

Israeli Settlement Activities & Related Policies in JERUSALEM



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INTRODUCTION

Throughout history, Jerusalem has thrived as an important political and cultural center and as a religious focal point and house of faith for the three monotheistic religions. Due, however, to its added importance as a political symbol and a regional geographic center, there have been numerous lengthy struggles to gain or have acknowledged the exclusive right to its possession. Its recent history, which for many years has been at the core of the Arab-Israeli conflict, has fueled ongoing battles relating to the future of the city and has rendered it a vital but unresolved question in Middle East politics.

From the outset of the occupation in 1967, successive Israeli governments have zealously and incessantly pursued one major goal, namely, the goal of 'Judaizing' East Jerusalem, i.e., to change its Arab character and create a new geopolitical reality in order to guarantee territorial, demographic, and religious control over all parts of city. They have shared their pursuit of this goal with various settlers groups, and while the former has concentrated on expropriating Palestinian land and building large, 'official' settlements in East Jerusalem, the latter have focused on 'secretly' penetrating Arab neighborhoods in and around the Old City as well as on archaeological digs, their motivation being both messianic and nationalistic in nature.

It was during the Camp David II talks held in July 2000 that Jerusalem was for the very first time placed on the negotiation table. Agreement, however, was not forthcoming, and Jerusalem consequently remains at the heart of the Arab-Israeli conflict and one of the most complex issues still awaiting a just solution. One thing is for certain though, i.e., the fact that any future talks will begin with the so-called 'Clinton Parameters' (negotiation principles drafted by then US President Bill Clinton at the end of the Camp David Process and publicized on 23 December 2000; they include, amongst other things, partitioning the city in order to make room for two capitals).

In recent years, there has been an increase in terms of both the number and long-term significance of the Israeli efforts to create yet more facts on the ground. All of the efforts represent part of an elaborate geopolitical strategy, the aim of which is to establish and consolidate exclusive Israeli sovereignty over Jerusalem and its environs.

This bulletin, by providing facts and figures relevant to the current situation, will hopefully shed some light on certain significant recent events and developments. Included here are Israel's so-called 'renovation projects' in the Al-Buraq/'Wailing Wall' area that began in Feb. 2007, the growing presence of Israeli settlers in and around the Old City, the expansion of settlements in the wider Jerusalem area, and the impact of the separation barrier - all of which were carefully designed to make any serious discussion relating to the establishment of a future Palestinian capital in Jerusalem impossible.

Changing Municipal Boundaries of Jerusalem, 1947-2000



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