

In 2007, another court ordered the settler families to leave the Al-Kurd home because they had built without a permit but they refused and the Israeli police did not enforce the order. Instead, the High Court issued a judgment in favor of the settlers on 14 July 2008, ordering the expulsion of the Al-Kurd family within 24 hours. The move triggered an official complaint from the US State Department to the Israeli government, questioning the legality of the terms on which the settler group claimed to have purchased the land. Eventually, on 9 November 2008, the Al-Kurd family – and not the settlers - was forcibly expelled, clearly in a bid to pave the way for the takeover of another 27 nearby houses (inhabited by over 500 Palestinians) and to proceed with the plans to establish a 200-unit settlement over 18 dunums next to the tomb (Town Plan Scheme 12705, submitted by the Nahalat Shimon settler organization in late August 2008). The move will create a Jewish continuum surrounding the Old City. Meanwhile, the



Destruction of the Al-Kurd tent

Al-Kurds, whose family head passed away some two weeks after their eviction, live in a nearby tent, which Israeli authorities have torn down at least five times so far. On 19 March 2009, *Ha'aretz* reported that a document uncovered in Ottoman archives in Ankara has now confirmed that Jews never purchased the disputed land and that Palestinians are the rightful owners. It is doubtful though, that Israeli courts will accept the document's validity as a recent case shows, when the Israeli High Court of Justice ruled on 17 May 2009 that the Iwa and Hannon families must evacuate their respective homes in Sheikh Jarrah within two months so the properties can be turned over to the Nahalat Shimon.

In a related development, the Jerusalem Planning and Building Committee on 20 April 2009 granted, the final permit to the settler group "**Amana**" for the construction of its headquarters in Sheikh Jarrah. The move is considered illegal since apparently no tender had been published. Palestinian neighbors and the French Hospital have filed an objection with the local planning committee against the planned three-story building to be located near the French Hospital, across the street from the Central Police Headquarters (*Peace Now, Settler Compound in East Jerusalem Receives Final Construction Permit*, April 2009). (See also satellite map on page 5.)

The Glassman Campus

A few meters southwest of the Shimon HaTzadik site, opposite the Olive Tree Hotel and in front of the Al-Hayat Medical Center, an empty plot was fenced off not long ago and a sign reading "The Max and Gianna Glassman Campus" was put up. Apparently the plan is to build a conference center at the site.



◆ **Wadi Al-Joz**

Another plan for expanding Jewish presence in East Jerusalem was approved by the Jerusalem Planning and Building Committee on 2 June 2009. The site in question is close to the northeastern corner of the Old City along the street leading to Suwaneh, overlooking the Mount of Olives and the Kidron Valley. The scheme is part of the master zoning plan for the Old City and foresees the destruction of the existing vegetable/wholesale market (locally known as "Al-Hisbe") and the building of a complex consisting of a nine-storey, 200-room hotel and a commercial center in its stead. Apparently, current store owners will be given the opportunity to rent space in the new complex, but it is unlikely they will be able to afford it. Implementation of the plan, which has been submitted for public comment, also will involve the demolition of a Palestinian kindergarten. The plot of land is occupied territory but "owned" by the Jerusalem municipality, which earmarked it as open/public space, and the implementing agency for the project is the Jerusalem Development Authority.



Part of Wadi Al-Joz with the site of the planned hotel

◆ **Silwan**

Silwan is a Palestinian neighborhood stretching from the southeast corner of Jerusalem's Old City, following Wadi Al-Hilweh (referred to on Israeli maps as the Kidron Valley) as it runs between the densely populated hillsides of the Mount of Olives and Mount Zion, and sloping down through the desert along the slopes of Jabal Al-Mukabber. It is a hotbed of confrontation where the struggle over space and presence is steadily multiplying and where currently some 400 settlers live amidst approximately 50,000 Palestinian residents.

Large tracts of land in the area - which Israel seized illegally after the 1967 War - were purchased in the 1920s by Baron de Rothschild and subsequently administered by the Jewish National Fund, which has since assisted settler groups in their efforts to take control of the area. Over 55% of the land is now in the hands of El 'Ad. It should be noted here that a 1992 government investigation (**Klugman Commission**, named after its head, Director General of the Justice Ministry Chaim Klugman) found that settler groups, including El 'Ad, had taken over Palestinian property by continuously using forged documents, misusing the law governing absentee property and with tens of millions of shekels of public money, transferred to them by government agencies without oversight.