

◆ Nof Yael near 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.

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 vil-



Walajeh Land

lage 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 absorbed and they were consequently not included in the subsequent Israeli 1967 census. As a result of this, they received West Bank identity cards instead of Jerusalem residency cards to which they were legally entitled.

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

The new '**Nof Yael**' (sometimes also '**Givat Yael**') settlement project was launched in June 2004 with the aim to provide 13,600 housing units for up to 60,000 settlers on 4,110 dunums and to link Jerusalem and the Etzion settlement bloc. Half the land in question 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.

At about the same time as the new settlement project was launched, the Walajeh checkpoint was established (it was later, on 19 Feb. 2006, transformed into a **border passage** by an Israeli military order according to which some 40 dunums of Walajeh land was confiscated to allow for the construction of a new terminal). In addition, the revised route of the **separation barrier**, approved by the Israeli Cabinet on 30

April 2006, included the encirclement of Walajeh, leaving it completely fenced in and with only one access road, passing through the Israeli controlled Har Gilo terminal.

On 17 February 2009, the Jerusalem District Planning Board rejected a town plan (along with one for the Bustan/Silwan area) that would have legalized hundreds of illegally-built homes, in part due to its unwillingness to legitimize, en mass, "illegal" construction.

◆ Har Homa on Jabal Abu Ghneim

Jabal Abu Ghneim was a tree-covered hill located within the southern municipal boundaries of Jerusalem that was privately owned by Palestinian families from Beit Sahour, Bethlehem, Sur Baher, and Umm Tuba. In 1968, the West Jerusalem municipality classified it as a "green area" – restricting development in order to preserve its ecological diversity. However, Israel con-



Jabal Abu Ghneim prior to the construction of Har Homa

fiscated the mountain in 1991 to build a new settlement. After the Israeli government's February 1997 announcement that 6,500 Jewish homes for some 30,000-40,000 Israelis would be constructed at the site and the beginning of construction work the following month, Palestinian protests led to a breakdown in the peace talks. Due to heavy international pressure, construction was eventually frozen. A few months later, the Israeli government tried to calm things down by offering to build 3,000 new apartments and 400 government-financed housing units in the nearby Arab neighborhood of Sur Baher. In November 1998, Israel began leveling the hill and advertising for tenders, and construction of apartments began in August 1999. In November 2000, the West Jerusalem municipality started planning for an additional 4,000 units ('**Har Homa B**') and in January 2002, the first settlers moved into the settlement.



Ongoing construction at Har Homa

In January 2007, Israel's Ministry of Housing and Construction approved the first 983 units for a new settlement ('**Har Homa C**') west of Har Homa and south of the Mar Elias Monastery. In addition, a new residential area ('**Khirbet Mazmuriya**' - '**Har Homa D**') is planned southeast of Har Homa, the plan being to extend Har Homa up to the municipal border. However, it is doubtful whether the plan will actually materi-