

**PALESTINE LIBERATION ORGANIZATION
NEGOTIATIONS AFFAIRS DEPARTMENT**

**RUNNING RINGS AROUND THE WORLD:
ISRAEL'S COLONIAL EXPANSION IN OCCUPIED EAST JERUSALEM**

Since the Israeli occupation of 1967, the Israeli government, in cooperation with Israeli settler organizations, has actively intensified a process of colonization all over the Occupied West Bank, particularly in and around Occupied East Jerusalem. This process serves the overarching Israeli goal of annexing vast parts of the State of Palestine to the State of Israel. Although the international community considers Israel's actions to be illegal and has strongly condemned them through several UN resolutions¹, Israel has been allowed to aggressively pursue its illegal colonization enterprise without any legal, diplomatic or political consequences.

Israeli settlement activity in and around Jerusalem has increased under recent Israeli governments, particularly under PM Netanyahu's mandate. Israel has been creating three main rings of settlements:

- 1) Ring of settlements set to **fragment** the Old City of Occupied East Jerusalem and its adjacent Palestinian neighborhoods. This is in order to expand the Jewish Quarter and includes several Palestinian houses taken by Israeli settlers in the Christian, Armenian and Muslim quarters as well as the demolition of the Magharbeh Quarter. Meanwhile, adjacent to the Old City, Israel's colonial activity spreads throughout Sheikh Jarrah, Wadi Joz, Ras Amoud, Silwan and the Mount of Olives.
- 2) Ring of settlements set to **isolate** the surrounding neighborhoods of Occupied East Jerusalem from the Old City. These settlements include: Ramot Eshkol, French Hill, Kidmat Zion and East Talpiyot.
- 3) Ring of settlements set to **seal** the whole of Occupied East Jerusalem from the rest of the occupied State of Palestine. These settlements include: Pisgat Ze'ev, Neve Yaaqov, Giv'at Ze'ev, Ramot, Ma'ale Adumim, Har Homa, Giv'at Hamatos, Gilo and Har Gilo.

This fact sheet describes the first ring of colonial settlements. It focuses on the settlements built throughout the Palestinian neighborhoods surrounding the old city of Jerusalem and also highlights the new facts on the ground that settler organizations, along with Israeli Occupation Forces, are trying to establish in the occupied Palestinian capital. A newly planned Israeli military academy will also be considered in more detail, as a recent example of Israeli colonization policies in Occupied East Jerusalem.

Annexing the Old City to Israel

The Israeli government, together with Israeli settler organizations, is constructing a ring of settlements in East Jerusalem within and around the Old City, with the aim of de facto annexing the Old City, an integral part of the Occupied State of Palestine within the internationally recognized

¹ For example, UNSC Res. 478 "Determines that all legislative and administrative measures and actions taken by Israel, the occupying Power, which have altered or purport to alter the character and status of the Holy City of Jerusalem, and in particular the recent "basic law" on Jerusalem, are null and void and must be rescinded forthwith." Available at <http://unispal.un.org/UNISPAL.NSF/0/DDE590C6FF232007852560DF0065FDDB>

1967 border, to the State of Israel. This is part of a larger Israeli settlement enterprise aimed at maximizing territorial contiguity for illegal settlements while absorbing as small a Palestinian population as possible within Jerusalem's boundaries. Israel's aim is to fragment the Palestinian neighborhoods of Occupied East Jerusalem, thus separating them from the Old City and the remainder of the occupied State of Palestine and, as a result, preempt any negotiated solution on Jerusalem.

This unilateral and illegal act of annexation is being conducted by the Israeli Government (the so-called "Israeli Jerusalem Municipality") in coordination with groups of radical settlers. Using several excuses to justify their plans (private property, archeology, military purposes), Israel has created a ring of settlements. This ring includes the following major areas:

- 1) **Sheikh Jarrah:** Including Maalot Dafna settlement; the Israeli Occupation Police Headquarters (which was a Palestinian hospital under construction by 1967); the Israeli Occupation Border Police Headquarters; the Israeli Ministry of Housing; and an Israeli Military Court. Since November of 2008, Israeli authorities have forcibly expelled four Palestinian families from their home in Sheikh Jarrah, in which they had lived since the 1950s, having become refugees in 1948. The houses are the first of 28 Palestinian homes designated for eviction to make way for a new settlement known as "Shimon HaTzadiq". A plan for the settlement, consisting of 200 settlement units on 18 dunams, has already been submitted to the Jerusalem Local Planning and Building Commission, a tool of the Israeli occupation. In January 2011, Israel demolished the Shepherd Hotel² in Sheikh Jarrah to facilitate the construction of two settler residential buildings, including 20 settlement units and associated amenities as a first stage.³ If completed, the Shepherd Hotel will mark a major new Israeli settlement in the heart of a Palestinian neighborhood. The settlement will act as a link between the Shimon HaTzadik settlement, the Israeli Police headquarters, and the French Hill settlement.
- 2) **Wadi Joz:** Israel has constructed a building used by the Israeli Ministry of Interior for East Jerusalem ID holders is part of the ring of settlements. It is close to the Shepherd Hotel and the French Hill settlement, both located on Jabal al-Masharif (Mount Scopus) and expanded mainly over land belonging to Sheikh Jarrah and Al-Issawiya.
- 3) **Ras Amoud:** On May 25th, 2011 Israeli occupation authorities inaugurated the expansion an additional 66 settlement units in the Ma'aleh HaZeytim settlement in the Ras Al-Amoud neighborhood. In addition to their imposition on the Palestinian neighborhood, Israeli Occupation Authorities have granted the settlers access to the Old Israeli Police Headquarters, located across the street, to build the settlement of Ma'alot David. The settlement is to be connected to the Ma'aleh Zeitim settlement across the road by a footbridge. The plan, promoted by the settler organization El'ad, calls for the construction of 104 settlement units in four and five storey buildings, along with a swimming pool, library, synagogue and parking spaces.
- 4) **Silwan:** The "King's Garden" is one of the most dangerous settlement plans in East Jerusalem. This plan was approved on June 21, 2010 by the Jerusalem Local Planning and Building Committee, a tool of the Israeli occupation. The plan involves the

² The Shepherd Hotel was the home of the late Haj Amin Husseini, the Mufti of Jerusalem, who was deported to Lebanon in 1948

³ The permits were issued in the name of "C & M Properties".

demolition of many Palestinian homes in the Al-Bustan neighborhood of Silwan to make way for an Israeli national park and various commercial structures. According to the approved plan, at least 88 Palestinian houses are slated for demolition during the first phase, which would result in the forced displacement of around 500 Palestinians. Construction has also begun on site located 100 meters south of the Haram al-Sharif compound. The settler organization, El'ad, plans to turn the so-called "Givaate Park" into a commercial center that will include underground parking for 400 cars. This center will be connected to the Wailing Wall by tunnels underneath the Old City walls next to the Moroccan Gate. Furthermore, excavation work is continuing on a new 600-meter tunnel under 'Ain Silwan Mosque and private Palestinian houses in the Silwan area by El'ad, under the supervision of the Israeli Antiquities Authority. The tunnel is to connect Israeli settlers in Silwan with the Haram compound. At present, some 200 meters of the tunnel have been completed, with an additional 400 meters remaining. Construction in Silwan is linked to the ring of settlements and excavation works inside the Old City of Jerusalem, including the Omar Ibn Khattab square (Jaffa/Al Khalil Gate) and Burj Al Laqlaq.

- 5) **Mount of Olives – At Tur (upper area):** Israel plans to build a Military Academy near the Augusta Victoria Hospital (see below). In addition to this, Israel has endorsed the construction of 24 new settlement units are under construction in the Beit Orot settlement, also near the Augusta Victoria Hospital, where they have established a Zionist yeshiva (religious school). In addition, Israeli settler groups have occupied several Palestinian homes in At Tur, transforming them into more Israeli settlements.

Militarizing Mount of Olives

The Jerusalem District Planning Committee of the Israeli Interior Ministry is considering the approval of Town Plan 51870 which provides for the construction of an Israeli Military Academy over 41,480 square meters area on the slopes of Mount of Olives in Occupied East Jerusalem. The Israeli Military Academy will then become one of the significant points in the plan to create a ring of settlements in strategic sites around the Old City.

Several churches are located on the Mount of Olives, which holds religious significance for Christians, who believe Jesus Christ was arrested there before his crucifixion. In addition, according to Luke's Gospel, the Mount of Olives was the site of Jesus' final meeting with his disciples before his ascent to heaven. The Mount of Olives also holds religious significance for Muslims, who believes that a thin bridge will connect the Mount of Olives and the Haram A-Sharif at the end of days.

Following its occupation of East Jerusalem in 1967, Israel immediately passed the Law and Administration Ordinance, in an effort to illegally annex East Jerusalem. This ordinance applied Israeli law, jurisdiction, and administration to the new municipal boundaries of East Jerusalem, which were extended from 6.5 square-kilometers to approximately 72 squares-kilometers. Later, in 1980, Israel enacted the Basic Law: Jerusalem, Capital of Israel, which declared, "Jerusalem, complete and united, is the capital of Israel."⁴

⁴ 1980 Basic Law: Jerusalem, Capital of Israel, passed by the Knesset on the 17th Av, 5740 (30th July, 1980) and published in Sefer Ha-Chukkim No. 980 of the 23rd Av, 5740 (5th August, 1980), at 186.

The United Nations Security Council and the General Assembly declared Israel's measures and unilateral annexation of East Jerusalem null and void and continue to maintain that East Jerusalem is occupied territory.⁵ Therefore, Israeli claim to sovereignty over East Jerusalem is invalid under international law.

If constructed, the Israeli Military Academy will mark a major new Israeli settlement, all of which are illegal under international law, in the heart of a Palestinian neighborhood. This is particularly significant as it is planned to be Israel's national military academy located in Israel's self-proclaimed capital, on par with national military academies in other countries, which are usually located in the capital city. The major difference, however, is that East Jerusalem is an occupied territory under international law illegally annexed by Israel in an act considered by the UN Security Council and the international community as null and void. Moreover, based on previous Israeli practice, freedom of movement for Palestinian residents will become subject to the "security concerns" of this planned settlement.

The construction of the Israeli Military Academy in Occupied East Jerusalem is part of Israel's unilateral policy of creating facts on the ground to consolidate its control over Occupied East Jerusalem and to irrevocably ensure its exclusive control over the future of the Holy City. Furthermore, the construction of this settlement will severely prejudice the future negotiation of the issue of Jerusalem and makes the division of Jerusalem along the 1967 border substantially more difficult.

Conclusion

Large-scale Israeli settlement plans have been aggressively driven forward in Occupied East Jerusalem, intensifying in recent years. Israeli colonization policies aim to turn the occupied Palestinian capital into an exclusively Jewish city by ethnically cleansing the Palestinian population from their own homeland and own State. As a result, Palestinians continue to suffer the consequences of Israeli forced displacement policies which compromise their most basic human rights to liberty, security of person, property, equality before the law and dignity, among others.

The UN Fact-Finding Mission Report on Israeli settlement activity released on January 31 stated that "The establishment of the settlements in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, is mesh of construction and infrastructure leading to a creeping annexation that prevents the establishment of a contiguous and viable Palestinian State, and undermines the right of the Palestinian people to self determination."

The same report calls "upon all Member States to comply with their obligations under international law and to assume their responsibilities in their relationship to a State breaching peremptory norms of international law – specifically not to recognize an unlawful situation resulting from Israel's violations."

⁵ UN Security Council, *Resolution 672 (1990) Adopted by the Security Council at its 2948th meeting, on 12 October 1990*, 12 October 1990, S/RES/672 (1990). See Security Council Resolution 478. The position was confirmed recently by the International Court of Justice; see *Advisory Opinion Concerning Legal Consequences of the Construction of a Wall in the Occupied Palestinian Territory*, International Court of Justice (ICJ), 9 July 2004, Para. 77.

Israel's actions amount to a colonization process which is ethnically cleansing the Holy City and creating a system of apartheid. The international community has the legal responsibility to hold Israel accountable for their serious and repeated violations of international law. Until this happens, Israel will have no incentive to end its 46 year old occupation and oppression of the people of Palestine. This culture of impunity, which allows Israel to effectively remain above the law, must be brought to an end. If it is not, then Israel will continue to "run rings" around East Jerusalem, the State of Palestine, and the international community as a whole; not only destroying the historical character and social fabric of the Holy City, but the very possibility of peace.