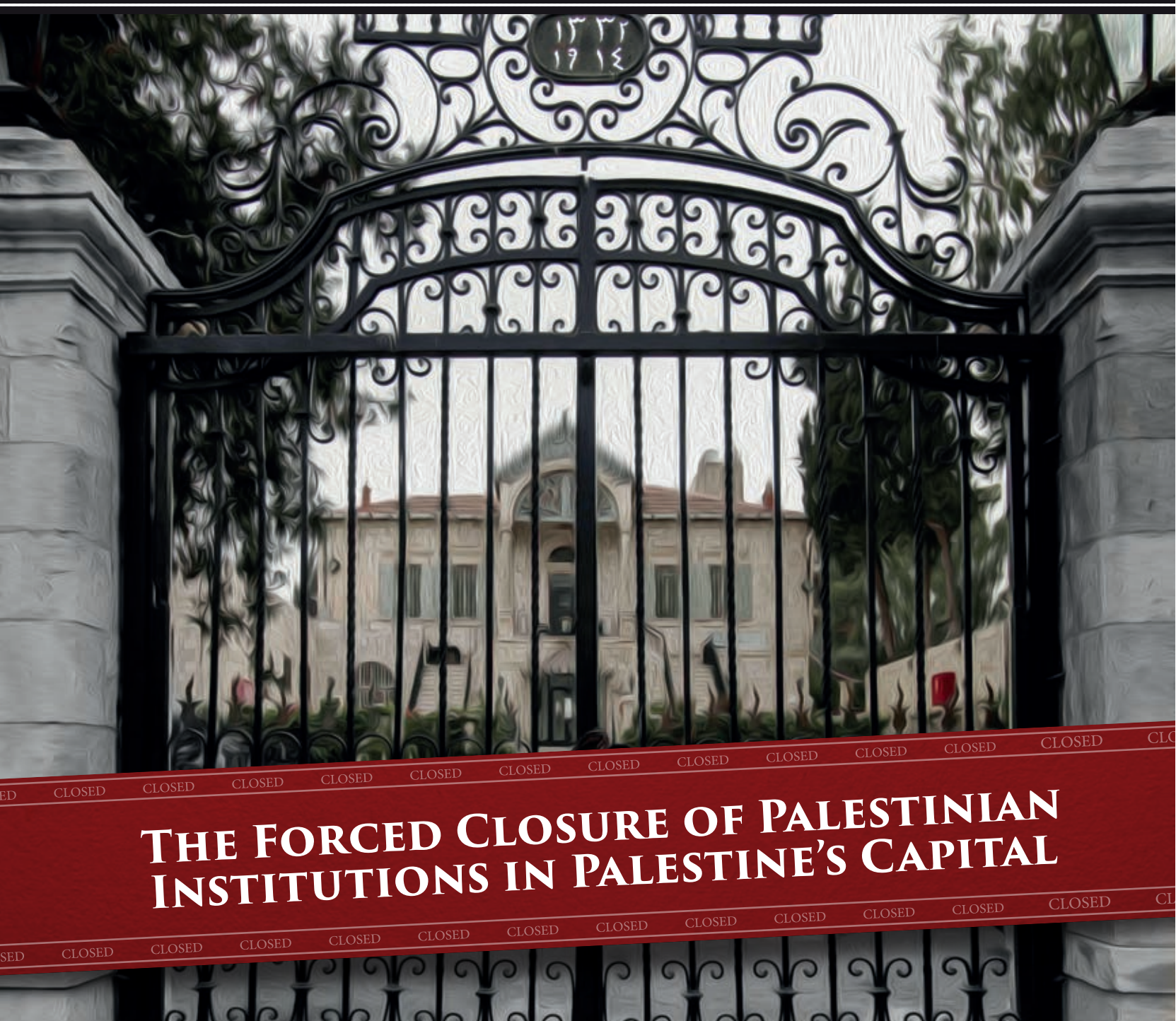


“ALTERING THE CHARACTER OF JERUSALEM”



THE FORCED CLOSURE OF PALESTINIAN INSTITUTIONS IN PALESTINE'S CAPITAL

STATE OF PALESTINE
PALESTINE LIBERATION ORGNIZATION
NEGOTIATIONS AFFAIRS DEPARTMENT
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“ [A]ll legislative and administrative measures and actions taken by Israel, the occupying Power, which purport to alter the character and status of the Holy City of Jerusalem have no legal validity and constitute a flagrant violation of the Fourth Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War and also constitute a serious obstruction to achieving a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East ”

INTRODUCTION

Al-Quds Jerusalem has always been the political, administrative and spiritual heart of Palestine due to its history, geographic centrality, commercial vitality and wealth of religious and cultural heritage sites.

Over the centuries, several institutions have been created in Jerusalem. During the period of Ottoman rule, a growing number of institutions resulted in the establishment of the Jerusalem Municipality in 1863. Thirty successive mayors led the city, from Mr. Musa al-Alami to Mr. Rouhi al-Khatib, who was in office when Israel occupied East Jerusalem in 1967. After Israel's conquest of what came to be known as 'West Jerusalem' in 1948, several Palestinian institutions were forced to move their offices from the western part of the city towards East Jerusalem. After Israel's occupation of the rest of the city in 1967, several institutions were forced to immediately close.

Only weeks later, Israel unilaterally expanded the municipal borders of Jerusalem from 6.5km² to 72km², enlarging East Jerusalem by more than ten times. Israel then applied its own laws, administration and jurisdiction over the newly expanded area of municipal Jerusalem. Since that time, Israel has imposed a number of policies and practices aimed at Judaizing the city and annexing it once and for all. These policies and practices are contrary to international law, severely detrimental to the prospects of a two-state solution with East Jerusalem as Palestine's capital, and are causing immense damage to Jerusalem's Arab-Palestinian identity and its significance as the home of the three major monotheistic faiths.

I. MAIN ELEMENTS OF ISRAEL'S POLICY OF ANNEXATION AND JUDAIZATION OF OCCUPIED EAST JERUSALEM	4
Establishing Settlements	4
Revoking Residency Rights and Denying Family Reunification	4
Denying Family Unification	5
Land Confiscation, Building Restrictions and Home Demolitions	5
Imposing Closure of the City	5
Eradication of Political, Economic, Cultural & Social Life and Fragmentation of the Palestinian community	5
II. JERUSALEM & THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY	6
International Law	6
International Consensus	7
Israeli Attempts to Undermine a National Identity	8
Israeli settlements and the wall around occupied East Jerusalem Map	7
Land grab in occupied East Jerusalem Map	8
Jerusalem institutions during 20 years of peace process	11
Some Closed East Jerusalem Institutions & their Functions:	12
The Orient House	12
The Jerusalem Arab Chamber of Commerce and Industry (JACCI)	12
Chamber of Commerce	15
General Union of Arab Chambers of Commerce, Agriculture and Industry	16
Palestinian Prisoners' Club – Closed on August 10, 2001	16
Jerusalemite Clubs Union	17
The Higher Council of Tourism	17
Arab Studies Society	18
Departments of the Arab Studies Society	19
III. PALESTINIAN INSTITUTIONS AND THE DEEPER FRAGMENTATION OF THE JERUSALEMITE COMMUNITY	21
The closure of the Palestinian Prisoners Club	22
A second blow: Jerusalemite communities cut off from Jerusalem	23
IV. ACTIONS REQUIRED	24
V. STATEMENT	25

I. MAIN ELEMENTS OF ISRAEL'S POLICY OF ANNEXATION AND JUDAIZATION OF OCCUPIED EAST JERUSALEM



ESTABLISHING SETTLEMENTS

Since 1967, the Israeli occupying authorities, in coordination with settler organizations, have established and intensified a process of colonization all over the occupied West Bank, particularly in and around occupied East Jerusalem.

Today these settlements, along with the Israeli Annexation Wall, form 3 rings around East Jerusalem, aiming to:

- a) **Fragment** the Old City of East Jerusalem and its adjacent Palestinian neighborhoods
- b) **Isolate** the surrounding neighborhoods
- c) **Seal** the whole of East Jerusalem from the rest of the occupied State of Palestine. In 2014, over 200,000 of the more than 540,000 settlers in the occupied State of Palestine live in occupied East Jerusalem.



REVOKING RESIDENCY RIGHTS AND DENYING FAMILY REUNIFICATION

Israel's goal with respect to its policies in occupied East Jerusalem has been clearly and repeatedly stated to be the preservation of a Jewish demographic majority in Jerusalem. In an attempt to maintain the "demographic balance" as officially specified in 1973¹, Israel has prohibited thousands of Palestinians from residing in the city of their birth by revoking 'residency' rights. The Israeli occupation authorities categorize any Palestinian who lives in occupied East Jerusalem, including spouses, children and other relatives as 'permanent residents', as opposed to full citizens of the city in which their families have lived for generations. This means that Israel is able to deny Palestinians their rights to live in the city according to Israel's own laws which it imposes on occupied East Jerusalem, laws which do not apply to Jewish permanent residents or Israeli citizens². Although Israel's policy of Identity Card (ID) revocation in occupied East Jerusalem violates its obligations as an occupying power,³

ISRAEL HAS NEVERTHELESS REVOKED IDS FROM MORE THAN 14,000 PALESTINIANS SINCE 1967⁴

1. "Inter-ministerial Committee to Examine the Rate of Development for Jerusalem," Recommendation for a Coordinated and Consolidated Rate of Development (in Hebrew), Jerusalem, August, 1973, p.3. The committee recommended that "a demographic balance of Jews and Arabs must be maintained as it was at the end of 1972" – which was adopted by the Israeli government. For percentage calculations see: See Binyamin Hyman and Gadi Izreich, Population of Jerusalem and Region: Growth and Forecasts (in Hebrew), Jerusalem Municipality, Municipal Planning Department, Planning Policy Section, July 1977, p.5

2. Israeli laws introduced to revoke Palestinian 'residency' rights include the 1952 Law of Entry to Israel and the 1974 Entry to Israel regulations. They include stipulations which allow Israel to revoke residency, i.e. ban a Palestinian Jerusalemite from returning to live in their home city, if he or she chooses to live outside of Jerusalem or to work or study abroad for more than seven years.

3. as outlined in the Fourth Geneva Convention.

4. <http://www.passia.org/publications/bulletins/english-jerusalem/pages/page7.pdf>

3 DENYING FAMILY UNIFICATION

Another policy designed to force Jerusalemite Palestinians to leave Jerusalem is the denial of Family Unification, whereby Israel habitually refuses to grant residency status to the spouses of Jerusalemite Palestinians from the rest of the West Bank, Gaza or the Diaspora. According to the Israeli law, Palestinians must apply for family unification to reside legally in occupied East Jerusalem, at the discretion of the Israeli Interior Minister. Simply put, if a Palestinian is a Jerusalem resident (or indeed an Israeli citizen) and wishes to marry another Palestinian who lives in Ramallah or Bethlehem, for example- cities only a few kilometers away- they will face difficulties living together in Jerusalem. In most cases this means that the Jerusalemite Palestinian is forced to leave the city, shortly thereafter losing their 'residency status', as explained above.

4 LAND CONFISCATION, BUILDING RESTRICTIONS AND HOME DEMOLITIONS

In addition to preventing Palestinian urban growth by confiscating lands and constructing settlements, Israel has adopted a series of discriminatory zoning policies intended to make it difficult for Palestinians to build on their own land or to expand existing structures. Palestinians are only allowed to build and live on 13% of East Jerusalem (100% of which should be under Palestinian sovereignty according to international law), a figure which has remained static since 1967. Even within these zones, Israeli issued permits are required to carry out any building work. These permits are costly and almost impossible to obtain, thereby giving the Israeli government the excuse to demolish homes when Palestinians are forced to build without a permit, in order to accommodate the natural growth of their families.

5 IMPOSING CLOSURE OF THE CITY

Since March 1993, Israel has prohibited all non-Jerusalemite Palestinians from entering the city unless they obtain an Israeli-issued permit, which is rarely granted. Over 4 million Palestinians are therefore: denied access to their capital city and places of worship; prohibited from studying in East Jerusalem; and often denied certain medical treatments that are only available in East Jerusalem hospitals.

6 ERADICATION OF POLITICAL, ECONOMIC, CULTURAL & SOCIAL LIFE AND FRAGMENTATION OF THE PALESTINIAN COMMUNITY

An element of Israel's overarching aim to "Judaize" Jerusalem has been to restrict Palestinian civil society from organizing national, cultural, and political events. For example, in 2009, Israeli occupation authorities closed down Palestinian cultural celebrations marking Jerusalem as the "**Capital of Arab Culture**".

Moreover, since 1967, Israel has forcibly closed a number of Palestinian institutions in Jerusalem. This research document will now highlight the closure of the Palestinian institutions since 2001.

II. JERUSALEM & THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY

UNDER INTERNATIONAL LAW, ALL POLICIES UNDERTAKEN BY ISRAEL, THE OCCUPYING POWER, TO ALTER THE STATUS QUO OF THE CITY ARE ILLEGAL

INTERNATIONAL LAW

Article 49 of the Fourth Geneva Convention clearly states that: *'The Occupying Power shall not deport or transfer parts of its own civilian population into the territory it occupies.'* Furthermore, according to the Rome Statute, Israeli settlement policies and forced displacement of Palestinians is tantamount to a war crime. Since the Israeli occupation of 1967, the international community has repeatedly insisted on the need for Israel to withdraw to the 1967 border, as no international party recognizes Israel's annexation or occupation of East Jerusalem.

In response to Israel's occupation of foreign territory, United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 242 of 1967 calls for the

“ *Withdrawal of Israel armed forces from the territories occupied in the recent conflict.* ”

In response to Israel's expansion of Jerusalem's borders, UNSCR 252 of 1968 states that the Security Council

“ *Considers that all... actions taken by Israel... which tend to change the legal status of Jerusalem are invalid and cannot change that status.* ”

In response to Israel's attempt to annex occupied East Jerusalem, UNSCR 476 of 1980 states that the Security Council

“ *Reconfirms that all...actions taken by Israel, the occupying Power, which purport to alter the character and status of...Jerusalem have no legal validity and constitute a flagrant violation of the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War and also constitute a serious obstruction to achieving a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East.* ”

The International Court of Justice Advisory Opinion on the Legal Consequences of a Wall in the occupied Palestinian Territory (2004) states that

“ *Israel is under an obligation to terminate its breaches of international law; it is under an obligation to cease forthwith the works of construction of the wall being built in the occupied Palestinian Territory, including in and around East Jerusalem (...)* All States are under an obligation not to recognize the illegal situation resulting from the construction of the wall and not to render aid or assistance in maintaining the situation created by such construction; all states parties to the Fourth Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War of 12 August 1949 have in addition the obligation, while respecting the United Nations Charter and international law, to ensure compliance by Israel with international humanitarian law as embodied in that convention ”

INTERNATIONAL CONSENSUS

Official U.S. policy does not recognize Israel's annexation of East Jerusalem. The position is embodied in the U.S. Letter of Assurances to the Palestinians of October 1991, part of the official record of the Madrid Peace Conference. In part, it reads:

"It remains the firm position of the United States that Jerusalem must never again be a divided city and that its final status should be decided by negotiations. Thus we do not recognize Israel's annexation of East Jerusalem or the extension of its municipal boundaries, and we encourage all sides to avoid unilateral acts that would exacerbate local tensions or make negotiations more difficult or preempt their final outcome."

For example, in 2012, the United States Supreme Court rejected a case by an Israeli holding American citizenship who wanted to record the birthplace of his child, Jerusalem, as a city in Israel.

Official European Union policy regards East Jerusalem as occupied territory and rejects Israeli claims of sovereignty over it. In a declaration by the EU Council of Ministers on October 1, 1996, the EU declared that:

MERCOSUR, **UNASUR** and **ALBA**, which includes the vast majority of Latin American countries (with the exception of Panama and Colombia) have expressed a clear policy of support for the creation of the State of Palestine on the 1967 border with East Jerusalem as its capital.

The **Arab League** and the **Organization of the Islamic Conference** as well as the **African Union** reaffirms support for the establishment of a Palestinian State with East Jerusalem as its capital.

On November 29, 2012, the **United Nations General Assembly** approved by an overwhelming majority of 138 to 9 the recognition of Palestine as a State within the UN system through resolution 6719/. In its preamble the resolution states:

"Reaffirming further its resolution 6618/ of 30 November 2011 and all relevant resolutions regarding the status of Jerusalem, bearing in mind that the annexation of East Jerusalem is not recognized by the international community, and emphasizing the need for a way to be found through negotiations to resolve the status of Jerusalem as the capital of two States."

"East Jerusalem is subject to the principles set out in UNSCR 242, notably the inadmissibility of the acquisition of territory by force and is therefore not under Israeli sovereignty. The Union asserts that the Fourth Geneva Convention is fully applicable to East Jerusalem, as it is to other territories under occupation."

ISRAELI ATTEMPTS TO UNDERMINE A NATIONAL IDENTITY FORCED CLOSURE OF PALESTINIAN INSTITUTIONS IN PALESTINE'S CAPITAL

"The presence of Palestinian institutions in the city is an expression of the Palestinian presence in Jerusalem; the Palestinians do not seek to impose such a presence on the ground. The Palestinians exist in Jerusalem as a fait accompli, an authentic presence. In fact, the Israelis are the ones who are trying to change the situation on the ground and create new facts in the city".

Faysal Hussein, head of the Orient House, 1994

The closure of Jerusalem's Palestinian institutions is one of the less evident Israeli policies geared at annexing and Judaizing the whole city. Since 1967 more than 120 Palestinian institutions in Jerusalem have been reportedly closed by Israeli authorities. About 88 were closed down completely, while the others were forced to transfer their operations from occupied Jerusalem to other areas in the occupied West Bank, mainly Ramallah, after the creation of the Palestinian interim government.

The most prominent institution is the Orient House which was considered to be the de facto headquarters of the PLO in East Jerusalem, the institution used to provide several services to Jerusalemites, as well as acting as an umbrella organization for institutions and political groups in the city. It was also the headquarters for Palestinian negotiating team in preparation for the Madrid Middle East Peace Conference in 1991.

The closure of the Orient House, and shortly after the Chamber of Commerce, marked the start of a wave of closure of Palestinian institutions. In total, approximately 22 Palestinian non-governmental organizations, including, kindergartens, charities, cultural, youth and service centers in Jerusalem were closed between 2001 and 2013. Some relocated and others still exist in other parts of the occupied State of Palestine, but all offices and branches in East Jerusalem remain closed.

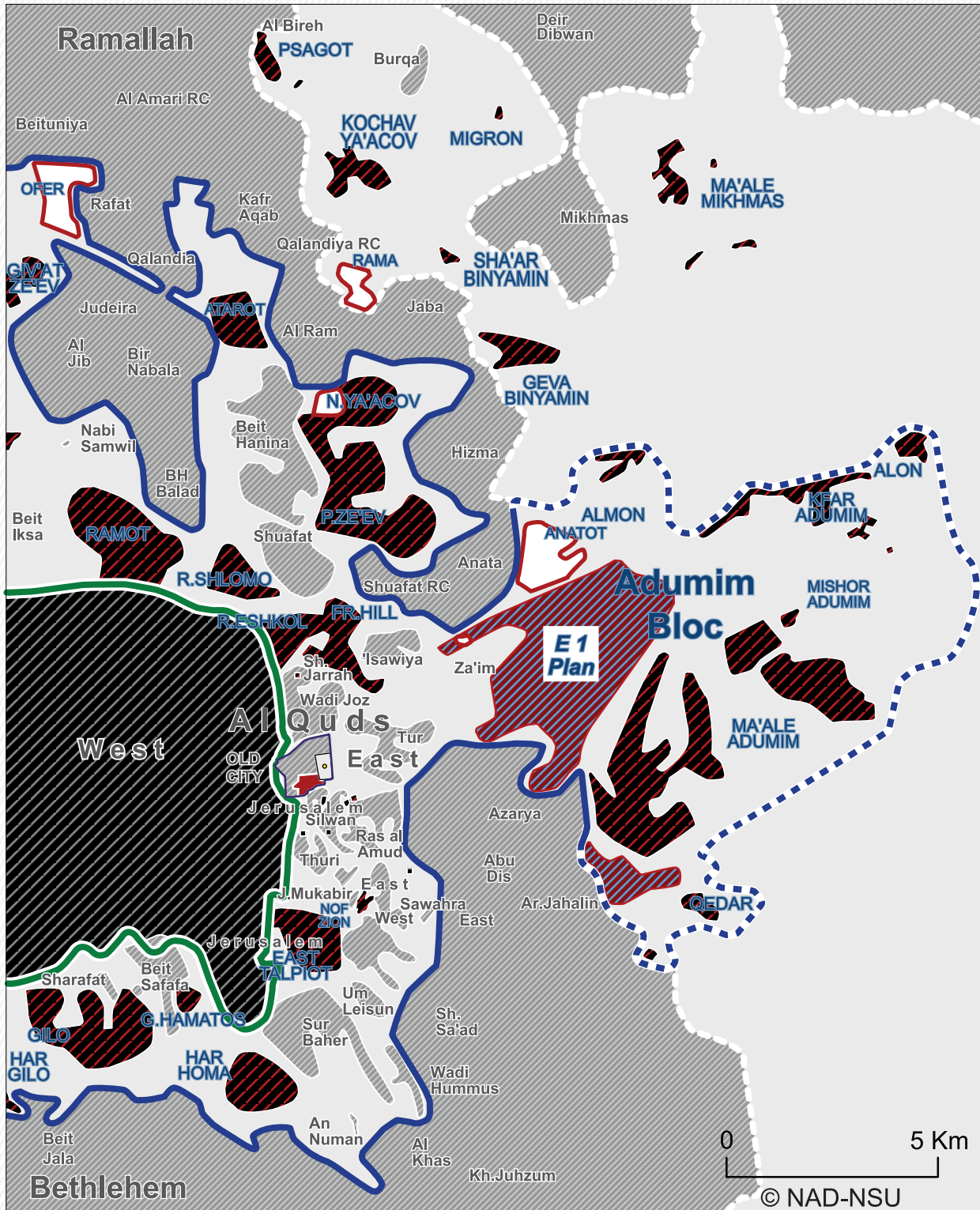
Israel continues to unjustifiably close Palestinian institutions under several pretexts which cannot be justified given Israel's commitments, obligations and assurances to the international









community regarding Palestinian presence and activities in Jerusalem.

The closure orders for the most prominent Palestinian institutions are renewed every six months by order of the Israeli government. It is a political decision that violates previous Israeli commitments as well as Israeli obligations to the international community. For example, one of the main Israeli obligations according to the Road Map, endorsed by UNSCR 1515, establishes that the Government of Israel "reopens Palestinian Chamber of Commerce and other closed Palestinian institutions in East Jerusalem based on a commitment that these institutions operate strictly in accordance with prior agreements between the parties."

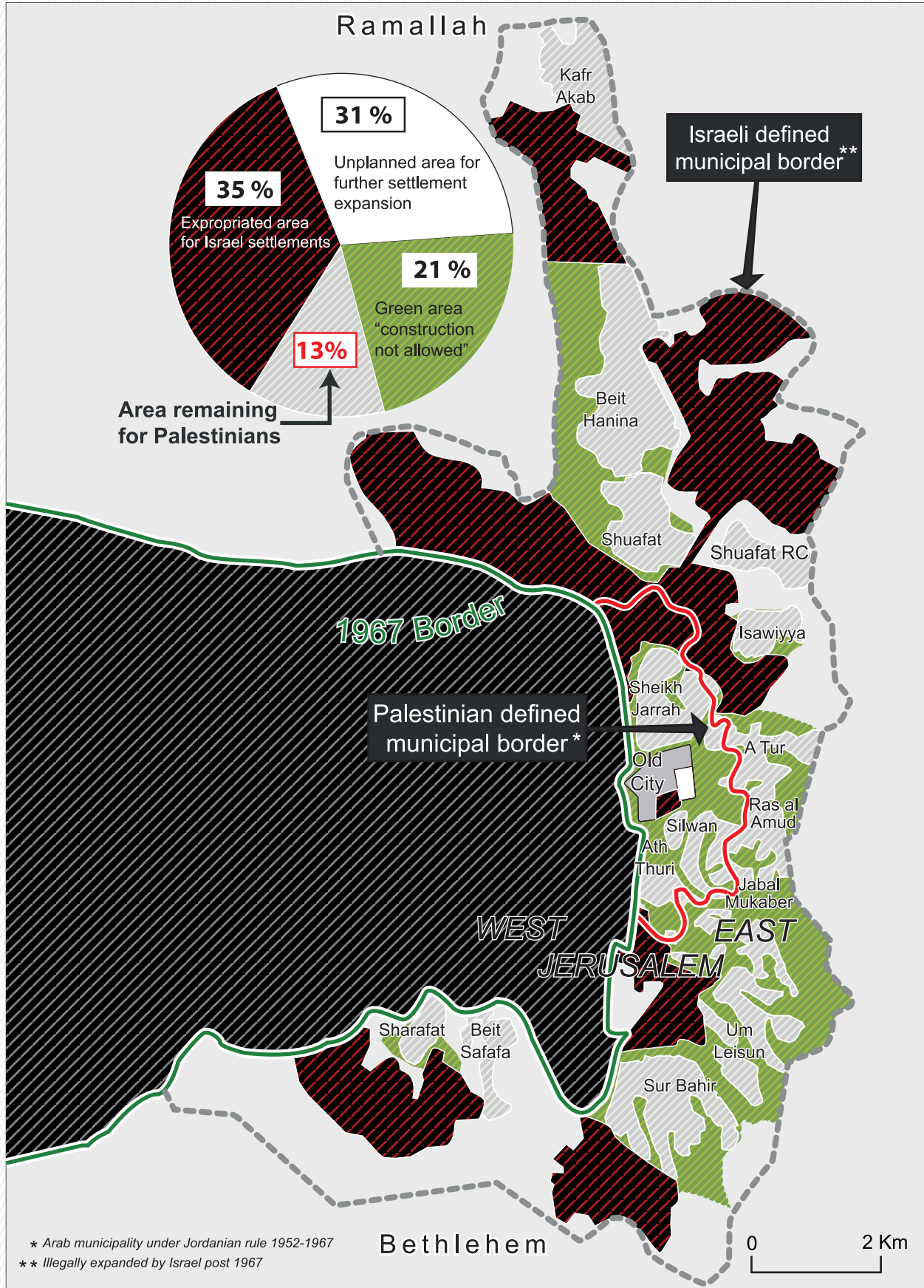
In fact, no agreement signed by the PLO limits Palestinian political, social, cultural, economic or any other kind of activity in Jerusalem. On the contrary, the Interim Agreement reaffirms that the PLO is mandated to conduct foreign relations for the Palestinian people. Under the Interim Agreement, PLO officials, as opposed to Palestinian Authority ("PA") officials, are not banned from working in East Jerusalem. In compliance with the Interim Agreement, the PA did not open any branch in Jerusalem. In fact, the head of the Jerusalem file in the PLO Executive Committee, Mr. Faisal Hussein, never held a PA position during his entire tenure as the head of the Orient House. Palestinian diplomatic and political activities at Orient House or in any other institution in occupied East Jerusalem were in full compliance with the PLO's obligations under the Interim Agreement.

ISRAELI SETTLEMENTS AND THE WALL AROUND OCCUPIED EAST JERUSALEM



- | | | | |
|---|--|---|---|
|  | 1967 Boundary ("Green Line") |  | Israeli settlement built-up area |
|  | Palestinian territory under Israeli settlement control |  | Israeli military base |
|  | Palestinian neighborhoods in East Jerusalem |  | The Wall
- completed or under construction |
| | |  | - planned |
| | |  | Proposed new Israeli settlement area |

LAND GRAB IN OCCUPIED EAST JERUSALEM



JERUSALEM INSTITUTIONS DURING 20 YEARS OF PEACE PROCESS

Jerusalem's Palestinian institutions have been specifically referenced throughout the Peace Process.

In the early 1990s, the PLO requested a written commitment from the Israeli side regarding the specific status of the Jerusalem institutions. On October 11 1993, Shimon Peres, the Israeli Foreign Minister at the time, sent a letter of assurances to Minister Johan Jorgen Holst of Norway. The letter reads (in part):

“ I wish to confirm that the Palestinian institutions of East Jerusalem and the interests and well-being of the Palestinians of East Jerusalem are of great importance and will be preserved. Therefore, all the Palestinian institutions of East Jerusalem, including the economic, social, educational, cultural, and the holy Christian and Moslem places, are performing an essential task for the Palestinian population. Needless to say, we will not hamper their activity; on the contrary, the fulfilment of this important mission is to be encouraged. ”

During the signing of the Declaration of Principles (DOP) in Washington D.C. in 1993 (more commonly known as the Oslo Agreement), Palestinians raised a flag over the Orient House, in the belief that Jerusalem would be the capital of two states and that peace would finally be achieved.

However, harassment and aggressions against Palestinian institutions and leaders continued, despite Israel's commitments and obligations undertaken at Oslo. Palestinian leaders responded to this aggression diplomatically, by requesting that foreign representations and visiting delegations attend meetings at the Orient House.

Attempts to diminish the Palestinian presence in occupied East Jerusalem increased under the first government of PM Benjamin Netanyahu, who was elected in 1996 based on promises to stop the negotiations process and prevent the creation of an independent Palestinian state. One of the first steps Mr. Netanyahu took was to open to the public a network of tunnels beneath Al-Haram Al-Sharif (The Noble Sanctuary), which would weaken the structure of Al-Aqsa Mosque. This action led to Palestinian protests and brutal Israeli repression which killed more than 80 Palestinian civilians within a few days.

When the Second Intifada (uprising) began in 2000, Israeli PM Ariel Sharon was even more determined in his efforts to close Palestinian institutions in the city. Faisal Hussein died suddenly in May 2001 in Kuwait. In the early hours of August 10, 2001 hundreds of Israeli commandos stormed Palestinian institutions in East Jerusalem. Within a few hours Israeli occupation forces had stolen many historical documents, including deeds of Palestinian property in West Jerusalem, as well as other documentation, archives and information from nine organizations: The Orient House; The Arab Chamber of Commerce and Industry; The Palestinian Prisoners' Society; The Jerusalem Institute for Planning; The Department of Prisoners and Detainees; The Department of Social Services; The Arab Studies Society; The Office for National Institutions; The Department of Cartography and Information Systems.

While seizing the Orient House, Israeli commandos pulled down the flag of Palestine and replaced it with an Israeli flag. This Palestinian flag had been raised on September 13, 1993 during the signing of the Oslo Agreement. The symbolic nature of removing it was clear: Israel had effectively declared the end of the peace process.



SOME CLOSED EAST JERUSALEM INSTITUTIONS & THEIR FUNCTIONS:

THE ORIENT HOUSE- CLOSED ON AUGUST 10, 2001

Referred to in Arabic as Beit al-Sharq ('House of the East'), Orient House was considered to be the unofficial representative office of the PLO. The institution was originally headed by late Faisal Abdel Qader Al-Husseini and was the headquarters for Palestinian negotiators between 1991 and 1993. After Faisal al-Husseini's unexpected death in May 2001, Dr. Sari Nusseibeh, who was heading the Technical Committee of the "Multi-lateral talks", was appointed in his place for the brief period before Israel forced the institution to close. The Orient House consisted of a several departments, which helped Palestinian Jerusalemites by protecting their legal, social and economic rights. The Orient House followed up on the cases of inhabitants facing legal proceedings imposed by the occupying authorities as well as coordinating the actions of economic, cultural, educational, health and social institutions, among others. It also played an important role in cooperating and coordinating with diplomatic missions, international non-governmental organizations (INGOs) and local NGOs, including Israeli human rights organizations and activists, in addition to raising funds for the city.

THE JERUSALEM ARAB CHAMBER OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (JACCI) – CLOSED ON AUGUST 10, 2001

Established in 1963. The JACCI offered services for the commercial and industrial actors in the Holy Land and was responsible for:

- Issuing certificates of origin and authenticating the commercial documents related to export;
- Issuing tradesmen, craftsman and merchandiser certificates to be presented at local and external institutions;
- Promoting local products, finding new markets and encouraging national commerce by arranging and participating in local and international exhibitions;
- Preparing economic studies, providing information and advice for investors, and contributing to Palestine's national economic strategic planning; and
- Arbitrating and mediating in commercial disputes. After its closure, the Chamber was forced to relocate and its activities are much more restricted today.



Photos Courtesy of Al-Quds Newspaper.



Photos Courtesy of Al-Quds Newspaper.

CHAMBER OF COMMERCE: ECONOMIC EFFECTS OF ISRAELI POLICIES IN OCCUPIED EAST JERUSALEM.

The deterioration of the socioeconomic conditions in the occupied East Jerusalem is a direct result of the Israeli occupation, which began in 1967. Since that time, Israeli authorities have pursued systematic policies which have hampered the Jerusalemite economy by imposing physical, political and economic segregation on occupied East Jerusalem.

In 2001, Israeli occupation authorities raided the offices of the Chamber of Commerce in Jerusalem, confiscated its material and sealed it shut. These offices have been closed ever since. Mr. Fadi Hidmi, the recently appointed Head of the Chamber of Commerce, which was forced to relocate, gave a brief history of the institution.

The institution was established in 1936 by several Palestinian businessmen from Jerusalem, in order to provide services supporting business, trade and commerce in the country. The significance of this institution lies in its location: Jerusalem is at the heart of a major trade route from Hebron and Bethlehem in the South to Ramallah in the North, supporting industries such as wooden products, glassware, ceramics, fresh produce and much more.

The Chamber of Commerce had grown to thousands of members before 2001, when Israel closed the Jerusalem Chamber and then began constructing the annexation Wall around the city in 2002. Israeli authorities then

stepped up restrictions on Palestinian Jerusalemite businesses, beginning with the imposition of high taxes. Together with Israel's almost complete closure of the city, these measures have meant that, today, the institution only has around 1300 active members.

The decline in membership is related directly to the decline in the tourism sector.

There were approximately 3000 hotel rooms in occupied East Jerusalem before 2001; today the number of hotel rooms is about 1800. Even before the tightening of Israel's control of Jerusalem in the early 2000s, the situation of tourism was dire. Since 1967 only one or two hotels have been built in East Jerusalem, which reflects the Israeli-imposed policies and restrictions that Palestinian Jerusalem has faced since the beginning of the occupation.

The Chamber of Commerce, having relocated, remains one of fourteen members of the Union of Chambers of Commerce in Palestine. However, it is not able to operate properly or fulfil its goals of improving the economic situation of Jerusalemites and encouraging an environment of development, interaction and capacity building. The institution is also no longer able to organize economic activities, such as exhibitions, trade fairs and conferences, because of its inability to be present on the ground in Jerusalem.



GENERAL UNION OF ARAB CHAMBERS OF COMMERCE, AGRICULTURE AND INDUSTRY – CLOSED IN JUNE, 2002

A civil economic institution (private sector) established in 1989. The main goals of the organization were to: 1) Institutionalize the work of chambers and develop its capabilities and cadres; 2) Create a proper economic and investment environment through partnership with civil society and private sector organizations; and 3) Represent the Chambers and private sector locally, regionally and internationally and consolidate international relations.

PALESTINIAN PRISONERS' CLUB CLOSED ON AUGUST 10, 2001

Established in 1992, based on a special initiative by Palestinian prisoners, who recognized the need to establish a body that cares for prisoners and their families. The idea was implemented through the establishment of a Prisoners commission in Palestine. It worked on following up all Jerusalemite prisoners' and ex-prisoners' affairs by providing legal defense, financial, material and vocational assistance to prisoners and their families. The Club also offered academic courses and published reports and statistics relating to Palestinian prisoners. The Jerusalem Office had been previously closed three times by Israeli military order, and remains closed today, but due to the numerous offices all over Palestine, the Club stills provides certain services despite the fact that it lacks a physical space in Jerusalem.

The following is taken from an interview with Amjad Abu Asab, Chairman of the Committee of Jerusalem prisoners' families

The Prisoners' Club Society was established on September 27 1982 and is one of the largest and oldest societies defending the rights of Palestinian and Arab detainees in Israelis prisons and interrogation centers. It was founded by a group of detained political leaders and envisaged as a popular foundation which would be capable of raising awareness and promoting the cause in regional and international forums.

Until its forced closure, the Prisoners' Club in Jerusalem had been providing legal services to prisoners, in addition to financial and psychological support for prisoners and ex-prisoners. The Club also organized popular activities to raise awareness of the prisoner issue in all forums. The number of Jerusalemites in Israeli prisons (those who hold blue IDs) has varied over the years, the current number is 265.

The Palestinian Prisoners' Club in Jerusalem has two lawyers who follow up on the situation of Jerusalemite prisoners in the Magistrate's Court, the Central Court and the Israeli Supreme Court. The organization does not have enough lawyers to cover the number of prisoners who are arrested on a daily basis, especially in Jerusalem, where there is a large volume of arrests in areas such as Silwan, Issawiyya, Tur and the Old City. This has to do with a lack of resources and difficulty in organizing the resources that are available. It is difficult to fundraise and organize without a physical space from which to operate. The lack of a physical institution also means the loss of a space for families and friends of prisoners to go, in order to support each other and share in a sense of community.

Despite the institutional vacuum in the city of Jerusalem, we continue working as the Committee of the Jerusalem Prisoners' Families together with the Prisoners' Club (Jerusalem) without premises, and we try to coordinate joint activities such as demonstrations, sit-ins and so on. The Committee of Prisoners' Families bears most of the financial costs in regards to our joint activities with the Prisoners Club in Jerusalem as, again, it is difficult to fundraise without a physical institution.

Palestinian Center for Micro-Projects Development:

Founded in 1995 in order to help Palestinians in need in Jerusalem and the rest of the occupied State of Palestine. The main function of the PCMD was to restore, rehabilitate and develop dozens of Palestinian organizations including schools, clinics and community organizations so as to improve quality of service. As with all other organizations listed above, the Jerusalem office was forced to close, denying these valuable services to the Palestinians in East Jerusalem.vv

JERUSALEMITE CLUBS UNION

An NGO established in early 1980s which played a significant role in physical education and Palestinian sports activities. In 1997, administrators of 28 Jerusalemite clubs held a meeting and elected the first Union Council. In spite of the closure of its headquarters, the Union is still running its competitions and activities. Its goals include:

- 1) Maintaining sports' infrastructure such as playgrounds, clubs and gymnasiums;
- 2) Overseeing the activities of Jerusalemite sport clubs;
- 3) Connecting Jerusalemite sport clubs and institutions;
- 4) Holding training courses to qualify trainers
- 5) Organizing various sporting events;
- 6) Developing administrative, technical and financial performance; and
- 7) Sponsoring sports competitions and participants.



THE HIGHER COUNCIL OF TOURISM CLOSED ON AUGUST 10, 2001

Established in 1992 in order to support Palestine's tourism infrastructure and to act as an umbrella for the private tourism agency activities. The Higher Council is considered to be the first professional approach to tourism in the Palestinian Territories before the creation of the Palestinian Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities. It became the official address on the local, regional and international level for Palestinian tourism. The Council's membership in regional and international tourism organizations was also coordinated with the Orient House. The Council membership consists of:

- 1) Arab Travel and Tourist Agents Society;
- 2) Arab Hotels Society;
- 3) The Union of Tourist Transportation Companies;
- 4) The Union of Tourist Guides;
- 5) Tourist Restaurants Society;
- 6) Craft Manufacturing Cooperative Society;
- 7) Local and International Airlines Companies' Committee.



ARAB STUDIES SOCIETY – OFFICES CLOSED ON AUGUST 10, 2001

An NGO founded in Jerusalem in 1980 as a research and documentation center to record the historical, cultural, and political history of Palestinians, the Arab-Israeli Conflict, the Arab World and the Middle East. The Arab Studies Society, which shared the same premises as the Orient House, was composed of a library which held some 14,000 books, documents and press material, in addition to a photo and video archive. Activities of the Society included: 1) Collecting and documenting data; 2) Collecting data on Israeli violations of Human Rights in Jerusalem and the rest of occupied Palestine; 3) Conducting studies on Israeli settlement in the occupied State of Palestine; 4) Carrying out an infrastructure project for the old city of Jerusalem and the Arab Property Index Project in Jerusalem.



THE FOLLOWING WERE THE DEPARTMENTS OF THE ARAB STUDIES SOCIETY:

The Land Research Center:

The Land Research Center was established in Jerusalem in 1986 as branch of the Arab Studies Society. It is an independent, non-governmental, non-profit Palestinian organization whose activities cover areas in the West Bank (including East Jerusalem) and Gaza Strip. The Center is dedicated to the research of land in the Palestinian territories including settlement monitoring, soil surveys, land use, etc. Its objectives are to:

- 1) Protect and develop the Palestinian land;
- 2) Protect Palestinian rights in construction, housing and land property;
- 3) Protect Palestinian agriculture and develop agricultural experience;
- 4) Conduct studies and research related to land, agriculture and training;
- 5) Link between Palestinian Jerusalem and the rest of the Palestinian territories occupied in 1967;
- 6) Focus on the prominent role of women in the aforementioned fields.

Youth Development Department:

Established in 2000 as an initiative designed to help young people between 15 and 25 years of age. The central aim of the department is to provide Palestinian Jerusalem youth with a range of opportunities both locally and internationally. Its objectives are to:

- 1) Encourage cooperation and networking among and between youth institutions in Jerusalem;
- 2) Work together with local and international youth organization on youth issues, through exchanges, work camps and training;
- 3) Empower the youth to play a role in building democratic civil society in Palestine;
- 4) Help youth institutions in planning programs, fundraising and finding partners for their activities;

- 5) Reinforce effective principles and strategies of collective work;
- 6) Activate a dynamic network for the exchange and diffusion of experience among various youth sector in the field of culture, education and social development;
- 7) Enhance and develop collective field experiences and experiments through a strategy of joint practice;
- 8) Establish various systems to facilitate the flow of information related to the youth.

Department of Cartography and Information Systems:

A non-profit organization dealing with issues related to maps, human rights, inhabitants and property.

Social Services Department:

The department supported Palestinians in terms of health insurance and protection of residency rights. The department also acted as a mediator in resolving social tensions, including problems between families or within Palestinian neighborhoods.

Prisoners and Detainees Department:

established to Follow up on Palestinians prisoners' affairs. Services included:

- 1) Following up with lawyers pleading prisoners' cases before the Israeli military courts;
- 2) Supervising the visits paid by the prisoners' families in coordination with the International Committee of the Red Cross in Jerusalem;
- 3) Supporting Prisoners education inside jails as well as educating their children and wives in universities;
- 4) Offering financial assistance to prisoners' families.
- 5) Welcoming and supporting released prisoners;
- 2) Following up on released prisoners' rights including financial dues;
- 4) Helping former prisoners to reintegrate into society;
- 5) and Rehabilitating the Palestinian freed prisoners.



Photos Courtesy of Al-Quds Newspaper.

III. PALESTINIAN INSTITUTIONS AND THE DEEPER FRAGMENTATION OF THE JERUSALEMITE COMMUNITY



The closure of Palestinian institutions in occupied East Jerusalem is just one element of a wider Israeli policy, which aims at achieving the goal of annexing the whole of Jerusalem, by fragmenting and weakening the Palestinian Jerusalemite community.

As seen in the previous section, institutions in Jerusalem traditionally existed in a number of fields such as economic development, agriculture and health, as well as providing community services, including special support for vulnerable groups like prisoners and their families. Much more than mere buildings, these institutions revolved around community spirit, they gave space for Palestinian Jerusalemites to gather and work together. Orient House, in particular, provided a physical, central address for Jerusalemite Palestinians to go with any problems they encountered and to organize themselves socially and politically.

Yet another dimension of this Israeli aim to weaken Palestinian identity in Jerusalem, by restricting the community's ability to organize itself, is the removal of prominent political leaders in Jerusalem. Four elected Members of the Palestinian Parliament (PLC) have been arrested and permanently expelled from Jerusalem.

The closure of these institutions therefore not only affects not the living standards and basic human rights of the Jerusalemite Palestinians, but their very identity as a community.

THE CLOSURE OF THE PALESTINIAN PRISONERS CLUB

The following is taken from an interview with Amjad Abu Asab, Chairman of the Committee of Jerusalem prisoners' families

The Prisoners' Club Society was established on September 27 1982 and is one of the largest and oldest societies defending the rights of Palestinian and Arab detainees in Israeli prisons and interrogation centers. It was founded by a group of detained political leaders and envisaged as a popular foundation which would be capable of raising awareness and promoting the cause in regional and international forums.

Until its forced closure, the Prisoners' Club in Jerusalem had been providing legal services to prisoners, in addition to financial and psychological support for prisoners and ex-prisoners. The Club also organized popular activities to raise awareness of the prisoner issue in all forums. The number of Jerusalemites in Israeli prisons (those who hold blue IDs) has varied over the years, the current number is 265.

The Palestinian Prisoners' Club in Jerusalem has two lawyers who follow up on the situation of Jerusalemite prisoners in the Magistrate's Court, the Central Court and the Israeli Supreme Court. The organization does not have enough lawyers to cover the number of prisoners who are arrested on a daily basis, especially in Jerusalem, where there is a large volume of arrests in areas such as Silwan, Issawiyya, Al Tur and the Old City. This has to do with a lack of resources and difficulty in organizing the resources that are available. It is difficult to fundraise and organize without a physical space from which to operate. The lack of a physical institution also means the loss of a space for families and friends of prisoners to gather, in order to support each other and share in a sense of community.

Despite the institutional vacuum in the city of Jerusalem, we continue working as the Committee of the Jerusalem Prisoners' Families together with the Prisoners' Club (Jerusalem) without premises, and we try to coordinate joint activities such as demonstrations, sit-ins and so on. The Committee of Prisoners' Families bears most of the financial costs in regards to our joint activities with the Prisoners Club in Jerusalem as, again, it is difficult to fundraise without a physical institution.



A SECOND BLOW: JERUSALEMITE COMMUNITIES CUT OFF FROM JERUSALEM

In the early 2000s, at around the same time that many institutions were closed, several Jerusalemite Palestinian communities suffered yet another blow as they found themselves completely disconnected from the city of Jerusalem, their center of life. Some communities were cut off physically from Jerusalem by the Annexation Wall and its associated regime of settlements and infrastructure. Meanwhile, other communities such as Bir Nabala, Nabi Samuel, Beit Hanina Balad, Jeeb, Shufat Refugee Camp, Ras Khames and Sheikh Saads remained on the Jerusalem side of the Wall but, due to Israeli policies, are now effectively trapped and suffer from a lack to access to any major city, most importantly, Jerusalem.

The Khalila neighborhood is an example of just one Jerusalem neighborhood north-west of the occupied city that once relied on Jerusalem's institutions. Mr. Ismael Abu Rabah, head of the Khalila community, explained that once Israel had closed Palestinian institutions and imposed physical barriers, while preventing the one third of the village community who hold Israeli-imposed Palestinian IDs (Green IDs) from accessing Jerusalem altogether, the village became almost completely isolated.

In Khalila's case, the community was cut off from the rest of the occupied West Bank by the Annexation Wall as well as several Israeli settlements (Givat Zeev, Givon Hadasha, Givon and Har Shmoeal) and a settler road connecting these settlements.

"The only way out is through an Israeli checkpoints which only take us to Ramallah. Despite the fact there are no physical barriers between the neighborhood and Jerusalem, we are not allowed to access the city or its institutions."

Mr. Abu Rabah also highlighted the problem of a lack of institutions for his village. *"The neighborhood doesn't have the minimum requirements for adequate living. We suffer from extensive house demolition and we are not allowed to*



build or add any rooms to existing houses. The community lacks a kindergarten and school, whereas the children have to walk more than 5 km to reach the closest school in the Jeeb village. But who can we turn to in order to address these problems? There is no address in our city as there used to be in the past."

He added: "Our life was altered completely since the beginning of 2000. The land surrounding the neighborhood was cultivated with different types of vegetables which we used to sell in the markets in Jerusalem. Today the owners of the land are prohibited from accessing the land because of the Israel restrictions. The main reason behind isolating us from Jerusalem and preventing Palestinians from accessing the city is to drive us out by delinking us from our city."

IV. ACTIONS REQUIRED



It is not a revelation that Israeli policy has resulted in fragmentation of the Palestinian people: those outside the occupied State of Palestine (refugees, Palestinians in Israel and the wider diaspora) from those inside occupied Palestine; those in Gaza from those in the West Bank; those in Jerusalem from those in the rest of the West Bank. A significant consequence of the closure of Palestinian institutions is the fragmentation it is causing within Jerusalem itself and its surrounding neighborhoods, whereby Israel seeks to weaken the Palestinian presence to the point where there is no longer a sense of community. The closure of institutions plays an important and understated role within this wider regime of physical restrictions. It is about far more than physical barriers, it is about identity.

The PLO calls on the international community to:

- Act in accordance with its stated positions by reinforcing and maintaining the prospect of the two-state solution on the 1967 border, with East Jerusalem as capital of the State of Palestine. To this end, the international community should reiterate its commitment to and support the implementation of various UN-related resolutions on Jerusalem, specifically those that reject the annexation of Occupied East Jerusalem.
- Exert further efforts to ensure that Israel implements its obligation as per UNSCR 1515 to re-open the Palestinian institutions in Jerusalem, beginning with the Orient House and the Chamber of Commerce.
- Support Palestinian leadership and institutions in Jerusalem. Diplomats and international visitors should insist on meeting with Palestinian leaders in occupied East Jerusalem.
- Continue financial and material support Jerusalem's various sectors such as health, education, culture and tourism.
- Take a firm stance against Israel's violations aimed at changing the city's physical landscape, social fabric and cultural and spiritual identity. The international community should hold Israel fully responsible for aggressions by military forces and settlers against Christian and Muslim holy sites and worshippers.
- Intensify efforts to counter settlement activities in occupied East Jerusalem and the rest of the occupied State of Palestine by cutting all ties with settlements, including institutions which support the occupation.

V. STATEMENT

The closure of the Palestinian institutions in occupied East Jerusalem is just one clear indication of Israeli indifference to the peace process. For someone who spent a significant part of his career working in the Orient House in preparation for the Madrid talks and the Multilateral talks, I find it absurd that there are still calls for resumption of talks, particularly while the institutions in Jerusalem remain forcibly closed. This is not an atmosphere conducive to reaching a comprehensive and lasting solution which will benefit both Palestinians and Israelis.

The closure of Palestinian institutions in Jerusalem is one example of Israeli policies in and around the occupied Palestinian capital. The denial of a whole community of its political, economic, social and cultural institutions accompanies more evident policies of settlement construction, home demolitions, ID revocations and other forms of direct and indirect forced displacement aimed at changing Jerusalem's physical, historical and cultural landscape. Over the years, harassment against Christian and Muslim institutions and celebrations, notably restrictions on praying in Al-Aqsa compound or at the Holy Sepulcher during Easter, adds to what Israel has been doing in order to erase the Arab – Palestinian identity of- and connection to- the city.

The Orient House, the headquarters of the Palestinian negotiations team, once a symbol of the peace process and hope for an independent Palestinian State, continues to be closed along with the Chamber of Commerce and other institutions vital for the establishment of a Palestinian capital in East Jerusalem. Dozens of closed institutions, from cultural and social to religious and political, exemplify the oppressive measures of Israel, the occupying power, against the rights and national identity of the occupied Palestinian population in Jerusalem.

Re-opening the Palestinian institutions in East Jerusalem is an Israeli obligation under international law. UNSC Resolution 1515, reaffirming the Road Map, states this as an Israeli obligation, which, like many other Israeli commitments, has not been fulfilled. The international community has a responsibility to support Palestinian institutions in Jerusalem, as recommended above.

East Jerusalem is the capital of the State of Palestine, as recognized by the United Nations. In order to achieve the internationally endorsed two-state solution, Israeli occupation policies must end. Palestinian institutions are imperative to the viability of a sovereign Palestinian capital. Their continued closure represents Israel's unequivocal rejection of a two-state solution as supported by the international community.

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