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Settlements: security and expansion

1. Approval of 900 new homes in East Jerusalem draws ire

Edmund Sanders , LA Times Blog, 4/10/2011

<http://latimesblogs.latimes.com/babylonbeyond/2011/08/israel-approval-of-900-new-homes-in-east-jerusalem-draws-ire.html?>

Israel's Interior Ministry gave the final green light Thursday to the construction of more than 900 new homes in a Jewish development built on land seized during the 1967 Mideast war.

Palestinians and anti-settlement groups said the Har Homa expansion, which has been working its way through Israeli regulatory agencies since last year, will occupy one of the last remaining undeveloped hillsides in the area and effectively cut off direct access between Palestinian neighborhoods in East Jerusalem and Bethlehem.

Palestinians hope to one day include both areas in a contiguous, independent state.

"This is very alarming because it will create a very big obstacle to the two-state solution," said Hagit Ofran of Peace Now, an Israeli group that tracks settlements.

She said the project, one of the largest planned in East Jerusalem in recent years, appears to have been fast-tracked, based on the speed of the approval process. Nevertheless, she said construction would not likely break ground for three more years.

The Har Homa project which experts say will be built partly on formerly private Palestinian land, has generated controversy from the start. It was one of the first developments announced last fall after Israel's 10-month partial construction moratorium expired.

Another government hurdle was cleared in May, just as Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu was preparing to meet President Obama at the White House to discuss attempts to restart peace talks. The timing of the May meeting was seen by some as an attempt to embarrass Obama, who had just surprised Israelis by publicly calling for negotiations to be based on 1967 borders, with agreed-upon swaps. Netanyahu opposed adopting such a framework.

The Har Homa expansion will likely harden the resolve of Palestinians, who plan to ask the U.N. for formal statehood recognition in September.

Efforts to relaunch peace talks have failed, and Palestinians say they will not return to the negotiating table as long as Israel continues to expand settlements.

Last month, the Israeli government announced it would seek approval for an additional 300 units in two West Bank settlements, drawing international condemnation.

2. Israel rejects international criticism of east Jerusalem housing project

Associated Press, 28/09/2011

http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/middle-east/israel-rejects-international-criticism-of-east-jerusalem-housing-project/2011/09/28/gIQA001H5K_story.html

JERUSALEM — The Israeli government on Wednesday rejected international criticism of its decision to build 1,100 new Jewish housing units in east Jerusalem, claiming the plans do not hinder peace efforts with the Palestinians.

Israel announced Tuesday that it had given the green light for the new construction in the Jewish neighborhood of Gilo in southeast Jerusalem. The Palestinians condemned the plan, and the U.S., European Union and United Nations all swiftly expressed their disappointment over the settlements, which raised already heightened tensions after last week's Palestinian move to seek U.N. membership.

“In every peace plan that has been put on the table over the last 18 years, Gilo remains an integral part of Jewish Jerusalem,” said Mark Regev, a spokesman for Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. “There is no contradiction between this planning decision and the government's desire to move forward in peace toward two states for two peoples.”

“Gilo is not a settlement, nor is it an outpost, Gilo is a neighborhood in the very heart of Jerusalem, only about a 5 minute drive from the very center of town.”

The Palestinians have demanded that Israel halt all settlement construction in east Jerusalem, which the Palestinians claim as their future capital, and the adjacent West Bank — territories captured by Israel in the 1967 Mideast war — as a condition for resuming peace talks.

Since capturing east Jerusalem, Israel has annexed the area and ringed it with about 10 Jewish enclaves that are meant to solidify its control. Gilo, which is close to the Palestinian city of Bethlehem, is among the largest, with about 50,000 residents. Israel's annexation of east Jerusalem has not been internationally recognized.

Saeb Erekat, the chief Palestinian negotiator, said Tuesday after the Israeli housing announcement that the decision amounted to “1,100 no's to the resumption of peace talks.”

With peace negotiations stalled for the past three years, the Palestinians last week asked the U.N. Security Council to recognize an independent Palestinian state in the West Bank, east Jerusalem and Gaza Strip.

The U.S. has vowed to veto the Palestinian request in the Security Council. Both Israel and the U.S. say a Palestinian state can be established only through negotiations.

The fate of east Jerusalem is the most explosive issue in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The sector is home to Jerusalem's Old City, which houses sensitive Jewish, Muslim and Christian holy sites.

Netanyahu says he will never relinquish east Jerusalem, which Israel considers an integral part of its capital. The Palestinian leadership has vowed it will not accept a state without key parts of east Jerusalem as its capital.

In all, about 200,000 Jews live in east Jerusalem areas that Israel calls neighborhoods and the Palestinians call settlements. Squeezed between them are Arab neighborhoods that are home to some 250,000 Palestinians.

Also Wednesday, Israeli authorities said that Palestinian assailants are to blame for a car crash that killed an Israeli father and his infant son in the West Bank last week on the eve of the Palestinian bid for recognition at the United Nations.

Police spokesman Micky Rosenfeld said the investigation found that the Israeli man lost control of his car after he was hit in the head by a stone. Palestinian youths regularly throw stones at Israeli cars in the West Bank.

The crash was initially thought to have been an accident.

3. A new friction point: Settlement in Arab Musrara

Ir Amim Report, June 2011

http://www.ir-amim.org.il/Eng/_Uploads/dbsAttachedFiles/musrara.pdf

Like all the other settler enclaves in Palestinian neighborhoods in East Jerusalem, the emerging enclave in Arab Musrara is situated in a strategically important location. Arab Musrara is a small Palestinian neighborhood east of Highway No. 1 -- the 1949 armistice line -- and near Damascus Gate, which is the most important entrance into the Old City leading to Temple Mount. Arab Musrara actually constitutes only a single block on the east end of Haneviim (The Prophets) Street. It begins with the restaurant-café complex opposite Damascus gate and ends at the intersection of the street with Highway No. 1. It includes 15-20 stores, behind which stands a small block of houses that are home to 20-25 Palestinian families. The strategic importance of this neighborhood stems not only from its proximity to the Old City and Temple Mount but mainly from the fact that it is at the heart of what can be called the main business center of East Jerusalem.

Like in all the other Palestinian neighborhoods where settler enclaves were created, here too the associations that back them enjoy cooperation with governmental institutions such as the Custodian General in the Ministry of Justice (who owns many of the neighborhood buildings) or the Ministry of Construction and Housing (which funds the private security guards who escort the settlers in and out of the housing complex). Like in other cases, in this case too the settlers claim that their only goal is to allow Jews return to live in buildings that were owned by Jews before Israel was founded and Jerusalem was divided. Like in other cases, in this case too there is not necessarily any connection (familial or other) between the Jews who owned the property before Israel was established and the Jews moving into it today.

The first homes of what is known today as Arab Musrara were built in 1875, as part of the process called "moving out of the walls." Both Jews and Arabs at the time

wished to leave the boundaries of the Old City and improve their living conditions in areas outside of it; both Jews and Arabs began building north of Damascus Gate at that time, in what came to be known as Arab Musrara. The Arabs who moved there quickly found themselves geographically connected to other Arab neighborhoods north of the Old City; the Jews who moved there found themselves disconnected from the other Jewish neighborhoods, built mainly west of the Old City, on the road leading from it to Jaffa.

The Jewish part of the neighborhood was built at the initiative of Nissan Beck, a prominent public figure in the ultra-Orthodox Ashkenazi community, who wished to improve the living conditions of members of his community from the Old City's Jewish Quarter. Beck bought land opposite Damascus Gate and paid for the construction of the neighborhood, but it soon turned out that few members of his community wanted to live there. The neighborhood he built for ultra-Orthodox Ashkenazis was named "the Nissan Beck houses," but was actually divided into three different complexes: one for Jews from Georgia, one for Jews from the Caucasus and the third for Jews from Syria and Iraq. Arabs lived between and around the complexes and commercial areas developed. Neighborly relations were good: Jews and Arabs maintained stores next door to each other, which served both Jews and Arabs.

The good neighborly relations lasted for decades but ended in great tragedy: on August 23, 1929, the first day of the so-called "Western Wall Uprising," dozens of Muslim protesters came from Damascus Gate and, armed with knives, raided the homes of the nearby Jewish neighborhoods. By the end of their raid on the Nissan Beck houses, they had left 19 Jewish corpses. Almost all the Jews who survived the killings abandoned their homes and shops and moved into safer Jewish neighborhoods. The abandoned buildings were occupied by Palestinian tenants and merchants, only some of whom contacted the Jewish owners and signed rental contracts with them.

At the end of the 1940s, with the establishment of Jordanian rule in East Jerusalem, the new administration registered all of those houses and stores in the name of the "Custodian of Enemy Property." The Jordanian custodian carefully registered all of the property that was Jewish-owned, signed protected tenancy contracts with the Palestinians who occupied it and started collecting key money and rent from them. In 1967, following the Six-Day War, that property passed from the possession of the Jordanian Custodian of Enemy Property to the Custodian General in the Israeli Justice Ministry. The Israeli custodian continued collecting rent from the Palestinian tenants but at the same time acted, under an amendment of the law passed by the Knesset in 1970, to find the Jewish owners or their heirs. The four decades that had passed since Jews abandoned the neighborhood made finding them very difficult. The few who were located received ownership of their property, but the tenant protection law protected the Palestinians who lived there in the status of protected tenants and prevented their eviction. Some of the Israelis who repossessed their property preferred to sell it to those Palestinian tenants who agreed to buy it; the others continued to collect rent from them. One way or another, no Jew asked at the time, in the 1970s, to move back into a house that belonged to their family. That was the case until 2002, when a settler association called "Homot Shalem" entered the picture.

Homot Shalem was established by Rabbi Benny Elon, who was a minister and Knesset member on behalf of the Moledet party and who heads the Beit Orot yeshiva,

which acts to increase Jewish settlement in the a-Tur and Mount of Olives area. One of the main activists in Homot Shalem is Tzahi Mamo, who is also active in the organization working to Judaize the neighborhood of Sheikh Jarrah and evict Palestinians who live near Rachel's Tomb, on the outskirts of Bethlehem. According to publications on websites identified with the right wing and settler movements, Homot Shalem has far-reaching plans. "Homot Shalem and its members managed to transfer or arrange Jewish possession of 12 complexes and courtyards out of 30 in Arab Musrara (...). Some are presently under private Jewish ownership and some are owned by the custodian general. Arabs still live in almost all of the apartments, but members of Homot Shalem say they plan to negotiate with the tenants, evict them by agreement and populate the entire complex with Jews, the way it was done in recent years in the Shimon Hatzadik area."²

The story of the Shubash family that lived in Arab Musrara for decades illustrates the new reality emerging there. The story begins with a protected tenancy agreement signed in the early 1940s between Zachariah Dabrashvilli, the heir of Georgian Jews who lived there until 1929, and Kamal Shubash, a Palestinian who purchased the right to live in his home from him for key money. Until 1948, Shubash paid the rent to Dabrashvilli; from 1948, after the division of the city separated them from each other, Shubash continued paying rent to the Jordanian Custodian of Enemy Property. Kamal Shubash died in January 1967. Right after his death, the Jordanian custodian signed a new rental agreement with all five of his children, his heirs. Doris Shubash, Kamal's daughter who lived in the apartment during the Six-Day War, continued paying rent to the Israeli custodian after the war.

In February 1974 she received a letter from the custodian telling her that the apartment in which she lived was "released to the possession of its owners," and that it was now owned by Tamar Dabra, the heir of Zachariah Dabrashvilli, the man with whom her father had signed the original rental contract. The custodian also told Shubash she must stop paying him rent for the apartment and that in order to continue paying rent legally she would have to contact Tamar Dabra. For that purpose, he gave her the name and address of a Tel Aviv lawyer who represented her. Shubash's lawyer sent a letter to Dabra's lawyer but received no reply. Not only did Tamar Dabra's lawyer refrain from contacting Shubash; Tamar Dabra herself refrained from doing so too, for no less than 26 years.

The contact between Doris Shubash and her landlord resumed only in 2002, two years after a woman named Channa Yachin bought ownership of the apartment from the Dabra family. Yachin went to the Jerusalem Magistrate Court demanding to evict Shubash from the apartment. She based her claim on the argument that Shubash had lost her right to be considered a protected tenant because for decades she avoided paying rent to the Dabra family.

In their answer to the suit, Shubash's lawyers claimed that for all of those decades the Dabra family showed no interest in the apartment or in collecting rent for it, and also reminded the judges that in 1974 Shubash approached the Dabra family's lawyer, who also refrained from showing any interest in the apartment. Shubash's arguments were rejected by the court and after a long legal process the claim of eviction was accepted. "We conclude that the appellant (Shubash) failed to explain convincingly her failure to pay rent for more than 30 years," ruled Jerusalem District Court Justice Orit Efal-Gabbay before ordering Doris Shubash evicted from her home.³

The apartment was evacuated and shortly thereafter settlers moved into it. In the copious material that accumulated in the legal file concerning this apartment there is no reference to the identity of Channa Yachin, the woman in whose name the claim of eviction was made and who transferred the apartment to the settlers who live in it today. The only thing that can be learned is that the lawyer who submitted the claim of eviction on behalf of Yachin is Eli Shmuelian, who appears in the documents of the registrar of associations as the representative of the Homot Shalem association. This is not a unique or exceptional case. The eviction of the apartment in which the Shubash family lived and the way ownership of the apartment passed on from its original Jewish owners, who showed no interest in it for decades, to a settler organization that presumes to be the successor of the Jews who lived in the neighborhood before 1929, reflect the processes underway in Arab Musrara. The right wing websites say it clearly. "The initial inhabitation of Arab Musrara (by Jewish settlers) was preceded by an investigation by members of Homot Shalem," said an article posted on the Moreshet site.⁴ Homot Shalem's investigation, said the article, led to the identification of some of the offspring of the original residents of the neighborhood and purchase of their rights to the houses; then members of Homot Shalem, carefully using all of the sections of the tenant protection law, saw to the eviction of the Palestinian tenants and the insertion of settlers in their place. "These are Jewish-owned houses and we bought them from the heirs themselves," Benny Elon said recently. "We occupied the houses without any help by the custodian."⁵ However, the story of the Abu Nida family's little coffee shop shows that the custodian too is working to evict Palestinian from Arab Musrara. The building on 13 Haneviim St., that for decades has housed a coffee shop as well as a card club for the area's elderly, belonged in the 1920s to Rivka Jenoshvilli. The Custodian General at the Justice Ministry, who inherited ownership of the building from the Jordanian Custodian of Enemy Property, could not locate Jenoshvilli or her heirs. In the claim of eviction he filed against the Abu Nida family he calls her "the absentee;" he introduces himself as the "administrator of the abandoned property of Rivka Jenoshvilli, the wife of Eliahu (henceforth: 'the absentee')."6

According to the legal documents in this file, the little coffee house was rented by the Jordanian custodian to Mohammed Bakeer, who rented it a few years later to Sobhi Abu Nida. After the death of Abu Nida it passed on to his son, Ibrahim Abu Nida, and when Ibrahim died in November 2005 it went to his widow Majda and their children. For all that time the Abu Nida family paid the protected tenancy rent regularly, first to the Jordanian custodian and then to the Israeli. In the claim of eviction he filed against the Abu Nida family, the custodian relied on a single argument. He claimed that the Abu Nida family transferred the coffee shop to the ownership of Mohammed Qastero, a resident of Silwan who does not have the status of a protected tenant in the property. Once ownership was transferred to Qastero, the Abu Nida family's protected tenancy expired and therefore Qastero is required to replace the protected tenancy rent paid by the family (less than NIS 200 per month) with real rent (which the government assessor set at NIS 2600 per month). Since for two years Qastero refused to pay the increased rent, the custodian demanded evacuation of the structure.

The Abu Nida family denied in court that they had sold the café to Qastero. Both they and Qastero claimed that Qastero was only managing the business for them. Judge Shirley Renner accepted the argument and thereby annulled the demand to pay real rent and canceled the grounds for eviction. But in her verdict, the judge showed a

considerable degree of judicial activism and ordered the café evacuated on the basis of an argument that was not even made in the claim of eviction. According to the protected tenant law, ruled Justice Renner, protected tenancy of a business must not be transferred to an heir who, before the death of the business owner, was not a partner to the business management; Majda Abu Nida and her sons, added the judge, were not partners with her husband and their father in managing the café and therefore the tenancy agreement expired and they must return the structure to the custodian.

The Abu Nida family appealed the judgment. The main claim by lawyer Muhannad Jabbara, who filed the appeal on behalf of the family, was that Justice Renner based her judgment on an argument that was not even in the custodian's claim of eviction and therefore the Abu Nida family could not defend itself against it even though it absolutely denies it. "I emphasize," wrote lawyer Jabbara in his appeal, "that the claim of eviction constituted the framework with which the appellants (the members of the Abu Nida family) contended, and therefore the appellants' defenses against the claim were limited and restricted to rejecting what was argued without addressing at all the question of the status of Appellant No. 1 (Majda Abu Nida), of whom it was not claimed in any context that she is devoid of a status in relation to the shop, and of whom it was not claimed in any context that she does not have protected tenancy rights to the property." The appeal, submitted to the Jerusalem District Court on March 16, 2011,⁸ is still pending.

The settlers' presence in Arab Musrara is becoming more tangible and prominent everyday. In one of the complexes they occupied they have been performing extensive repairs for months; in another they have defiantly hung a large Israeli flag and at the entrance of the third complex they installed a prominent steel door that distinguishes it from the other residential complexes in the neighborhood. On one visit by representatives of Ir Amim to the neighborhood they saw three Israelis in civilian clothes, guarded by four armed border police, identify themselves as "Shabak" (the Israel Security Agency) and enter the settler complex behind the steel door. The settlers themselves are guarded, every time they go in and out of the neighborhood, by civilian guards, whose presence in the neighborhood increases every day and often causes friction and tension. Rumors have recently been circulating among the Palestinian residents of the neighborhood about the settlers' future plans. According to one, they are going to fill the neighborhood's alleys with security cameras; according to another, they are also going to install an electric gate at the only entrance to the neighborhood, so that only its registered tenants will be allowed to be in it. Even if there is no way to verify the veracity of these fears, their very existence indicates the atmosphere of tension and intimidation created in Arab Musrara as a result of the settlers' presence in it.

The experience accumulated in the past in other neighborhoods shows that the Judaization and settlement processes in Palestinian neighborhoods of Jerusalem are very hard to stop. In the specific case of Arab Musrara, these Judaization processes have an added symbolic meaning. The division line between West and East Jerusalem, drawn in 1949, created a unique situation in Musrara: the west side of the neighborhood, which was once populated mainly by Palestinians, became a Jewish neighborhood, whereas the East side, which used to be populated by Jews, became an Arab neighborhood. This reality, which perhaps reflected a kind of fragile and partial justice, is quickly being eroded.

Footnotes

1 The Law and Administration Regulations Law (Combined Version), 1970, Section 5.

2 Moshe Yerushalmi, The Shimon Hatzadik Area Returns to Jewish Hands, "Shaarim," June 22, 2005,

<http://muni.tiktak.co.il/web/news/luchot1.asp?modul=9&codeClient=1365&CodeSubWeb=0&id=42150&kategory=1000> (Hebrew).

3 CA 9310/06, Doris Shubash v Channa Yachin, judgment from June 4, 2007.

4 Ibid.

5 Nir Hasson, "A new friction point in East Jerusalem," Ha'aretz, April 15, 2011,

<http://www.haaretz.co.il/hasite/spages/1225172.html> (Hebrew).

6 CC 10846/05, The Custodian General as administrator of property of the absentee Rivka Jenoshvilli

wife of Eliahu v Majda Abu Nida et al, Amended Statement of Claim, Jerusalem Magistrate Court.

7 CC 10846/05, Judgment, given on January 18, 2011.

8 CA 31176-03-11, Majda Abu Nida et al v Custodian General as administrator of property of the absentee Rivka Jenoshvilli wife of Eliahu, submitted to the Jerusalem District Court by lawyer Muhannad Jabbara on March 16, 2011.

4. Israel Intensifies Training of Settler Security Teams

By Isabel Kershner, *New York Times*, 30/08/2011.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2011/08/31/world/middleeast/31israel.html>

JERUSALEM — The Israeli military has stepped up training for more than 100 settler security teams in the West Bank in anticipation of Palestinian popular protests and possible mass disturbances accompanying any Palestinian bid for United Nations recognition in September, settler leaders said on Tuesday.

The military is drawing up boundaries around each settlement that protesters will not be allowed to cross and is carrying out simulated “scenarios” with the security teams, according to Shlomo Vaknin, the security officer of the Yesha Council, the settlers’ umbrella organization.

It was not clear how the boundaries would be made clear to protesters. Mr. Vaknin refused to go into detail about possible rules of engagement or to describe under what conditions settler response teams might open fire.

There are more than 100 settlements in the West Bank, only some of which are fenced. Each has its own rapid response team armed with military-issued M-16 automatic rifles. There are high levels of hostility — and past clashes — between some Palestinian villages and neighboring settlements and outposts dominated by Jews claiming territory they consider their biblical birthright.

Evoking a recent episode in Cairo in which an Egyptian scaled the building housing Israel’s embassy and supplanted Israel’s flag with Egypt’s, Mr. Vaknin said the teams would not allow “any marchers to enter a community, take down the Israeli flag from the roof of the secretariat and replace it with another one.”

The teams were established in 2000, amid the violence at the outbreak of the second intifada, in recognition of the fact that the army could not be in every place at all times. They are required to step back when soldiers arrive. Settler leaders note that the teams, like much of the Israeli population, are made up mostly of army reservists who receive regular training, and they say the teams know how to restrict their operations to defense.

Palestinian leaders have called for popular protests to support their September bid for United Nations recognition. The Palestinian president, Mahmoud Abbas, has eschewed violent confrontation and wants the protests to stay within the confines of Palestinian cities, away from Israeli checkpoints and settlements. But there is fear on the Israeli side that the situation could spiral out of control.

In what some here saw as a rehearsal for September, thousands of Palestinians and their supporters, some wielding firebombs and stones, tried to breach Israel's northern border with Lebanon and the frontier between Syria and the disputed Israeli-held Golan Heights in May, with a repeat on the Syrian frontier in June. Israeli forces opened fire in both cases, and as many as 33 protesters were killed. Israel maintains that 10 of the dead were killed by land mines on the Syrian side of the fence.

In the May case, some protesters crossed into the Golan Heights before the Israelis opened fire. In June, the military said it fired before protesters reached the fence, aiming at the legs of those who crossed a new ditch the Israelis considered a red line.

The Israeli military says it now provides its forces with more nonlethal equipment for use in such situations. Despite reports that such weapons, like tear gas and stun grenades, would be distributed to the settler teams, Mr. Vaknin said he believed the military had so far decided not to do so.

The increased training of the settlement security teams, first reported by the newspaper Haaretz on Tuesday, is "only natural in this period," said Dani Dayan, chairman of the Yesha Council.

In response to the Haaretz report, the Israeli military said in a statement that it "maintains an ongoing, professional dialogue with the community leadership and security personnel throughout Judea and Samaria while devoting great efforts to training local forces and preparing them to deal with any possible scenario." It was referring to the areas of the West Bank by their biblical names.

The military added that it had completed training the majority of the settler teams and that the exercises were ongoing. It declined to go into further detail regarding what it called its "operational preparedness."

5. OECD: Settlements weaken Israeli economy

Sever Plocker, Ynet News, 15/08/2011

<http://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-4108350,00.html>

Study shows inclusion of east Jerusalem, West Bank settlements and Golan Heights in Israel's statistic figures reduces per capita income, increases inequality

The inclusion of east Jerusalem, West Bank settlements and the Golan Heights in Israel's statistic figures reduces the per capita income and increases inequality, according to a first-of-its-kind study conducted by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD).

The report, based on new surveys, includes an in-depth analysis of the economy of the settlements and areas annexed by Israel and states that they weaken the Israeli economy.

Here are some of the study's main findings:

- Israel's population within the Green Line included 6.7 million residents in 2009. An additional 440,000 residents lived in east Jerusalem, 290,000 in West Bank settlements, and 41,000 in the Golan Heights. From 1997 to 2009, the east Jerusalem population grew by 40% and the settlement population rose by almost 100% - at a pace of 8% a year. The Israeli population within the Green Line grew at a pace of only 2.2% a year during that period.
- The economic inequality in the territories, which include the settlements and east Jerusalem, is 10% higher compared to the inequality in income within the Green Line – and in both cases it is one of the highest among OECD members.
- The poverty rate in Israel, both within the Green Line and in the territories, is the second highest among developed countries – after Mexico.
- The inclusion of the settlements and east Jerusalem adds about 4% to Israel's gross domestic product, but reduces the GDP per capita by a significant rate of 6.5% a year. "Without east Jerusalem, the Golan Heights and the settlement, the GDP per capita within the Green Line would have been 6.5% higher. The post-1967 territories pushed Israel's GDP per capita down," the OECD rules.
- In the budget year of 2007, the Israeli government spent some NIS 12.5 billion (NIS 14.5 billion in 2011 prices) on the West Bank settlements, Golan Heights and the annexed part of east Jerusalem – a 10% addition to the State Budget. In addition, NIS 5.5 billion were invested that year in the settlements and east Jerusalem, NIS 2.4 billion of them on housing construction.

Reshaping Jerusalem: walls, tracks and borders

6. High Court approves Separation Barrier route in al-Walajah

Btselem 24/08/2011

<http://www.btselem.org/separation-barrier/24-aug-11-high-court-approves-separation-barrier-route-al-walajah>

On 22 Aug. 2011, Israel's High Court of Justice has approved surrounding the built-up area of the Palestinian village of al-Walajah with the Separation Barrier – a concrete wall nine meters high and 700 meters long. The wall will separate the village from hundreds of dunams of villagers' farmland. Only one opening will be left for entering and exiting the village, on the road that connects the village to Beit Jala in the east and reaches the area of Malha in southern Jerusalem. The planned route of the wall in the area will also surround the built-up area of the nearby village of Batir.

The village of al-Walajah

The village of al-Walajah lies on a ridge south of the Refaim Stream. Prior to 1948, the village was located north of the stream, on land later used to establish Moshav Aminadav. In 1948, some residents of the village fled to the village's farmland that remained on the other side of the Green Line, and built the present village. In 1967, the Israeli government decided to annex about 70,000 dunams [70 square kilometers] of West Bank land to the Jerusalem Municipality. The annexed land included about one-third of the village's land, leaving the other two-thirds in the West Bank. Half of the annexed al-Walajah land was used to build settlements – Har Gilo and the Gilo neighborhood, which is within Jerusalem's expanded municipal boundary. The village currently has 2,000 residents, only few of whom hold Jerusalem residency status.

Preventing development of the village

Over the years, the Jerusalem Municipality has not provided services to the village, and city officials' visits to the village have primarily been to document houses built without a permit or to demolish them. In the late 1990s, the villagers prepared an outline plan for the village that would arrange construction that had already been done in the village, enable the future construction of public buildings and roads, and preserve its unique ancient agricultural terraces. The villagers began advocating for their plan with municipal officials and the Civil Administration's planning committee, but the planning authorities did not deal with the plan during the second intifada. When the intifada ended, the Jerusalem Municipality refused to discuss the plan on the grounds that the Separation Barrier planned in the area would sever the village from the city. In February 2009, the District Planning and Building Committee rejected the outline plan, contending that the village lies in a green area, on which building is not allowed.

The Separation Barrier in al-Walajah

The route of the Separation Barrier in the area, which runs entirely in the West Bank, has been changed a number of times over the years. The original plan placed the village on the western, "Israeli" side of the Barrier, detaching the village from the Bethlehem Governate, to which the villagers belong and from which they receive their services. Later, the defense establishment changed it, setting a winding route running around the built-up area of the village, separating it from the hundreds of dunams of village farmland, from the spring the farmers used for irrigating their crops, and from the village's old cemetery. The route separated the village from the nearby Har Gilo settlement, leaving a single road along which persons could enter or exit the village, in the direction of the adjacent town of Beit Jala. Another change in the route, made at the

request of the Cremisan Monastery, placed the monastery and its lands on the western side of the Barrier.

Citing budgetary constraints, Israel froze construction of the Barrier in the area of al-Walajah until early 2010. When construction recommenced in March 2010, the village council petitioned Israel's High Court of Justice, claiming that the construction work was based in part on military requisition orders that were no longer valid, and that some of the work was being carried out on land that had not been seized on the basis of military orders at all. The High Court did not issue a temporary injunction prohibiting work, and the defense establishment began to work rapidly to build the Barrier. It was not until December 2010 that the High Court issued the temporary injunction. By then, a wide patrol road and a nine-meter-high concrete wall had already been built. The wall surrounds almost the entire built-up area of the village, with the side of the wall facing the Har Gilo settlement covered by aesthetic Jerusalem stone and the side facing al-Walajah being bare concrete. The work has caused enormous damage, visible at a great distance, to the landscape of the Emek Refaim reserve.

Opposition to the route of the Separation Barrier

In a rare move, the Society for the Preservation of Nature in Israel submitted an opinion objecting to the route of the Barrier in the area of al-Walajah. Its opinion described the terraced landscape, which has existed for more than 1,500 years, as a cultural asset that preserves the terrace-cultivation tradition. The SPNI proposed that the area be preserved and declared a world heritage site. It also proposed moving the Barrier's route close to the road linking the village and Har Gilo to southern Jerusalem. The Minister of Environmental Protection, Gilad Erdan, too, requested the minister of justice to refrain from harming the unique terraces in the area.

The High Court of Justice ruling

The High Court rejected all the arguments made by the village council, after the defense establishment undertook to install two gates along the Barrier, through which the villagers would be allowed to pass to get to their farmland. Passing through the gates will be conditional on the villagers obtaining permits from the Civil Administration. The defense establishment added that the Barrier's route would be rerouted northward, such that the spring will remain within the area of the village that is surrounded by the wall, and that it would build an underground passage to the old cemetery. The justices – Dorit Beinisch, Asher Grunis, and Uzi Fogelman – stated in their opinion that the route of the Barrier is “reasonable and proportionate” in relation to the “great security benefit” gained from its construction. The justices ignored the serious harm the Barrier causes to the landscape of the ancient terraces.

Effect of the Barrier on the village

The Separation Barrier has already caused great harm to the village, and the harm is expected to increase upon its completion. The Barrier makes development of the village impossible because it runs close to the houses. Also, preparing the route and building the Barrier have caused serious damage to agricultural terraces under cultivation. The requirement that the villagers obtain permits to get to their land is likely to greatly diminish their income. Based on the experience in other areas of the West Bank, the

Civil Administration gives permits sparingly to farmers, and many residents with land on the other side of the Separation Barrier have been compelled to abandon their land.

7. Israel sanctions East Jerusalem family for straddling Palestinian border

By Nir Hasson, Haaretz, 27/09/2011

<http://www.haaretz.com/print-edition/news/israel-sanctions-east-jerusalem-family-for-straddling-palestinian-border-1.386897>

According to government mapping agency the building in question is located 65 percent in the PA and only 35 percent in Israel. A Jerusalem court says the family has not proved that most of its apartment building is in Israel.

The Jerusalem District Labor Court rejected the demand of an East Jerusalem family to have their residency status in the city restored. The request of the Badriyas, who live in Kafr Aqab, was refused because their home straddles the line separating Israel from the Palestinian Authority.

Residency status confers eligibility for health insurance and National Insurance Institute coverage.

To be precise, according to government mapping agency Israel Survey the building in which the Badriya family's apartment is located is 65 percent in the PA and only 35 percent in Israel.

In issuing its ruling two weeks ago the court said the family had not proved that most of their apartment building is in Israel.

The fact that their actual apartment is within the municipal borders of Jerusalem, and that they pay municipal taxes to the capital, apparently was not taken into consideration.

The family's attorney, Ramzi Nadaf, said his clients would appeal the ruling.

In recent years the National Insurance Institute has informed a number of East Jerusalem families that their residency status had been canceled due to new measurements that found that the boundary between Israel and the Palestinian Authority crossed the house.

By law, residents of East Jerusalem who move beyond Jerusalem city limits lose their legal status in the city.

In the case of Diana Kurd, from Anata, north of Jerusalem, the District Labor Court actually went so far as to entertain a discussion of the precise place where her late husband used to sleep. Depending on whether his bed was in the State of Israel or in the Palestinian Authority, his widow would or would not be eligible for survivor's benefits. In that case as well, the Jerusalem Municipality considered the house to be in the city

for the purpose of collecting municipal taxes, but the court did not count this in Kurd's favor.

Both the claim and the appeal were rejected, and Kurd lost her widow's pension.

Firas Abuahmad, the attorney who represented Kurd, said his client had no way of knowing her house was outside of Jerusalem. "Now, now only has her pension been cancelled but she is being asked to repay hundreds of thousands of shekels," he said.

The surveyor who measured the Badriya house, Ashraf Haj Yihiya, said a deviation of one millimeter on the map is five meters in a building. That means that an error on the map of two millimeters can move a whole building from Israeli to Palestinian territory.

The Jerusalem organization Ir Amim, which publicized the Badriya case, said: "Israel spares no effort in pushing Palestinians out of Jerusalem. This absurd ruling illustrates that Palestinians are conditional residents, and that is only the tip of the iceberg of regulations and laws intended to harm the status and rights of Palestinians in the city. Outwardly Israel is selling a false image of a united city, but in fact it is trying to empty it of Palestinians."

Meanwhile, a new opinion poll shows that despite hardships, Palestinian residents of East Jerusalem are relatively satisfied with their lives under Israeli rule. The survey, implemented by the Washington Institute for Near East Policy in cooperation with Princeton University and the Beit Sahur-based Palestinian Center for Public Opinion, found that almost half of East Jerusalem Palestinian respondents said they preferred to remain under Israeli sovereignty.

Only 23 percent of respondents said they would definitely prefer Palestinian citizenship to Israeli citizenship.

Among the reasons respondents cited for wanting to remain under Israeli sovereignty were relative freedom of movement, relatively higher income, employment opportunities and social rights.

8. Obama, the '67 lines and Jerusalem

By Shlomo Slonim, Jerusalem Post, 13/09/2011

<http://www.jpost.com/Opinion/Op-EdContributors/Article.aspx?id=237834>

Why Netanyahu had no choice but to refuse the US administration's terms for a settlement with the Palestinians.

US Secretary of Defense Robert Gates is reported to have charged Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu with being an ingrate for failing to accept President Barack Obama's terms for a settlement with the Palestinians. In this, Gates is echoing earlier presidential "spokesmen" such as former ambassador Martin Indyk and New York Times correspondent Thomas Friedman.

Apparently, it is expected that a country benefiting from American largesse will agree to surrender territory, rights and history in return.

In order to understand what the president was asking of Israel, and therefore why Netanyahu had to refuse, it is necessary to analyze just what his pronouncement calling for talks to start on the basis of the June 1967 lines entails.

For one thing, no previous American president had premised the Israeli-Palestinian talks on such a basis. American pronouncements repeatedly emphasized that the negotiations, and indeed any forthcoming agreement, was a matter for the parties to agree upon. No outside party was entitled to intervene and dictate the terms of the discussions.

The closest that any administration came to making such suggestions was the ill-fated Rogers Plan of 1969 which, while calling for Jerusalem to remain united, also endorsed a settlement with only minor territorial changes. Israel vigorously rejected the Rogers Plan, with prime minister Golda Meir declaring that a government accepting that plan as a starting point would be guilty of undermining Israeli security. The Nixon administration beat a hasty retreat, and with the substitution of Henry Kissinger as secretary of state in place of William P. Rogers, nothing more was heard of the plan.

That episode also highlights another unusual feature of the Obama pronouncements.

Presidents generally float new ideas by means of a subordinate, a state department official or even a secretary of state. Such a procedure ensures that the president's prestige is not directly involved. It allows the president to backtrack, if need be, or qualify the subordinate's statement without loss of face and without the embarrassment of a major confrontation and crisis with an injured party. In relation to the Middle East, however, Obama is acting very much as his own secretary of state, issuing orders or statements directly from the White House. This leaves very little room for revision of policy. It becomes this or nothing.

On the subject of Jerusalem, such an approach is fraught with danger.

WHEN JORDAN unleashed its barrage on Jerusalem, against Israeli suburbs, during the Six Day War, the Israeli response was immediate and overwhelming.

Within two days Israel had expelled the Jordanians and united Jerusalem under Israeli control.

The international legal implications of this development were spelled out by Stephen Schwebel, subsequently America's judge on the International Court of Justice, in an article entitled, "What Weight to Conquest," that appeared in the American Journal of International Law in 1970. He wrote: "Having regard to the consideration that ... Israel ... [acted] defensively in 1948 and 1967 ... and her Arab neighbors ... [acted] aggressively in 1948 and 1967 ... Israel has better title in the territory of what was Palestine, including the whole of Jerusalem, than do Jordan or Egypt."

It should be remembered that neither President Johnson's Five Points nor Security Council Resolution 242 mentioned Palestinians. When the legal status of Jerusalem was determined in 1967 in the wake of the Six Day War the Palestinians were not a legal factor. Israel contends that nothing has occurred in the interval to disturb Israel's

sovereign right in all of Jerusalem. This status was confirmed in 1980 by the Knesset when it adopted a law declaring: “Jerusalem, complete and united, is the capital of Israel.”

Nor did the 1993 Oslo Accords modify matters, even with Jerusalem being designated as the first item listed for the final status talks. Prime minister Yitzhak Rabin declared in 1995: “Undivided Jerusalem is the heart of the Jewish people and the capital of the state of Israel. Undivided Jerusalem is ours.” Foreign Minister Shimon Peres, in a 1994 interview, said: “We have told the Palestinians this – we are very adamant about our position. Jerusalem will not be redivided.

It will not be a Berlin... One cannot have two capitals in one city because that would mean a division of Jerusalem. It is the historical capital of Israel and Israel’s capital today.

... In summation, I would say that in the political sense, the issue of Jerusalem is closed and it will remain the united capital of Israel.”

For these two men, discussion of Jerusalem in the final status talks would relate only to matters of religious and social interests, not to the political status of the city. Thus, in legal terms, Israel’s position, as outlined by Prime Minister Netanyahu in his recent Washington appearances, accurately reflected the longstanding bipartisan position of the Israeli consensus.

IT IS this status of Jerusalem that President Obama apparently seeks to modify. He cannot challenge Israel’s title directly. By confirming the ’67 line he seeks to posit that Israel lacks title in east Jerusalem. However, both the facts and the law regarding Israel’s claim are clear and decisive. Prime Minister Netanyahu was therefore fully justified, and even compelled, to adhere to the pattern of his predecessors in declaring categorically that the ’67 lines are not the starting point for any negotiations. Those lines were armistice lines, and no more.

Netanyahu was unable to allow the United States to conceive, even for a moment, that Israel could accept a dictat about the status of Jerusalem. It is Israel’s contention that anything proposing the redivision of Jerusalem is destructive of the search for peace.

Acceptance of Obama’s reference to the June ’67 lines means acceptance of a scheme to divest Israel of its title to Jerusalem “complete and united.”

This, in Israel’s view, is not compatible with the search for peace. Anyone suggesting that Israel accept Obama’s proposals for negotiations should first ponder the implications of those proposals for Israel’s capital, Jerusalem.

The writer is a professor at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and the author of Jerusalem in America’s Foreign Policy.

9. Jerusalem's little train that almost could

By Ilan Lior, Haaretz, 21/08/2011

<http://www.haaretz.com/print-edition/news/jerusalem-s-little-train-that-almost-could-1.379724>

After 11 years of delays, Jerusalemites finally got their long-awaited light railway on Friday, but security concerns cast a pall on launch day.

On Friday, the first day that the Jerusalem light rail ran, everyone wanted to ride it - Orthodox and secular, Arabs and Jews, tourists and locals. The fact that it was free was also quite an incentive. "This is historic," some passengers said, smiling and snapping photos to preserve the memory. Others were less excited, only welcoming the fact that after years of infrastructure work, the train was finally serving the city's residents and not only making their lives miserable.

Nahum Cohen of Pisgat Ze'ev in north Jerusalem was nervous as he waited for the train at the outskirts of his neighborhood. Cohen said an Egged driver had recommended he get off the bus and try the train, promising him it would be faster. But Cohen, who owns a clothing store on Jaffa Road, lost his patience as the minutes ticked by. "I'm not bitter that the train is working now - I'm bitter about the 11 years that have gone by. I almost went bankrupt because of the construction," Cohen said, referring to the years of major work along downtown Jerusalem's main thoroughfare.

Ten minutes later, the train pulled in. It was only its fourth stop, but Cohen had no place to sit. Alongside him stood Vered Zakut and her three daughters, Shani, 12; Bar, 11; and Gali, 5. "This is the first time they promised the train would work since the year 2000, when she was born," Zakut said, pointing to Bar. "Gali was born the second time they promised," she added.

"This is really fun. There are lots of windows and you can look at the view," Zakut said. But as the train passed through north Jerusalem's Arab neighborhoods of Shuafat and Beit Hanina, their excitement turned to worry. "I'm worried, especially after yesterday," Vered Zakut said, referring to Thursday's terror attack on the road to Eilat.

Security men in protective vests stood tensely at the Shuafat station. A few Arab teens got on the train. "That's what I'm worried about. I don't know if I'll send my daughters alone. I don't even know if I'll take the train."

"Why is the sign only in Arabic?" asked a passenger, Baruch Levy, as the train slowly crossed the French Hill junction. It turned out that a malfunction in the electronic signage kept it from changing into Hebrew and English. Levy, 61, from the settlement of Beit El, had come into the city especially to take the train on its first day.

The Zakut family's enthusiasm was waning at this point. "It's crowded, the air-conditioning is not great, and there's no shade on the windows," Vered Zakut said as the train moved slowly. It still does not have the right of way at traffic lights and it is limited to 40 kilometers an hour. Near Ammunition Hill, the children sat on the floor, and ultra-Orthodox women got on with baby carriages. The crowding became

unbearable. The driver had trouble closing the doors and the train was delayed at every stop.

"This is such a nightmare - the sardine train," Cohen said, adding that this ride was his first and his last, as he barely managed to squeeze off at the Jaffa Road station. Masses of people were waiting in the center-city stops; hundreds at Mahane Yehuda market alone.

At the central bus station the electronic sign began working and the crowd thinned out. Passengers sounded optimistic again. Nehama from Beit Hakerem bought a photograph for NIS 10 from a veteran Jerusalem photographer. "This has made my day," she said.

An hour and twenty minutes after it started out, the train reached its last stop at Mount Herzl. A few dozen passengers who had come along just for the ride crossed over the wait for the return train. Finally, 25 minutes later, it arrived. Once again, the crowds became insufferable, and this time the train got stuck in Shuafat. A train employee explained that the electricity was down and asked passengers to be patient. "Is the train bullet-proof?" a woman asked, only calming down five minutes later when the train started up again.

All in all, the round-trip ride had taken three hours and 15 minutes. "It will improve," a train attendant promised. "Give it a chance," he added.

Arab Jerusalemites surveyed

10. Arabs in East Jerusalem conflicted about Palestinian state

By Michele Chabin, USA Today, 20/09/2011

<http://www.usatoday.com/news/world/story/2011-09-19/east-jerusalem-palestinian-state-arab-israel/50470736/1?csp=34news>

JERUSALEM – Isham Fteih, who lives in East Jerusalem and works as a bellman at the Dan Jerusalem Hotel, says he wouldn't mind if his home comes under Palestinian rule.

"Something's got to change," Fteih said. "Due to the Israeli roadblocks, it takes me longer to reach Ramallah, where my sister lives, in the nearby West Bank, than it does to Amman," the capital of Jordan.

As the Palestinian leadership goes to the United Nations this week to demand statehood for Arabs in the Palestinian territories, some Arab residents of Israel whose neighborhoods are being proposed for inclusion in the new state are full of hopeful anticipation. Others are reacting with trepidation, regional experts say.

A poll by the Palestinian Center for Public Opinion this year indicated that Arab East Jerusalemites are split about who they want controlling the territory where they live.

Asked whether they preferred to become a citizen of a future Palestinian state, "with all the rights and privileges of other citizens of Palestine," or a citizen of Israel, with the rights and privileges of Israelis, 30% said they would choose Palestinian citizenship; 35% Israeli citizenship; and 35% either declined to answer or said they didn't know.

East Jerusalem is home to 288,000 Arabs, and some Palestinian leaders, such as Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas, say it should be made the capital of an independent Palestinian state.

Israel captured the eastern part of the city from Jordan in the 1967 Six-Day War and says Jerusalem will always be its undivided capital.

"People are conflicted," said Nabil Kukali, director of the Palestinian Center for Public Opinion, which conducted the poll for Pechter Middle East Polls and the Council on Foreign Affairs. The poll was conducted in all 19 East Jerusalem Arab neighborhoods.

According to the latest available statistics from 2008, of the roughly 460,000 people living in East Jerusalem, 57% are Muslim and 43% are Jewish.

Although the vast majority of Arabs in East Jerusalem have spurned Israeli citizenship, believing it would undermine Palestinian aspirations to have East Jerusalem as their capital, Israeli ID cards are highly prized, Kukali said.

As ID-card-carrying residents of Jerusalem, Kukali said, East Jerusalemites "receive a lot of services," including access to health care, social benefits such as disability insurance and pensions, higher wages, "and most importantly, the ability to move from place to place and to travel abroad."

Arab Jerusalemites who want to live under Palestinian sovereignty would do so "for nationalistic and patriotic reasons," Kukali said, in spite of the inferior services offered by the Palestinian Authority in the West Bank.

Khaled Abu Toameh, an Arab journalist from East Jerusalem, said the prevailing mood is uncertainty.

"People don't know where they'll end up," he said.

Abu Toameh called it "ironic" that the fence Israel built to keep Palestinian terrorists from the West Bank from entering Israel has encouraged "thousands upon thousands" of Arabs who left Jerusalem years ago to move back. Legally, East Jerusalemites "enjoy all the rights of Israeli citizens except to vote for the parliament. It's pretty comfortable having an Israeli ID or citizenship," he said.

Even so, Abu Toameh said, "just because people would prefer Israel sovereignty doesn't mean they're necessarily pro-Israel."

Many Arabs complain of problems in addition to benefits. Israeli security personnel often order Arabs to show their identity cards, and the municipality has traditionally provided fewer services, such as roads and schools, to the Arab, eastern part of the city.

Ideally, "Palestinian East Jerusalemites would like Jerusalem to be an open, undivided city" with a Palestinian government in the east and an Israeli government in the west, said Yitzhak Reiter, a professor at the Hebrew University and the Jerusalem Institute for Jewish Studies.

But without a series of security checkpoints, such a model could endanger Israel, Reiter warned.

"If Jerusalem is open to Palestinians, a Hamas activist from Nablus," in the West Bank, "could come to East Jerusalem and go to Tel Aviv.

Stressful though it can be, straddling Palestinian and Israeli society creates unique moments.

In a column in the Hebrew newspaper Ha'aretz, the writer and humorist Sayed Kashua, an Arab from northern Israel who now lives in Jerusalem, recounts how his wife hired a rabbi to perform their son's circumcision.

Justifying the move, Kashua's wife explains, "A rabbi has more experience than anyone else. If we have to live in Jewish state, then why not take advantage of what it offers?"

Hassam, an East Jerusalem father of four who asked that his last name not be published, fearing harassment, does indeed utilize many of the benefits Israel provides.

"I have two disabled children. Would they receive the same level of care in Palestine that they receive in Israel?" Hassam asked outside his comfortable home near the Hebrew University.

Israel, Hassam said, "shouldn't allow Jerusalem to be divided."

Fteih, the bellman, says he works alongside Jews every day and considers many his friends. He doesn't want to be cut off from Israel under any circumstances.

"My work is here. My life is here. It would be difficult," Fteih said.

11. What Do the Arabs of East Jerusalem Really Want?

David Pollock, *Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs (JCPA)* Vol. 11, No. 14, 7/9/2011

http://www.jcpa.org/JCPA/Templates/ShowPage.asp?DRIT=1&DBID=1&LNGID=1&TMID=111&FID=442&PID=0&IID=8573&TTL=What_Do_the_Arabs_of_East_Jerusalem_Really_Want

- According to face-to-face surveys conducted according to the highest international standards, more Palestinians in east Jerusalem would prefer to become citizens of Israel rather than citizens of a new Palestinian state. In addition, 40 percent said they would probably or definitely move in order to live under Israeli rather than Palestinian rule.
- 44 percent of the Palestinians in Jerusalem say they are very, or at least somewhat, satisfied with their standard of living. This is a very high percentage

compared to other populations in the Arab world. Only about 30 percent sympathize with either Fatah or [Hamas](#) or with the Israeli Arab Islamic movement. Politics is not a major preoccupation.

- Three-quarters of east Jerusalem Arabs are at least a little concerned, and more than half are more than a little concerned, that they would lose their ability to write and speak freely if they became citizens of a Palestinian state rather than remaining under Israeli control.
- Significantly, 41 percent thought that the armed conflict probably or definitely would continue even after a peace agreement, and this is from the most moderate population of Palestinians. Only a third say that a unilateral declaration of Palestinian independence backed by the UN would have a positive effect on their lives. Two-thirds say that such a unilateral step would have no positive effect.
- For people who tend to assume that a fair and practical solution for the Jerusalem issue is for the Arab neighborhoods to become part of Palestine and the Jewish neighborhoods to become part of Israel, these findings suggest that this could be somewhat problematic from the point of view of the people who actually live in east Jerusalem.

The "Arab Spring": The Eruption of Public Opinion

All around the Middle East we see the eruption of public opinion as an important, and perhaps even a decisive, factor in the politics of various Arab countries. For the first time in recent memory, the ordinary people in these countries are becoming empowered to change the course of their own governments. This indicates how vital it is for us to try to understand and measure not just what the politicians say, but what the people think.

In Egypt during the revolution, in cooperation with Pechter Middle East Polls, we used Arab interviewers to conduct a telephone poll in Cairo and Alexandria at the very moment that thousands of Egyptians were out in the streets demanding the overthrow of Mubarak. We found that the main reasons for the Egyptian revolution were internal economic issues, not issues of Islam, America, Israel, or any foreign policy issues, or even political issues such as democracy or freedom. The issues were more about economic opportunity, inequality, corruption and abuses, and the ineffectiveness of Egypt's government to provide for its own people's basic needs. This is what motivated the people in Egypt to overthrow their government.

In retrospect, these results fit well with another poll that I did in Egypt a year before the revolution. When Egyptians were asked in an open-ended way what was on their mind, they were much more concerned about internal issues, and especially economic ones including corruption.

In a poll that I took in 2011 in Jordan, sympathy for al-Qaeda was around 20 percent. When we asked Jordanians what they would do if they knew there was someone from al-Qaeda in their own neighborhood, some 10 percent were willing to say they would help an al-Qaeda fugitive in their own neighborhood rather than turn him in to the authorities. As never before, people are willing to give honest answers to the toughest questions.

300,000 Palestinians in 19 Neighborhoods

What do the almost 300,000 Palestinians living in 19 Arab neighborhoods in the eastern half of Jerusalem actually think? What do these people want? What do they think about their experiences under Israeli rule? How do they see the future of their city?

We conducted solid surveys conforming to the most rigorous international standards. In east Jerusalem the total sample was 1,039, which means a margin of error of less than 3 percent. The sample covered the entire city, every single neighborhood, and was based on face-to-face interviews. The sample was representative of the overall Palestinian population of the city by age, education, gender, occupation, neighborhood, and income.

Some 44 percent report a monthly household income of NIS 4,800 (\$1,400) or more. Almost half of the total population enjoys a lower middle class or higher standard of living, much better than Palestinians in the West Bank and approximately the same as Arab citizens of Israel inside the 1967 lines, but significantly lower than that of the Israeli Jewish population. In comparison to other Palestinians in the West Bank, and certainly in Gaza, the standard of living of Palestinians in east Jerusalem is reasonably good.

At the end of the survey, once respondents felt reasonably comfortable answering increasingly nosy questions, we came to the bottom line issue: If you had to choose, would you prefer to be a citizen of Israel or a citizen of a new Palestinian state. We found that more Palestinians in east Jerusalem would prefer to become citizens of Israel rather than citizens of a new Palestinian state: 35 percent would prefer to become citizens of Israel, 30 percent citizens of Palestine, and 35 percent either don't know or refused to answer.

After the interviews were completed, we did a statistical analysis of the 35 percent who said they did not know, and analyzed their responses to other questions in the survey in order to make a judgment. We determined that the people who said they did not know or would not answer were in the middle in their views on all the different issues that make up their lives. Statistically speaking, that 35 percent leans slightly in the direction of the people who say they would prefer Israeli rather than Palestinian citizenship. Out of 50 different variables that we analyzed, the people that said "I don't know" or "I refuse to answer," answered more like the people who preferred Israel on 27 of those 50 variables, more like the people who said Palestine on 17 of those variables, and exactly in the middle on the rest of the 50 variables.

Pollsters often use a sort of trick question when they are asking about very controversial issues. In order to make it safer to answer, we ask people what they think their neighbor thinks, or what do people like them think about the issue. When we asked that question, we found that slightly more, 39 percent, said they thought that most of their neighbors would prefer Israeli to Palestinian citizenship. This gives us an indication that the answers to this question are probably honest. When people say roughly the same thing about what they think and what they think their neighbors think, that is usually an indication in polling practice that people are telling you candidly what their real opinions are.

We went a step further and asked people an even harder question: Would they move in order to be a citizen of whichever side they preferred if that choice became a necessity as part of a peace settlement or as part of a division of the city between Palestinian and Israeli rule? When we asked people whether they would move into Palestine, most said

no, but when we asked whether they would move in order to become a citizen of Israel if their existing neighborhood came under Palestinian rule, fully 40 percent of the Palestinians in east Jerusalem said they would probably or definitely move in order to live under Israeli rather than Palestinian rule.

We presented these results to the Council on Foreign Relations in Washington and New York, and there were Palestinian activists present. As one of these Palestinians put it, the PA has a problem with this population - they are not on their side. We also presented these results to a Palestinian audience in east Jerusalem and found that they are convinced that these are valid findings. They conform to their own experiences and perceptions of the people around them.

In addition, we found that there is not a whole lot of difference in most demographic categories on most questions. In other words, young and old, rich and poor, better educated and less educated are not that different. The younger segment of the population is slightly more inclined to say that they would prefer Israeli citizenship, but not by a whole lot.

Even in Shuafat refugee camp, where attitudes are the least moderate, you do not get a majority saying that they would rather be Palestinian citizens, which is incredible and even counter-intuitive.

Why Palestinians Feel the Way They Do

Why do these people feel that way? They are Palestinians after all. Why would so many of them become Israeli rather than Palestinian citizens, and even move to Israel in order to make that choice possible?

First, 44 percent of the Palestinians in the city say they are very, or at least somewhat, satisfied with their standard of living. This is a very high percentage compared to other populations in the Arab world that I have studied.

Second, we found that many of these Palestinians are generally pretty satisfied with a lot of important issues in their daily lives, including education, access to a nearby place of worship, health care, and basic services such as electricity and water. There is a significant percentage that has a neutral or even a negative view of these issues, but in every case, the majority is satisfied with all of these aspects of life. It actually turns out that less than half of the Palestinians in east Jerusalem are dissatisfied with their personal interactions with Jews in the city, with their ability to obtain travel documents, with their personal interactions with municipal officials, or with disability benefits.

To be fair, we found that a majority of Palestinians in east Jerusalem - 56 percent - did report that they feel there is a great deal or a fair amount of discrimination against them by the municipality. In other words, they feel there is official, not social, discrimination against them. Yes, they are reasonably satisfied with a lot of things, but that does not mean that they feel, on the whole, that they are being treated equally.

At the same time, almost half of the Palestinians report that corruption by PA officials is a big or at least a moderate problem for them personally.

Palestinians in east Jerusalem have a special status and blue identity cards like Israelis, which enable them to travel into the West Bank or into Israel. Unlike West Bank or Gaza Palestinians, they are very mobile and not isolated either from Palestinians or from Israelis. There is a high incidence of travel to west Jerusalem, to other areas of Israel, to the West Bank, and also quite a high level of interaction with Jewish citizens of Israel. This is a population which often works in the western side of the city and has often been educated in Israeli institutions.

We found that identity as a blue card holder is almost as important to these people as their identity as Palestinians or even as Muslims. That helps to explain why such a high percentage, if faced with the choice, would choose to be citizens of Israel and preserve some special status and their access to education, employment, travel, and social benefits, rather than give up those benefits and privileges in return for Palestinian citizenship.

In east Jerusalem, only about 30 percent sympathize with either Fatah or Hamas or with the Israeli Arab Islamic movement. This is a population whose political sympathies are not that strong or well-defined in comparison with their focus on their own personal identities - either religious, national, economic, or social. Politics is not a major preoccupation.

Finally, we asked the Palestinians directly and in an open-ended way why they wanted to be a Palestinian citizen or an Israeli citizen. For most Palestinians who said they wanted to be citizens of Israel, approximately 35 percent said it was practical issues that dominate - freedom of movement, higher income, health insurance, job opportunities, prosperity, more shops, and much lower down the list came issues of politics, culture, and law and order. Much higher on the list were practical concerns. When we looked at the Palestinians who said they would rather be citizens of Palestine, for 30 percent, practical issues were not very important. Issues of nationalism, identity, religion, and getting rid of discrimination were the issues that dominated among this group.

People were concerned that if they became a citizen of Palestine, they had significant worries about losing employment in Israel, free movement in Israel, Israeli health care, and reduction in city services. They were also concerned about an increase in corruption and most of all about the possibility of losing access to the Old City and the Al Aksa mosque, which was highest on their list of concerns.

Many of the concerns that these people have are very similar to the top concerns that are being expressed all over the region in public opinion and in the Arab uprisings that we are now witnessing from Egypt to Tunisia to Yemen. People are concerned most of all about economic opportunities, about corruption, and about freedoms, such as the freedom to write and speak freely. Three-quarters of east Jerusalem Arabs are at least a little concerned, and more than half are more than a little concerned, that they would lose their ability to write and speak freely if they became citizens of a Palestinian state rather than remaining under Israeli control.

If they became part of Israel, their concerns about the moral misconduct of their children was fairly high on the list. They are, generally speaking, a religious and conservative group. Even though educated and young, on the whole, a fairly high

proportion of the population are concerned about what they see as the more lax moral standards or more progressive atmosphere in Israeli society compared to their ideal of Muslim society and culture. Interestingly, 60 percent cared about access to the beach. They travel in Israel quite a lot, so they think about access to the beach when they consider their future.

Will There Be an End to the Conflict?

Today the peace process is going nowhere. Even if the peace process does produce an agreement, this will not necessarily be more than a piece of paper, nor will it necessarily be the end of conflict. We asked the Palestinians in Jerusalem: If there is an agreement, will the conflict continue anyway? Significantly, 41 percent thought that the armed conflict probably or definitely would continue even after a peace agreement, and this is from among, in other respects, the most moderate population of Palestinians.

Then we asked: How did they think people in their own neighborhood would react to an agreement? Some 31 percent said that about half or more of the people in their own neighborhood would support the continuation of the armed struggle against Israel even after a peace agreement.

We also asked: If the negotiations collapsed, how likely is a new intifada in east Jerusalem? Only 27 percent said very likely, but an additional 37 percent said somewhat likely. In other words, putting those two figures together, almost two-thirds of east Jerusalem Palestinians said that a new intifada is at least somewhat likely if peace negotiations completely collapse.

Only a third of the Palestinians in east Jerusalem say that a unilateral declaration of Palestinian independence, even one backed by the United Nations, would have a positive effect on their own lives. Two-thirds say that such a unilateral step would be no more than an empty declaration and would not have a positive effect on their lives. If the Palestinians proceed down this path, it could be a recipe for trouble within their own population because of the expectations that are being raised. The almost inevitable disappointment that is likely to follow could lead, in my view, to an intifada not only against Israel but against the Palestinian Authority, along the lines of the uprisings that we have seen in other parts of the Arab region in recent months.

Most Arabs who are polled do not like and are really afraid of Iran. This holds true for Egypt, Jordan, everybody but the Shiites in Lebanon, and the Saudi public, which really does not like Iran. In many of these countries, 40 percent or more support sanctions against Iran. That is a very high percentage in support of international pressure against a fellow Muslim country. A third of the Saudi public said that they wanted the United States to bomb Iran's nuclear facilities. Iran has few friends in the region among the ordinary people, and that is good to know. On the other hand, the Palestinians have a terrible opinion of the United States and are more favorable towards Iran than most Arabs.

Implications of the Findings

In my opinion, these findings should have an effect at least in refining the discussion of Jerusalem, and it is also important from an American government or a broader international perspective. For people who tend to assume that a fair and practical

solution for the Jerusalem issue is for the Arab neighborhoods to become part of Palestine and the Jewish neighborhoods to become part of Israel, these findings suggest that this could be somewhat problematic from the point of view of the people who actually live in east Jerusalem.

This factor needs to be taken into account or we are going to end up with a very disgruntled population of Palestinians who will be forced to come under Palestinian rule when a plurality do not want that. At a minimum, there needs to be some arrangement that responds to people's personal needs and aspirations, not just to their collective identity or political leadership.

Educational battles

12. Fighting for Jerusalem, Book by Book

by Joharah Baker, World Media Monitors, 20/09/ 2011

Printed from: <http://world.mediamonitors.net/content/view/full/89824/>

"The onus does not fall solely on the Palestinian schools in east Jerusalem facing the brunt of the pressure but also on the Palestinian Authority to fight for Jerusalem. This is primarily a matter of education but it is also about our political will. If Israel gets its way, it would have cemented one more tool supporting the claim that Jerusalem is part of Israel. This is something we as Palestinians cannot accept no matter the pressure. First grade teachers, unite and teach the young minds before you the beautiful colors of Palestine."

East Jerusalem schools have been fighting an uphill battle, ever since 1967 really, but more recently since last March. Since 2000, schools in occupied east Jerusalem have taught the Palestinian curriculum, devised by the Palestinian Ministry of Education. Then, after a complaint from Israel Beiteinu parliament member Alex Miller, Israel decided things needed to change. "The whole curriculum should and must be Israeli," he said during a meeting of the Knesset's committee on education.

In March, the [west] Jerusalem municipality sent a letter to the heads of private schools that receive subsidiary funds from the municipality, informing them that from now on, schools would have to use the textbooks prepared by the Jerusalem Education Administration, not the Palestinian Authority books. While municipality-run schools already use books approved by the municipality, UNRWA and Waqf-run schools have been using Palestinian curriculum, which took the place of the Jordanian curriculum used prior to the Oslo Accords and after the 1967 seizure of east Jerusalem.

Teachers, students and parents have been arguing up a storm ever since. Some private schools have rejected the dictate outright, thus risking a cut in funds next year.

The battle is on, with Jerusalem schools striking after third period for two days last week and a promise for escalated measures if the municipality continues its pressure. The books, which still contain much of the material devised by the Palestinian

Authority's education ministry, are nonetheless dangerously modified. It is not surprising that Palestinians in east Jerusalem are so irate. They have good reason.

Just to offer an example of the changes made to Palestinian schoolbooks, a first grade book requires children to color in the Palestinian flag. This part of the lesson has been struck from the book completely. In other grades, passages about the Palestinian refugee right of return have been deleted. Mention of Acca [Acre] has been taken out and national sentiments towards Jerusalem have been struck from books that now host the Israeli Jerusalem municipality logo.

The changes are not random. Israel has had a long history of "judaizing" east Jerusalem, which it considers part of Israel. International law does not concur; neither do the world's nations, even the United States. According to them, east Jerusalem is occupied territory. Palestinians in Jerusalem consider themselves just that: Palestinians. They do not take it lightly when their occupiers dictate to them what they can or cannot teach in their schools.

Legally, Palestinians say the municipality has no right to change the PA books, which are copyrighted, without the latter's consent. One measure being considered by Palestinian lawyers in Jerusalem is to take the Israeli municipality to court for this breach. As all things Palestinian in Jerusalem, this will certainly be another uphill battle, but one that is definitely worth it.

Right now, Palestinians everywhere need to focus on Israel's plans to reeducate our students in Palestinian Jerusalem in a way that Palestinian nationalism is no longer on the agenda. National poets such as Mahmoud Darwish and Sameeh Al Qasem, events such as the Intifada and places such as Haifa and Acre are all part of our collective psyche and national pride. As Palestinians and parents, we strive to pass this history on to our children. Israel is acutely aware that Palestinian pride is a force to be reckoned with and it is trying to kill it in any way it can. It has no right to dictate what we teach our children, especially when Israel's Jerusalem municipality has been so negligent of Palestinian schools in the eastern sector as it is. According to recent studies, approximately 1,000 classrooms are missing from east Jerusalem schools and more than 4,000 Palestinian children are not enrolled at all.

The onus does not fall solely on the Palestinian schools in east Jerusalem facing the brunt of the pressure but also on the Palestinian Authority to fight for Jerusalem. This is primarily a matter of education but it is also about our political will. If Israel gets its way, it would have cemented one more tool supporting the claim that Jerusalem is part of Israel. This is something we as Palestinians cannot accept no matter the pressure. First grade teachers, unite and teach the young minds before you the beautiful colors of Palestine.

13. The East Jerusalem School System – Annual Status Report 2011

Ir Amim, September 2011

Overview

Despite the Israeli government's obligation to provide free education, thousands of children in East Jerusalem remain outside of the school system each year. The continued neglect of the Arab school system in Jerusalem has caused:

- a severe shortage of classrooms, teaching in crowded classrooms – many in inadequate buildings,
- high dropout rates
- thousands of children, who have no other choice, attending unofficial schools, where they have to pay tremendous fees to receive the education they should have been getting for free.¹

The East Jerusalem school system has suffered from severe neglect for many years. Therefore any solution of the resulting problems requires a deep overhaul and a comprehensive long-term plan to overcome the ongoing failure of the authorities. Although there has been a certain amount of progress recently by the authorities, the change comes decades too late and, for the moment, is moving too slowly.

This paper represents an annual update on the status of various aspects of the education system. Ir Amim and ACRI continue to monitor, document and act for the full realization of the basic constitutional right of the tens of thousands of children of East Jerusalem to a decent education.

The curriculum in East Jerusalem – attempts to change the status quo

Fears of an attempt to change the status quo arose in spring 2011, when MANHI demanded for the first time that the "recognized but unofficial" schools buy textbooks exclusively through it. These textbooks, although virtually identical to those printed under Palestinian authorities, use somewhat altered political terminology. In addition, the Knesset education committee, headed by MK Alex Miller, expressed its intent to apply the Israeli curriculum to East Jerusalem.

On June 6 this year Ir Amim asked the Prime Minister to act to block attempts to change the status quo of the last 40 years, according to which the East Jerusalem education system uses a curriculum consistent with the heritage, identity and culture of its tens of thousands of students. As explained in the letter to the Prime Minister, after Israel annexed East Jerusalem, Israel's leaders understood that the question of the contents of the curriculum that would apply there required a sensitive and creative approach, and a complex and delicate solution. Thus, in past decades, schools in East Jerusalem continued to teach the Jordanian curriculum; later, as per the second Oslo accords, they adopted the Palestinian Authority's curriculum, which they have been using for the past 15 years.

The residents of East Jerusalem understand the attempt to impose the Israeli curriculum on them as yet another unilateral and aggressive act adding tension to life in the city and further violating their basic rights. Conversely, the use of the PA curriculum in East Jerusalem is supported not only by the signed political agreement but by international law and the right to education, both as a customary duty and as recognized in international conventions Israel has signed and ratified.

¹ See "Failed Grade: Palestinian Education System in East Jerusalem," (2010 August 2010) available at: <http://www.ir-amim.org.il/Eng/Uploads/dbsAttachedFiles/FailedGrade.pdf>
<http://www.acri.org.il/pdf/EJeducation2010en.pdf>

The question of the curriculum in East Jerusalem, if there is one, should be discussed as part of political arrangements. If truly concerned with the level of education in East Jerusalem Israeli authorities could act vigorously to reinforce the inadequate and neglected educational infrastructure.

For full details of the report see:

<http://www.ir-amim.org.il/Eng/?CategoryID=254>

Israeli Summer Protests

14. Summer of Protest in Israel Peaks With 400,000 in City Streets

By Isabel Kershner, *New York Times*, 3/09/2011.

http://www.nytimes.com/2011/09/04/world/middleeast/04israel.html?_r=1

JERUSALEM — As many as 400,000 Israelis demonstrated on Saturday night against the high cost of living and for social justice in one of the largest protests in the nation's history, although questions remained about what it might achieve.

The mass protest across the country had been planned for weeks and was considered by many to be the grand finale of the street phase of the social dissent that has swept Israel this summer. Organizers initially billed it as a million-person march, but had tried to lower expectations over the last few days, saying that it would be considered a success if the turnout equaled the 300,000 people who took to the streets on Aug. 6.

The police estimated that more than 300,000 people turned out on Saturday night, but a company monitoring the turnout for the Israeli news media said the total was about 400,000, with almost 300,000 gathering in Tel Aviv alone. Tens of thousands more rallied in Jerusalem, Haifa and other cities.

The nationwide protest came after a lull in the movement over the last two weeks. The country's attention was first diverted by a mid-August attack by Palestinian militants that killed eight Israelis near the southern city of Eilat, near the Egyptian border, and a subsequent flare-up in violence along the Israel-Gaza border.

The most visible symbols of the protest movement, the scores of tent encampments that sprang up around the country, have gradually emptied as summer vacations ended and people went back to work and school.

On Saturday, the main rally in Tel Aviv began with a march and ended in Kikar Hamedina, a broad traffic circle and park lined with luxury stores. Television commentators noted that not one display window was broken; these Israeli protests, largely driven by the middle class, have been carnival-like and nonviolent.

“This square is filled with the new Israelis who would die for this country, but who expect you, Mr. Prime Minister, to let us live in this country,” Itzik Shmuli, the

chairman of the National Union of Students and a leader of the protest movement, said from the stage at the Tel Aviv rally.

Daphne Leef, 25, the young woman who pitched the first tent in Tel Aviv in mid-July and invited friends to join her on Facebook, told the crowd that the fact that her generation had stood up and raised its voice was “nothing short of a miracle — the miracle of the summer of 2011.”

Organizers have said that many of the tent encampments will end in the next few days but that the spaces may become communal meeting places.

The protest movement’s next milestone is likely to come later this month when a government-appointed committee on socioeconomic change led by Manuel Trajtenberg, a respected professor of economics at Tel Aviv University, presents its recommendations to the government. The panel was set up in response to the protests.

The protests began over the lack of affordable housing, but grew to encompass calls for tax reform and the creation of a welfare state, among other demands.

Mr. Shmuli has urged that protesters cooperate with the committee, but Ms. Leef and other members of the protest movement’s informal leadership have rejected such a move.

Mr. Shmuli said on Saturday night that the movement had “reached a very high peak” that had to lead to dialogue and achievements.

15. A tale of two cities: The differences between Tel Aviv and Jerusalem’s housing protests

By Nir Hasson, Haaretz, 2/08/2011

<http://www.haaretz.com/print-edition/news/a-tale-of-two-cities-the-differences-between-tel-aviv-and-jerusalem-s-housing-protests-1.376472>

Jerusalem is a city of political and social protests, but a demonstration of 10,000 people, most of them young and secular, without a large sponsor is a rarity in the capital

Jerusalem has seen much larger demonstrations than the housing protest that took place on Saturday night. All those, however, were rallies that were organized by large organizations that brought participants to Jerusalem by bus from Tel Aviv (if it was a left-wing demonstration) or from the settlements (if the demonstration had been called by the right); or they were demonstrations arranged at the command of one rabbi or another.

But a demonstration of 10,000 people, most of them young and secular, without a large sponsor is a rarity in Jerusalem.

The organizers of the Jerusalem housing protest sat Sunday in the tent encampment in the capital's Horse Park and tried explain what the next objectives are, why they won't manage to finish their exams this year, and what differentiates them from their counterparts in Tel Aviv.

Compared to the Tel Aviv protest, the Jerusalem tent encampment is much more reliant on local political and social movements, most prominent among them the Yerushalmim (Jerusalemites) and Hitorerut (Awakening) organizations, two relatively new movements that have representatives on the city council.

The local student association and youth groups are also involved in the encampment, as is the left-wing Solidarity movement, which emerged from the battle over Palestinian evictions from the Sheikh Jarrah neighborhood and is sharing its experience with political protests.

This is one reason why the atmosphere at the Jerusalem encampment is more serious and less carnival-like than the one in Tel Aviv. The leaders are experienced social activists who can fluently express their demands and their social-democratic worldview. They have produced position papers, bill proposals and other documents that they hope will provide an intellectual and practical basis for the housing demands of all the protesters.

"We are a battle headquarters here, not a music festival," said Rona Orovano, chairman of the Bezalel Academy Student Association and one of the leaders of the Jerusalem protest.

For years, young Jerusalemites have been suffering from a particularly severe housing crunch that has some unique characteristics - the diplomatic pressure not to build in the neighborhoods over the Green Line on the one hand, along with the trend of Haredi couples moving into cheaper, secular neighborhoods that has driven up the prices in these areas.

Added to this is the fact that thousands of apartments are owned by foreign residents who keep them empty so they will be available when they visit during the summer or Jewish holidays - apartments that are referred to locally as "ghost apartments."

All this has made it difficult for young people to rent in the capital while they study there, or to buy an apartment if they want to stay.

The tent protesters have formulated a list of housing demands from the government that includes requiring contractors to allot a certain percentage of projects to "affordable housing," blocking the proposed national housing committees bill, expanding the Mehir Lemishtaken program that awards land to developers who offer the lowest sale price for apartments, resuming construction of public housing, and more.

Like their counterparts elsewhere, many of the Jerusalem protesters are talking about "the next stage," expanding the struggle to include issues such as privatization, tax policies, education, health care and more. But, as with their counterparts elsewhere, one gets the impression that despite the power they have accumulated during a few short weeks and their determined statements, they don't really have a clear goal that, if achieved, would bring an end to the struggle.

Meanwhile, they are hoping that the protest will re-educate the Israeli public about its rights.

"We want a political party with a social-democratic platform, but the public still doesn't know what that means," said Orovano.

"The revolution is a revolution in society and in citizens' heads," added Amnon Rabinowitz, one of the protesters.

To date, the Jerusalem tent encampment has been largely secular, although the religious among them believe that a mass of religious protesters are on the verge of joining. To avoid causing any disruptions, encampment residents are careful not to start political arguments. The tent people are mostly between 25-30 years old, about half of them students who have sacrificed the second and third round of final exams on the altar of the revolution.

The encampment is very neat. There's a small bookcase with books on economics and society, a kitchen, a recycling corner, a recruiting booth and a place to conduct debates. A large net has been spread over the encampment to provide shade. At one end of the grassy area there's a large children's pool, where several children were splashing.

There are other encampments in the capital too - in Independence Park and Sachar Park in the center of the city, as well as in the neighborhoods of Kiryat Yovel and Ein Kerem.

"This protest won't end well," predicts Yair Fink, one of the leaders of the Jerusalem encampment. "Not everyone will be happy, they won't get everything they want.

"But the day after, they will join the big parties and will go out to vote," he adds. " And in the next election, or the one after that, there will be a revolution."

Politicising sacred spaces

16. Israeli archaeologists oppose privatisation bill

By Lauren Gelfond Feldinger, The Art Newspaper, 6/10/2011

<http://www.theartnewspaper.com/articles/Israeli-archaeologists-oppose-privatisation-bill/24810>

JERUSALEM. More than 150 Israeli archaeologists and historians have petitioned the Israeli parliament to vote down an amendment to a bill that would privatise national parks, including archaeological and historic sites. The petition, delivered to the culture and environment ministers, charges that the changes to law, if passed, would fuel political interests, hurt minority communities and undermine unbiased scientific research. "We demand that the government not change the laws... and instead strengthens academic freedom and heritage without sectarian preference," it says. The

Union for Environmental Defence and The Society for the Protection of Nature in Israel have also opposed the amendment.

The bill, to be voted on in October, was proposed following protests against the management of City of David, one of Israel's most popular, albeit politically charged, archaeological parks, sponsored and managed by a private foundation.

Based on the writings of Roman historian Flavius Josephus and in the Bible, archaeologists have been searching since the 19th century for clues to ancient Jerusalem in the Silwan neighbourhood, just south of the Old City. They named the site City of David based on biblical descriptions; the water source in biblical texts was called Shiloah in Hebrew, or Silwan in Arabic. The first excavations, run by late Ottoman-rule archaeologists, discovered that Jerusalem was first developed there as far back as the 18th century BC by the Canaanites. Archaeologists have since found complicated strata from more than a dozen periods and evidence of settlement by as many civilisations. By the early 20th century, the inhabitants were primarily Muslim, living peacefully with around 100 Yemenite Jewish families.

Today, Silwan/City of David is a powder-keg, sometimes referred to as being symbolic of the local conflict. More than 35,000 inhabitants of the disputed east Jerusalem neighbourhood, primarily poor Arab residents, live amid the wealthy archaeological park. The privately owned Elad Foundation, which manages the site, has invested millions of dollars to fund Israel Antiquities Authority digs and run tours and archaeological exhibitions that particularly focus on showing Jewish and biblical history from the Judean and Israeli periods of settlement.

Archaeology professor Raphael Greenberg of Tel Aviv University, who dug at the site in previous years, says that there is Palestinian, Jewish and other history in the ground, and Palestinian and Jewish rights above ground, and that recognition of this by both sides is fundamental to any reconciliation. "In the meantime," he says, "as long as Israel controls Silwan, it must restrain itself as well as those groups who would use a one-dimensional view of the past in order to further the rhetoric of disenfranchisement and displacement of Palestinians in the present."

Elad's mandate beyond archaeology, which includes "revitalising" Jewish settlement at City of David, has also led to its acquisition of dozens of homes for Jewish families. Occasional clashes with the new Jewish residents and their armed guards has resulted in arrests of Palestinian protestors and the fatal shooting last year of a teenaged Palestinian resident. The village authorities also maintain that a main street and several homes have suffered damage from the underground tunnelling, and that plans to demolish homes and massive traffic jams because of more than 300,000 tourists a year are the results of city planning that favour the tourist site over the residents.

Israel has always given permission to independent registered academies, such as institutes of archaeology at international universities, to dig, analyse artefacts, and publish their results, with a licence from the Israeli Antiquities Authority (IAA) or National Parks Association. Independent development companies have also managed historic sites, as at Caesaria. But Elad is the first private organisation in Israel to fund and oversee an antiquities site inside a crowded residential Arab neighbourhood, while also pursuing an ideological mandate to settle Jewish residents there as part of connecting to and promoting a particular historic era.

Archaeologists charge that the IAA permits this because they need funding from Elad and the bill, if passed, will formalise the arrangement. “This is the most outrageous case of a political group running an archaeological site and a case study for archaeology in conflict with communities,” says archaeologist Yonatan Mizrahi, who left the IAA to found Emek Shaveh, the alternative archaeology organisation that sponsored the petition. “When you bring heritage sites to political organisations you give them political power—archaeologists should be open-minded about which layers to preserve and show to the public and what kind of co-operation to have with the surrounding public,” he says.

A number of Israeli civil rights organisations, including Rabbis for Human Rights, Peace Now, Ir Amim and the Association for Civil Rights in Israel, have also protested against Elad.

Elad dismisses the criticism of it as biased, arguing that during a three-hour tour, it is not possible to represent all periods, and “like in every other site around the world, the primary periods were chosen... while Jerusalem has been inhabited by many different peoples, the time in which Jerusalem became a centre of life for the people in the area was during the Canaanite and Israelite periods (1850BC-70AD),” said Doron Spielman, Elad’s senior director. He also said that charges that Elad has a political agenda are “an attempt to undermine archaeological findings and give support to unsubstantiated claims that the Jewish people are newcomers to this area”.

Elad has hired workers from Silwan, in what it calls efforts towards good relationships, but Spielman says that “radical elements... parading under the guise of human rights” coerced 100 local Arab workers to quit. The IAA declined to comment.

Archaeologists here have often debated the role of nationalism and religion in archaeology. In the early years of the state, most local archaeologists were primarily interested in proving biblical narratives and searching for Jewish roots. Religious communities objected to the digging of areas that had human remains and, after years of conflict over the approach to burial grounds and religious law, Israel’s attorney-general declared in 1997—in contrast to antiquities authorities worldwide—that bones are not antiquities and must be turned over to religious authorities for proper burial. In the past decade, the head of the IAA, Benjamin Kedar, acknowledged that Israel did not have enough archaeologists who were experts in the Islamic periods and tried to reinvigorate the academies to broaden their fields of study.

Now, as petitions from archaeologists, environmentalists and human rights groups seek to kill the privatisation bill, archaeologists are also opposing a proposed amendment to the Israeli Antiquities Authority law that would allow the appointment of an IAA chair of the board of directors who is not a member of the National Academy of Sciences. The heads of four of the five major archaeology departments at universities—Hebrew University in Jerusalem, Tel Aviv University, Haifa University and Ben Gurion University in the Negev—also sent a letter of opposition to the culture minister, Limor Livnat, against the amendment. Livnat has said that all qualified candidates should be eligible to head the IAA board of directors, as Kedar stands to step down. But the private archaeologists argue that a chair selected by the Academy of Science will be

more scientifically independent and not answerable to the politics of the minister who appointed them.

17. Latest Architects of Israel's Museum of Tolerance Threaten to Follow Frank Gehry Out the Door

By Kate Deimling, ARTINFO France, 5/10/2011

<http://www.artinfo.com/news/story/38793/latest-architects-of-israels-museum-of-tolerance-threaten-to-follow-frank-gehry-out-the-door/>

The planned Simon Wiesenthal Museum of Tolerance in Jerusalem continues to hit one roadblock after another. When Frank Gehry pulled out as architect in early 2010, the L.A.-based Wiesenthal Center cited funding cuts, due to the financial crisis, that required a new, scaled-back design, reducing the building's price tag from \$250 million to \$100 million. The project has also faced significant opposition from Arab activists, who are furious that it's being built — ironically for a museum of tolerance — atop a medieval Muslim cemetery. They lost their challenge to the site's legality in a 2008 case that made it to Israel's Supreme Court, and last July the interior ministry fast-tracked the project. But now, in a new twist, the firm that replaced Frank Gehry, Chyutin Architects, is threatening to quit.

A municipal official told Haaretz that Israeli architects Bracha and Michael Chyutin may resign over a bad working relationship with the Wiesenthal Center. "The Center drove the architects crazy," according to the unnamed official. "It asked for daily briefings and nagged them to death." Meanwhile, the Los Angeles Times reports that the Wiesenthal Center withheld a scheduled payment to the firm, citing its failure to meet contractual obligations on the project. It comes down to "a stupid contractual dispute," Wiesenthal Center spokesperson Lior Chorev told the paper. "Our financial guys have told them that once they fulfill the contract, we will pay them the money."

The project's construction management company, Tafnit Wind, dropped out a month ago under circumstances that remain unclear, with Haaretz reporting that Tafnit Wind quit and Chorev saying that it was dismissed. Construction on the museum is supposed to begin in less than a month. In an email to the Times, the Wiesenthal Center maintained that "construction is going forward as scheduled and the financial dispute will have no impact whatsoever on the project."

Yet building the museum in its current location may not be so simple. Middle Eastern historian and Arab activist Rashid Khalidi told ARTINFO France that he suspects the controversial building site continues to play a role in the museum's troubles. "Gehry felt that he'd been deceived" by the Center, according to Khalidi, who believes that the Muslim cemetery "was one of the issues" that led the renowned architect to withdraw from the project. It may have discouraged his successor as well, Khalidi surmised. Chyutin Architects was not immediately available for comment.

While the museum's opponents seem to have exhausted available legal avenues in Israel, they are still seeking to prevail in the court of international opinion. "We have every hope that this desecration will be stopped," Khalidi said. A petition against the

project signed by many prominent archaeologists will be sent to the Simon Wiesenthal Center in the next two weeks, and opponents are also waiting for UNESCO and the special rapporteur for human rights at the U.N. to take a position on the issue.

Other currents issues

18. Patriarch encourages pilgrimages to bolster Jerusalem's Christians

By Patricia Zapor, Catholic News Service, 27/09/2011

<http://www.catholicnews.com/data/stories/cns/1103827.htm>

BETHESDA, Md. (CNS) -- The Latin patriarch of Jerusalem says the dwindling population of Christians in his city needs to be bolstered by the support of Christians around the world and by their visits as pilgrims.

In an interview Sept. 20 at the suburban Washington offices of the Holy Land Christian Ecumenical Foundation, Patriarch Fouad Twal told Catholic News Service that the Christian population in Jerusalem is about 10,000 -- Catholics, Protestants and Orthodox Christians combined. There are about 240,000 Muslims and 455,000 Jews.

He said the small number of Christians "reminds us about the words of the Lord, 'You will be the salt of the earth,' and salt is the small quantity."

Just as only a small amount of salt is needed to flavor food, he said, "I hope we can do our work as a small, small group, to be an example of witness, of charity, to be a bridge between these people, to be an element of peace, an element of tolerance."

A significant portion of his work as patriarch of Jerusalem -- the equivalent of an archbishop for a patriarchate that includes all Latin-rite Catholics in Israel, the Palestinian territories, Jordan and Cyprus -- includes traveling the world to visit the displaced Christians of the region.

He noted that last year's Synod for Bishops on the Middle East included a focus on the diaspora "and our obligation to visit them and their obligation to come back or to help with a project as much as possible."

In response, Patriarch Twal has visited Argentina, Chile, Colombia and Honduras in the last year. His trip to the United States in September brought him around the country -- his message, in part, encouraging Christians who have left Jerusalem to come back.

He recognizes that the key to making that possible is peace, he said. But until that day comes, he said he asked people to help with various efforts "and to not forget those who are still there."

Pope Benedict XVI, as well as King Abdullah of Jordan and Israeli President Shimon Peres, are among the leaders who encourage him to keep up that effort. "They have often told me, please keep your people in the Holy Land, don't lose them."

"We don't need only all the beautiful buildings, all the antiquities," Patriarch Twal said. "We want this living community, these living stones. That's why we are doing our best to give them hope."

He said one thing that gives Christians in Jerusalem hope is when pilgrims come. For now, it's easier for pilgrims to visit Jerusalem from the United States, Europe or Asia than it is for those nearby.

"We need any parish priest to come with his parish group, from all Palestine, Jordan and the Arab countries, to visit the Holy Land, to visit Bethlehem and Jerusalem," he said. But the threat of violence and the unsettled political situation make it very difficult for nearby Christians to visit, the patriarch said.

"When we see pilgrims in the Holy Land, it says 'you are not alone, we are with you,'" he said.

Among the projects he hopes will help bolster the Christian presence in the Holy Land for the long term is the new American University of Madaba, set to open in October in Patriarch Twal's home city in Jordan, not far from Jerusalem. The Catholic university has an enrollment so far of about 200 and eventually will accommodate up to 8,000 students, said the patriarch.

Pope Benedict blessed the cornerstone of the university in May 2009. Programs available include engineering, science, health sciences, information technology, business and finance, art and design and languages and communications.

19. An alternative side to the City

By Renee Ghert-Zand, *The San Diego Jewish Journal*, 1/09/2011

<http://sdjewishjournal.com/site/2629/an-alternative-side-of-the-city/>

People dream of visiting Jerusalem to put a note inside the cracks of the Western Wall, seeing the Dome of the Rock on the Temple Mount and watching the sun set over the city's ancient, golden stones. But if these are the only things you do once you get here, then you are missing out on what the more contemporary and secular side of Jerusalem has to offer.

Rabbinic literature has for millennia referred to the Jewish people's eternal spiritual capital as having a dual nature. There is Jerusalem on High (Yerushalayim shel malah), but also Jerusalem on Earth (Yerushalayim shel matah). And there is no better time than the summer months to discover the city's contemporary cultural gems that fly below the radar of the usual Jewish tourist itinerary. Summer may be coming to an end this month, but it's never too soon to start planning for next year's vacations.

The news of recent years has been about the exodus of secular Jews from Jerusalem for Tel Aviv and its environs.

“This very important city...became irrelevant. It became irrelevant to me and my friends who left it. It became irrelevant to my parents and their friends who left it. It became irrelevant to Israeli society, and in many ways it became irrelevant to many parts of the world, because all they heard about it was the political narrative and the religious narrative,” said Itay Mautner, artistic director of the Jerusalem Season of Culture (JSOC), a new annual showcase of Jerusalem-focused arts and culture running from mid-May through the end of July. “Those narratives do, of course, exist in the city, but alongside those two big narratives throughout 3,000 years has been a cultural narrative...this cultural narrative in Jerusalem is way different than any other cultural narrative that you see anywhere else in the world. It’s different for thousands of reasons. It has a lot to do with the religion, with the historical layers, with the complexity.”

Jerusalem has always been a key producer of major Israeli artists and cultural figures, but most have left the city after completing art school or early in their careers in search of more work and a more robust mainstream artistic environment. However, since the election of secular Mayor Nir Barkat in 2008 (thanks, in large part, to support from newly active grassroots liberal political movements founded by the city’s young people), things have begun to change. Contemporary artists are now starting to live and work more in Jerusalem, and they are being increasingly backed by governmental institutions, private sponsors and nonprofit organizations.

JSOC constitutes a major attempt at capitalizing on and strengthening this wind of change. Spearheaded by the Schusterman Foundation-Israel in partnership with the Jerusalem Municipality and the Jerusalem Foundation, it was designed to build on existing major cultural events like the Jerusalem International Film Festival and the Israel Festival.

“The summer in Jerusalem was a very vibrant, dynamic, interesting cultural season, and no one seemed to realize it,” said JSOC Deputy Director Karen Brunwasser. “Against the backdrop of what was already happening, we added additional content that is very Jerusalem-specific. By that, I mean content that aspires to ask the question of what happens when excellent creativity meets the spirit of Jerusalem, such that the end result is something that could only happen here.”

What could only happen in the highly multicultural Jerusalem is what Mautner calls “alternative” arts and culture. The notion of a cultural “mainstream” is antithetical to both the theoretical spirit and the everyday reality of the capital city, as he sees it.

“Throughout all the years, it’s been an alternative scene,” he said. “There has never been a mainstream in Jerusalem. You can feel it in the streets. This has always been a place under struggle, and a place under struggle is never satisfied. And when you’re hungry you cannot be mainstream, you have to be a little bit alternative. It’s a place that has been both cursed and worshipped. That brings a special energy to it.”

This past summer, JSOC included Jerusalem-inspired performances by internationally acclaimed artists like opera singer Renee Fleming, the Merce Cunningham Dance Company and reggae superstar Ziggy Marley. But it was also packed with programming featuring the contemporary creativity of hundreds of local performers and artists. Much of it was cutting-edge, avant-garde and very outside-the-box. It invited and challenged audiences to see Jerusalem in a whole new light.

The contemporary art scene in Jerusalem does not stand on JSOC alone. In fact, JSOC purposely works with a variety of the city's high-profile and lesser-known art institutions and organizations in an effort to be coordinated during the season, and to promote Jerusalem's cultural scene year-round.

It is too early to know what JSOC will have in store for 2012, but here are some of this past summer's highlights, which will likely be repeated next year. In addition, here are the names and descriptions of several must-see places (open year-round) for visitors to Jerusalem interested in checking out its unique contemporary art scene.

Balabasta

You'll never think of Jerusalem's Machane Yehuda market the same way again. Known through the media mainly as the site of suicide bombings during the Second Intifada and a favorite location for populist politicking, the bustling open-air market was turned by JSOC into the Balabasta arts festival every Monday night in July. Packed with thousands of people, the stalls and shops stayed open into the night, and hundreds of local performers and artists of all disciplines engaged and delighted audiences in every alleyway, and even on the market's rooftops.

Balabasta's director, Kobi Frig, grew up in his grandfather's spice shop in the market, and he now lives with his own young family in the nearby Nachlaot neighborhood.

"It's fine art, but it's local; it works with the community, and that makes the event really special and unique" Frig said from the market. "And when it's unique, people from all over will come to see it."

Different Trains

JSOC brought the Jewish Theatre of Sweden's cutting-edge interpretation of renowned contemporary American composer Steve Reich's "Different Trains" to a unique setting in Jerusalem. The series of performances by Sweden's Fleshquartet of Reich's piece about the Holocaust (triggered by his having been shuttled across the U.S. by train between his divorced parents) took place with the musicians and the audience sitting amid large, billowing glass sculptures lit up colorfully in synchrony with the score and video projections.

Most unique was the fact that all this was presented in the Kishle, a former Ottoman police garrison turned archeological excavation site within the Old City's Tower of David. The Kishle site, which had been closed for more than a decade, was opened to the public solely for these performances.

Contact Point

On the night of the full moon in July, the recently renewed Israel Museum was host to thousands of spectators who had come to experience some of Israel's most exciting artists and creative thinkers interact with specially chosen art and artifacts on display. The event's director, Nir Turk, worked painstakingly to pair the artists with the works, and he charged them with creating one-of-a-kind, cutting-edge interpretations and

explorations of the items to share with Museum visitors. It was a night of music, poetry, dance, new media and more.

“I don’t want to please the crowd, but I do want for it to contemplate, for it to enrich its banks of images in a different way...We need to be open and to let ourselves be vulnerable, to take risks, to be an active spectator and be willing to take risks,” Turk said as he prepared for the event.

The Israel Museum was pleased to be the venue for Contact Point, a type of program that is unique to it among the world’s leading museums. “The idea of Contact Point is exactly in sync with what we hope and think this place is about, which is a lot of synthetic resonance,” explained the museum’s director, James Snyder. “So the idea that you invite artists, performers, performance artists, writers, creative thinkers to come and interact with aspects of the landscape, the architecture, specific works of art, galleries, subjects or content in the frame of our site is kind of exciting.”

Museum on the Seam

Museum on the Seam is located exactly where its name indicates: on the seam between East and West Jerusalem just next to the historic Mandelbaum Gate checkpoint. Not always on the radar of visitors to the city, it is a museum of social-political contemporary art founded and directed by Raphie Etgar, one of Israel’s leading graphic designers.

“We deal universally with social-political issues, not necessarily only from a local standpoint,” Etgar emphasized. Themes of recent shows included the right to protest, the politicization of home, abuse of women, and child slavery and labor. Its current exhibition, called “Westend,” is about the clash between Islam and the West, as well as meeting points between them. Museum on the Seam’s unique vision and reputation (it does not take public funding) led several artists from Muslim and Arab countries to defy the unofficial artistic boycott against Israel and participate in this show.

Musrara

Musrara, a gentrifying neighborhood on the border between East and West Jerusalem next to several ultra-Orthodox areas, has become a focal point for the local, alternative art scene. It used to be known for being a poor, formerly Arab neighborhood in which the government settled new immigrants from North Africa in the early decades of the State (and from which the Israeli Black Panther protest movement arose in the 1970s).

Musrara is a few minutes’ walk from the Museum on the Seam. The environmental art of the Muslala Collective is evident in the streets and courtyards of the neighborhood. The Musrara Photography School is also worth a visit to check out exhibitions of students’ and local photographers’ work.

Jerusalem Print Workshop

Located right at the point where Musrara meets the ultra-Orthodox neighborhood of Meah She’arim is the Jerusalem Workshop. Located in a large Ottoman-era building

and in existence since 1974, it is a nonprofit center advancing printing and graphic art in Israel. You know you are in an active print shop the minute the smell of ink hits you as you come in the door.

Jerusalem Print Workshop houses a number of historical and antique printing presses, including the one that was used to publish the first modern Hebrew newspaper in the Land of Israel. Classes and exhibitions are held regularly at the workshop, and it is open for use by amateur and professional artists under the guidance and supervision of a staff of master print-makers.

The Workshop holds the largest and most valuable collection of prints in Israel, including the work of such famed artists as Moshe Kupferman, Moshe Gershuni, Lea Nikel and Tamara Rickman. It also owns the largest collection of artist's books in Israel.

Yaffo 23

It is hard to imagine that the Yaffo 23 sleek gallery space on the top floor of Jerusalem's famed main post office (built in 1938) was once the British Mandate's telephone switchboard center, and later, Jerusalem's main communications hub. All the clunky, outdated telecommunications equipment was moved out, and the space turned into a cultural center oriented toward contemporary art.

Opened a year ago and seeded by Israel's premier art school, Bezalel, the gallery has curated and hosted dozens of shows, programs and events. It also serves as the home base for the fellows of the Foundation for Jewish Culture's new American Academy in Jerusalem.

"Yaffo 23 is not just a gallery, it's a space for creation, research and learning, and also for exhibition for contemporary practices in art. It's nonprofit; we don't sell anything. It's not like a museum; we don't collect anything," explained its director, Roy Brand, a Sarah Lawrence College philosophy professor specializing in aesthetics and contemporary art. "We're just very free to operate in this large spectrum of activities that you can do if you are not a gallery oriented toward a market, and if you are not a museum oriented toward history or some kind of narrative that you want to present. We're just doing this experimental stuff. That's our mandate."

For More Information

Jerusalem Season of Culture (including Balabasta, Different Trains and Contact Point): www.jsoc.org.il/

Museum on the Seam: www.mots.org.il/

Musrara: www.gojerusalem.com, search "Musrara"

Jerusalem Print Workshop: www.jerusalemprintworkshop.org

Yaffo 23: yaffo23.wordpress.com

20. Changing directions – expanding activity in Sheikh Jarrah

Sheikh Jarrah Solidarity, 1/09/2011

<http://www.en.justjlm.org/584>

For nearly two years, we have demonstrated each Friday in Sheikh Jarrah. We demonstrated because we saw yet another Palestinian neighborhood in East Jerusalem being turned into a den of extreme right-wing fanatics. We demonstrated because the police did whatever it deemed necessary to turn Sheikh Jarrah into “Shimon Ha-Tsadik.” We demonstrated because joint Israeli-Palestinian demonstrations were a rarity in East Jerusalem.

Today, thanks to you, the situation has changed.

The settler takeover of properties in Sheikh Jarrah has been hindered in parts of the neighborhood, and halted in other parts. The courts have begun, for the first time in years, to rule against the settler organizations in hearings about the future of the neighborhood. The police, the executive arm of the settlement, has retreated from the neighborhood. Arrests of neighborhood residents have dwindled to next to nothing and as a result; our freedom of action and that of the neighborhood popular committee have increased. Most importantly, the political reality in East Jerusalem has begun to change. The joint Palestinian-Israeli political struggle has become a byword in East and West Jerusalem.

Nonetheless, the goals of our struggle — the removal of the settlers from Sheikh Jarrah, the return of the families to their homes, and above all, the liberation of the residents of East Jerusalem from repression – are still far from being realized.

Therefore we, the activists of Solidarity and the residents of Sheikh Jarrah have decided to move on to the next phase of the struggle. In the coming months, a series of activities in Sheikh Jarrah will replace the weekly demonstrations. We will conduct tours of the neighborhood for the Israeli public, hold large-scale political and cultural events, and begin the construction of a permanent information center run by the neighborhood’s residents. We call on you all to take part in the next stage of the struggle in Sheikh Jarrah.

Want to help? Contact us at SJnextphase@gmail.com, or at 0525357456.
Activity plan for the next couple of months:

Please note that some activities, including occasional demonstrations in Sheikh Jarrah and elsewhere, are not part of the plan and will be announced according to current events.

1. Launching of a new tours operation:

Three tours are already scheduled for the upcoming week. Want to take part in organizing and guiding tours of Sheikh Jarrah and East Jerusalem? Want to organize a tour for friends? Contact us at sjnextphase@gmail.com

2. Solidarity with Palestine: Saturday, September 17th, 11:00am

Israeli and Palestinian women's demonstration on both sides of the Kalandya checkpoint. The demonstration is a cooperation of the Solidarity Movement and the Israeli-Palestinian Women's Campaign in anticipation of the Palestinian bid for independence at the United Nations. Attention: the demo will be led by women, but men are naturally welcome to join!

3. Celebrating the Upcoming Palestinian Independence: September 22nd. Details TBD.

4. Live Screening of UN vote on Palestinian Independence in Sheikh Jarrah Details TBD.

5. An Information Sukkah in Sheikh Jarrah - Sukkoth mid-holiday.