

foresaw the construction of 91 apartments, many of which have already been sold to Jews from abroad, is slated for completion by October 2007.

While the El 'Ad settler group claims that all the land in question was acquired legally, it is certain that an estimated half was confiscated by the West Jerusalem Municipality from Arab landowners who subsequently appealed to the Jerusalem District Court on the grounds that the confiscation was illegal and that only Arab-owned land had been expropriated and designated as 'green areas.' Not surprisingly, however, the court ruled in favor of the West Jerusalem Municipality. The settlement's infrastructure is to be built on land confiscated from residents of Jabal Mukabber for which they were promised better water, electricity, and sewage services in return. It is worth noting that the site is the only space left for future urban development in the area.

The Jabal Mukabber settlement project is clearly a key link in an evolving chain of settlements being built inside Arab areas to break up Arab continuity and establish Israeli domination over East Jerusalem, thus making it virtually impossible to have a viable Palestinian capital there.

## **BUILDING NEW AND EXPANSION OF EXISTING SETTLEMENTS ALONG OR BEYOND THE MUNICIPAL BOUNDARIES**

In addition to the settler activities mentioned above, there is also, of course, the Israeli Government's ongoing settlement policy in East Jerusalem and its wider metropolitan area.

At least 66% of the Jerusalem of today is territory that was seized by force (5% being former Jordanian Municipality territory, and 61% former West Bank territory). Within this area, Israel has expropriated more than 23,380 dunums of mostly Palestinian-owned land - over one-third of East Jerusalem - for the construction of Israeli settlements since 1967 (FMEP, *Report on Israeli Settlement*, May-June 1999). The construction and subsequent expansion of the settlements - with a population of approx. 180-200,000 - was intended to secure Israeli sovereignty over the entire Jerusalem region. The settlements form two rings around the city with the inner ring around East Jerusalem and the outer ring ('Greater Jerusalem') reaching far into the West Bank, thereby isolating Arab East Jerusalem and imposing economic strangulation on the Palestinian Territories' natural center for trade and movement and cutting the West Bank in half. The 'Greater Jerusalem' plan is a political rather than geographical concept that follows Israel's vision of a metropolitan Jerusalem stretching from Ramallah (north) to Hebron (south) and from Jericho (east) to Bet Shemesh (west) and covering some 30% of the West Bank. The total area involved amounts to 440 km<sup>2</sup>, of which less than a quarter lies within pre-1967 Israeli borders.

Expanding existing settlements and establishing new ones along or just beyond the municipal boundaries is part of Israel's overall plan to form a Jewish urban belt around Palestinian East Jerusalem. Pillars of this project are Nof Yael near Walajeh in the southwest, Har Homa II in the south, Geva between Geva Binyamin and Jerusalem in the north, Giv'at Ze'ev's new 'neighborhood' Agan Ha'Ayalot in the northwest, and the Ma'ale Adumim/E-1 Plan in the east.

### ◆ **Walajeh**

The village of **Walajeh**, which is located in southern Jerusalem close to Bethlehem (both inside and beyond the West Jerusalem Municipality border), has traditionally been associated with the cultivation of vineyards, olive trees, wheat, barley, and fruits. After the *Naqba* and the War of 1948, the village was handed to Israel in accordance with the terms of the Armistice Agreement signed with Jordan on 3 April 1949, which stipulated that the southern Jerusalem boundary line would run along the Jerusalem-Jaffa railway line, north of which Walajeh was situated (now the site of Jerusalem's Biblical Zoo). The villagers left their homes and moved south of the tracks into Jordanian territory, where much of their land was located. Since they enjoyed UNRWA refugee status, many also moved into the Dheisheh or Shu'fat refugee camps.



*Walajeh*

After the War of 1967, the boundaries of the expanded East Jerusalem, which Israel had annexed illegally, brought nearly the entire area of the new village within Jerusalem's city limits (the remainder becoming part of Israel proper, located on the other side of the Green Line.) However, although the land was annexed, its residents were not and they were consequently not included in the subsequent Israeli census. As a result of this, they received West Bank ID cards instead of Jerusalem residency ID cards to which they were legally entitled.

Today, the approx. 2,000 residents of Walajeh, although living in Jerusalem, depend on the PA for all their services as the Israeli Ministry of Interior still refuses to issue them with Israeli ID cards. Their village, meanwhile, is surrounded on all sides by Jewish settlements (Har Gilo and Betar Illit).

The new '**Givat**' or '**Nof Yael**' settlement project was launched in June 2004, the intention being that it would eventually provide 13,600 housing units for up to 60,000 settlers on 4,110 dunums and thus link Jerusalem and the Etzion settlement bloc. Half the land is within city limits, and half is on the other side of the Green Line.

The Ministry of Interior claims that the land on which the settlement is situated was purchased by the Jewish National Fund subsidiary Himnuta, which confirmed ownership but denied any connection to the settlement project. There are also claims that the plan is a completely private initiative (based on land sales made possible by the use of forged documents). However, the Israeli campaign of house demolitions in the area suggests that the Nof Yael plan is/was both sponsored and approved by the State.