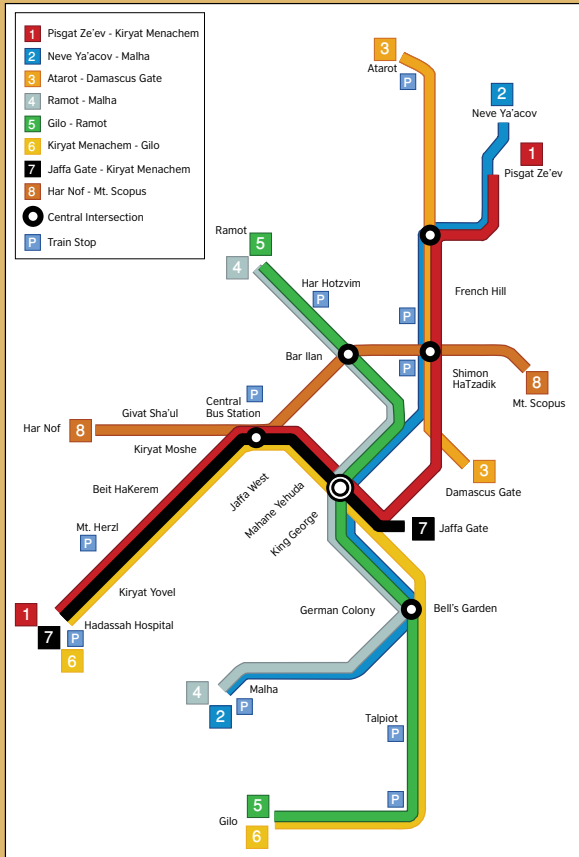


Community Council and the Galway City Council in Ireland voted against renewing their city contracts with Veolia. In June the High Court of Nanterre will hear a legal claim brought by Association France Palestine Solidarité (AFPS) against Veolia, Alstom and Alstom transport regarding the construction and operation of a light railway in East Jerusalem. Furthermore, the Palestinian Boycott Divestment and Sanctions National Committee (BNC) has called on Iran to suspend Veolia and Alstom contracts in the country. (Adri Nieuwhof and Omar Barghouti, "Putting words of support into boycott action," *The Electronic Intifada*, 5 May 2009). As a result of these initiatives, Veolia, which was supposed to run the train system after its construction, abandoned the project in early June and was reportedly also trying to sell its 5% stake in CityPass.

## LIGHT RAIL SYSTEM

In 2000, the French company Alstom won the international bid for the construction of the Jerusalem light rail system and in 2002, Connex, a subsidiary of another French company, Veolia, won the operating rights. Both subsequently formed a consortium called CityPass with two Israeli companies, Ashrom Construction and Pollar Investment, as well as two Israeli banks, Hapaolim and Leumi, and the contract was signed in July 2005 ("Jerusalem's Apartheid Tramway," *Le Monde Diplomatique*, 8 Feb. 2007.) Work began in April 2006 with the aim to operate the first 13.8-km long transit line with 23 stops and 25 trains between Pisgat Ze'ev and Mt. Herzl by 2009, serving some 100,000 passengers a day. By 2020, eight lines are planned. However, CityPass postponed the 2009 target to September 2010, and, in February 2009, its Director General Yair Naveh hinted that there may be further delays.

Unlike his predecessor Uri Lupolianski, the present mayor of Jerusalem, Nir Barkat, opposes the project for its costs as well as for the increase in air pollution and traffic jams in the city. In March 2009, he was quoted as proposing to cancel the project after the first two lines are completed and to replace the rest of the planned rail network (five more lines) with Bus Rapid Transport.



## House Demolitions

Israel's policy in East Jerusalem is politically motivated and is aimed at maintaining a Jewish majority in the city; it is therefore very difficult for Palestinians to obtain **building permits**. According to figures by the Israeli Interior Ministry and the West Jerusalem municipality some 15,000-20,000 buildings in East Jerusalem have been built without permits, i.e., about 40% of the total number of buildings. It is estimated that for every building erected under permit, ten have been built without permits. (Meir Margalit, *No Place Like Home - House Demolitions in East Jerusalem*, ICAHD, 2007).

One of the main obstacles in obtaining building permits is that large areas of East Jerusalem land have been declared 'unfit for building' or as 'green' or 'open space,' where construction is forbidden. The policy means that no more than 12% of East Jerusalem, which has already been intensively developed, is left for Palestinian residential purposes. Areas allocated in Israeli future building plans for public buildings and/or areas lacking infrastructure (e.g., roads, water and sewage) are also off-limits for Palestinian building. In addition, in many cases it is difficult to prove land ownership, as Palestinians did not document their title deeds under Ottoman, British Mandate, Jordanian or Israeli rule. A complicating factor is the fact that land is often owned by several inheritors some of whom are difficult to locate in order to obtain the required letter of approval.

A series of "illegal" construction is **punished** in two ways: with a **monetary fine** (which adds a significant amount to the municipal budget! Between 2001-06, the municipality collected an average of NIS 25.5 million per year. OCHA Special Focus, *The Planning Crisis in East Jerusalem*, 2009) and with the requirement either to produce a permit or restore the *status quo ante*, i.e., **demolish** the building. Until 2001, house owners who paid the fine were left alone, even if they did not obtain a building permit. But in 2001, the West Jerusalem municipality started re-opening their cases, charging home owners not only with illegal construction, but also with failing to comply with a court order and occupying a building without a permit. Another form of punishment is the **confiscation of construction equipment** and requesting high fines for their release, aimed at intimidating contractors and causing them sufficient economic damage so that they refrain from providing services to people without building permits. Increasingly common is also the 3-6 month **imprisonment** of East Jerusalem residents for failure to obtain a building permit as well as the demolition of their homes (M. Margalit, *No Place Like Home...*, ICAHD, 2007).



Demolition order

Also problematic are the high **costs** for issuing a **building permit**. These costs include fees for: opening a file, road and sidewalk development, land development, water and sewage development, water mains connection and a development, and betterment levy. These costs are often higher than the actual building costs, estimated at almost NIS 110,000 for a 200 m<sup>2</sup> house on a half-dunum lot (M. Margalit, *No Place Like Home...*, ICAHD, 2007).

Other restrictions include the necessity of approved **Town Planning Schemes (TPS)** that comply with the municipality's