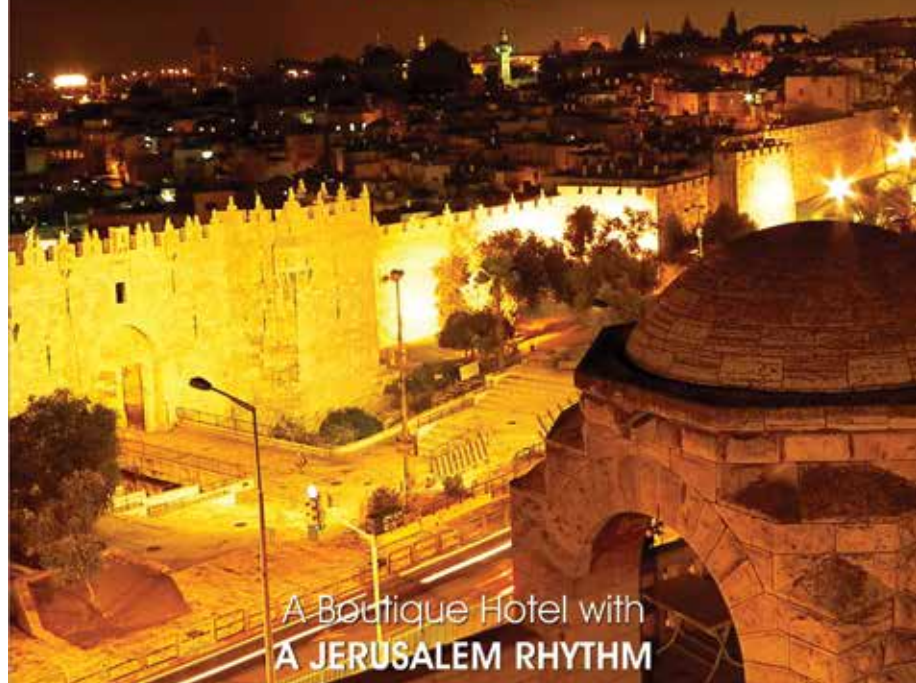
*Dr. Hanan Ashrawi*



in the years to come. We want to make their voices heard and bridge the gap between Jerusalem citizens and PA officials. The support that MIFTAH can give them in this regard is through promoting social and political accountability among Jerusalemites and decision-makers and through raising the awareness of official bodies about their needs through direct meetings or the media.

MIFTAH includes Jerusalem in its programs in order to address the issues of citizens there. Hence, the series of awareness-raising meetings and workshops held by MIFTAH in the city have succeeded in delivering the voices of Jerusalem's residents to Palestinian decision-makers. They have also helped to convey Jerusalem's male and female youth as citizens committed to their social, national, and educational role whether at the level of youth or individual initiatives on the ground, including the embodiment of the concepts of citizenry, social participation, good governance, and participation in decision-making.

MIFTAH will always work according to this broad-based vision and is determined to continuously develop it in order to achieve the goals it has sought to achieve since its establishment in Jerusalem.



A Boutique Hotel with  
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# Jerusalem and the Private Sector

## Productive Contributions and Greater Needs

Courtesy of Bank of Palestine



A panoramic view of Jerusalem. Photo from Palestine Image Bank.



For the past fifty years, Jerusalem has been suffering from the Israeli occupation. The situation has worsened during the past few years due to the increased Israeli hold on the city and its attempt to control the city's history, economy, culture, and society. The poverty rate in Jerusalem has increased to more than 80 percent since 1967. The tourism, industrial, commercial, and service sector conditions have worsened. The city has experienced continuous crises due to the occupation's policies that have resulted in a commercial and economic recession, the bankruptcy of various enterprises, the closure of hundreds of commercial stores, and the migration of many economic institutions and enterprises outside the city. Prior to the Oslo Agreement in 1993, Jerusalem comprised 15 percent of the overall Palestinian economy. Today this figure has been reduced to 7 percent. According to a media report published in 2014, 75 percent of occupied East Jerusalem residents live below the poverty line.

Despite all attempts to practically erase Jerusalem from the national Palestinian map, the city is resilient. Initiatives and development projects executed by private-sector companies and civil-society institutions contribute, even if just slightly, to strengthen the city's perseverance and continuation of life. Despite everything, Jerusalem is the eternal capital for Palestinians and a source of cultural inspiration, always shining with hope for a better life. A number of institutions from the private sector and civil society contribute to development projects that substantially relieve the suffering of citizens who live in Jerusalem. Bank of Palestine provides support to health institutions, including Augusta Victoria Hospital, Al-Makassed Hospital, Saint John's Eye Hospital, and Bir Nabala Hospital outside the Separation Wall. At Augusta Victoria Hospital, Bank of Palestine established a playground to be used by patients

in the children's ward, especially those who have cancer. At Al-Makassed Hospital, the bank purchased mobile homes (caravans) to be used by the family members of out-of-town patients. Many patients are from Gaza, Nablus, Hebron, and other Palestinian cities, and their families are not able to find appropriate accommodations at affordable rates.

During the last quarter, the bank launched a campaign titled "Palestine in Our Heart." The campaign's goal

was to gather financial support for the hospital and for our people in Gaza who continue to suffer in the aftermath of the last Israeli onslaught. The campaign raised around \$1 million through the donations of the bank's customers, shareholders, and investors from other institutions. The bank also provides various contributions to all



Yabous Cultural Centre.

Palestinian hospitals in Jerusalem to support their resilience and to aid in their facility development to continue to serve Palestinians from within and outside Jerusalem.

A number of companies and organizations in Jerusalem finance and support educational and development projects. Bank of Palestine is working on a new program, in partnership with the Welfare Association, to support youth leadership in Jerusalem schools. This is accompanied by several partnerships with various cultural institutions in Jerusalem. Bank of Palestine believes in developing and supporting the continuity of the cultural scene. In partnership with Yabous Cultural Center, the bank launched a campaign called “Immortalize Your Name in Jerusalem” in order to revive the work at the Jerusalem Cinema. The bank



*The First National Palestinian Orchestra for Youth. Photo courtesy of ESNM.*



*St George Jerusalem Hotel.*

currently has a five-year partnership agreement with Yabous. In addition, through its partnership with the Edward Said National Conservatory of Music, the bank has contributed to reviving the spirit of art and culture in Jerusalem by sponsoring the conservatory's performances and participation in various local and international festivals, including the sponsorship of the first national Palestinian Orchestra for Youth. In addition, the bank provides significant support to a number of important activities in Jerusalem that have a clear impact on reviving the Holy City's spirit, economy, and tourism sector. Bank of Palestine's activities in Jerusalem are part of a commitment that the private sector has made towards the city. One of the various initiatives to revive Jerusalem

was the establishment of the Jerusalem Holding Company. The company works to increase investments in Jerusalem and enhance its economy, therefore supporting the resilience of its people.

Through another of its projects, the Palestine Development and Investment Company (PADICO Holding) renovated and reopened Saint George Hotel, a landmark of East Jerusalem. The hotel, one of the biggest and best hotels in Jerusalem, is now open for business with its newly renovated facilities.

As part of its national duty towards Jerusalem and devotion to its Arab, Islamic, and Christian character, PADICO previously launched “Alhambra Palace” project, which is located on Salah al-Din Street. Formerly known as Alhambra Cinema – which has been closed for twenty years – it was revived and reopened for business with earmarked funds that exceed \$2 million. Such projects highlight the importance of investing in this city that holds significant emotional, religious, and tourist value. PADICO Holding is working to implement a residential project in Beit Safafa that will develop more than 160 residential

apartments and a shopping center. The company is also researching the possibility of implementing several other projects to create promising investment opportunities in Jerusalem.

Palestine Investment Fund (PIF) announced the “Jerusalem Grant Program” to support small and medium enterprises in the city. This promising project, which is managed by the PIF through funding from the European Union, is expected to vitalize the small and medium enterprises in Jerusalem. The budget earmarked for this project is €1.8 million and began in 2014, for a period of two years, to provide financing in the form of grants to projects in Jerusalem. Funded projects should show viability, sustainability, and the ability to employ people.

An important question remains: Is this sufficient to change the status quo in Jerusalem? Certainly not, as Jerusalem needs greater efforts that are not limited to the private sector's heroic initiatives in revitalizing tourism, industry, education, health, and economic projects. Despite the fact that these needs are considered to be opportunities for investment for

those who take initiative, Jerusalem needs collaboration among all related parties. The Palestinian Authority, Arab, Islamic, and Christian funds, the private sector, banks, and civil-society institutions must all unite to save Jerusalem. It is one of the largest cities of historical Palestine, in terms of area and population, and it is the most significant politically, economically, and culturally. It is the Holy City. Given that the city is experiencing a rapid increase in adverse practices and harassment by the Israeli occupation in an unprecedented and organized manner that aims to erase its political, cultural, and social features, everyone must cooperate to foil these plans with a strong will and full awareness. We are confident that all private-sector, governmental, international, and Islamic institutions and organizations are able to make the needed change and contribute to preserving the identity of the holy Palestinian city, the capital of our vigorous country.

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Bank of Palestine



# Renovation and Rehabilitation Works in the Old City of Jerusalem

By Simon Kouba

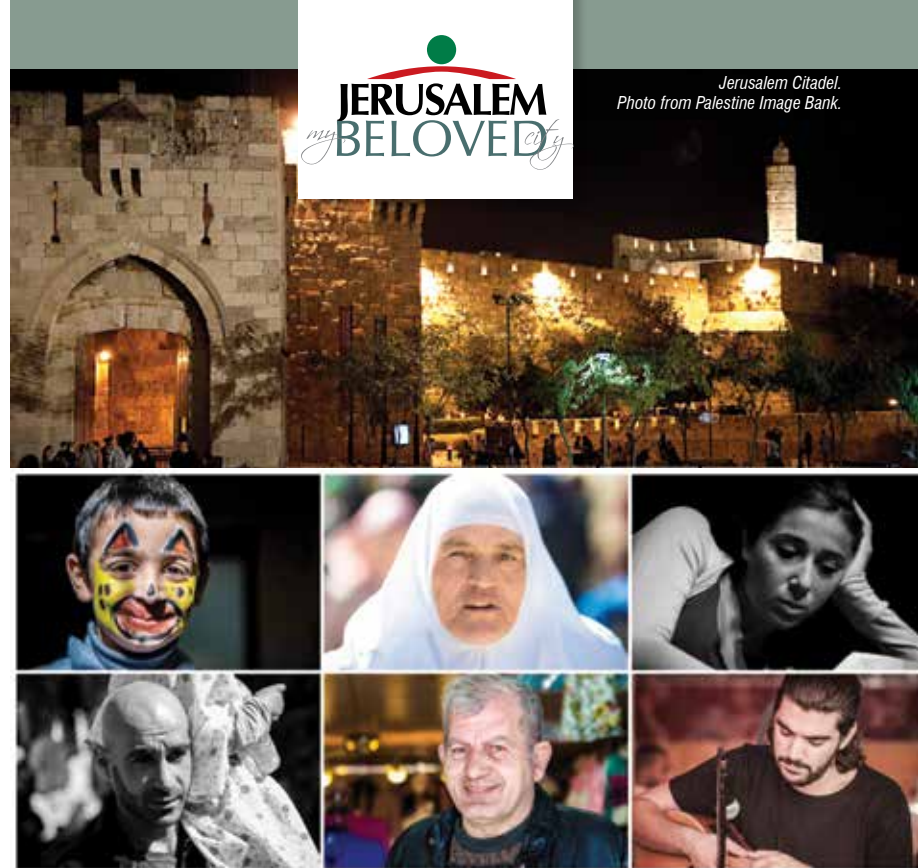


In 1996 the Israeli government introduced a law that prohibited Jerusalem residents from living outside the municipal borders, or within Israeli sovereign territories in general. Many Jerusalemites were already living in Bethlehem, Ramallah, Al-Ram, and other places in the West Bank. Some of these families had left Jerusalem, their center of life, to find a cheaper cost of living elsewhere, closer to their work, and to find affordable housing. Among the families who left in the 1980s are families who lived in the Old City. Under the threat of losing their residency privilege, a large number of families started to move back to their old homes. Lack of housing, difficulty in obtaining building permits in Jerusalem, and the high cost of land and building encouraged people to revert to living in the Old City, especially those who had lived there before and those who still owned shares in houses in the sacred city.

A number of the houses in the Old City had been unused for a long time, some even abandoned. These old structures that are made of stone and lime are very susceptible to damage due to high humidity and lack of aeration when not inhabited. Renovation and rehabilitation were urgently needed.

Various organizations that work in Jerusalem took the initiative to fundraise for and administrate such works since the unfortunate families who owned these properties were unable to cover the renovation costs themselves. The idea was very successful. More NGOs moved in to help in this mission and fundraising became easier.

During the first years, the results were poor. The work, the needs, the approach,



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Jerusalem Citadel.  
Photo from Palestine Image Bank.

and the difficulties were changing all the time. Neither the administrative teams nor the engineers or contractors had adequate experience in this field, and the specialized materials to be used were unknown to the engineers. In addition, the renovations needed to be completed in a very short time, which contributed to the poor quality of work.

With time, however, things changed for the better. New engineers and architects joined the works; major institutions hired experienced personnel, others organized seminars to share know-how and expertise. Today the renovation works can be described as good, with more experienced team players who are better prepared and more competent in restoration and conservation methods and techniques.

Renovation work in the Old City of Jerusalem is a very complex process that includes not only the engineering aspect but also the relationship with local authorities and the need to protect the heritage value of the structures. Given this complexity, very few architects and contractors choose to get involved in this work.





*Renovation project in the Old City of Jerusalem. Photo courtesy of the author.*

The municipality of Jerusalem and the Israel Antiquities Authority also significantly affected the work. The municipality does not usually facilitate the construction of new buildings or even additions to the properties of the Arabic population in the Old City. Fewer than ten permits were granted during almost 50 years of occupation. To make things more difficult, the Antiquities department closely monitors any construction in the city, under the pretext of preserving the antiquities and heritage of the city.

Both the Antiquities Authority and the municipality share interests and motives; they were able to slow the construction activities in the Old City,

increasing burdens – specifically financial burdens – on the interested parties. The Antiquities Authority requires a \$300-per-day observation fee for personnel. Unlucky sites may need 10, 20, or even more days of observation. In one case, the beneficiary had to pay approximately \$10,000 in observation fees to the Antiquities Authority.

At first, the authorities were satisfied with visits to the construction sites to make sure that no building additions were being constructed. If additions were discovered, then the works were halted by court order and the owners required to pay a heavy penalty. Demolitions were carried out in some

cases. In later stages the authorities started to ask for detailed work plans and descriptions. This made it more difficult for beneficiaries to carry out the work they had planned.

During the last decade, building additions almost completely ceased as it became too dangerous and too expensive to continue. Some architects working in this field discovered that an alternative to building an addition was either to upgrade the available space and make it more useful or to look for unused spaces and render them available and useful.

During our work in the oldest quarters of the city, such as Haret Alsadie, Bab al-Silsileh, and Bab Hutta, we were stunned by houses used in shifts: some families would use the bedrooms in the daytime and others at night, and together they would share living rooms and kitchens and toilets. In such cases, before starting the rehabilitation process, we and the beneficiaries had to find alternative rooms to use, and in other cases, we had to do the work in stages to keep a minimum amount of space where the inhabitants could sleep. It is worth mentioning that these parts of the Old City are among the most population-congested areas in the world.

As mentioned before, we had to look for new spaces to enlarge the living capacity of the city: caves became useful, old stables became bedrooms, rooms with high ceilings were bisected by a mezzanine floor, hallways were also converted to family space.

During the rehabilitation of the new areas to be used, we had to install new services, such as sewage and ventilation, for which some excavations had to be done. This posed a significant problem for the Antiquities Authority, which imposed heavy supervision on the project. This has significantly slowed the work and increased costs due to the fees required by the authority.

Given that most of the NGOs working in the city refuse to pay taxes or fees to any Israeli authority, the burden of payment is laid on the beneficiary, who is already financially exhausted.

All parties working in this field – including donors, administrators, architects, and contractors – have learned a lot through this process. During the last twenty years, they have upgraded the quality of their work and at the same time have learned how to maneuver through the obstacles put in place by the authorities.

Seminars run by local NGOs teach architects, engineers, and contractors how to deal with old structures, keep our heritage alive, and make the best use of a space without causing damage. New, more effective construction materials have been introduced to architects and contractors. In the old alleys of the city, one again hears familiar words such as lime, argil, and hydraulic cement, among others.

We are proud to share that the quality of our renovation and rehabilitation works has been improved, and that our zeal for traditional building materials and our grandfathers' stones has been restored. We strive for the highest professional level in conservative restoration of the structures in our city.

If Jerusalem were a free, sovereign city, it would be possible to create a new model for the city with wise building additions that would preserve the authenticity of this holy place and meet some of its growing needs. For now, however, a local conservation committee can be charged with overseeing the work and encouraging all to:

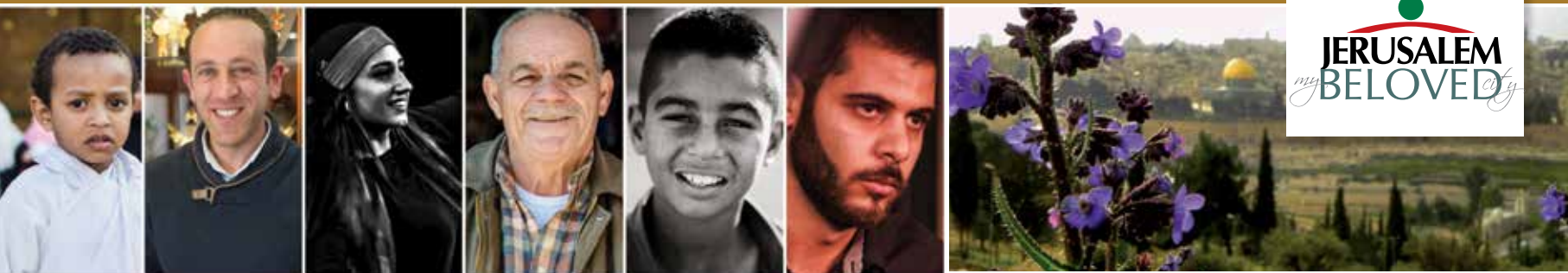
**KEEP OUR HERITAGE ALIVE!**

*Simon Kouba is an architect and the owner of Simon Kouba Consultants. He is a member of several boards that work with youth, arts, and culture. He can be reached at [simon@koubas.net](mailto:simon@koubas.net).*

*Another sample of a renovated project in the Old City of Jerusalem. Photo courtesy of the author.*







Jerusalem in Spring. Photo by Tarik Bakri.

# Learning from Jerusalem

## The Old City Revitalization Programme/Welfare Association



The Old City of Jerusalem, a UNESCO World Heritage Site (1981) and a World Heritage Site in Danger (1982), carries both titles as a testimony to the special condition of the city. The beauty, significance, and uniqueness of the city easily make it of outstanding universal value, but as we witness firsthand the structural changes in the city's social, economic, and historical fabric as a result of the accumulation of Israeli policies, we cannot afford to be emotional and nostalgic. The Welfare Association made a clear decision to establish a professional technical program to revitalize the Old City and its environs in 1994, and this program has not only been working on the restoration of historic buildings and monuments in the Old City, but it has also been learning from all the diversity and problematics the city has to offer. Only a few places in the world would have this exceptional challenge to offer, and we consider ourselves lucky to be there and learn from it every day.

Over the past 20 years, the Old City of Jerusalem Revitalization Programme (OCJRP) has developed in scope, knowledge, and abilities thanks to Jerusalem. Working in significant monumental buildings – such as the Museum of *Al-Haram Al-Sharif*, the various Mamluk *Madrassas* in the vicinity of *Al-Haram*, such as *Al-Ashrafiyyeh*, *Al-Manjakiyya* and *Al-Omariyyeh*, among others, *Dar Al-Aytam Al-Islamiyyah*, the Armenian Museum, and many architectural jewels – challenged us to become masters at our profession. It challenged us to develop our skills and to raise the bar for the quality of restoration works that adhere to international standards. Knowledge and skill in restoration works have become the cornerstone of our program.

But buildings are not about stone, they are about people and people's needs as well. This stands true for all historic cities, but in Jerusalem the need is acute and is sometimes in conflict with the conservation principles we dearly hold. With a consistent increase in the number of residents in the city who are trying to safeguard their Jerusalem residence status, the emigration of young couples

and affluent and middle-class families from the Old City, the deteriorating physical and structural conditions of historic buildings, the demise of public spaces, and the continuous attacks of Israeli settlers, the city is in a vicious cycle of deterioration on all levels, and it is our responsibility as community members to try to use our

limited resources to break that cycle. One of our greatest resources, other than human resources, is our cultural heritage. In 2000, OCJRP led the effort to develop a revitalization plan for the Old City. The plan was based on sectorial studies and community consultations and was prepared by a multi-disciplinary team of experts. The

Restoration Program. Housing Renewal of *Al-Madrassa Al-As'ardiyya*.







Information and documentation - output map from OCJRP comprehensive database.

plan highlighted the main issues to be targeted in the Old City and set out key actions for implementation. The implementation of the plan depended on the concerted efforts of all actors in Jerusalem who were also part of its development. The plan and the research linked to it allowed us at OCJRP to develop our intervention logic and scale.

OCJRP adopted a four-tiered program: restoration, documentation, capacity building, and community participation. Parallel to the direct provision of services, the program focuses on behavioral change, capacity building, and knowledge generation not just for our direct constituents but also for the professional community and ourselves.

Restoration followed two tracks: housing and public buildings. In housing, the predicament was and still is how to re-adapt houses to modern needs while saving the integrity of historic buildings. We have to deal with irregular additions, severe humidity problems, insanitary bathrooms and kitchens, and highly unappreciated but priceless architectural elements and details, among many other issues that are surely known to all.

The program has restored more than 650 housing units to date and devised three tracks for housing restoration in order to increase efficiency and decrease response time: total restoration, emergency restoration, and fast-track projects. Still the need

is high, and it is estimated that there are another 1,500 housing units that need intervention. In public buildings, we worked on the conservation and adaptive reuse of historic buildings to service institutions that support the community of Jerusalem. More than 60 buildings were restored through this program that not only provided the needed infrastructure for communal institutions to function in a healthy environment but also gave us long-term partners in the process of reviving Jerusalem.

Documentation and research would go hand in hand with restoration. Our work in the Old City gave us the advantage of close proximity to invaluable knowledge, for which we used different forms for collection. OCJRP owns one of the most extensive architectural databases on the Old City and uses this to support revitalization works by this program and others, as well as for spreading knowledge among the academic and professional communities.

Capacity building, on the other hand, targeted fresh graduates, professionals, craftspeople, workers, etc., the entire circle of individuals in the conservation-production cycle. With the Israeli mobility and access restrictions, the labor market in Jerusalem is constricted, and hence our pool of knowledgeable workers, architects, and contractors has been small. To that end, tens of individuals have been trained by both local and international experts

*The Old City of Jerusalem Revitalization Programme (OCJRP) was established by the Welfare Association in 1994, with primary funding from the Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development in order to achieve sustainable development and renewal of Jerusalem's much neglected Old City. The program is recognized internationally as a signal program in its field: in 2004 OCJRP received the prestigious Aga Khan Award for Architecture in its ninth award cycle. OCJRP recognizes the efforts and contributions of all individuals who have been part of its 20-year journey, and to whom we are indebted. For more information, please visit <http://ocjrp.welfare-association.org/en/>.*



through various courses, training sessions, and internship opportunities. Jerusalem opened the doors for us to communicate with the international professional community and attract the best possible experts.

OCJRP works mainly with two community groups: families using



1. Restoration Program. The African Community Society
2. Restoration Program. The Al-Aqsa Library
3. Restoration Program. The Edward Said National Music Conservatory.





Restoration Program. Spafford Children Centre.



Architectural Heritage Preservation Institute - Core Course - Students at site.

the historical buildings, and youth and children. As architects, communication may not be our strongest skill, but if we are to work in the Old City, communication is essential. Perhaps this was and still is our main challenge. How to balance needs and expectations with abilities and resources? How to let appreciation of historic elements seep into people's hearts while they struggle to survive in the city? These questions are obviously not easy to answer! We have been doing this for 20 years, and we still have a long way to go.

The program's four tiers intertwine in a continuously changing environment that poses new challenges every day. Our flexibility is tested when it comes to finding ways to overcome restrictions posed by the occupation and developing community participation tools; and our rigidity is tested when it comes to rigorous research and strict upholding of conservation guidelines. After more

than a decade of working in Jerusalem, it was time for the next step. Our work has equipped us with the tools to replicate and build on the experience in other cities in Palestine; so Nablus was next. We have been working in Nablus for more than seven years now, exchanging knowledge between the two cities. This year, OCJRP will also start to work in Arrabeh.

In addition to moving to new geographies, in 2007 OCJRP took the first steps towards the amalgamation of all its knowledge and activities into the institutionalization of a center of excellence for rehabilitation to be based in Jerusalem to offer services locally and regionally. The Institute for Architectural Heritage Preservation in Jerusalem is now in the second phase of planning and establishment. We still have a long way to go, but we are on track towards establishing a rigorous research and practice center that focuses on issues of restoration and rehabilitation.

The beauty of Jerusalem, its value and its significance, may stir various emotions among those who live or visit the city, but it also puts us in a spot where we have to carefully calculate our steps as we work in a dynamic and conflictual environment. The city is not easy; every stakeholder has a stake in the work we do. Owners, residents, users, contractors, merchants, and even the occupation authorities have an influence on our work, and we have learned how to develop a dynamic and flexible approach to meet their needs and address the constrictions. Jerusalem offers us the opportunity to become better at what we do, to excel in our work and to always seek innovative solutions to the problems at hand. Thank you, Jerusalem, for making us better, and thank you for giving us the chance to learn to use our knowledge in other places in Palestine.

*Article photos courtesy of The Old City Revitalization Programme/Welfare Association.*



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# East Jerusalem – The Urban Challenges

By Anjad Hithnawi and Lubna Shaheen

**S**ince its occupation in 1967, East Jerusalem and its surroundings have been under Israeli jurisdiction and the administration of the Israeli Jerusalem City Council.<sup>i</sup> Israel has strived to strengthen the Jewish presence in the city through imposing planning policies that encourage the development of Jewish settlements while simultaneously limiting the development and expansion of Palestinian neighborhoods.

After occupying the city, Israel cancelled the Jordanian planning ordinance and confiscated large areas of land for the construction of Israeli settlements.<sup>ii</sup> From the beginning, the Israeli planning system did not recognize the distinct characteristics of the Palestinian towns and villages and their specific needs. The Israeli planning authorities dealt with Palestinian areas in East Jerusalem as rural areas with low densities rather than as urban areas with high densities and major infrastructure. As a result, the Palestinian neighborhoods became isolated from each other and

from their surroundings, which increased the fragmentation of the city. Israel has since continued to violate international law.<sup>iii</sup>

Throughout the last 48 years, East Jerusalem has been affected by various local and regional planning schemes, the most recent one being that of Jerusalem 2000.<sup>iv</sup> These planning schemes have negatively affected the city's built-up environment and the quality of life of its Palestinian residents. Israeli plans for the city have allocated vast tracts of lands to settlement growth and expansion and allow for large building percentages for their settler residents. The Israeli Jerusalem Municipality has, since its establishment, been allocating tremendous portions of its funds to improve infrastructure and public services in these Jews-only settlements. At the same time, these plans have limited the development and growth of Palestinian neighborhoods. Large tracts of privately owned Palestinian lands have been designated as open areas where construction is prohibited,<sup>v</sup> and the lands allocated for future planning are already built up to their maximum capacity, leaving no room



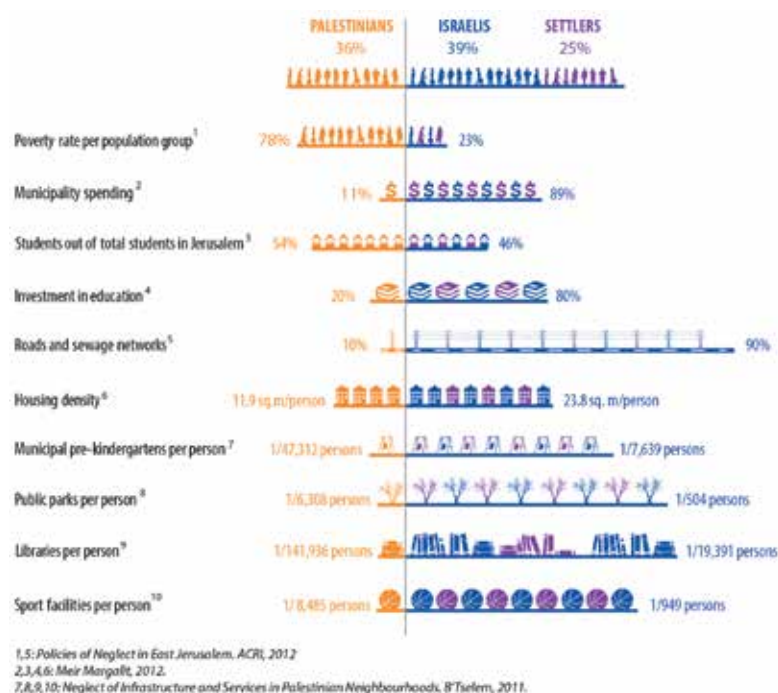
Photo from Palestine Image Bank.



Photo by Tarik Bakri.

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for natural growth. The average density in a Palestinian neighborhood is 13,500 persons/km<sup>2</sup> compared to 8,300 persons/km<sup>2</sup> in Israeli settlements. Moreover, the planning policies in East Jerusalem allow for very low building percentages and densities in the Palestinian neighborhoods, which do not meet the housing needs of the population. The average building rights in Palestinian neighborhoods range between 50 and 70 percent, compared to between 75 and 120 percent in Israeli settlements. This has led to a severe housing crisis in East Jerusalem; more than 15,000 housing units are needed today to supply the current shortage. Simultaneously, the municipal procedures and planning frameworks – by requiring difficult, lengthy, and expensive procedures – are halting the development of detailed plans by the local residents that may allow Palestinians to issue building permits, making it almost impossible for Palestinians to build. As a result, very few Palestinians manage to obtain

building permits, and the majority resort to “informal” building to meet their housing needs. Building without permits has placed thousands of Palestinian homes under demolition threats, increased the displacement risks, and burdened hundreds of families with municipal fines. Currently, more than half of the existing units in East Jerusalem are considered “illegal” by the municipality and are therefore under demolition threats.

In terms of land provision for public services, Israeli plans fail to provide adequate lands for educational, health, social, and cultural facilities. Moreover, as a result of the biased planning policy, Palestinian neighborhoods in East Jerusalem suffer from discrimination – compared to Israeli settlements – in terms of the municipal public investments allocation. There is a lack of public investment in road networks, sewage, water and electrical infrastructure, waste collection systems, and public recreational

facilities. Infrastructure services in Palestinian areas are largely inadequate and badly maintained.

The Palestinian neighborhoods in East Jerusalem are characterized by high levels of informality, over-crowdedness, deteriorating urban conditions, poor physical infrastructure, and lack of public spaces and public services. They are becoming slum-like living environments, which negatively affects the socio-economic conditions and the quality of life of the Palestinian residents, thus increasing unemployment, poverty, and school dropout rates. The construction of the Separation Wall has exacerbated the situation. It has disconnected Jerusalem from its surroundings and from the rest of the West Bank, isolating more than 99,000 Palestinian residents of East Jerusalem behind the Separation Wall, with poor living conditions and complete detachment from the city. As a result, the urban fabric of East Jerusalem has lost its contiguity, and what has remained are enclaves surrounded by Israeli settlements, the Separation Wall, and checkpoints.

Realizing the complexity and severity of the urban situation in East Jerusalem, it is very important to address the

The urban living environment in East Jerusalem continues to deteriorate under the restrictive political, socio-economic, and spatial policies of the Jerusalem Municipality. These policies have deprived the Palestinians living in the city from their urban rights to housing, public space, and basic urban services. Without feasible options to realize spatial planning solutions that can help generate housing, educational, and health facilities, economic opportunities and enabling building permits, more and more Palestinians are left with no option but to build “illegally” without permits in overcrowded and under-serviced neighborhoods, putting themselves under the demolition and displacement threats.



An Israeli settlement.



above-mentioned challenges and start to look for a viable solution that protects residents' rights to their city. In light of the absence of a formal Palestinian authority in the city, community-driven and community-led initiatives to address land and planning complexities are important in order to realize any results. A formal coordination and administrative body that includes the various Palestinian actors, UN agencies, NGOs, and private-sector establishments is needed to oversee and govern various relief and development interventions in the city, and to tackle the most urgent and pressing problems. Such a body should ensure the effectiveness of implementation and act as a Palestinian reference for the community. In addition, more advocacy efforts are needed to inform the international community, diplomatic missions, and human rights organizations about the deteriorating conditions in East Jerusalem in order to pressure the Israeli government to stop home demolitions, approve more master and detailed plans for the Palestinian neighborhoods, provide adequate infrastructure, and grant a sufficient number of building permits to meet the needs of the community. Until a final political solution is achieved to end the occupation in East Jerusalem, an immediate intervention is needed to alleviate the living conditions of Palestinians in East Jerusalem and to support their resilience in the city.

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*Lubna Shaheen (PhD) is a spatial planner who worked as an assistant professor at the Department of Architectural Engineering at Birzeit University. She also worked as a consultant and senior planner with several local and international consulting firms. Currently she works with UN-Habitat as a project manager for the Urban Planning Support Program for the Palestinian Communities in East Jerusalem.*

<sup>i</sup> The annexation of East Jerusalem was never recognized internationally. The UN Security Council censured it "in the strongest terms" and declared it "null and void," adding that "it must be rescinded forthwith." Under international law it therefore continues to be part of the West Bank and is considered to be "occupied" by Israel.

<sup>ii</sup> 52 percent of land in East Jerusalem is allocated for settlement construction.

<sup>iii</sup> International law requires the occupying power to take measures to ensure the welfare of the occupied, prohibits displacing the occupied within or outside the occupied territory, prohibits the transfer of the civilian population of the occupation power into the occupied territory, and prohibits the confiscation and destruction of the private property of the occupant.

<sup>iv</sup> Though not formally endorsed, Jerusalem 2000 is being used by the Israeli Municipality.

<sup>v</sup> 35 percent of land in East Jerusalem is designated as green or open areas where construction is prohibited.

*Together with Israeli and foreign activists, stand near newly-erected tents in an area known as E1 at the settlement of Ma'aleh Adumim, near Jerusalem.*



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General view of Jerusalem taken from the Citadel.  
Photo from Palestine Image Bank.

# Financial Planning Challenges in East Jerusalem

## How Can We Break The Cycle?

By Nassar Odeh



Economic growth is difficult in East Jerusalem, a detached territory racked with turmoil from an unjust occupation. A history of conflict, paired with cycles of economic uncertainty and recovery have created challenging situation to navigate when planning for the future. With the majority of policy documents and regulations written in Hebrew, it is nearly impossible for East Jerusalemites to understand, let alone negotiate the complicated, yet deeply important insurance industry. As a result, the government and independent insurance agencies are profiting from the mandatory pension plans and insurance policies taken out by unassuming citizens due to misinformation and uninformed decision making. All these unfortunate events of exploitation beg the question: How can East Jerusalem break this cycle?

To open the debate, it is important to think about the professionals upon whom you already rely. When it comes to your personal health, who is the first person you turn to? It

is doubtful that you leave issues regarding your personal well-being to yourself, your friends, or your work colleagues. Rather, you undoubtedly put your trust in a medical doctor, someone with high educational achievements and extensive experience. In society, we equate knowledge, success, and experience with those who are an authority in their field. Therefore it only makes sense to trust a doctor of medicine to lead you towards wellness and vigor. Turning the question to the world of finance, why then do many people not put their personal finances in the hands of an equally authoritative professional? Having a trustworthy financial planner is the first step to reducing your stress and increasing your profitability, *especially* in times of economic unpredictability.

East Jerusalem, as an occupied territory, faces challenges unique to its residents. A smattering of problems, from lack of political representation to unacceptable access to housing, all contribute to the stagnation, if not detriment, of East Jerusalemites' quality of life and inability to break the cycle of poverty. To illustrate one of the many ways East Jerusalemites are being taken advantage of, reference must be made to the Mandatory Pension Law implemented in 2008. Insurance agents across the region began to offer advice

Residents of East Jerusalem, part of an occupied territory, face unique financial challenges. One such example, the Mandatory Pension Law implemented in 2008, forced many people to sign up for pension plans without knowing that they were committing to high rates that would ultimately have extremely dire consequences on their finances. This article opens the debate about financial planning and points towards possible solutions for East Jerusalemites.



and open accounts for their unassuming customers, before they had a grasp of what the new policy encompassed. With most of the documentation written in Hebrew, many people signed up for these plans without knowing that they were committing to high rates that would ultimately pose extremely dire consequences on their finances. It is only



Poverty in Jerusalem. Photo by George Azar.

today that many are beginning to feel the repercussions of the plans they signed up for under the impression that their lives would be made easier, not more difficult.

As a Jerusalemite, you must take control of your financial situation through investments and insurance policies in order to develop and maintain your personal finances. With lackluster economic growth in East Jerusalem, what can you be doing to come out above the fray of failed development? With so many options for investment, yet so much uncertainty, the solution lies in in-depth financial planning.

### **The benefits of enlisting the help of a trusted financial planner**

Although no financial planning institution or individual can guarantee you absolute success, what they can do is offer you the best tools and advice for making informed decisions

regarding your finances. All good financial planners are educated and informed on the latest trends, as well as hindrances, that face Israel's economy. Further, the more well-connected in the international market your potential financial planner is, the more opportunities and benefits he/she can offer you. A well-connected and respected financial adviser will have access to invaluable insight, giving you confidence in your financial decisions.

Hasty decision making and the inability to answer your questions is the first red flag that your best interests are not at the forefront of an insurance broker's decision-making process. Take control of your finances and enlist the help of a trusted, qualified financial planner to help you benefit from your insurance plan. Well thought out personal insurance and pension plans can provide you with sustainable

financial growth and benefits far into the future. The absence of a national pension plan means that you must look to enlist the help of an internationally stationed financial planning agency or brokerage. Only these agencies can help you find stability and financial growth.

A steady increase in economic stability can only be made possible through calculated and well-informed investment decisions. For a Jerusalemite, in particular, this is where the importance of having a financial planner lies. You need someone you can trust to advise you in times of Israel's economic uncertainty, equally, if not more so than in times of economic prosperity.

The particular financial challenges unique to Jerusalemites must be considered from a variety of angles in order to make the best possible decision regarding one's financial

planning decisions. Internationally affiliated insurance brokers and financial planners have up-to-date information on policies and the ability to provide you with the best financial planning advice available to Jerusalemites. Look for a financial planner who has successfully managed thousands of accounts and who has an array of positive testimonials from clients of every walk of life. Having a financial planner with many happy clients lessens your risk of being cheated or taken advantage of.

In 2015, numerous factors must be considered when making weighty decisions for the future of your finances. The unique economic climate in East Jerusalem means that you must seek a uniquely positioned financial planning expert who is equally as invested in your success as you. Inform yourself, then find someone who is equally informed as well as internationally connected. Now is the time to invest in your future!



Photo by Nabil Darwish.

*Nassar Odeh is CEO at the Jerusalem Insurance Agency and a dedicated entrepreneur who has a deep passion for giving back to his community. He has over 14 years of diverse financial management experience, as well as community volunteering experience with emerging youth leaders in Palestine. Nassar is committed to helping find solutions for the financial problems of Palestinians in Jerusalem.*



# Jerusalem Tourism

## Challenges and Opportunities

By Raed Saadeh



**T**he Palestinian consensus is that Jerusalem is a tourism destination of the first degree. It is perceived to be the city that possesses the strongest competencies as far as tourism is concerned. The current reality, however, is that its hotel capacity has decreased by half during the past twenty years, and many shops inside the Old City have closed their doors, forcing their owners to look for work at Israeli establishments. So what is happening to the city? What can be done to overturn this decline, and who can and/or should do it?

First of all, it is important to understand that Jerusalem has been deprived of its hinterland as a result of the Wall that the Israeli authorities have constructed around the city. This deprivation has detached Jerusalem from the rest of the Palestinian body and impacted its economic, cultural, social, and central importance, characteristics, and dynamics. A quick nostalgic glimpse at Jaffa might help explain this decentralization or de-urbanization that Jerusalem seems to be suffering from. The Israeli Wall not only prevents people from nearby cities and villages from accessing the city and hence annulling its ability to serve its natural clients, it has the double-edged-sword effect of draining the city of its residents as they seek to spend their time and attend to their interest with their counterparts in other Palestinian

cities, rendering Jerusalem a town that is suffocating. The influx of visitors into the city is mostly international and is subject to the seasonality of Christian pilgrimage, the main source of business in the city, and the Islamic market, which is limited and occasional.

Secondly, due to the political setup dictated by the Oslo agreements, the Palestinian government has very limited intervention in the city. Its ability to act as a reference for the residents of the city, addressing their needs, aspirations, challenges and plans, is hampered by this fact. The Israeli authorities, on the other hand, have their own plans for Jerusalem, which for the most part don't take into account Palestinian economic, cultural,

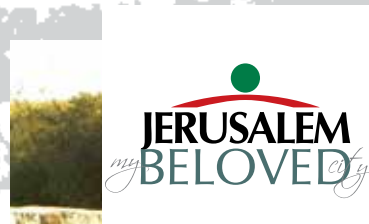
and touristic well-being as indicated by the tragic decrease in the number of hotel establishments and room capacity. Civil society organizations, educational, cultural, and religious establishments have moved in to close the gap. Although this sincere and well-appreciated effort is pivotal for the city, it is fragmented and poorly coordinated.

Hence, the situation in Jerusalem is impacted by a number of imposed threats and mounting challenges such as the Israeli-imposed siege of the city, the absence of a governmental body to cater to its well being and aspirations, and the seasonality of its business. The situation is further compounded by the negative perceptions of travel to Palestine and the area, the lack of unique and differentiated programs, the frail competitive advantage, and the instability of the political situation.

Based on the above, the way to move forward in Jerusalem tourism has to take into consideration a plan that is based on three strategies: protection, competitive capacity, and promotion.

Protection reflects the need to preserve Palestinian culture, identity, and existence in the city. This requires programs that help

*Palm Sunday in Jerusalem. Photo by Tarik Bakri.*





Church of the Holy Sepulchre. Photo by Shareef Sarhan.

sustain the existing establishments, including those that focus on rehabilitation, furnishings, trainings, and institution and capacity building of both the individual business and the establishment or organization.

Competitive capacity can be enforced with new packages and offers for discerning visitors. Jerusalem needs a set of new products to challenge the overwhelming seasonality that overshadows its tourism. Competitiveness is about differentiation. It is about a uniquely identified Palestinian product in the city. It is about how the Jerusalem community is able to utilize its human, cultural, economic, and social resources and capacities. Once achieved, competitiveness is a key for sustainability.

So what are the main sustainability elements the city should aspire to realize? Understanding these elements and decoding them into practical and genuine initiatives is pivotal to achieve success. The first is the ability of its various sectors to work together, based on the notion that tourism doesn't belong to the tourism industry alone but to all sectors that are directly or indirectly linked to its value chain, such

as the commercial, the cultural, the religious, the educational, and the IT sectors. The second is the role of the community not only as a beneficiary of the tourism, economic, and cultural action but also as an active participant in the planning process for the tourism package and development.

The third element is the need to diversify the tourism offer. It will be difficult to create a viable, developing tourism industry in the city if it confines itself to one product and one market. Finally, in order to create a unique Palestinian tourism offer in Jerusalem, it is necessary to enhance the supporting sectors, including culture, women's and youth activity and production, and local handcrafts and artisan workmanship. Needless to say, the role of the various cultural festivals and exhibitions in attracting visitors is imperative, and it impacts both the domestic and the international. The domestic includes Jerusalemites, expatriates, and Palestinians from every location that has access to Jerusalem.

The third strategy is promotion and branding. The Jerusalem community, through its organizations and coordinated efforts, has the

ultimate responsibility of building its competencies, promoting its offer, and enhancing its well-being. There are two ways to accomplish this endeavor. The first is direct and requires that the community's tourism leadership find ways and resources to position Palestinian Jerusalem on the international and regional tourism maps. The second is networked and is based on the establishment of a set of relationships with local, regional, and international organizations that are involved in activities similar to the ones being created in Jerusalem. Cultural production, for example, can be networked with similar offers and activities in other countries



Photo by Shareef Sarhan.

Palestinian civilization is a sophisticated, well-documented and enchanting reality that has its print on many of the surviving cultures and civilizations of today. There is no better place than Jerusalem to live and experience such a diverse cultural, architectural, demographic, and human mosaic.



that aim to promote culture. People who are seeking culture can find the Jerusalem offer intertwined in the respective circles. The various Jerusalem activities can find their place in pertinent platforms throughout the world, based on a scheme of networking, synergy coordination, and partnerships.

To further address Jerusalem tourism competency, consider the cultural and demographic mosaic of Palestine, which can best be explored in the

Old City of Jerusalem. This small area brings together a rich mixture of cultures, ways, and traditions. Jerusalem can best be understood through the eyes of this diversity. Gypsy, African, Moroccan, Afghani, Kurdish, Syrian, Egyptian, Coptic, Ethiopian, Armenian, Greek, Assyrian, and Arab, as well as a multi ethnic Jewish community (just to name a few) all have a story of Jerusalem to tell and, when combined, provide a unique cultural identity that waits to be explored.

In addition, Jerusalem conceals an array of architectural-heritage medleys from Roman times through major empires such as the Byzantines, the Umayyads, the Abbasids, the Crusaders, the Ayyubids, the Mamluks, and the Ottomans. Women have built some of the best monuments and institutions in Jerusalem. Although Arab Islamic society was primarily patriarchal, some women had a clear role in many facets of life, particularly those who were close to the ruling authority, such as princesses, sultan's wives, or mothers or wives of rulers or influential people.





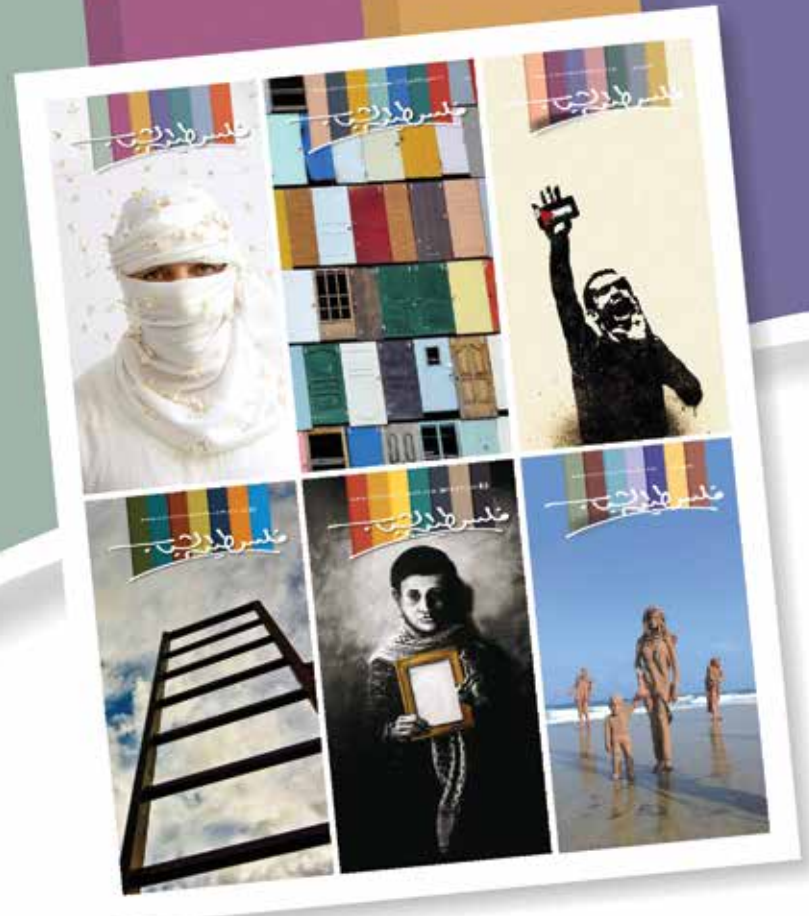
Tourists visiting Jerusalem. Photo by Tarik Bakri.

The Mamluk era, with its characteristic stability and calm, saw clear activity by women, represented by the establishment of public and private buildings and structures. The largest house or palace representing civil architecture in Jerusalem is attributed to a woman, al-Sitt Tunshuqal-Muzaffariyya. Also, the largest and greatest social charity organization from the Ottoman era, known as Al-Emara al-Amara is attributed to the wife of Ottoman Sultan Suleiman al-Qanuni (Suleiman I or Suleiman the Magnificent). She was famously known as Khassaki Sultan, and her building structure houses what is considered one of the greatest organizations, not only in Jerusalem, but also in Palestine and the Levant.

This uniqueness is what Jerusalem tourism needs. These elements can be integrated in the main current tourism offer, and they can be promoted individually in order to attract niche markets that might fancy the new potential to explore a city such as Jerusalem. Is the Jerusalem Palestinian community up to the challenge?

*Mr. Raed Saadeh is the co-founder and chairman of the Jerusalem Tourism Cluster and the co-founder and chairman of the Rozana Association for Rural Tourism Development based in Birzeit. Mr. Saadeh is also the owner and general manager of the Jerusalem Hotel, a boutique hotel in Jerusalem, a former president of the Arab (Palestinian) Hotel Association (AHA), and the co-founder of the Network for Experiential Palestinian Tourism Organizations (NEPTO).*

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A coffee shop in Jerusalem. Photo by tarik Bakri.

"I can be a treasure chest,  
for all your stories, ones  
from before the hurt,  
before before everything  
stabbed you with its edges."

From the poem *Jerusalem* by Tala Abu Rahmeh



# A Valentine Letter to Jerusalem

By Riyam Kafri AbuLaban



**D**ear Jerusalem,  
*Will you be my Valentine?*

Somewhere in my distant childhood, there are countless afternoons spent in the Old City. There is the smell of sweet *qater* oozing onto *knafeh*. There is me trying to manage Zalatio's *mtabaq* as it slips and slides out of my hands and onto my clothes. There is my mother's look of dismay as she chides me, "*Lissa talee' min al-ghaseel*" (*I just washed this*), and rushes me to the small bathroom to wash my hands. There is the smell of incense and the hot glow of candles lit at the church of the Holy Sepulcher, and there is the shimmering Dome of the Rock in the warm spring sun. There is the taste of *shawerma* and the dripping of *theeniyyeh* all over my clothes again. In my distant childhood, there are memories of me, us, all of us, visiting you often and loving you very dearly. There is the taste of *halaweh*, and gummy bears, and there is the shopping for tennis shoes at the beginning of the school year on busy and central Salah al-Din Street. There is my blissful ignorance of your pain and your significance, and my childish love of your pleasures.

Dear Jerusalem, you and I have a very troubled relationship, written with the disappearing ink of separation, punctuated with distance, and illustrated with

forgetfulness. It didn't help that I had a chance to visit you only in 2010, more than 15 years after the last time I walked your stone streets. It did not help that the only part of you I saw on that visit was the inside of Al-Makassed Hospital, the sight of my mother being shuttled to the operating room for a stent, then the hour-long wait that extended infinitely; the sound of my mother's friend on the phone asking if my mother was out of surgery, and the change in her tone when she asked me if I was ok. The burning tears I pushed back as I assured her that I was fine, that this would end soon, and that we would be home. It did not help that I spent the rest of the day in the Cardiac Care Unit, fashionably abbreviated CCU, sitting on a plastic chair, with all kinds of plastic

bags around me filled with snacks I did not eat and would never eat. It was definitely not in your favor that all the smells and tastes of you were erased by one cold sandwich of over-fried falafel, washed down with a Diet Coke that left me with horrible stomach pain for the next two days. And it did not help at all that, when I finally dared to look out through the window as my mother lay stretched out on her bed, moving in and out of sleep, I saw Al-Aqsa right there, so close, shimmering gold under the sun, aloof to my own suffering at that moment, unaware that it would have been easier to take my mother to Jordan for her catheterization and stent than come to you, the Holy City, city of Peace, to Al-Quds, the Holy Sanctuary. It also was not in your favor that when





the nurse asked me to leave at the end of the day and come back in the morning, it felt like I was being exiled to another country, like I was leaving my mother on another planet, not just down the road to another city, less than 15 km away. See, my dear, on that visit, all those sweet memories disappeared. They took one final bow as the curtain fell. They were thrown into a barbed wire cage as we stood waiting for our turn at Qalandiya Checkpoint, also fashionably called Ma'abar Qalandiya to trick people into thinking that their path is not obstructed at all, that caging people into steel passages like chickens getting ready to be slaughtered is absolutely normal and necessary for the security of a free nation that has fenced in another nation.

Truth is, they were fading slowly as my distance from you grew greater, and my access to you became more restricted. They faded as I drove past an exit every day for six years clearly marked Al-Quds, and was never able to take it. They faded, because the one person I want to share you with is

unable to reach you, and to him you are not more than an illusion, an image, a metaphor to a lost land.

I wanted to pretend that I still loved you, that I still was very passionate about you and everything you stand for, but I could not. And so many are like me. You have become the unattainable, out of reach, too much trouble to get to, reserved only for sickness and rarely in health destination. You are accessible and open to everyone in this world except us, your own children, who rose from your belly and only wish now for a minute of prayer or meditation in your warm center. *They* [the Israeli occupation] won, with their wall, and chicken-coop-like checkpoints, with their permits and magnetized cards, they made me unlove you, and I fell for it and forgot you.

It wasn't until September 2014 that I fell in love with you again. I had an appointment at the new American Consulate for a visa to the United States. I took the day off and agreed to meet my sister in the Old City after I was done. I needed to make peace with

you again; I needed to love you again. When I finished early, I took a cab down to Bab al-Amoud, and I sat in the sun reading, listening, smelling, and people-watching. I looked up from my Kindle to take the place in; I breathed you in, and as I did, I felt you bloom into my blood again. Your holiness covered me with a veil. I loved you again. I was ashamed to have unloved you; I was ashamed to have forgotten your smell, your taste. I loved you again with *tahineh* dripping all over my clothes as we ate Al-Shu'leh *shawerma*. I loved you again as I bought "tennis shoes" from Salah al-Din Street for Basil and Taima, and *halaweh* from the Old City; as I contemplated purchasing the handmade leather purse and then decided against it. I loved you again because I was a little girl one more time, and I wished so hard I could bring my own children to visit you. I felt your pain too. Your streets were emptier, your shops quieter, your shopowners bored with silence, elated when a customer walks in, deflated when they buy nothing. Your Old City is still as beautiful as ever, but devoured by the hustle and bustle just out "West."

I tasted all that is sweet and all that is sour about you in the lemonade I bought in front of Bab al-Amoud, and I fell in love with you again. Please forgive my forgetfulness, forgive me for not visiting you. Forgive me for not claiming you every day, all day. But how could I claim you, when I do not really have you? I want to extend my arms through the Wall and strangle you with a big hard hug. I want you to love me again. I want to find peace in your courtyards and sanctuaries. I want to shimmer under the sun with your golden dome; I want to breathe the incense and light a candle in your churches again. I want to love you again and not forget you this time. I want to pass you on to my children, and they on to their children. I want you to be, if just for a few hours this year, my Valentine.

Love,  
Riyam



Photo by Shareef Sarhan.



# The Jerusalem-Ramallah Bus Company Aspirations and Accomplishments

Courtesy of The Jerusalem-Ramallah Bus Company



If we think of our country a hundred years ago, in the midst of the British Mandate, we would realize that the formation of a local transportation company was a national project based entirely on individual effort and without any assistance from a ruling power or government. The main goal was to serve the country's development interests by connecting cities and providing easy communication and support to commercial traffic inside and abroad. This modest project led to the advancement of culture and knowledge, and strengthened the country's commitment to the necessity and importance of community cohesion in order to build the nation and escape the clutches of colonial occupation. Success grew slowly through the collaboration between local capital and the national population, which resulted in the establishment of a national transportation company.

With the *Nakba* in 1948, national ties were severed and the country came under Jordanian rule. After things settled, however, the founders of the national company started to rebuild with more knowledge and experience. They managed to expand the company and increase the number of routes to serve various areas. Their situation continued to improve as bus lines brought people together and facilitated commercial and cultural exchange.

In 1967, with the event of the second *Nakba*, called *Al-Naksa*, which brought about the suffering of our people as the rest of Palestine was occupied, the company continued to promote unity in the field of transportation. During that time the structure of the company was rebuilt to allow it to keep its independence and national identity. The spirit remained nationalist despite the various names: Ramallah-Al Bireh-Jerusalem Bus Company, Hebron National Buses, Bethlehem-Beit Sahour Bus Company, Al-Azaryah-Abu Dis Bus Company, Wadi Al-Joz and Shufat Buses, Beit Hanina Bus Company, and buses to various villages such as Bir Nabala, Hizmeh, Al-Jeeb, Bidu, Qibya, among others. These were all lines that were based in the heart of Jerusalem.

After the second *Nakba* and under occupation, the field of transportation was rebuilt despite the lack of support from the government. Individual efforts enabled the running of a national company according to international standards. The company's commitment to modernization ensured the replacement of older vehicles and the reliance on experts in the field to implement the important aspects of the project,







which continued to improve until the first Intifada in 1987.

The first Intifada deeply impacted transportation and made investors wary about continuing the process of modernization. In fact, investors decided to withhold funds until a vision for the future became clear, especially after owners sustained losses due to damage to their buses and the constant risk under which they operated, which was a brand new reality.

Things became worse when the Occupation authorities began the construction of the Separation Wall around the holy city, which was the main center for all carriers to and from nearby towns and villages. This situation completely dissipated all hopes for progress and improvement, not only because of the occupation but also due to the dominance of the new

“Ford Transit system of transport” on the roads after public transportation seemed to stop due to the above-mentioned conditions.

The second Intifada further complicated the situation and reinforced the company’s state of stagnancy until April 2004, when an agreement was forged between the governing authority of the city of Jerusalem and company owners and shareholders. This agreement served to restart the various bus lines and services, and combatted the Ford phenomenon, which had caused a serious mess.

After the national public transportation companies suffered significant losses during the first and the second intifadas, the owners and shareholders managed to bring these companies back into existence and continue to improve and strengthen them through

generous collective and individual efforts, even in the absence of real government support. We are referring here to a group of companies that were operating separately, with ownership rights to the lines from Jerusalem: the bus companies of Jerusalem-Ramallah, Beit Hanina, Ram and Bir Nabala, and Kufur Aqab Buses, each of which had been able to establish itself as a company with high financial and moral standards, providing comprehensive transportation services to citizens in a civilized manner, despite all the difficulties and obstacles they encountered.

After a few years of solo work, the owners felt that these companies and their shareholders needed to unite in a manner that would

preserve their interests but strengthen their overall work and goals, a move that furthered their capacity and proved to be a success. After the unremitting efforts of the parties responsible, the official name of the company became the Jerusalem-Ramallah Bus Company, which reinstated the prestige and power that had been lost.

In order to progress, develop, and ensure sustainability, it was necessary to search for modern mechanisms that would enable quality service provision to citizens. To this end, the company formulated a strategic plan that called for the appointment of directors, executives, and consultants who were specialized in the field, in order to engage in the restructuring of the company.

According to Iyhab Al Qutob, who was recently appointed chief executive of the Jerusalem-Ramallah Bus Company, and who is also an expert in the field of management, “We have hard work ahead of us in order to reach our goals that focus on creating a new and different reality that ensures continuity in a more powerful and more civilized manner to meet the needs of the traveling public.” He adds: “We are still at the beginning. We need more time. I’m creating a new administrative body of major shareholders that include a number of advisers in multiple fields, such as economy and information technology.... We will hold training courses for drivers in order to raise the quality of services provided to customers in addition to bettering driver performance in general.... We have devised a call center for customers to communicate with us through regular methods and social media so that we can listen to their complaints and improve our overall performance.”

All this planning and work is for the sake of the travelers, the city, and the country in general, and to maintain an organization that is a symbol of the city and an economic pillar that continues to support our national existence, identity, history, and rights, which are constantly being taken from us.

*For more information, visit our Facebook page, The Jerusalem-Ramallah Bus Company or call us at 02-627-4334.*

*Article photos courtesy of the author.*

# CULTURAL CENTERS

## ARTLAB

Mob. 0544 343 798, artlabjerusalem@gmail.com

## Al-Jawal Theatre Group

Telefax: 628 0655

## Al-Ma'mal Foundation for Contemporary Art

Tel: 628 3457, Fax: 627 2312

info@almamalfoundation.org

www.almamalfoundation.org

## Alruwah Theatre

http://jerusalem.usconsulate.gov/america2.html

## Al-Urmawi Centre for Mashreq Music

Tel: 234 2005, Fax: 234 2004

info@urmawi.org, www.urmawi.org

## America House

http://jerusalem.usconsulate.gov/america2.html

## Ashtar for Theatre Productions & Training

Telefax: 582 7218

info@ashtar-theatre.org, www.ashtar-theatre.org

## British Council

Tel: 626 7111, Fax: 628 3021

information@ps.britishcouncil.org

www.britishcouncil.org/ps

## Centre for Jerusalem Studies/Al-Quds University

Tel: 628 7517, cjs@planet.edu

www.jerusalem-studies.alquds.edu

## Community Action Centre (CAC)

Tel: 627 3352, Fax: 627 4547, www.cac.alquds.edu

## Educational Bookshop

Tel: 627 5858, Fax: 628 0814

info@educationalbookshop.com

www.educationalbookshop.com

## El-Hakawati Theatre Company

Tel: 583 8836, Mobile: 0545 835 268

f.abousalem@gmail.com, www.el-hakawati.org

## French Cultural Centre

Tel: 628 2451 / 626 2236, Fax: 628 4324

ccfjeru@consulfrance-jerusalem.org

## Issaf Nashashibi Center for Culture & Literature

Telefax: 581 8232, isaaf@alqudsnet.com

## Jerusalem Centre for Arabic Music

Tel: 627 4774, Fax: 656 2469, mkurd@yahoo.com

## Melia Art Center

TeleFax: 628 1377, Melia@bezeqint.net

www.meliaartandtrainingcenter.com

## Palestinian Art Court - Al Hoash

Telefax: 627 3501

info@alhoashgallery.org, www.alhoashgallery.org

## Palestinian National Theatre

Tel: 628 0957, Fax: 627 6293, info@pnt-pal.org

## Sabreen Association for Artistic Development

Tel: 532 1393, sabreen@sabreen.org

www.jerusalem.usconsulate.gov

www.facebook.com/USConGenJerusalem

## Sanabel Culture & Arts Theatre

Tel: 671 4338, Fax: 673 0993

sanabeltheatre@yahoo.com

## The Bookshop at the American Colony Hotel

Tel: 627 9731, Fax: 627 9779

bookshop.americancolony@gmail.com

www.americancolony.com

## The Edward Said National Conservatory of Music

Tel: 627 1711, Fax: 627 1710

info@ncm.birzeit.edu, ncm.birzeit.edu

## The Magnificat Institute

Tel: 626 6609, Fax: 626 6701

magnificat@custodia.org

www.magnificatinstitute.org

## Theatre Day Productions

Tel: 585 4513, Fax: 583 4233

tcp@theatreday.org, www.theatreday.org

## Turkish Cultural Centre

Tel: 591 0530/1, Fax: 532 3310

kudustur@netvision.net.il, www.kudusbk.com

## Wujoud Museum

Tel: 626 0916, www.wujoud.org, info@wujoud.org

## Yabous Cultural Center

Tel: 626 1045, Fax: 626 1372

yabous@yabous.org, www.yabous.org

## Legacy Hotel

Tel: 627 0800, Fax: 627 7739

info@jerusalemlegacy.com, www.jerusalemlegacy.com

## Metropol Hotel

Tel: 628 2507, Fax: 628 5134

## Mount of Olives Hotel (61 rooms; bf; mr; res)

Tel: 628 4877, Fax: 626 4427

info@mtolives.com, www.mtolives.com

## Mount Scopus Hotel (65 rooms; bf; mr; res)

Tel: 582 8891, Fax: 582 8825, mntscopus@netvision.net.il

National Hotel (99 rooms; bf; cr; res; cf)

Tel: 627 8880, Fax: 627 7007

www.nationalhotel-jerusalem.com

## New Imperial Hotel (45 rooms)

Tel: 627 2000, Fax: 627 1530

## New Metropole Hotel (25 rooms; mr; res)

Tel: 628 3846, Fax: 627 7485

## New Swedish Hostel

Tel: 627 7855, Fax: 626 4124

swedishhost@yahoo.com

www.geocities.com/swedishshostel

## Notre Dame Guesthouse (142 rooms, Su, bf, mr, cr, res, ter, cf, pf)

Tel: 627 9111, Fax: 627 1995

info@notredamecenter.org

www.notredamecenter.org

## Petra Hostel and Hotel

Tel: 628 6618

## Pilgrims Inn Hotel (16 rooms; bf; mr; res)

Tel: 627 2416, info@goldenwalls.com

# RESTAURANTS

## Al-Diwan (Ambassador Hotel)

Middle Eastern, French, and Italian Cuisine

Tel: 541 2213, Fax: 582 8202

## Alhambra Palace Jerusalem

Restaurant & coffee shop

Tel: 626 3535, Fax: 6263737

info@alhambrapalacej.com

## Al-Manakeesh Pizza & Pastries

Tel: 585 6928

## Al-Shuleh Grill Shawerma and Barbecues

Tel: 627 3768

## Amigo Emil Middle Eastern, American, Indian, and Italian Cuisine

Tel: 628 8090, Fax: 626 1457

## Antonio's (Ambassador Hotel)

Middle Eastern, French, and Italian Cuisine

Tel: 541 2213

## Arabesque, Poolside, and Patio Restaurants (American Colony Hotel)

Western and Middle Eastern Menu

Tel: 627 9777, Fax: 627 9779

## Armenian Tavern Armenian and Middle Eastern Food

Tel: 627 3854

## Askidinya Italian and French Cuisine

Tel: 532 4590

## Az-Zahra Oriental food and Pizza

Tel: 628 2447

## Borderline Restaurant Café Italian and Oriental Menu

Tel: 532 8342

## Burghoulji Armenian and Middle Eastern

Tel: 628 2072, Fax: 628 2080

## Cardo Restaurant Continental Cuisine

Tel: 627 0800

## Chinese Restaurant Chinese Cuisine

Tel: 626 3465, Fax: 626 3471

## Educational Bookshop Books and Coffee

Tel: 627 5858

## El Dorada Coffee Shop and Internet Café Chocolates, Coffee, and Internet

Tel: 626 0993

## Flavours Grill International Cuisine with Mediterranean Flavour

Tel: 627 4626

## Four Seasons Restaurants and Coffee Shop Barbecues and Shawerma

Tel: 628 6061, Fax: 628 6097

## Gallery Café Snacks and Beverages

Tel: 540 9974

## Garden's Restaurant

Tel: 581 6463

## Goodies Fast Food

Tel: 585 3223

## Kan Zaman (Jerusalem Hotel)

Mediterranean Cuisine

Tel: 627 1356

## Lotus and Olive Garden (Jerusalem Meridian Hotel)

Middle Eastern and Continental Cuisine

Tel: 628 5212

## Nafoura Middle Eastern Menu

Tel: 626 0034

## Nakashian Gallery Café

Tel: 627 8077

## La Rotisserie (Notre Dame Hotel)

Gourmet Restaurant, European and Mediterranean Menu

Tel: 627 9114, Fax: 627 1995

## Dina Café Coffee and Pastry

Tel: 626 3344

## Panoramic Golden City Barbecues

Tel: 628 4433, Fax: 627 5224

## Pasha's Oriental Food

Tel: 582 5162, 532 8342

## Pâtisserie Suisse Fast Food and Breakfast

Tel: 628 4377

## Ritz Hotel Jerusalem (104 rooms, bf, mr)

Tel: 626 9900, Fax: 626 9910

reservations@jerusalemritz.com

www.jerusalemritz.com

## Rivoli Hotel

Tel: 628 4871, Fax: 627 4879

## Savoy Hotel (17 rooms)

Tel: 628 3366, Fax: 628 8040

## Seven Arches Hotel (197 rooms; bf; mr; res)

Tel: 626 7777, Fax: 627 1319

svnarch@trendline.co.il

## St. Andrew's Scottish Guesthouse

"The Scottie" (19 rooms + Self Catering Apartment)

Tel: 673 2401, Fax: 673 1711

standjer@netvision.net.il, www.scotsguesthouse.com

## St George Hotel Jerusalem

Tel: 627 7232 Fax: 627 7233

info@stgeorgehoteljerusalem.com

www.stgeorgehoteljerusalem.com

## St. George's Pilgrim Guest House (25 rooms; bf; res)

Tel: 628 3302, Fax: 628 2253

sgshostel@bezeqint.net

## St. Thomas Home

Tel: 628 2657, 627 4318, Fax: 626 4684

aset@aset-future.com, www.aset-future.net

## Strand Hotel (88 rooms; mr; res)

Tel: 628 0279, Fax: 628 4826

## Victoria Hotel (50 rooms; bf; res)

Tel: 627 4466, Fax: 627 4171

Info@4victoria-hotel.com, www.4victoria-hotel.com

# ACCOMMODATION

## 7 Arches Hotel

Tel: 626 7777, Fax: 627 1319

svnarch@bezeqint.net, www.7arches.com

## Addar Hotel (30 suites; bf; mr; res)

Tel: 626 3111, Fax: 626 0791, www.addar-hotel.com

## Alcazar Hotel (38 rooms; bf; mr; res)

Tel: 628 1111, Fax: 628 7360

admin@jrscazar.com, www.jrscazar.com

## Ambassador Hotel (122 rooms; bf; cf; mr; res)

Tel: 541 2222, Fax: 582 8202

reservation@jerusalemambassador.com

www.jerusalemambassador.com

## American Colony Hotel (84 rooms; bf; cf; mr; res)

Tel: 627 9777, Fax: 627 9779

reserv@amcol.co.il, www.americancolony.com

## Austrian Hospice

Tel: 626 5800, Fax: 627 1472

office@austrianhospice.com, www.austrianhospice.com

## Azzahra Hotel (15 rooms, res)

Tel: 628 2447, Fax: 628 3960

azzahrahotel@shabaka.net, www.azzahrahotel.com

## Capitol Hotel (54 rooms; bf; mr; res)

Tel: 628 2561/2, Fax: 626 4352

## Christmas Hotel

Tel: 628 2588, Fax: 626 4417

christmashotel@bezeqint.net, www.christmas-hotel.com

## Commodore Hotel (45 rooms; cf; mr; res)

Tel: 627 1414, Fax: 628 4701

info@commodore-jer.com, www.commodore-jer.com

## Gloria Hotel (94 rooms; mr; res)

Tel: 628 2431, Fax: 628 2401, gloriahl@netvision.net.il

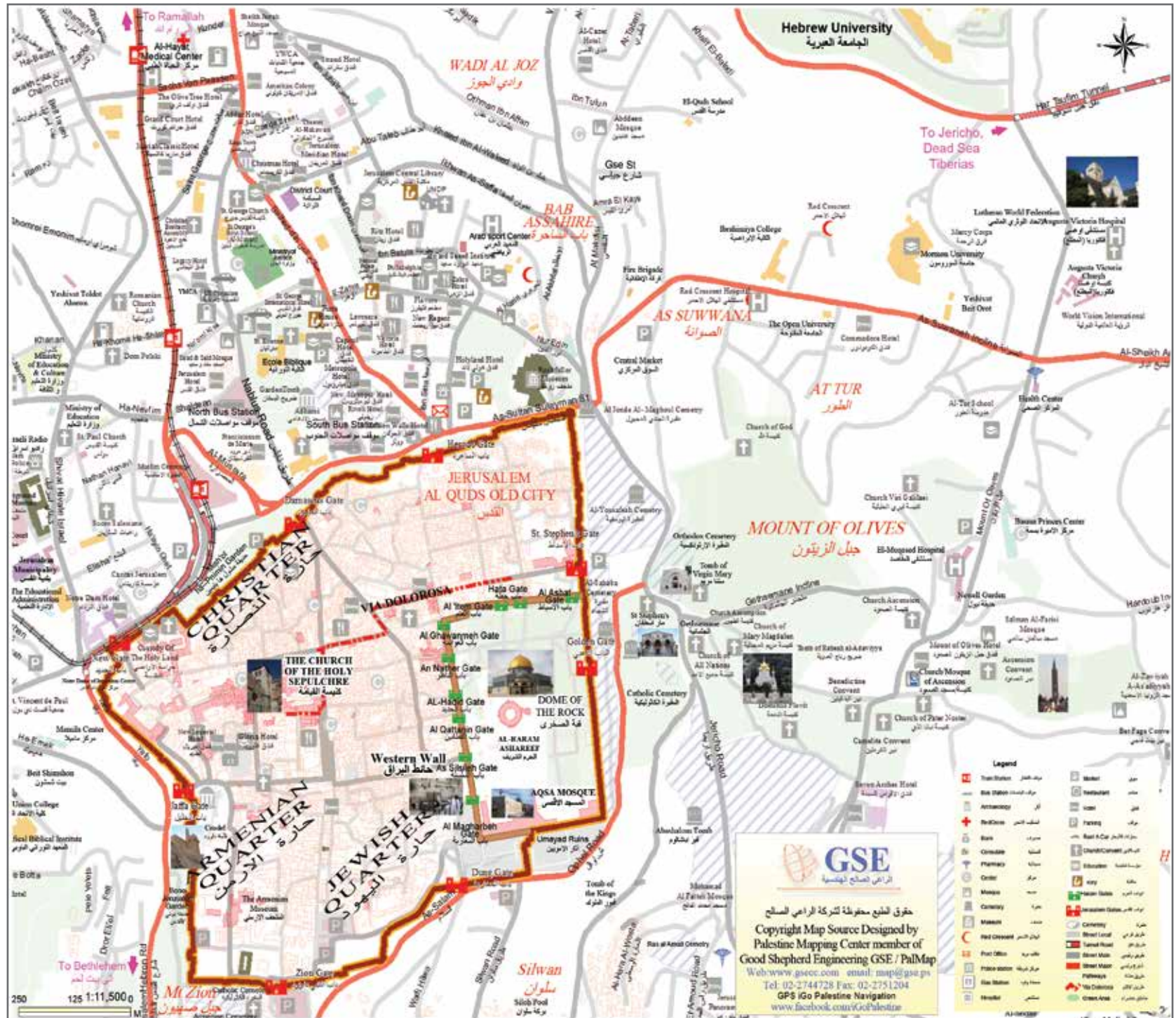
## Golden Walls Hotel (112 rooms)

Tel: 627 2416, Fax: 626 4658

info@goldenwalls.com, www.goldenwalls.com



# JERUSALEM





# THE LAST WORD

## Jerusalem, My Beloved City

I have lived fifty years – practically my entire life – in Jerusalem. I don't believe that my father or his father lived anywhere else. Not sure when the first Meo (previously Bartolomeo) settled in Palestine, but I am told that it was centuries ago, possibly even a millennium ago. You would think that with this track record, I would have impunity to live indefinitely in Jerusalem. I'm afraid that is not the case. Like every Palestinian who lives in Jerusalem, I am officially a permanent resident of Jeruzalem, Izrael (excuse the misspelling!). Actually "permanent" resident is not really accurate since, if I live outside the city limits for a period of seven years, my Israeli identity card, which allows me to live in Jerusalem, gets revoked and I lose my residency, permanently! That law naturally does not apply to a Jewish immigrant who comes from a village near Addis Ababa or from Gdansk, for that matter.

I know, it could be worse. I could have been born in North Korea and, apart from living under a repressive regime, I could have had the same hairstyle as everyone else. I could have been born in Afghanistan and live in constant fear of American drones. I could even have been a Copt trying to earn a living in Libya. Jerusalem, however, is my beloved city, and it is my battlefield. Please do not take this literally! In my book, injustice is absolute. It really doesn't matter where or when it takes place; any decent human being should at least raise his or her voice against it when it occurs.

My beloved city is changing, and not in a natural way. For almost five decades, it has been denied its natural development. I'm not sure which Arab city I can compare it with, but I expect that it could have looked something like a combination of Amman and Beirut. A mixture of the Middle East with a touch of liberalism and *joie de vivre*. Had it not been for wars and occupation, Jerusalem could have most definitely been the holy city that welcomes with open arms literally everyone on the globe to come and pray, to visit the ancient sites, to meet the most wonderful people on earth – the living stones – and yes, to live in as well. Sadly, Jerusalem today is cold; even hostile. It is open to some and denied to many, even if they live in its vicinity. As glamorous as they try to make it, it remains hollow and without a spirit.

I don't have the faintest idea where to go from here, but the Israelis could probably benefit from a little soul-searching. They could question the path they're on. Is it sustainable? Will it bring peace and security? Is it possible to deny not only the internationally recognized rights of Palestinians but also their basic human rights forever? It would be helpful if they could realize that "the other" is not about to vanish into thin air but will remain here till doomsday.

Warmly,  
Sani P. Meo  
Publisher



Photo courtesy of HLTOA.



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