

JERUSALEM

Israeli Settlement Activities & Related Policies



INTRODUCTION

Throughout history, Jerusalem has thrived as an important political and cultural center and as a religious focal point for the three monotheistic religions. This status has resulted in numerous struggles taking place in an attempt to possess this significant city.

From the outset of the occupation in 1967, successive Israeli governments have zealously and incessantly pursued one major goal, namely, the 'Judaization' of East Jerusalem, a policy of changing its Arab character and creating a new geopolitical reality in order to guarantee territorial, demographic, and religious control over all of city. They have shared their pursuit of this goal with various settler 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' infiltrating Arab neighborhoods as well as archaeological sites in and around the Old City, 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. However, recent years have seen an increase in the number of Israel's elaborate geopolitical strategies to consolidate its exclusive sovereignty over Jerusalem. Therefore, the parameters of a political division of the city that Bill Clinton laid out ("What is Arab should be Palestinian," and "what is Jewish should be Israeli") become meaningless.

In the months following the November 2007 Annapolis conference, Israeli construction in Jerusalem and beyond its boundaries significantly accelerated and increased - often through or in close cooperation with settler organizations. Out of a total of approximately 470,000 settlers in the occupied Palestinian Territories, 40% - or 190,000 - are currently living in East Jerusalem, with another 96,000 in settlements around Jerusalem. A Peace Now report released in March 2009 shows that Israel plans to build 5,722 new housing units in East Jerusalem alone. In addition, recent Peace Now calculations have shown that almost 2,000 settlers now live in outposts in the heart of the Palestinian neighborhoods of East Jerusalem.

This bulletin describes current Israeli plans, trends and undertakings in Jerusalem. It provides the facts, figures, means and policies employed by Israel to strengthen its grip on the city. It shows how Israel is trying to exclude Jerusalem from any future negotiations by making sure that the city can never be "divided" along any lines, and hindering any Palestinian plans to develop East Jerusalem and declare it the capital of a future Palestinian state.



While the focus of the bulletin is on settlement related topics, it should be noted that Israel's ongoing efforts at foiling diplomacy are further aided by its discriminatory residency rights and housing policies, closure and permit regime, as well as house demolitions and the separation barrier.

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