Contents

The Palestinian Papers (Al-Jazeera files)

1. The Palestine Papers: "The biggest Yerushalayim"
2. Netanyahu secretly promised not to link Jerusalem and nearby settlement, Palestine papers show
3. Sparking Outrage, Political Storm
4. Al-Jazeera angers Palestinians
5. The Palestine Papers: Al-Jazeera Has an Agenda

International responses to Jerusalem and the peace-process

6. EU Heads Recommendations on Jerusalem
7. US veto underscores failure of US-sponsored 'peace process'

Deconstructing and reconstructing East Jerusalem

8. Toward a point of no return: Lifting the political restraints in East Jerusalem
9. The 10 plagues of east Jerusalem
11. Court orders government to accommodate East Jerusalem school children
12. Netanyahu commits to promoting Arab construction in East Jerusalem
13. Army colleges to move to east Jerusalem
14. Over 100 Participants Mark Two Year Anniversary to Solidarity Tent in East Jerusalem’s Silwan
15. Families forced out as army occupies Jerusalem rooftop

Jerusalem’s Grey zones

16. No man's land in east Jerusalem: Chaos reigns supreme
17. Shin Bet warns of increased PA security involvement in East Jerusalem
18. Jerusalem MPs hold Palestinian Authority complicit in the Judaization of the Holy City

Excavating and disputing sacred space

19. Digging completed on tunnel under Old City walls in East Jerusalem
20. Jerusalem Underground: Secrets of an Ancient City
   A new discovery links the City of David to the Temple Mount.
21. Education about Jerusalem can help resolve its divisions
22. King Solomon's Vanishing Temple

Other current issues

23. Would East Jerusalem Arabs rather be citizens of Israel or Palestine?
24. The Lifta that never will be
The Palestinian Papers (al-Jazeera files)

1. **The Palestine Papers: "The biggest Yerushalayim"**
   Gregg Carlstrom, al-Jazeera, 23/01/2011

http://english.aljazeera.net/palestinepapers/2011/01/2011122112512844113.html

*PA offered to concede almost all of East Jerusalem, an historic concession for which Israel offered nothing in return.*

Ramat Shlomo, Israel – For all the international controversy over construction at this quiet settlement in north Jerusalem, there is little of it in evidence.

The controversy came last year, when the Jerusalem municipality approved 1,600 new housing tenders while Joe Biden, the US vice-president, was visiting Israel. But construction has yet to begin, and residents of this settlement – populated mostly by Orthodox Jews, a group with one of the highest birth rates in Israel – say politics are interfering with family life.

“Isn’t it a question of politics,” said Avraham Goldstein, a student waiting at a bus stop in the settlement. “People need to build, they want to have their families nearby. There are more than 18,000 people here. And Ramat Shlomo is obviously part of Jerusalem.”

The US responded to the Ramat Shlomo announcement with anger; Biden said it "undermines the kind of trust we need" to restart talks between Israel and the Palestinian Authority (PA).

But The Palestine Papers reveal that Israel had no reason to halt construction in Ramat Shlomo. That’s because Palestinian negotiators agreed in 2008 to allow Israel to annex this settlement, along with almost every other bit of illegal construction in the Jerusalem area – an historic concession for which they received nothing in return.

"We proposed that Israel annexes all settlements"

The unprecedented offer by the PA came in a June 15 trilateral meeting in Jerusalem, involving Condoleezza Rice, the then-US secretary of state, Tzipi Livni, the then-Israeli foreign minister, Ahmed Qurei, PA's former prime minister, and Saeb Erekat, the chief Palestinian negotiator.

Qurei: This last proposition could help in the swap process. We proposed that Israel annexes all settlements in Jerusalem except Jabal Abu Ghneim (Har Homa). This is the first time in history that we make such a proposition; we refused to do so in Camp David.

Erekat went on to enumerate some of the settlements that the PA was willing to concede: French Hill, Ramat Alon, Ramat Shlomo, Gilo, Talpiot, and the Jewish Quarter in Jerusalem’s old city. Those areas contain some 120,000 Jewish settlers. (Erekat did not mention the fate of other major East Jerusalem settlements, like Pisgat Ze’ev and Neve Ya’akov, but Qurei’s language indicates that they would also remain a part of Israel.)
The "napkin map" revealed

The Palestine Papers include a rendering of the land swap map presented in mid-2008 to Palestinian president Mahmoud Abbas by Israeli prime minister Ehud Olmert.

In an October 2009 meeting, Erekat also proposed a geographical division of Jerusalem’s Old City, with control of the Jewish Quarter and "part of the Armenian Quarter" going to the Israelis.

Settlements in East Jerusalem are illegal under international law, but the Israelis have long treated them as suburbs.

Ramat Shlomo, indeed, feels little different from Jewish neighbourhoods of Jerusalem. It is a 10-minute drive from the Knesset building, the first exit on highway 1 after crossing the Green Line. The Jerusalem municipality provides services in settlements like Ramat and Neke Ya’akov. Pisgat Ze’ev will soon be connected with downtown Jerusalem via a light rail line currently under construction.

Israelis are deeply divided on East Jerusalem settlements – polls conducted last year by Yedioth Ahronoth and Ha’aretz found that 46 per cent and 41 per cent (respectively) support an East Jerusalem settlement freeze – but the government’s position is resolute. Binyamin Netanyahu, the Israeli prime minister, likes to say that “building in Jerusalem is no different than building in Tel Aviv”; Tzipi Livni says her Kadima party will "never divide Jerusalem" in an agreement with the Palestinians.

That is the Israeli framing. But the PA embraces a similar view, according to The Palestine Papers. And it does so unilaterally: The Israeli side refused to even place Jerusalem on the agenda, let alone offer the PA concessions in return for its historic offer.

In July 2008, Udi Dekel, adviser to then-Israeli prime minister Ehud Olmert, asked Erekat why “your side keep[s] mentioning Jerusalem in every meeting.” Six weeks earlier, he told PA map expert Samih al’Abed that he wasn’t allowed to discuss the subject.

Dekel: I do not have permission to discuss Jerusalem without knowing what arrangements will be in Jerusalem.

Al’Abed: And Abu Ala said we cannot discuss Ma’ale Adumim.

Dekel: So let’s eat lunch together, and let them [leaders] decide what to do.

The PA, in other words, never even really negotiated the issue; their representatives gave away almost everything to the Israelis, without pressuring them for concessions or compromise. Erekat seemed to realise this – perhaps belatedly – in a January 2010 meeting with [US president Barack] Obama’s adviser David Hale.

Erekat: Israelis want the two-state solution but they don’t trust. They want it more than you think, sometimes more than Palestinians. What is in that paper gives them the
biggest Yerushalaim in Jewish history, symbolic number of refugees return, demilitarised state… what more can I give?

*An impossible choice?*

Palestinian leaders took a more principled stand on other major settlement blocs in the West Bank. In the same meeting where he conceded East Jerusalem, Qurei told Livni that the PA "cannot accept the annexation of Ma’ale Adumim, Ariel, Giv’at Ze’ev, Ephrat and Har Homa settlements".

All of those (with the exception of Har Homa) are located deep in the West Bank, and their inclusion in Israel would be ruinous for the territorial contiguity of a future Palestinian state. Ariel, for example, is nearly halfway to Jordan, connected to Israel by an 18km stretch of highway 5. Palestinian laborers work on a housing development in the illegal settlement of Ma'ale Adumim.

But dismantling these settlements is also not an option for the Israeli government. Ariel is a major industrial zone with nearly 18,000 residents. Ma’ale Adumim, east of Jerusalem, is a fast-growing "bedroom community" of 30,000 people; during a recent visit, a group of Palestinian construction worker was building family homes on the settlement’s north-eastern slopes.

"The people who will buy these homes, they will not just leave in a few years," said one of the workers, from the nearby village of al-Jahalin.

The Palestine Papers, then, underscore the seeming impossibility of resolving the status of settlements like Ma’ale Adumim and Ariel: Palestinian negotiators cannot accept them, and Israeli negotiators cannot dismantle them.

There is a third option, which Palestinian negotiators raised in several meetings: those Jewish settlements could be allowed to remain as part of the future Palestinian state. Ahmed Qurei made that suggestion to Tzipi Livni several times in 2008, including this exchange in June:

Qurei: Perhaps Ma’ale Adumim will remain under Palestinian sovereignty, and it could be a model for cooperation and coexistence.

Livni: The matter is not simply giving a passport to settlers.

The Israeli foreign minister refused to entertain the idea. “You know this is not realistic,” she told Qurei in May.

Asked about Qurei’s offer earlier this month, residents in Ma’ale Adumim reacted with a mix of laughter and disbelief. Some wrote it off as a political impossibility; others worried about their safety, claiming that they would be killed.

There is, in other words, seemingly no mutually acceptable policy for Ma’ale Adumim, Ariel, and other major West Bank settlements within a two-state solution – a fact the Bush administration was willing to acknowledge in July 2008.
Rice: I don’t think that any Israeli leader is going to cede Ma’ale Adumim.

Qurei: Or any Palestinian leader.

Rice: Then you won’t have a state!

Rice may prove to be correct: Two and a half years later, the parties are no closer to a solution on settlements, and the Israeli government may be gearing up to issue a “massive” new round of housing permits for illegal settlers in the West Bank.

2. Netanyahu secretly promised not to link Jerusalem and nearby settlement, Palestine papers show
   By Barak Ravid, Haaretz, 26/01/2011

Released documents run contrary to Israel's long-standing plan to build a neighborhood of 3,500 homes in area E1, construction that the U.S. has strongly opposed.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu secretly promised U.S. President Barack Obama and Secretary of State Hillary Clinton during his first visit to the White House in May 2009 that Israel would not build new neighborhoods in E1, a controversial area which connects Jerusalem to Ma'aleh Adumim.

Netanyahu's commitment is revealed in two documents from the Palestinian Negotiations Support Unit Unit leaked to Al Jazeera TV.

In response, The Prime Minister's Office said that "Netanyahu did not make any commitment on the matter."

Israel has been planning for several years to build a neighborhood called Mevaseret Adumim in E1 that would include 3,500 housing units, as well as commercial and tourism facilities, in order to create an urban Jewish contiguity between Jerusalem and Ma'aleh Adumim, bolstering its hold on East Jerusalem by enveloping it with Jewish neighborhoods.

The United States strongly opposes the construction of this neighborhood, fearing that it would block the territorial contiguity of a future Palestinian state, splitting the West Bank into two and isolating East Jerusalem from the Palestinian population centers in the territories. This, the Americans fear, would undermine the chances of reaching a permanent settlement and establishing a Palestinian state.

In late May 2009, Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas visited the White House. On June 2, 2009, Saeb Erekat, the head of the Palestinian negotiating team, briefed staff in Ramallah on details of the visit.

"[President] Obama said he got Israel to commit to stop construction in E1 but nothing yet on home demolitions," Erekat is quoted as saying in the briefing. "[U.S. envoy] Mitchell said Obama was very tough with Bibi, [and] Clinton said the same. The
meeting with the Israelis did not produce anything besides the commitment to stop E1 construction, but that is secret," Erekat is quoted as saying.

Two weeks later, on June 16, Erekat briefed a different group of advisers in the Negotiations Support Unit and repeated the message. "We gave Barack Obama a file that gave him all the details on this issue, on E1, on Ma'aleh Adumim, etc. Hillary Clinton told us that [construction in] E1 wasn't going to happen but to be quiet. She got something from the Israelis."

At the briefings, Erekat said that during Abbas's meetings at the White House, Obama was highly critical of Netanyahu and said that he had given him until July 1, 2009, to make his position clear on the principle of two states for two peoples, as well as on settlement construction.

Quoting Obama, Erekat said he told Abbas that "I cannot report anything to you, what we heard from the Israelis doesn't deserve your time."

In late July 2009, Aluf Benn reported in Haaretz that the U.S. administration told Netanyahu that construction in E1 would be "destructive." The Palestinian documents reveal that in response to the American message, Netanyahu promised to avoid building in that area.

But when Netanyahu launched his election campaign in Ma'aleh Adumim, he promised to move ahead with the controversial project.

"I will link Jerusalem to Ma'aleh Adumim through the neighborhood of Mevaseret Adumim, E1. I want to see neighborhoods in one contiguous Jewish construction," he said at the time.

On the eve of the formation of his government, it was reported that Netanyahu had agreed with Avigdor Lieberman, the chairman of Yisrael Beitenu, to allow construction in E1, but this was not included in the coalition agreement.

The documents show that when Abbas returned from the visit to Washington in late May, there was a sense of euphoria on the Palestinian side about Obama's attitude.

"The Washington I went to last week isn't the Washington I knew before," Erekat is quoted as saying.

In a meeting, Admiral Michael Mullen, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, told Abbas that "Arabs and Muslims have only one thing on their mind: Palestine. I have 230,000 troops in Iraq and Afghanistan and I am bringing back 10 each week draped in American flags or in wheelchairs. Because I want to bring them back home, a Palestinian state is a cardinal interest of the USA."

Erekat is quoted as saying that Obama told Abbas "the establishment of the Palestinian state is a must for me personally."

He also said that "Obama told [Netanyahu] that if the Israeli government coalition can't deliver, that's their problem. The U.S. needs an answer by July 1."
Erekat complained that "Netanyahu is going to burn the West Bank. He will give the green light in Gaza, let Hamas run loose, while burning the West Bank to show that AM can't deliver. Netanyahu is capable of anything."

3. **Sparking Outrage, Political Storm**  
Hasan Abu Nimah, The Jordan Times, 2/2/2011  
http://www.zawya.com/story.cfm/sidZAWYA20110202044213

On January 23, Al Jazeera Satellite Channel began to release a large cache of secret documents on Palestinian-Israeli negotiations, all of them obtained, it would appear, from Palestinian sources.

The "Palestine Papers", consisting of detailed meeting minutes of high Palestinian, Israeli, American and European officials, emails, reports, maps and presentations, were highlighted on Al Jazeera's both English and Arabic channels in special programmes over a four-day period, causing a veritable political storm.

Out of the 1,600 or so documents, all now released on Al Jazeera website (transparency.aljazeera.net), only a few - focusing on so-called "final status issues" of Jerusalem, settlements and refugees, Palestinian security collaboration with Israel and the Israeli war on Gaza - were featured on the television.

This may mean that there is much more in this huge collection of documents that academics and others should study in the coming months and years to learn how a "peace process" that was supposed to bring justice and peace ended up bringing us farther away from those goals than ever.

The Israeli-Palestinian negotiations, which began with the Madrid peace conference in 1991, were supposed to be built on clear terms of reference rooted in international law. What the Palestine Papers reveal is that the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) and the Palestinian Authority (PA), that the 1993 Oslo Accords gave birth to, have consistently departed from any such principles, offering Israel huge, unauthorised concessions behind the back of the Palestinian people.

Much outrage has been expressed over the PA negotiators' positions on Jerusalem, the future capital of the envisioned Palestinian state, and on the right of return for the Palestinian refugees.

Saeb Erekat, the Palestinian "chief negotiator", characterised the Palestinian offer to give Israel virtually all its settlements in and around East Jerusalem, well beyond the 1967 lines, as creating the "biggest Yerushalayim in history", using the Israeli term for the city.

All United Nations resolutions and other relevant accords amongst concerned partners agreed that the lines of June 4, 1967, should be the new borders of the future Palestinian state. The lines run across the holy city of Jerusalem, clearly demarcating what belongs to whom, as is the case for the rest of Palestine.
On the question of refugees, the papers reveal that Palestinian negotiators offered that out of the five or six million Palestinian refugees in the diaspora and in refugee camps in the occupied territories, only a tiny fraction - between 100,000 and 150,000 - would be able to exercise their internationally recognised right to return, stretched out over a period of 10 years. Israel, the papers show, rejected this dramatic concession, and offered only an insignificant total of 5,000 refugees.

Other disclosures reveal scandalous PA concessions on Jewish settlements and Israeli Palestinian security cooperation. Israeli settlements built on Palestinian land occupied in 1967 are illegal from the point of view of international law and should therefore be removed as they were formerly removed from Sinai and Gaza.

The Palestinians have nevertheless granted Israel the right to annex most of the illegal settlements, which currently house about half a million Jewish settlers, under the very vague clause of a "land swap". Keeping the settlements or most of them in place renders the much-acclaimed two-state solution a mere fantasy. While the Palestinian offers contained in the papers indicate a 1:1 "land swap", this is deceptive. In the Jerusalem area, under Palestinian proposals, Israel would receive 50 units of land for every one swapped to the Palestinians. The "compensation" would not be in the Jerusalem area, but largely in the form of sand dunes near Gaza.

Security cooperation between Israel and the PA has never been a secret. It forms a significant part of the 1993 Oslo accords. The Quartet's (US, UN, EU and Russia) roadmap (2003), on the other hand, placed a firm requirement on the PA to "declare an unequivocal end to violence and terrorism and undertake visible efforts on the ground to arrest, disrupt, and restrain individuals and groups conducting and planning violent attacks on Israelis anywhere".

But the fulfillment of this commitment was conditional upon Israel's halting violence, stopping its settlement-building activity and removing all its "illegal" outposts. While Israel met none of its commitments, the Palestinian side carried the security cooperation to levels that defy comprehension and which would, in any other country, be considered unconscionable collaboration with a belligerent military occupation.

The PA simply allowed its security apparatus, built with US supervision and financing to become an agent committed to serving Israeli security needs, to brutally target and disarm other Palestinians, Hamas in particular, and suppress political dissent against the PA.

PLO official Ahmed Qureia, the documents reveal, even asked Israel to tighten its siege on Gaza by reoccupying the Gaza-Egyptian border, the so-called "Philadelphia Route", and by blocking the Rafah smuggling tunnels.

Stunned observers asked why such excessive Palestinian concessions were not adequate to prompt the Israelis to agree to a settlement. The explanation is simple. It is precisely because the PA was constantly lowering its negotiating ceiling that the Israelis never needed to do anything but sit and wait for more concessions.

Negotiations obviously involve compromises, but reciprocal, and only when they facilitate a deal. There is hardly any parallel in history where one side was making
successive offers while the other was not only escalating its demands but all along creating physical, irreversible facts on the ground.

The Palestinian effort and capitulation were in vain. They did not lead to any kind of progress on the road to a peaceful settlement in accordance with international law, nor to any visible improvement of the situation for millions of Palestinians and the wider region.

All sides need to recognise the enormous damage done as a result, not only to the weaker Palestinian side, but also to the Israelis who were blinded to the harm done to their chances of ever being accepted in the region by the impunity and unconditional support from the US and EU.

For Palestinians, these are matters of life and death, the core of a cause that has persisted for more than six decades. But the PA treated the whole matter as a personal attack on its main personalities. It trivialised the issues and launched slanderous attacks on Al Jazeera and any critic. Killing the messenger, it hoped, would kill the message as well. Through this arrogant, irresponsible and undignified behaviour, it demonstrated once again, as it did in all the meetings recorded in the Palestine Papers, that it is unfit to speak on behalf of a people that holds fast to its rights and dignity.

4. **Al-Jazeera angers Palestinians**


   http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2011/01/24/AR2011012406221.html

   JERUSALEM - The publication this week of documents revealing the Palestinian leadership's willingness to concede parts of East Jerusalem and make other difficult compromises in peace talks with Israel is troublesome for both sides.

   For Palestinian negotiators, the risk is an erosion of credibility, with the documents strongly suggesting to the Palestinian public that their leaders abandoned core Palestinian positions in exchange for little from Israel, analysts said Monday.

   For Israel, the documents could prove problematic because they show the earnestness with which the Palestinians pushed for a deal, despite Israeli protestations that they have no partner for peace.

   As they try to limit the fallout from the documents disclosed by al-Jazeera TV, the prospects for renewed negotiations toward a two-state solution appear to be growing even more faint.

   A bid in September by the United States to restart stalled peace talks collapsed almost as soon as it started amid disputes over Israeli settlements in the West Bank, territory that the Palestinians claim for a future state. Amid the impasse, U.S. officials have come and gone in recent weeks searching for new formulas to restart talks, which have failed to produce a Palestinian state during nearly two decades of fitful negotiations.
State Department spokesman P.J. Crowley acknowledged Monday that publication of the documents complicated U.S.-led peace efforts and will at least temporarily "make the situation more difficult than it already was."

The impact of the disclosures was especially profound Monday among Palestinians, with the Palestinian Authority leadership furiously backpedaling from the apparent concessions, the Islamist Hamas movement seeking to capitalize and much of the Palestinian public seemingly surprised at what their negotiators were willing to bargain away.

"It is a huge blow to the Palestinian leadership, and it's going to make it very difficult for them to stand before the Palestinian people and say they are representing the Palestinian interests," said Ed Abington, a former U.S. consul general in Jerusalem and longtime American diplomat.

Many of the compromises discussed in the 1,600 pages of memos, minutes, e-mails and other documents being released this week by the Qatar-based al-Jazeera TV network on air and on its Web site are well-known to veteran watchers of the peace process.

At the Camp David summit brokered by President Bill Clinton in 2000, the Palestinians were open to surrendering claims over parts of East Jerusalem settled by Jewish Israelis, negotiators said. But what's most damaging in the newly released documents is the way Palestinian negotiators are "seen as conceding more and more" while getting "absolutely nothing from Israeli negotiators," Abington said.

The United States will suffer a credibility blow as well, he predicted. "The impression one gets from reading these documents is the United States is, by default, on the side of Israel in the negotiations," he said.

Palestinian Authority officials in the West Bank reacted angrily Monday to the documents' release, denying much of the content and lashing out at the Persian Gulf state of Qatar for allowing them to be published. Al-Jazeera began releasing the documents Sunday.

Demonstrators attacked al-Jazeera's office in the West Bank city of Ramallah, breaking a window and spray-painting graffiti that said "al Jazeera = Israel." More protests against al-Jazeera were planned in the West Bank for Tuesday.

Saeb Erekat, the Palestinian negotiator who is featured prominently in the documents as one of those willing to surrender control of large swaths of East Jerusalem inhabited by Jews, said the documents "misrepresented our positions" and took "statements and facts out of context."

Some analysts said the swiftness with which the Palestinians sought to dismiss the reports highlighted how little the Palestinian leadership has done to prepare the Palestinian public for concessions.

Meanwhile, Hamas, which rules the Gaza Strip, tried to capitalize on the documents' revelations as part of its bid to portray itself as the true, legitimate leader of the Palestinian people. While the group remains in control of Gaza after seizing the territory
in a battle with the rival Fatah party in 2007, its ability to operate in the West Bank has eroded amid Palestinian and Israeli crackdowns there.

"What surprised us is the scope of the betrayal in the documents, especially towards Jerusalem," Ismail Radwan, a Hamas leader in Gaza, told al-Aqsa radio, a Hamas-backed station. "But we, in Hamas, are not surprised from this group in the Fatah government, that it engages in these kinds of concessions."

The Israeli government had no official comment on the documents' release. Former Israeli foreign minister Tzipi Livni of the Kadima party, who led negotiations in 2008, said Monday, "Today, it is clear that during the previous government we established - in a serious and responsible way - all of the foundations . . . necessary to end the conflict."

But her successor, Foreign Minister Avigdor Lieberman, sharply contradicted that assessment, saying the revelations prove only that reaching a deal with the Palestinians is impossible.

5. The Palestine Papers: Al-Jazeera Has an Agenda

Pinhas Inbari, Jerusalem Centre for Public Affairs, Jerusalem Issue Brief - Vol. 10, No. 25 27/01/2011

http://www.jcpa.org/JCPA/Templates/ShowPage.asp?DRIT=1&DBID=1&LNGID=1&TMID=111&FID=442&PID=0&IID=5864&TTL=The_Palestine_Papers:_Al-Jazeera_Has_an_Agenda

* Al-Jazeera, the powerful Qatari satellite television station, has been publishing documents leaked to it from the PLO Negotiations Support Unit.

* The release of the documents has caused great damage to the reputation of the PA and the PLO negotiating team. Sa'eb Erekat noted that while the PA was en route to triumph as it gathered international support for the recognition of a Palestinian state and for isolating Israel, al-Jazeera cut short this triumph and "instead of delegitimizing the occupation, they delegitimized us."

* The PA's success in gathering support for statehood recognition was turning Hamas rule in Gaza into a liability. Once Ramallah is recognized as representing a state, the international community might turn against the separate entity in Gaza and seek to end the problem.

* For years al-Jazeera has sought to advance the interests of the Muslim Brotherhood against the Arab regimes. The problem it faces is that the sources of the current wave of Arab unrest are actually local and have nothing to do with pan-Arab ideals or with the Palestinian problem.

* Now, after al-Jazeera has brainwashed Arab minds with charges of PLO treason, no declaration of statehood can be expected. Neither will there be a resumption of negotiations with Israel since the Palestinian team will stick to the most hard-line positions possible.
Al-Jazeera, the powerful Qatari satellite television station, has been publishing documents leaked to it from the office of the main PLO negotiator, Sa'eb Erekat, and his Negotiations Support Unit (NSU) on its main news program, and has opened a special WikiLeaks-like website dedicated to the publication of the original documents.1

In addition, the British Guardian, which also publishes WikiLeaks documents, is publishing the Palestinian documents in the same format. In addition, both al-Jazeera and the Guardian are putting much effort into commentaries and explanations of what the documents mean.

It is obvious that al-Jazeera has a political agenda and wants to make a point. The PA sees the publication of the documents as an act of state espionage. An open crisis broke out, with the PA accusing Qatar of treason for hosting the largest U.S. bases in the Middle East.

_Charges Meant to Damage the PA's Reputation_

Indeed, the release of the documents has caused great damage to the reputation of the PA and the PLO negotiating team. Sa'eb Erekat noted that while the PA was en route to triumph as it gathered international support for the recognition of a Palestinian state and for isolating Israel, al-Jazeera cut short this triumph and "instead of delegitimizing the occupation, they delegitimized us."

The main damage caused to the PA and the PLO negotiating team related to their exposure as "traitors" who betrayed Arafat's red lines on Jerusalem and the right of return, and who collaborated with Israel to the point of helping Israel in assassinating top Hamas terrorists.

On Jerusalem, the main accusation is about betraying Arafat's legacy of insisting on full Palestinian sovereignty over the al-Aqsa Mosque compound (the Temple Mount), including the cavity beneath the compound, and accepting instead President Clinton's old parameters of: "what is Jewish to Israel and what is Arab to Palestine." According to the documents, the Palestinian negotiating team relinquished all Jewish neighborhoods in east Jerusalem except for Har Homa - including Ramot Shlomo, the Jewish neighborhood that sparked the crisis between Israel and the U.S., and Sheikh Jarrah, now a location for demonstrations by international supporters of the Palestinian cause.

On the Palestinian refugees, according to the leaked documents, the PLO negotiating team gave up the right of return. They quote PA leader Mahmoud Abbas' internal briefing to PA officials that "we cannot demand the return of millions, as this will end Israel." He has made similar statements to the open media. Abbas is also quoted as offering that 100,000 refugees be allowed to return to Israel proper over ten years, while Israeli Prime Minister Olmert was ready to let in only 1,000 per year, totaling 10,000 after ten years.

Another damaging blow to the PA is the revelation of collaboration in the killing of top Hamas leaders in Gaza. This could lead to a series of revenge attacks on an extended family (hamula) basis that could drag on for generations.

After reading many of the documents, it appears that most of them are genuine and reflected the course of negotiations with Israel's previous Kadima government. The
problem is that because al-Jazeera has a point to prove - that the PLO negotiators betrayed Arafat's legacy and hurried to cross red lines, with their gestures unreciprocated - Israel is portrayed as a hard-line interlocutor that did not respond to PLO "moderation." This results in damage to both sides - to the "traitorous" PLO and to "unresponsive" Israel.

Yet there appears to be a clear gap between the substance of these documents and the way they were presented. Besides a readiness to accept the principle of land swaps - from the Clinton parameters - there were no further Palestinian concessions. Nor was there agreement on the size and location of these land swaps. The PLO team was adamant in refusing to agree to Israeli demands to keep the settlement blocs. For example, the Palestinians demanded the dismantling of the city of Ariel (pop. 17,559), and they were ready to consider leaving Israeliis living in Ma'ale Adumim (pop. 34,324) only if the Jewish city adjacent to Jerusalem was under Palestinian sovereignty.

While Erekat mentioned "creative ideas" to solve the issue of the al-Aqsa/ Temple Mount compound, they have nothing to do with sharing the site with Israel, but rather to establishing an Arab and Muslim consortium to supervise the holy site.

Questions on the Refugee Offer

While the figure of 100,000 refugees to be allowed into Israel is mentioned for the first time in Palestinian sources, it is unclear which side offered this figure. According to previous reports, it was Olmert's offer that was rejected by Abbas. Abbas himself referred to these documents as a "mixture" of Israeli and PLO positions.2

There are strong reasons to be suspicious of the reports on refugees because of the source of the leak. According to the Ma'an news agency there are two suspects. One is an American bodyguard of former U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, who later worked for an American security firm in the West Bank and is now working with al-Jazeera International in Doha. The other suspect is a negotiator, Ziad Kalut, a French citizen who until half a year ago was working in the NSU and is now employed by the Bureau of the Emir of Qatar. He is mentioned in the documents as dealing with the refugee problem and is the one who prepared the document where Abbas says absorbing millions of refugees inside Israel is not possible.

Kalut had been sent to Amman to iron out problems with Jordan about the PLO claim to also represent the refugees in Jordan. If he really leaked the documents, which is not certain, perhaps he was in a position to forge some of them as well in order to slander the PLO on this sensitive matter and cause collateral damage to Israel. If it is proved that the refugees documents are forged, serious doubts would be cast on the rest of them.

Linking to the General Unrest in the Arab World

A key to evaluating al-Jazeera's motivation in launching this campaign may be found in an article published on its website by Azmi Bishara, a Palestinian nationalist who stars in al-Jazeera talk shows and spreads the old Nasserite ideology of uniting the Arabs. The Palestinian problem is seen as the main tool to trigger the "Arab masses" to revolt...
throughout the region. After the Tunisian unrest broke out, Bishara published an article titled: "Tunisization of the Arabs." The purpose was to link the Palestine Papers with the general unrest in Arab countries in order to return the Palestinian problem as the leading issue for Arab unrest.

Al-Jazeera is now under the management of Wadah Khanfar, a radical Palestinian from Nablus. For years the Arab satellite channel has sought to advance the interests of the Muslim Brotherhood against the Arab regimes. The problem it faces is that the sources of the current wave of Arab unrest are actually local and have nothing to do with pan-Arab ideals or with the Palestinian problem. Nevertheless, al-Jazeera is trying to link the local grievances in every Arab country to a pan-Arab revolution triggered by the Palestinian problem.

Another motivation is to preserve Hamas' interests. Erekat was right when he said the leaks cut short the PLO's diplomatic campaign to isolate Israel and gain international recognition of a Palestinian state. The PA success in gathering support for statehood recognition was turning Hamas rule in Gaza into a liability. Once Ramallah is recognized as representing a state, the international community might turn against the separate entity in Gaza and seek to end the problem.

Some encouragement for the PA leadership may be found in the popular reactions among the Palestinians in the West Bank. They did not "revolt" as a result of the leaks, which may indicate that the West Bank Palestinians are ready to compromise as a result of fatigue after the generation-long struggle with Israel. If there is popular rage, it is against al-Jazeera, as seen in attacks on its property in Ramallah and in Tripoli, Lebanon.

Now, after al-Jazeera has brainwashed Arab minds with charges of PLO treason, no declaration of statehood can be expected. Neither will there be a resumption of negotiations with Israel since the Palestinian team will stick to the most hard-line positions possible.

To sum up, al-Jazeera is serving Qatari policy to deepen unrest in the Arab world and link the current local upheavals to the Palestinian problem. In its presentation of the Palestine Papers, al-Jazeera distorted the contents in order to delegitimize the PLO and present Israel as a hard-line non-partner. There is also reason to suspect forgery in the documents referring to refugees since the person suspected of the leaks is the same person who wrote them.

Notes

1. http://transparency.aljazeera.net/ar/search_arabic
International responses to Jerusalem and the peace-process

6. **EU Heads Recommendations on Jerusalem**  
   Reproduced by FMEP, Vol 21, 1, Jan-Feb 2011

http://www.fmep.org/reports/archive/vol.-21/no.-1/PDF


[Annex 2]

**East Jerusalem as the future Palestinian capital**

1) In conformity with the objectives of the Strategic Multi-sector Development Plan for East Jerusalem, promote a coordinated approach and a coherent Palestinian strategy towards East Jerusalem.

2) Promote the establishment of a PLO focal point/representative in East Jerusalem.

3) National or Europe Day events to be held in East Jerusalem (when suitable at Palestinian institutions).

4) EU missions with offices or residences in East Jerusalem to regularly host Palestinian officials with senior EU visitors.

5) Avoid having Israeli security and/or protocol accompanying high ranking officials from Member States when visiting the Old City/East Jerusalem.

6) Prevent/discourage financial transactions from EU Member State actors supporting settlement activity in East Jerusalem, by adopting appropriate EU legislation.

7) Compile non-binding guidelines for EU tour operators to prevent support for settlement business in East Jerusalem (e.g. hotels, bus operators, archaeological sites controlled by pro-settler organisations etc).

8) Ensure that the EU-Israel Association Agreement is not used to allow the export to the EU of products manufactured in settlements in East Jerusalem.

9) Raise public awareness about settlement products, for instance by providing guidance on origin labelling for settlement products to major EU retailers.

10) Inform EU citizens of financial risks involved in purchasing property in occupied East Jerusalem.

**Reopening of Palestinian institutions in East Jerusalem**

1) Highlight the reopening, as stipulated in the Road Map, of Palestinian institutions in high level meetings with Israeli representatives, as well as in the EU and Quartet discussions and statements.

2) Host Palestinian Jerusalem civil society events in cultural offices, consulates and diplomatic residences until institutions are reopened.

3) Explore the use of Palestinian institutions to promote joint EU-PLO interests.

**Religious and cultural dimension of the city**

1) Support and encourage inter-faith dialogue in Jerusalem.
2) Encourage Arab countries to acknowledge the multicultural dimension of Jerusalem, including its Jewish and Christian heritage.
3) Engage in informing (e.g. web sites etc) EU citizens undertaking visits on the political situation in East Jerusalem.

**Strengthen the role of the European Union**

1) Enhance local coordination between Quartet actors for input into policy making and decisions.
2) Ensure EU presence when there is a risk of demolitions or evictions of Palestinian families.
3) Ensure EU presence at Israeli court cases on house demolitions or evictions of Palestinian families.
4) Ensure EU intervention when Palestinians are arrested or intimidated by Israeli authorities for peaceful cultural, social or political activities in East Jerusalem.
5) Operationalise the EU policy on bringing high level visitors to sensitive sites (e.g. separation barrier etc).
   — on logistics for high level visitors (e.g. choice of hotel, change of transport East/West)
   — on contacts with the Jerusalem Mayor and on refraining from meeting Israeli officials in their East Jerusalem offices (e.g. in the Israeli Ministry of Justice etc)
   — on information sharing on violent settlers in East Jerusalem to assess whether to grant entry into the EU.

7. **US veto underscores failure of US-sponsored 'peace process'**

Badil, 20/02/2011


BADIL Resource Center for Palestinian Residency and Refugee Rights is dismayed by the US’s opposition to a UN Security Council Resolution that seeks to affirm the illegality of Israeli settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territory (OPT). The US’s position demonstrates its continued neglect of international law and human rights norms and its incapacity to act as an 'honest' peace broker in the decades-old colonial conflict between Israel and the Palestinians.

The Security Council Resolution, which has 120 co-sponsors, deliberately reflects well-established US policy on settlements in order to avoid a US veto. That the US would nevertheless veto this resolution reflects its unwillingness to hold Israel to account for its violations of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people to self-determination, national independence, sovereignty and return. Instead, President Barack Obama, Secretary of State Hilary Clinton, and US Ambassador to the UN Susan Rice have insisted that a Security Council Resolution is counterproductive to the peace process and that the controversy over settlements should be settled in direct negotiations. Given the US’s dismal record in halting settlement expansion and its inability to pressure Israel to extend its 10-month settlement moratorium, despite offering lucrative incentives, the exercise of the US veto gives Israel the green light to continue and accelerate the growth of its colonial settlements.

Since the advent of the peace process in 1991, illegal Israeli settlements have more than doubled and have been accompanied by a complex network of road blocks, check
points, the systematic expropriation of Palestinian lands, destruction of Palestinian homes and the displacement of thousands of Palestinian families. Moreover, under the veneer of a 'peace process', Israel has built an Apartheid Wall within the occupied West Bank in an attempt to circumscribe its illegal settlements and solidify its illegal annexation of East Jerusalem, in defiance of a 2004 International Court of Justice Advisory Opinion deeming the route of the Wall, the settlements, and the associated regime of restrictions and closures to be illegal. Far from bringing a viable resolution to this conflict, 20 years of the 'peace process' has afforded Israel impunity to continue its colonial and Apartheid policies and provided cover to further expropriate and de-facto annex Palestinian land.

The US’s veto continues its legacy of shielding Israel from accountability. Between 1972 and 1997, the US used its veto 32 times to shield Israel from rebuke; amounting to nearly half of the 69 vetoes the US has cast since the founding of the UN. The US’s insistence that accountability to international law and human rights norms are mutually exclusive to the peace process has undermined the viability of establishing peace and has been especially deleterious to Palestinians who, stateless, living under occupation and exile, lack the international protection otherwise afforded by humanitarian and human rights law.

By vetoing this resolution, the US will cast the final nail in the coffin of the terminally ill peace process and destroy any lingering doubts regarding its credibility as a peace broker. The US’s intransigent diplomatic, financial and military support for Israel and opposition to international law and human rights norms further amplifies the Palestinian call for Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS) against Israel as the most effective method by which Israel's respect for the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people and peace can to be achieved.

*Deconstructing and reconstructing East Jerusalem*

8. **Toward a point of no return: Lifting the political restraints in East Jerusalem**

Ir Amim Report, 20/2/2011

http://www.ir-amim.org.il/eng/?CategoryID=311&ArticleID=1023

In the last quarter of 2010, we witnessed a salient and significant change in Israeli government policy towards East Jerusalem. This policy is turning Jerusalem into a political battleground, rather than preserving its stability.

The change began to emerge in the last days of September 2010, when Israel's commitment to refrain from new construction in the West Bank settlements expired. Although East Jerusalem was not formally included in that commitment, a high level of restraint was evident during that time in all areas of Israeli activity in East Jerusalem: in construction, demolitions, settlement activity and police action.
This restraint was exercised over the Jerusalem Municipality, the District Planning Committee and other parties active in East Jerusalem by the Prime Minister's office. This became particularly evident after the diplomatic crisis with the US that broke out in March 2010 following the approval of a building plan for the neighborhood of Ramat Shlomo during VP Joe Biden's visit to Israel.

The visible restraint disappeared at the end of September (when the building freeze ended) and was replaced by an aggressive policy, not only concerning construction but extending to almost all aspects of policy that affect the lives of the Palestinians of East Jerusalem. Besides the proliferation of construction plans beyond the Green Line that landed on the drawing boards of the planning committees almost weekly, the loosening of restraints has also been clearly evident in the area of home demolitions and in the nature of the activity of the police and other security organizations, who are targeting the Palestinian political and community leadership in East Jerusalem.

These developments portray a clear picture: just as the restraint in the previous period was exercised by the Prime Minister's office, so is the current recklessness the result of a political decision.

Following is a brief overview of the main developments that characterize the current aggressive policy in East Jerusalem. See website for full report.

9. The 10 plagues of east Jerusalem
Meir Margalit, Jerusalem Post, 15/02/2011


The daily humiliation suffered by residents is reaching a boiling point and it is only a matter of time until a conflagration erupts.

The revolution in Cairo’s streets should raise the alarm in Jerusalem too. Like many Egyptians and Tunisians, the Arabs of east Jerusalem have been humiliated and trampled upon for years. Here too, patience is running out. The winds in east Jerusalem are the same ones blowing through Egyptian streets, and may ultimately bring down a regime that anticipated never-ending rule.

The government seems unaware of events in the city’s eastern half. It’s not really interested, and is also enslaved to the doctrine imported from the occupied territories – best to keep them on a short leash so they don’t get unruly and dare to demand national rights. The entity responsible for east Jerusalem today is effectively the Shin Bet (Israel Security Agency) which rules in an iron-handed triumvirate together with the police and the Border Police.

The municipality is a bit-player, reacting to events with obvious unwillingness and making half-hearted attempts to solve problems here and there, in the patchwork method. Control over east Jerusalem is based on truncheons and bribery – and they won’t last forever.

Several experts say that an uprising in east Jerusalem is unlikely, since the residents there have too much to lose – National Insurance allowances and blue ID cards for
example. But they’re living in the past. More and more residents now say openly that their daily humiliations are not worth the NII benefits. Many have decided that even if the conditions here are better than in the Palestinian Authority, social benefits in return for humiliation is not a sustainable exchange. They know it’s not a divine decree that they must remain fourth-class citizens.

IT’S NOT hard to see the undercurrents of rage in east Jerusalem. You just have to look into people’s eyes to realize that something major is going on. It’s better to stop for a moment and look at the processes that are so intolerable for east Jerusalem residents, before it’s too late. Because even if things erupt and tanks drive into east Jerusalem, Cairo has shown us that armor cannot withstand the people’s rage when things become too much.

The inventory list of things that infuriate east Jerusalem residents can be summed up in 10 points – let’s call them the 10 plagues of east Jerusalem – and they’re not listed here in order of severity.

1. The difficulty of obtaining building permits and thus building lawfully. Obstacles have piled up for years – proving ownership, lacking infrastructure, low construction percentages – and all of them have worsened with the migration of scores of families who have crossed the security barrier to the “right side” to avoid losing their blue ID cards.

2. The security barrier, what many call the “separation wall.” It divides families, relatives and loves ones, and makes any trip to the occupied territories a journey into the unknown. No one can predict how long it will take to get to the destination or return from it. It all depends on the mood of the IDF soldier at the checkpoint.

3. The Interior Ministry’s prevention of east Jerusalem residents from reuniting with their families or wives from the occupied territories. They must live an almost underground existence in Jerusalem, without the necessary papers, for fear of arrest.

4. The Interior Ministry (again), which pursues and confiscates ID cards from people it believes are living beyond the municipal jurisdiction. Many discover one day that their citizenship has been revoked, with no prior warning. They must then launch a legal battle that requires immense resources 5. The settlers who have abandoned all self-control. Their aggression increases with rumors that the peace process is progressing. They have no compunction about evicting whole families from their homes, and cast fear wherever they go.

6. The destruction of homes built without the proper licenses, arguably the harshest plague of all. It is a threat to thousands of families, not because the municipality can destroy all the homes in question, but because none of those who have received demolition orders know when the bulldozer will arrive. In this situation, families live on borrowed time, and their stress is evident.

7. The economic situation that is wreaking havoc, dragging 70 percent of the families living in east Jerusalem below the poverty line. When there’s no prospect for improvement, people feel they have little to lose.
8. The Border Police and its members’ degrading attitude toward east Jerusalemites. It has become an uncontrollable force, violent and hotheaded, that harms their deepest sensitivities.

9. The archeological excavations near the Temple Mount. The dig is considered an attempt to penetrate beneath the Haram al-Sharif and to topple the mosques. Even if this is not the intention, the very concern or a rumor is enough to set things off, as we have seen time and time again.

10. The atrocious level of municipal services, from garbage collection to the education system, which renders east Jerusalem’s inferior status permanent. And every time Arab citizens cross to the western part of the city and see the vast divide between their own standard of living and that of their Jewish neighbors, it is seared into their consciousness.

ALL THESE reasons, alone or together, will ignite a future conflagration. How long can this go on? The “carrot and stick” method on which control of east Jerusalem is based is disintegrating. The stick is hitting too hard, and the carrots are losing their effect. The end-of-the-season sales are over, no one’s selling their self-respect for a mess of pottage. The checks and balances system which has been going for 42 years is now wornout – and the abyss awaits. This is not meant to be a prophecy of doom, but a flashing warning light before disintegration.

Most people prefer to ignore events when they occur in their own backyard, but the city’s leaders cannot afford to bury their heads in the sand. They would do well to rethink their policies before the tsunami that’s sweeping through the whole Arab world washes over us too.

The writer is a field coordinator for the Israeli Committee Against House Demolitions (ICAHD) and a member of the Jerusalem City Council for Meretz.


Jerusalem (condensed)

• The Israeli Occupation bulldozers demolished the 90 square meters area house of Naser Yousif Siyam in As Sammar area in Lefta village north of Ash Sheikh Jarrah city, leaving around 35 square meters standing. The family of nine must now live in one bedroom, one lounge and a corridor. Maannews (January 3, 2011).

• Israeli officials in Jerusalem carried out the area’s second demolition in the Beit Hanina neighborhood, north of the Old City. The Israeli bulldozers demolished a 125 square meter house owned by Nayif Uweida which was built in the year 2000. Palestinian homes adjacent to Uweida’s house were damaged during the destruction. It is worth mentioning that it is the third home he owned to be demolished, with the first in the area of Shu’fat in 2008, and a second agricultural building in Beit Hanina in 2009. Maannews (January 4, 2011).
• A new settlement project in the Jerusalem community of Silwan will see the neighborhood split in two. The new development, set for 5 dunums of land some of which take up the Silwan valley, a fertile area southeast of the Old City walls known alternatively as the Valley of Jehosaphat, or Kidron Valley. The area contains a spring, known as Job’s Well (Beer Ayoub), and variously identified as the Well of Nehemiah, and En Rogel. A development plan made for the zone included the construction of public buildings, a network of swimming pools and activity areas and would also include the demolition of 30 homes, eight of which are in the Silwan area, and another 22 closer to the spring. Maannews (January 6, 2011).

• The Israeli occupation authorities demolished the Shepherd Hotel (the Mufti, Amin Al - Husseini palace) in sheikh Garrah neighborhood in Jerusalem, pursuant to the Israeli court ratification of a plan of 20 settlers’ units construction as a first phase within the master plan of 390 settlers’ units construction in the area. Al Quds (January 8, 2011).

• Israel spent 5 million US dollars in 2010 to restore and maintain what it called Jewish holy sites in the ‘Ein Silwan and Burj al - Nawateer (Neve Shamuel) Governorate of Jerusalem. The sites were actually mosques that were seized in 1948 and 1967 and later converted into Jewish synagogues. Al Quds (January 8, 2011).

• The Israeli Occupation bulldozers affiliated to the Israel Nature and Parks Authority (INPA) demolished two houses and poultry barns in As Sammar area in Wadi Al Joz in Jerusalem city under the pretext of lacking valid building permits owned by resident Abu Ahmad. The authorities also confiscated two horses, and several pieces of equipment from the barn. The demolition followed one week after inspectors from the nature and parks authority visited the area and took photos of the area. Wafa (January 10, 2011).

• Israeli settlers vandalized 20 graves in the historic Mamilla cemetery in West Jerusalem. Some graves were found completely destroyed while the tombstones had been removed from others. Maannews (January 11, 2011).

• The Israeli Occupation bulldozers demolished a 20 square meters stall in Al Sultan street owned by resident Wael Al Razem in Jerusalem city. Losses are estimated at 150 Thousand NIS (New Israeli Shekels). Al Quds (January 12, 2011).

• The Israeli Jerusalem municipality and the Israeli Tourism Ministry will invest NIS 2 million in a project run by the Elad organization that buys property for Jews in East Jerusalem's largely Arab Silwan neighborhood. The municipality's finance committee confirmed that it would transfer NIS 1.025 million to the Spring House museum, a development project in the City of David National Park. Elad plans to use the house to build a visitors' center or a museum on the history of the Siloam Spring, the main water source for ancient Jerusalem. The museum is supposed to be set up in a large house belonging to Elad. The house was originally owned by a man named Musa al - Abassi, who was declared absentee after the Six - Day War. In 1988, the house was nationalized under the Absentee Property Law, following extensive lobbying by Elad. Three years later, the house was rented out to the organization at only NIS 23.73 per month. In July 2006, the organization acquired a long - term lease on the property. Haaretz (January 14, 2011).
• A new Jewish prayer area was created in Jerusalem's Old City in the center of a Palestinian neighborhood. The area was made by clearing scaffolding that was supporting an archway beneath Palestinian homes. The area beneath the arch had been called "the little western wall plaza" by some religious Jewish groups, who say it is the second closest access point to what Jews believe is the western wall to the third Jewish temple. The road leading up to the small space has been used before by the ultra-orthodox, causing tension in the Old City, with large groups accompanied by border guards taking over what remains a Palestinian residential area. The rightwing organization Ateret Cohanim was said to have been demanding the area be cleared of the scaffolding to make room for a prayer area. Maannews (January 14, 2011).

• The Israeli Knesset approved in preliminary reading a bill defining Jerusalem as a first grade national priority area which will provide it with benefits. 39 Israeli MKs voted in favor and seven opposed. "The bill will help the city's residents of all sectors, particularly the young ones, in purchasing apartments, finding work, and opening businesses," MK Uri Ariel (National Union) who initiated the bill said. Ynetnews (January 14, 2011)

• The Israeli Occupation army announced that construction should be finished on a wall surrounding the city of Jerusalem in about a year. The wall, dubbed "the Jerusalem envelope", is set to isolate the holy city from neighboring Palestinian communities. According to the plan, approved by the army's Deputy Chief of Staff Yaif Naveh, works will continue on the structure’s remaining central points in the villages of Qalandyia, West Shu'fat, and Mount Gilo in an area not exceeding 20 kilometers. Al Quds (January 17, 2011).

• The Israeli local committee for building and planning ratified the construction of 197 housing units in a number of Israeli settlements in east Jerusalem; of which, 75 housing units to be built in Ramat Shlomo settlement (Reches Shu'fat), 32 housing units in Pisgat Ze'ev settlement north of Jerusalem and 90 housing units in East Telpiot settlement south of Jerusalem city. Al Quds (January 18, 2011)

• The Israeli Reconciliation Court in West Jerusalem refused to issue a temporary order to prevent the demolition of 200 additional graves in Ma'manallah Cemetery in Jerusalem city. Wafa (January 20, 2011).

• The Israeli local committee for building and construction discussed the master plan number 13456 which states the construction of a new road that will link the settlements of Pisgat Ze'ev and Neve Yaacov with the Israeli bypass road number 443, known as "Begen road". According to the plan, 34 pieces (85 dunums) of Palestinian lands will be confiscated from Beit Hanina city for that purpose. Al Quds (January 23, 2011).

• The Israeli Planning and Construction Committee ratified the construction of 180 new settlement housing units' on lands of Sur Baher and Umm Leison communities south of Jerusalem city. The proposed construction plans will cover almost 53 dunums and constitute a vast extension of the settlement outposts already existing in these areas. The units are set for construction on confiscated Palestinian land in Sur Baher. The project, submitted to the Israeli District Committee 5 years ago, encountered several setbacks before being approved this week. Al Quds (January 29, 2011).
• The Israeli financial committee at the Municipality of Jerusalem city designated 40 Million NIS to implement 12 projects for developing the transportation network and other roads that link east Jerusalem with West Jerusalem. Among projects, designating 22 Million NIS for bypass Road number 20. Al Quds (January 29, 2011).

• The cornerstone for a new East Jerusalem Jewish neighborhood was placed in a ceremony attended by Knesset members, Jerusalem councilmen, as well as former GOP presidential candidate Mike Huckabee. Initial construction for the new neighborhood, called Beit Orot and located near the Beit Orot religious school (Yeshiva in Hebrew) on Mount Scopus, called for 24 new housing units to be built near the Augusta Victoria Hospital. Haaretz (January 31, 2011).

11. Court orders government to accommodate East Jerusalem school children
Nir Hasson, Haaretz, 8/02/2011


Ruling comes after rights group files a petition on behalf of parents who could not register their children in the city's public-school system because of a lack of classrooms.

The High Court of Justice has given the government five years to find enough classroom space for East Jerusalem children, or it will have to pay private schools to take care of the matter.

The Association for Civil Rights in Israel had filed a petition on behalf of parents who could not register their children in the city's public-school system because of a lack of classrooms. The association says the shortage means many children must be turned away each year.

"The High Court ruled today in no uncertain terms that free education for all is not just a slogan but the state's obligation to all children, including those in East Jerusalem," said attorney Tali Nir, who represented the parents for the civil rights organization.

Some 40,000 out of nearly 80,000 school-age children in question are registered in the public-school system; the rest study in private schools or do not attend school at all. It is estimated that 9,000 children are not registered at all, whether publicly or privately.

The lack of classrooms forces many families to send children to private schools that charge tuition of thousands of shekels a year. According to the petition, if the government cannot operate enough public schools in East Jerusalem, it must compensate parents for private-school fees.

Justices Ayala Procaccia and Yoram Danziger and High Court President Dorit Beinisch accepted the petition. Procaccia wrote in the decision that "the right of children in East Jerusalem to a free education is not being met, and at this stage there is no way for the authorities to provide the solution that is their responsibility by law: to grant each child a free education."
Procaccia wrote that "this situation damages the legal right of children in East Jerusalem to an equal education," calling this "an injury to human dignity" and "an affront to the law."

According to Beinisch, "Over many years, not enough resources have been budgeted by the municipality that could reduce the gap between what is demanded by law and the current situation in which tens of thousands of school-age children do not receive places in the public education system."

Procaccia wrote that the authorities are aware of the situation and are acting to remedy it, "but the pace of activity and the resources allotted indicate that the solution to this difficult and complex problem will only be partial in the coming years."

The justices therefore instructed the state to pay private schools directly whenever a pupil who sought to register in the public-school system was rejected because of a lack of space.

12. **Netanyahu commits to promoting Arab construction in East Jerusalem**
Barak Ravid, Haaretz, 4/02/2011


Commitments comes as Israel plans gestures to Palestinians in bid to deflect Quartet criticism over settlement construction.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and the international community's Middle East envoy, Tony Blair, announced Friday a series of gestures that Israel will make to the Palestinians, including a promise to support Arab construction in East Jerusalem.

"In respect of East Jerusalem, the Government of Israel has agreed to encourage the implementation of all projects that abide by municipal regulations that will improve infrastructure there for Palestinians, including in particular housing, starting with two projects in East Jerusalem," Blair announced.

The meeting between Netanyahu and Blair on Friday comes a day before a summit of the Quartet of Mideast peacemakers - the United States, European Union, United Nations and Russia - for whom Blair is the envoy. The Quartet is meeting to discuss the stalemate in peace talks between Israel and the PA.

The package of confidence-building measures that Israel will offer the Palestinian Authority is seen as a bid to moderate the Quartet statement at the end of its deliberations, which is expected to criticize Israel for its continued construction in West Bank settlements.

"On the West Bank, there will be an extension of Palestinian Authority security presence in Area B – with 7 towns approved in principle; an agreement to fast-track the construction or reconstruction of schools and health clinics in Area C on the basis of plans submitted by the Palestinian Authority," Blair said.
In the end, Netanyahu's offer did not include measure that would enable the PA to take over land required to build the new town Rawabi. Blair added, however, "5000 Gaza-registered residents of the West Bank will be given West Bank identity cards."

Israel’s forum of seven senior ministers discussed the proposed gestures to the Palestinians last week. Netanyahu, Defense Minister Ehud Barak and minister Dan Meridor supported the gestures, while ministers Benny Begin, Moshe Ya’alon, Avigdor Lieberman and Eli Yishai objected.

The gestures will also ease the blockade on Gaza, permitting more items for export and permitting a limited amount of construction materials. Blair also announced the agreement to establish "mobile desalination plants to meet Gaza’s needs for clean water and approval in principle for a larger permanent desalination plant."

Netanyahu agreed to the Palestinian Authority's request to renew discussions on the development of an offshore natural gas field opposite Gaza's shores, and agreed in principle for the gas to power the new power plant to be built in Gaza, which he also specifically approved.

Netanyahu said that although Israel's natural gas needs will be satisfied by its Leviathan and Tamar gas fields in ten years' time, it needs other sources of natural gas in the interim, and it is currently dependent upon supply from Egypt. Netanyahu pointed out that the profits from the Palestinian gas field will go to the Palestinian Authority, and not to Hamas, who rules Gaza.

"I am pleased at the package of measures agreed today with the Government of Israel," Blair said in response to Netanyahu's offer, but later added, "Obviously, agreement to all this is not the same as implementation."

Netanyahu began discussing the proposals with Blair last month. Blair, who recently visited Israel and met with Netanyahu, Barak and Shalom, urged the prime minister to publish details of the gestures before the Quartet’s meeting.

Due to its difficult international situation, Israel must do something, Blair says.

The American, Russian and European Union’s foreign ministers are to take part in the Quartet’s meeting in Munich to discuss the complete standstill in the peace talks. The talks would also touch on the U.S. administration’s apparent confusion about a solution to the crisis.

The Quartet’s closing statement is expected to support the World Bank’s prediction that the PA will complete setting up institutions in the coming months to enable it to establish a state.

The Americans have indicated to the European Union that they would not object to an especially harsh statement if the Europeans were the ones behind it, Jerusalem officials said.

Israel hopes the gestures would also encourage the Palestinians to reconsider their refusal to negotiate with Israel.
13. **Army colleges to move to east Jerusalem**
Melanie Lidman, The Jerusalem Post, 16/02/2011


The IDF’s academic campus, located in Herzliya, is expected to move to an area next to Jerusalem’s Mount Scopus campus – though the location of the campus has brought strong condemnation from left-wing groups.

According to the initial plans – which have not undergone the official approval process – the future campus will be about 32,000 square meters (eight acres) and feature one large building with classrooms, offices, a swimming pool and synagogue.

About 1,400 soldiers are expected to be stationed at the campus. The current campus, Glilot, houses the military academy, school for national security and the command school. The decision to move the campus to east Jerusalem was a joint effort between the IDF, the Defense Ministry and the Jerusalem Municipality.

Land claims are notoriously complicated in the area around Mount Scopus, because the area remained an Israeli enclave between 1948 and 1967. The area has a “second Green Line,” which basically encircles the Hebrew University campus. The planned army campus – located south of the Hebrew University – also includes parts of Wadi Joz, an Arab neighborhood.

“I’m happy that the colleges are coming to Jerusalem, but I’m very sorry they’re building it on occupied lands in east Jerusalem,” said City Councilor Meir Margalit, a member of the opposition in the Meretz party. Margalit accused the municipality of “deceiving” the Defense Ministry, and called on the Ministry to look for land within the Green Line.

Ir Amim also appealed to the Defense Ministry to alter the plan before they submit it for review. “It’s sending a message: ‘We don’t just own it, but we are a presence here with our government and our army and our institutions,’” said Ir Amim spokeswoman Orly Noy. “There is something very declarative about it being there.”

A Defense Ministry spokeswoman said the Mount Scopus option had not yet been approved, pending reviews by both the Jerusalem Municipality and the defense establishments. “One of the goals of the review is to determine that the area is fully owned by the State of Israel,” she said. “If it is determined that the area is not owned by the State of Israel, the defense establishment will move the colleges to another area.”

The plan for the new campus was designed by architect Eli Ilan, who was the chairman of the board of the left-wing organization Bimkom: Planners for Planning Rights from 2003-2004.

Ilan did not return repeated phone calls seeking comment.

A spokeswoman for the Jerusalem Municipality said the city does not differentiate between lands on different sides of the Green Line because, “as is widely known, Jerusalem was united in 1967.”
She added that the municipality hadn’t yet begun the official planning process with the Defense Ministry.

14. **Over 100 Participants Mark Two Year Anniversary to Solidarity Tent in East Jerusalem’s Silwan**

Tania Kepler, *Alternative Information Center (AIC)*, 22/01/2011

http://www.alternativenews.org/english/index.php/topics/jerusalem/3337-over-100-participants-mark-two-year-anniversary-to-solidarity-tent-in-east-jerusalems-silwan-

More than 100 people gathered at the solidarity tent in the al-Bustan area of East Jerusalem’s Silwan, Tuesday morning (22 February), to mark two years of the tent’s presence in the neighborhood as Jerusalemites struggle for the right to housing, liberation and self-determination.

A member of the Popular Committee of al-Bustan welcomed visitors, Palestinian and international, who came from as far as the occupied Syrian Golan and Umm al Fahm to commemorate the anniversary of the struggle in Silwan.

The Grand Mufti of Jerusalem, Sheikh Mohammed Hussein, also spoke. He called attention to the Arab revolutions in Tunisia and Egypt, and spoke of the significance of the struggle in Silwan within the broader Arab world.

Hatem Abdel Qader, a member of the Fatah party and the former Minister of Jerusalem Affairs for the Palestinian Authority, also spoke. He said that though Silwan is one neighborhood struggle, it is a symbol of the struggle of all Jerusalemites and the direct threat of Judaization of Jerusalem and daily violence.

Silwan is an East Jerusalem village with a population of roughly 55,000, located just southeast of Jerusalem’s Old City, extending along the Kidron Valley and running alongside the eastern slopes of the Palestinian neighborhood Jabal al-Mukaber.

Since the Israeli military occupation in 1967, when the village was annexed to the Jerusalem Municipality, the area has been a major target of the Israeli government and religious settler organizations.

Residents of the Silwan have lived in a long-standing state of uncertainty since the late 1970s, when the Jerusalem Municipality approved a plan which labeled much of their Al Bustan neighbourhood as “green space.”

Since 1991, more than 40 Palestinian homes have been taken by force by Jewish settlers.

On the maps issued by the Israeli Jerusalem Municipality and Jewish organizations, part of Silwan is labeled ’City of David’ (Ir David in Hebrew), with no mention of the fact that the neighborhood is mostly owned and inhabited by Palestinians.

Since 2004, almost 90 Palestinian homes in the Al Bustan neighborhood of Silwan in East Jerusalem have been under threat of demolition, in order to clear the area for the construction of an Israeli national park on the land.
In November 2008, the Jerusalem Municipality returned to its policy of house demolitions in East Jerusalem and demolished two buildings in Silwan, home to Palestinian families. On the site an illegal six-story apartment building, Beit Yonatan, is now inhabited by extreme right-wing Jewish settlers.

Most recently, Silwan has been a great target of the Jerusalem Municipality and the settler community there.

On 18 February, Silwan resident Issam Qawasmeh and his 2 month old son were forced to seek medical treatment after Israeli border guards launched a tear gas grenade into the family’s living room, filling the home with toxic gas.

On 12 January, Adnan Geaith, resident of Silwan and General Secretary of the Fatah party in his area, moved to the West Bank city of Ramallah in order to avoid arrest by Israeli authorities, who decided to expel him from Jerusalem for a four month period.

On 9 January, at 4:00am, Israeli police and special forces closed the East Jerusalem neighborhood, forcibly entered homes, and arrested nine residents.

On 4 January, Jerusalem police raided Silwan’s Madaa Community Center and arrested Jawad Siyam, director of the Community Center as well as the Wadi Hilwe Information Center in Silwan.

On 22 September 2010, 30-year-old Silwan resident, Samir Solhan, who was fatally shot by an Israeli settlement security guard at around 4:30am outside his home.

The AIC stands in solidarity with the community in al-Bustan for their continued efforts and strength in spite of the many hardships they face. They work is essential to Jerusalem and the future of the Palestinian people.

15. **Families forced out as army occupies Jerusalem rooftop**

Jillian Kestler-D'Amours, *The Electronic Intifada*, 21/02/2011


The sound of heavy boots stomping up five flights of stairs resonated throughout the entire apartment building on a recent night as the Israeli military headed towards their post on a roof in the embattled neighborhood of Silwan in occupied East Jerusalem.

"There may be clashes [between Palestinian youth and Israeli soldiers], but it doesn't mean the army has a right to take over the house," said Abid Abu Ramuz, a Palestinian father of four, as his children quickly moved towards their front door to catch a glimpse of the soldiers.

Dressed head-to-toe in combat gear -- including face coverings, thick helmets and gloves -- and wielding machine guns, two Israeli soldiers kept their heads down as they made their way to the locked door leading out onto the roof.
"If we want to do laundry, we have to do it in the stairway. Only a technician can go up [to the roof] now, and only with a permit from the police," Abu Ramuz explained.

For at least five months, Israeli military has been stationed on the roof of Abu Ramuz's building -- which houses a total of 69 persons from seven separate families, as well as a mosque -- in the heart of Silwan's Baten al-Hawa neighborhood.

One month ago, Abu Ramuz said, the soldiers invited him to a Jerusalem area police station and offered him two options: they would either "pay [him] for renting the roof, or they would go to court and [get a permit to] use it for free."

He told them to go to the court. And, as of 7 February, the Israeli military received permission from the Israeli Ministry of Defense in Tel Aviv to use the building's rooftop as their lookout base until August 2012.

"The Israeli people don't know where they are sending their children. Their children are behaving in bad ways," said Abu Ramuz, as a loud bang resounded from overhead. "Every day," he said, sighing, as he pointed his index finger up towards the roof.

The residents of the building are presently appealing the ministry's decision to grant the soldiers unlimited access to their roof. In the meantime, however, the constant harassment and attacks continue unabated.

"Everything is hard. My daughter is going through her [high school final] exams at school and the soldiers are playing all night [on the roof]. She can't sleep," Abu Ramuz told The Electronic Intifada. "I filed a complaint today because yesterday they were playing with a stone until 4am. I've complained many times. But the soldiers tell me that I can move if I don't like the situation."

The Israeli military says it has justified its takeover of the roof of Abu Ramuz's building because of regular clashes that occur between Palestinian youth and Israeli soldiers, police and settler security guards in the area -- and because it offers them a unobstructed view of most of Silwan.

Abu Ramuz explained that at least three Israeli soldiers are on the roof of the building at all times, day and night, and that they are constantly making noise, cutting off residents' access to electricity and water and sometimes even throwing dirty water or urine onto people walking in the street below.

"It's winter so the children are staying inside. During the summer it will be more difficult because the children will be outside and they will have nowhere to play. It's going to be a disaster here in the summer," the 43-year-old said.

At least four windows in Abu Ramuz's home remain broken as a result, he said, of Israeli soldiers shooting tear gas canisters and rubber bullets at his home from the street below. "The broken windows are all from gas and rubber bullets. I'm not getting new windows because I know they're just going to break it again," Abu Ramuz said.

Sitting just outside Jerusalem's Old City walls, the Palestinian village of Silwan is at the foot of the third holiest site in Islam, the Haram al-Sharif, or Noble Sanctuary, which is known to Jews as the Temple Mount. In recent years, the neighborhood has undergone a
large-scale takeover by far-right Israeli organizations that are largely supported by the Israeli government and Jerusalem municipality.

A seven-floor illegal Israeli settlement called Beit Yonatan -- which was built in 2004 by extreme right-wing settler group Ateret Cohanim, and which even the Israeli state prosecutor has said needs to be vacated as soon as possible -- is also only a few meters away from where Abu Ramuz and his neighbors live.

Intense clashes erupted in the Baten al-Hawa area shortly after resident Samer Sarhan was shot and killed by an Israeli settler security guard last September. Since then, Israeli police and soldiers have routinely arrested residents -- especially children -- on the suspicion of throwing stones.

The situation deteriorated even further in early January 2011, when an Israeli soldier on the Baten al-Hawa rooftop urinated in front of a Palestinian woman who was trying to hang her laundry there. During the clashes between Palestinians and Israeli soldiers that ensued, the military forgot a crate of tear gas grenades and other ammunition on the rooftop, and it ended up in the possession of Palestinian youth.

Palestinian residents quickly returned the weapons, yet police and other Israeli security forces conducted nighttime raids and arrests in response to the embarrassing misstep. From this point on, residents of the building have been banned from accessing the roof.

Children traumatized by military presence

According to building residents that agreed to speak to The Electronic Intifada, children living in the building have exhibited signs of trauma as a result of these sustained attacks, including bed-wetting, loss of interest in school and even a fear of leaving their homes.

"My children are afraid to leave the house. [My four-year-old daughter] is afraid to go to school," explained Muhammadeia, a mother of six children between the ages of 1 and 13, from her living room.

"It's very, very hard. My children are always shouting, crying and choking when the soldiers shoot tear gas. I have to close the windows all the time," she added. Nasrine Fakouri, a Palestinian mother of five children who lives on the third floor of the building, echoed that sentiment. "My children used to get perfect grades and they started failing. They're not even going to school," explained Fakouri, adding that she was forced to quit her job as a secretary at a local hospital in order to take care of her children, who are now too afraid to leave the house even to go play outside.

Fakouri's 13-year-old son Hamzi missed the past week of school because he had to undergo surgery as a result of a sound grenade that exploded too close to him.

"They're not willing to let us live like normal kids," Hamzi said quietly, on the couch in his living room. "I tell [my siblings] not to be afraid and to keep their heads high." Fakouri added that the most difficult aspect of the situation is having tear gas thrown into her home. "The gas is killing us here. The soldiers even throw gas down the stairwell. I tell [the children] to hide, to use onions on their face to relieve the stinging,
and to be very careful," she said. "Why do the [Israeli] settlers have so many guards while we don't have anyone? No one is protecting our children."

**Forced out of Silwan**

Fakouri said that after months of living in a near-permanent state of fear, her family now has no choice but to leave their home. "I don't think I will be able to come back to Silwan. Never," she said, sitting next to nine packed cardboard boxes that were stacked in front of her livingroom window. "I don't want to come back. Nobody should live here. It's horrible."

Fakouri explained that her family would soon be moving to Jabel Mukaber, a neighborhood in the southern part of East Jerusalem in the direction of Bethlehem. She said that she is afraid that the Israeli military or police will take over the apartment once they leave, however.

She added that she lost a child during her fifth month of pregnancy last year because of what she said was the overwhelming stress incurred by constant Israeli military harassment. "I'm pregnant again and I don't want the same thing to happen," Fakouri said. "We want to leave but we also feel sad about the neighbors that have to stay and deal with it. We just want a peaceful and quiet life and to be able to raise our children."

Abid Abu Ramuz, for his part, said that despite owning his apartment, he and his family would also likely be forced out because of the Israeli military. "I don't want to leave the house, but if the situation continues, I might have to for the sake of my children," he said. "I'll have to leave. This is what they want. They want everybody to just leave."

"I hope [this interview] will get to everybody in the world and that people will start doing something about it," Abu Ramuz added. "This would not be allowed anywhere else in the world. This is a crime."

**Jerusalem’s Grey Zones**

16. **No man's land in east Jerusalem: Chaos reigns supreme**
Elior Levy, Ynet News, 22/01/2011

http://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-4017005,00.html

**Ynet special: Chaos reigns supreme in Jerusalem neighborhoods situated beyond security fence**

The main road in Kafr Aqab, a northern Jerusalem neighborhood adjacent to Ramallah, is bustling with traffic. One lane for each route cannot contain the number of taxis, trucks and many private cars the road regularly sees. Local traffic wardens donning yellow vests are steering traffic in exchange for NIS 1 (roughly 30 cents) they receive from each taxi driver. In the absence of Israeli presence, this is the only solution the residents have found.
"We have no other choice, otherwise the road will get congested and no one will be able to pass through," says one of the wardens, Nazmi Jaber. Asked why there are no traffic police vehicles or at the very least traffic lights, he smiles and says the only police they get here are Border Guard jeeps coming in cases of riots or stones being hurled at the Qalandiya checkpoint.

The Shin Bet chief's recent overview of the "no-man's land area" in east Jerusalem surprised no one. This is life for the residents of Jerusalem neighborhoods situated beyond the security fence, such as Kafr Aqab and Shufat.

The Jerusalem vicinity fence surrounds the entrance into the Shufat refugee camp on nearly all sides. Several hundreds of meters away from Pisgat Zeev is no man's land. Crowded buildings, narrow, faulty roads, no parks or gardens. Even trees are hard to come by. The road to the refugee camp entails crossing a military roadblock. A new checkpoint is currently being built causing concern among locals holding Israeli IDs.

"We know that steps are being taken to keep us within Palestinian Authority territory but most of the people here would rather stay inside Israel," a local who wishes to remain anonymous says. "It's not that we love Israel, but we know that the Palestinian Authority cannot provide work for everyone, and national insurance in the PA is not like what we get here."

Haven for Palestinian criminals

The increase in Palestinian license plates on the highways is proof of the immigration growth from the territories to Shufat and to the Anata village.

"Since 2004 many Palestinians have moved here from the territories in search of work near Jerusalem, and with them a lot of criminals who escaped the Palestinian Authority looking for a safer place. We became their haven," says the mukhtar of Shuafat, Jameel Sanduka. "Life here is very similar to anarchy."

Sanduka described an incident that occurred a few weeks ago when two Bedouin were shot and killed by armed men near a garage. "We called the police but they refused to enter the camp and requested that we move the bodies to the checkpoint. No one arrived to collect evidence from the crime scene. We were told that the investigation was handed over to the hands of the Palestinian Authority," he says.

Even during medical emergencies, he claims, the residents are forced to call for a Red Crescent ambulance, and then to drive patients to the checkpoint as the Red Crescent refuses to enter the premises without police escort.

When a fire broke out last winter in a house at the refugee camp, killing two brothers aged two and five, the firefighters called in refused to enter as well. The residents were forced to break one of the walls in a desperate attempt to rescue those trapped inside but failed to save them.

This tragic outcome created a window of opportunity to amend the situation, but Sanduka says nothing has changed. "We've talked with the municipality and asked that they supply us with our own fire extinguishing equipment so we could respond immediately the next time, but so far we have gotten nothing," he says.
All one has to do is walk around the refugee camp and see the garbage piled up on the streets to understand the dire situation. The residents have to burn the garbage in order to get rid of the stench. The streets are filled with potholes that go unfixed.

Yet some know how to make the most of the situation: The PA, and especially Prime Minister Salam Fayyad. The Palestinian PM provided the camp residents with financial aid to build new roads. In doing so, the PA managed to gain a little more control over the territory, which is officially defined as part of Jerusalem.

The PA is gaining a foothold in other ways as well. "In certain cases, undercover PA security forces come here, kidnap people and bring them in for questioning in Ramallah," says Samih, a Kafr Aqab resident. "Even when a clan fight begins and things become dangerous, Palestinian police arrive in civilian vehicles, pick up suspects, resolve the situation and get out quickly," he says.

The lack of enforcement and Israeli presence has led to extensive illegal construction. Buildings are being built one after the other, without municipal permits. Orly Noy the of Ir Amim group, which works to promote equality in Jerusalem, says that authorities encourage Palestinians residing in east Jerusalem to move to the other side of the fence and therefore ignore the illegal construction.

Jerusalem city council backs up Noy's statement. Council member Yakir Segev, a rightist, charged a few months ago that Israel has given up on neighborhoods beyond the security fence and that he does not know anyone who wishes to enforce Israeli sovereignty there. Segev told Ynet he thinks things have gotten much worse ever since he made these statements.

"(Shin Bet Chief) Yuval Diskin is right. There is no control here, not by Israel and not by the Palestinian Authority. There's no master," says Nassar Jubran, a member of Anata's residential council. "This is going to hit Israel like a boomerang, because Hamas might take advantage of this vacuum and establish a strong base here and take over the neighborhoods."

A Jerusalem city council official said in response that the city's provide the neighborhoods surrounding Jerusalem with cleaning, infrastructure, education and sanitation services. "Firefighting, emergency and rescue services are provided immediately when needed," the official said.

Jerusalem district police said they "abide by the law and investigate any complaint from these neighborhoods." Police officials said that when security forces enter these neighborhoods they usually get attacked and stoned, and many times it turns out that "these calls are bogus and are made in order to attack the forces entering the area."
17. Shin Bet warns of increased PA security involvement in East Jerusalem

Chaim Levinson, Haaretz, 22/02/2011


Israeli intelligence agencies have warned that Israel is turning a 'blind eye' to security activities in East Jerusalem, where militant Palestinians may be encouraging young Palestinians to disturb the peace.

Intelligence figures in the Jerusalem District Police and the Shin Bet security service are increasingly concerned about the growing involvement of Palestinian security authorities in East Jerusalem. Recent intelligence reports suggested that militant Palestinians may be trying to prevent the operation of community centers so that young Palestinians will roam the streets and disturb the peace. In another incident, the Palestinian security forces reportedly arrested a man in connection to a dispute between neighbors.

Information obtained by Haaretz indicates that in the past year Israeli intelligence agencies repeatedly warned that Israel's "blind eye" policy send a message of weakness to the Palestinians that could undermine Israeli sovereignty. The intelligence findings were recently presented to the highest ranks of the Israel Police and the Israel Defense Forces.

They reported the involvement of Palestinian security forces in schools in A-Tur, including the personal appointment by the head of the Palestinian Authority's Preventive Security Service of the members of a parents' committee at one of the schools, who terrorize anyone who opposes them.

Neighborhood activists reportedly threatened a landlord who sought to lease a building to the municipality, for use as a community center, while a school principal was ordered not to allow the city to open a community center on the premises.

According to another report, last July members of the preventive security forces arrested an East Jerusalem man who was involved in a dispute over a parking space with a neighbor. The neighbor appealed to the Palestinian Authority after being disappointed by the response of the local police station to his complaint. The arrested man was detained for four hours before being released.

In another incident, a Fatah activist in Silwan warned residents to register complaints with the PA and not the Israel Police.

The intelligence reports also refer to efforts by PA Prime Minister Salam Fayyad to solidify his grasp on East Jerusalem. Fayyad allegedly paid a city planner from Anata 4,000 Jordanian dinars to draw up a master plan for the neighborhood. Each resident was asked to contribute NIS 100 for the plan, and Fayyad promised to allocate $345,000 for infrastructure and school construction in the neighborhood. The allocation has not been made.
Intelligence reports say the PA's main contact person in East Jerusalem is Palestinian Legislative Council member for the Shoafat refugee camp, Jihad Abu Zneid. Two siblings living in the United States send her money to fund her activities, which include paying attorneys' fees for young Palestinians who created a public disturbance in Shoafat last year.

18. **Jerusalem MPs hold Palestinian Authority complicit in the Judaization of the Holy City**
   Middle East Monitor, 9/02/2011


   Jerusalem MPs threatened with deportation from their home city by Israel have accused the Palestinian Authority and what they call "Arab and international complicity" responsible for the increasing Judaisation of occupied East Jerusalem. The MPs' statement was prompted by the decision of the Zionist state to construct several settlement units in Sheikh Jarrah in Jerusalem. They consider the Authority run by Mahmoud Abbas to be guilty of "negligence" over the Holy City when sitting at the negotiating table with their Israeli counterparts. The recent decision by the Israelis to expel the Palestinian residents of a number of houses to make way for the illegal settlements was denounced by the MPs.

   The three members of the Palestinian Legislative Council, who are seeking refuge at the headquarters of the International Red Cross in Jerusalem, said that the occupation authority's latest settlement-related decision could not have been made without what is in effect the agreement of the Palestinian leadership to give up Jerusalem by considering that it is negotiable. Such negotiations are, say the MPs, "futile", albeit part of what the Al Jazeera documents show to be the massive complicity of the Palestinian Authority and the international community in the destruction of the city of Jerusalem which international law still recognises as "occupied". It is illegal under such law for the occupying power to make material changes to the land under occupation.

   The MPs claimed that the settlement process is only going ahead because Palestinian negotiators have more or less waived their rights to the occupied territory. The position of the Arab and Muslim world is weak on these issues and does not challenge the Israelis.

   In the same context, Jerusalem MP Ahmed Attoun condemned Zionist Rabbi Dov Lior who has called for buildings to be constructed within the Noble Sanctuary of Al-Aqsa. This, said Mr. Attoun, is part of the "Zionist attack on Al-Aqsa and Jerusalem which has been ongoing for more than forty years since the Israelis occupied the city in 1967". Attoun condemned "the silence of the Arabs and their shameful neglect of the city" as well as the aggressive policies of the Israeli occupation authority.
19. **Digging completed on tunnel under Old City walls in East Jerusalem**

Nir Hasson, Haaretz, 25/01/2011


Digging delayed after residents of Silwan filed petition claiming dig was damaging their homes; tunnel dates back to Second Temple and links City of David to location near Western Wall.

The Israel Antiquities Authority has completed an archaeological dig of a tunnel that will enable visitors to cross under the walls of Jerusalem's Old City, not far from the Temple Mount.

The tunnel, which was uncovered during excavations conducted over the past few months, was formerly used for drainage and dates back to the Second Temple. It links the City of David in Silwan with the Archaeological Park & Davidson Center, which is located near the Western Wall.

The Antiquities Authority stressed that the newly uncovered tunnel does not come near the Temple Mount and that it has no plans to dig in that direction.

The digging had been going on for seven years and was delayed for about a year by order of the High Court of Justice, after Silwan residents filed a petition claiming the dig was damaging their homes.

In September 2009, Supreme Court Justice Edna Arbel rejected the petition and lifted the halt on the dig. Since then, work has been stepped up and in recent weeks the segment of the tunnel between the City of David and the Davidson Center was completed.

Even though no opening was made giving access to the Davidson area, there are plans to do so in the future.

"This [tunnel] was part of a drainage system that we had known about for a long time and it does not drain the Temple Mount by Haguy Street in the Old City. Therefore, even if the dig continues, it will not move in the direction of the Temple Mount," the deputy director of the Antiquities Authority, Uzi Dahari, said yesterday, adding that the dig has no political aim.

"The Antiquities Authority deals only with archaeology. We are not digging tunnels, but working only where we are allowed to work," he explained. "After the High Court realized that there was no risk involved, and that none of the residents are being harmed, it authorized the continuation of the work. This dig is very important from an archaeological standpoint."
"When we filed the petition, it was clear to us that the purpose of the tunnel is to link Silwan with the Western Wall," attorney Sami Arshid, who represented the residents in filing the petition at the High Court, said in response.

"But the court accepted the explanations of the Antiquities Authority - that it is not a dig, but the clearing out of an existing tunnel. Today we see that the Antiquities Authority's explanations were merely sand [thrown] in our eyes," he added.

20. Jerusalem Underground: Secrets of an Ancient City
A new discovery links the City of David to the Temple Mount.
Eric Gibson, Wall Street Journal, 3/02/2011
http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052748704698004576104320263685168.html?mod=googlenews_wsj

'Jerusalem is all about water," says Doron Spielman of the Ir David Foundation, which preserves and maintains the ancient biblical City of David. "If you can conserve, preserve the water, you can live here. And if not, you're in trouble."

We are standing 65 feet below ground in the City of David, located just outside the southern wall of Jerusalem's walled Old City, listening to the rush of water enter via an underground tunnel from a nearby spring. The half-kilometer long tunnel was cut through bedrock in 702 B.C. on orders of the King Hezekiah, who needed to bring water into the ancient city of Jerusalem from the spring outside its walls if it was to survive the impending Assyrian invasion. (It did.)

Hezekiah's Tunnel, as it is known, superseded an earlier but more militarily vulnerable one dug in 1800 B.C. by the Canaanites—an even more remarkable feat considering that it was cut before the invention of metal tools. It was by attacking through this first tunnel, rather than by overland assault, that the young King David captured the city from the Jebusites in 1000 B.C. and established his capital here.

Three thousand years later, the ancient, buried aqueducts and tunnels of Jerusalem have lost none of their political or strategic significance. Since the city was reunited under Israel's flag in 1967, efforts by archeologists to uncover Jerusalem's history have been met by fierce and sometimes violent resistance.

That was so during the first intifada in 1988, when Arabs rioted over the opening of an ancient canal; and again in 1996, when 80 people were killed over three days of Arab rioting after Israel opened an ancient tunnel in the Old City; and again in 2007, when Arabs rioted over archeological work that Muslim religious leaders claimed was meant to physically undermine the foundations of the al-Aqsa mosque, a Muslim holy place. Palestinian leaders, including the late Yasser Arafat, have repeatedly insisted that Jewish historical claims to Jerusalem are a fiction (or conspiracy), which in turn plays directly into debates about the ultimate political disposition of the city.

All of this was surely on the mind of Jerusalem's mayor, former high-tech entrepreneur Nir Barkat, when he announced last Monday that archaeologists had cleared an underground aqueduct dating from the time of Herod in the Second Temple Period (515
B.C.-70 C.E.). The aqueduct links the western plaza of the Temple Mount (the holiest site in Judaism and one of the holiest sites in Islam) to the City of David, thus reaffirming the ancient Jewish presence in Jerusalem. When the entire aqueduct is open it could become a tourist destination attracting some 500,000 visitors annually.

Yet the politics seems far-off as a group of journalists bend, squeeze and shuffle through the underground passage. Beneath the old Herodian road that pilgrims took from their ritual cleansing in the City of David's Siloam Pool up to the Temple, we trace a route from which some 2,000 Jewish rebels escaped the city in 70 C.E., when the Romans destroyed the city, thus putting an end to Jewish sovereignty in the city for the next 1,897 years.

Walled on either side with heavy stone slabs, the aqueduct is between three and four feet wide at the most, with head clearance of about seven feet—a claustrophobe's nightmare. The roof slabs are the paving stones of the road above. One is grateful for the fluorescent lighting strung along every few yards, which provide illumination up and down the entire length of the tunnel, a far cry from the guttering tapers the fleeing ancients would have had to rely on as they ran for their lives through darkness.

Later in the tour, we are taken to the site of the current excavation, which sits a few hundred yards southeast of the Dung Gate, the southern entrance to the Old City. Descending some "steps"—really piles of bags filled with archaeological debris ready for removal—we re-enter the aqueduct 30 feet below ground. Our underground stroll takes us some 650 meters, from our present location between the City of David and the Old City, under the southern wall of the Old City and toward the southwest corner of the Temple Mount. We then jog left as the aqueduct swings to avoid the Temple Mount and resumes its northward trajectory.

According to Ronny Reich, Jerusalem's chief archaeologist and the man responsible for this latest discovery, the aqueduct was built by Herod to drain the western part of the city, a necessity after the Second Temple's construction. Mr. Reich was himself building on the work of British archeologists from the late 19th century—and on his own work from 20 years ago. What he has now done is link the two stretches of underground tunnel, and he hopes to have it open to tourists in about 18 months.

"Before this we thought that what Warren found there and what Bliss and Dickey found here is connected," he says, pointing to the British archaeologists' map. "Today we know."

But sometimes a tunnel is more than just a tunnel. "For the first time you see a connection from the plaza right outside the Temple Mount with the City of David and the [Siloam] pool underneath," says Mr. Barkat. "It's practically the first time that people can connect dots and better understand how people have lived here in the past." At the same time, he's quick to insist that the digs not "touch the status quo—no digs under the Temple Mount."

For now, what the mayor wants the world to focus on is history, not religious or political conflict. "This is a city that was always, for over three and a half billion people of faith, the center of the world and has layers and layers of history, second to practically no other city in the world," he says. "This is something we need to share with
the world, we've got to share it and make sure more and more people come and see it with their own eyes like you saw it."

21. **Education about Jerusalem can help resolve its divisions**
   Daniel Seidemann, Daily Star (Lebanon), 31/01/2011

#axzz1EmJyP0r5

The Arab Peace Initiative makes cursory reference to Jerusalem, stating only that East Jerusalem should become the capital of the Palestinian state. Yet the underlying architectural principles of the Arab Peace Initiative (API) can be identified, articulated and extrapolated to Jerusalem. In sum, the API re-frames “land for peace” into “end of occupation in exchange for legitimacy.” It includes closure of the “1948 file”– end of claims – in exchange for acceptance of the 1967 border.

How will these principles interact with the ebb and flow of Israeli fears and hopes regarding the future of Jerusalem?

The API points toward a politically divided Jerusalem, based on the principles of territorial sovereignty defined by the green line. This approach dovetails with the growing awareness in Israel that a unified, bi-national Jerusalem is not in Israel’s national interest, and that over time, Israeli rule over close to 300,000 Palestinians in East Jerusalem is not sustainable. The Israeli attitude toward occupation is increasingly reminiscent of Thomas Jefferson’s quip that slavery is like holding a wolf by the ears: you don’t dare hold on, and you are scared to let go. The API has the potential to provide a framework for Israel to “let go” of occupation in East Jerusalem, not as a retreat, but as a bold move made in the service of the two-state solution, and justifying a division of the city.

On the other hand, if the API sanctifies the green line, thereby mandating a dismantling of all Israeli settlements in East Jerusalem, it is not likely to gain much traction in Israel. There are 195,000 Israelis living in these settlements, and a proposed agreement that requires them to be uprooted will not likely go far. It is noteworthy that the Palestinians have acknowledged publicly that the API does allow for mutually agreed territorial adjustments that deviate from the green line. If this is indeed the case, the API principles offer Israelis the incentive of transforming the bulk of their settlements in East Jerusalem into universally recognized parts of sovereign Israel.

The API is rooted in the language of legitimacy. In this context its potential impact on Israeli public opinion is greatest. No state recognizes Jerusalem as Israel’s capital. Ironically, it is only the Palestinians, in the framework of the API, who can deliver to Israel what it craves most in Jerusalem: legitimacy. A division of Jerusalem will encounter fierce domestic Israeli opposition; but a division of Jerusalem that brings recognition of Jewish Jerusalem as Israel’s capital, alongside the Palestinian capital of Al-Quds, with Arab embassies in both, will increase support for an agreement in Israel.

If it is possible to envisage an agreed border in Jerusalem under API principles that deviates from the green line, it is highly unlikely that such accommodations will apply to the Haram al-Sharif-Temple Mount and its environs. The API is less prone to ideas
like a special regime in the Old City (ostensibly offered by Ehud Olmert to Mahmoud Abbas) or inventive ideas like “divine sovereignty” on the Haram-Mount (as articulated by the late King Hussein). Any attempt to construe the API short of “full-stop” Palestinian or Arab sovereignty on the Haram-Mount would be self-delusion.

Achieving an Israeli waiver of sovereign claims to the Haram-Mount and the surrounding areas will be one of the most daunting challenges of any permanent-status agreement.

The potential to secure an Israeli waiver of sovereign claims, to the extent such potential exists, is embedded in the logic of the API. Israelis correctly perceive Palestinian and Arab denials of historic Jewish connections to Jerusalem as a litmus test, disclosing the acceptance or rejection of authentic Jewish connections to Israel-Palestine. Absent an affirmative acceptance of these connections, demands to cede Israeli sovereignty on the Temple Mount would almost certainly be rejected out of hand, as such an action would for Israelis be accompanied by a sense of violation and feared loss of legitimacy of the entire enterprise that is modern Israel.

On the other hand were the permanent-status agreement, loyal to the inner logic of the API, to include declarations recognizing the legitimacy of Jewish attachments and provisions guaranteeing the inviolability of Jewish equities under Palestinian-Arab sovereignty, the calculus could change significantly. In effect, the Palestinian-Arab sovereign would declare itself the custodian of Jewish memories and their physical embodiments. The act of assuring protection of archeological artifacts and guaranteeing access for non-Muslims to the Haram-Mount, would significantly increase the willingness of Israelis to entertain the possibility of such sovereignty.

Indeed, such a development is not implausible: today, from Rabat to Beirut, Cairo to Damascus, Arab governments are restoring Jewish synagogues because the historic, legitimate Jewish presence in their countries is part of their interpretation of Arab civilization – an interpretation shared by the API.

The API has the potential to “speak the language” of Jerusalem well. Its focus on the green line, with agreed modifications, is consistent with the growing consensus in Israel that Israeli rule over East Jerusalem is untenable in the long run. And indeed, based on the API’s principles, validating Jewish attachments to areas that fall under Palestinian-Arab sovereignty – an act that would, in parallel, demand validation of Muslim attachments to sites within Israel, like the Mamilla cemetery – would likely be far less difficult than resolving what for Palestinians and the Arab world is the highly problematic Israeli demand for recognition of “the Jewish character” of Israel.

The concern, even passion, in the Arab world regarding Jerusalem is undoubtedly genuine – but not always accompanied by a familiarity with the rival equities in the city, an appreciation of the city’s real-time complexities, or a respect for the genuine concerns of Israelis and Jews. For these reasons, stakeholders in the API need to begin to educate themselves and their populations about Jerusalem.

In doing so, they can begin leveraging the API to make real progress on Jerusalem. They can use it to generate potential permanent-status positions compatible with the complexities of the city and the sensitivities in the Jewish, Muslim and Christian
worlds, and that contribute to building confidence in the API as a tool to energize Israeli-Palestinian peace efforts and, ultimately, achieve peace.

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22. King Solomon's Vanishing Temple


http://www.jidaily.com/rO4rw/e

The recent round of peace negotiations between the Palestinian Authority and Israel, when it was not interrupted by disputes over settlement freezes and other marginalia, focused on the same set of issues that has typified the negotiating agenda for many years: borders, Jerusalem, security, refugees, water and so on. We know them so well that we can recite them even in our dreams.

There are now, however, two new nightmares to trouble our sleep. The lesser one concerns the recent Israeli demand that the Palestinians explicitly recognize Israel as a “Jewish state”; this demand may well cause more problems than it can solve. Closely related is the greater nightmare: the Palestinian leadership’s insistent denial of history. To be specific, Palestinian public discourse claims that the Jewish Temple never existed in Jerusalem. It refuses to even acknowledge, let alone tolerate, the universally accepted history of the city and of other parts of the country. For example, the Palestinian Authority recently complained to the Chinese organizers of the Shanghai Expo (through its representative in Egypt, Barakat al-Farra) about Israeli exhibitions that speak, among other things, of the history of Jerusalem. More recently, UNESCO acceded to Palestinian and Arab demands to recognize the Cave of the Patriarchs in Hebron and the Tomb of Rachel as “Palestinian” sites. And still another is the appearance in November 2010 on the Information Ministry web page of the Palestinian Authority government of a paper written by Al-Mutawakel Taha, a Ministry official, denying any Jewish historical association with the Western (outer) Wall of the Second Temple Mount.

Where does this spasm of resistance to accepted historical narratives come from? What do Palestinian activists hope to achieve by it? Are they unaware of how deadly it is for the peace process? Or are they rather very much aware?

Most Israelis were first exposed to the Palestinian denial of history in July 2000. According to U.S. negotiator Dennis Ross, when Jerusalem was discussed during the second Camp David summit, Palestinian Authority leader Yasir Arafat asserted that “the Temple never existed in Jerusalem, but rather in Nablus.” Another senior Palestinian negotiator, Saeb Erekat, asserted, the “Jerusalem Temple is a Jewish invention.” President Bill Clinton was astonished: “Not only do all of the world’s Jews believe that the Temple was located on the Temple Mount, but most Christians believe it, too.” For the Israeli delegation, however, as then-Foreign Affairs Minister Shlomo Ben-Ami tells us, it marked a decisive moment in a more practical way: All the Israelis instantly understood that the Palestinian negotiators were not ready to sign a peace agreement to end the conflict.
After these events went public, 91 percent of Israelis (according to a public opinion survey conducted by Mina Tzemach) rejected a compromise deal based on exclusive Palestinian control of the Haram al-Sharif, the holy shrine where the two Jewish Temples once stood and which Jews call Har HaBayit (the Temple Mount). The Palestinian rhetorical innovation has clearly been a major factor in persuading Israelis of the moderate left peace camp that Israel has “no real partner for peace” among Palestinians. Indeed, it is reasonable to surmise that if the same Palestinian denial of Jewish affinity to the Temple Mount had been voiced in 1993, the Oslo Accords would never have been signed.

As it happened, the September 1993 “Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements” agreed to delay discussion of the core issues, including Jerusalem, to the final stage of negotiations. That probably explains why Arafat did not refute the Jewish connection to Jerusalem at that time. Looking back from Camp David in June 2000, Arafat’s refusal to sign the May 1994 Gaza-Jericho agreement until he received a letter guaranteeing the continuation of Palestinian political institutions in Jerusalem also makes more sense. By August 1994, when he visited South Africa as the guest of Nelson Mandela, he had let the cat out of the proverbial bag. Speaking at a mosque in Johannesburg, Arafat cited the Hudaybiyya Pact of 628 between the Prophet Muhammad and the infidels of Mecca as a precedent for signing the Oslo Accords: “This agreement, I do not regard it as anything more than the agreement the Prophet Muhammad signed with Quraysh.” He then called on his audience to be prepared for jihad to liberate Jerusalem (if the Palestinians did not receive it in political negotiations). Arafat sought in his Johannesburg speech to have it both ways: to justify the signing of the Oslo accords vis-à-vis his opponents by grounding it in the Prophet’s practice, and, at the same time, to convey a tough message in advance of the political struggles that awaited on the Jerusalem question and other core issues.

The Johannesburg incident underlines that Jerusalem was a top priority for Arafat. Negating the historical Jewish connection to the city in 2000 reflected not just his calculation that denial provided an emotive, rhetorical tool in the struggle over the sovereignty of Jerusalem, but also his deep-seated belief. But the question remains: Where did Arafat acquire this belief? It contradicts not only widely accepted scholarship by Westerners and others, but also the traditional views of Muslim prelates and scholars lasting well into the 20th century.

A thorough study of contemporary Arab and Muslim public discourse, books and other publications shows that the denial process is widespread in the Arab and Muslim world. The following story gives the flavor of this process. On September 25, 2003 a delegation of Arab leaders from northern Israel visited Arafat at his Muqata’a compound in Ramallah to show solidarity with the Palestinian Al-Aqsa Intifada (the second Palestinian uprising), which started in September 2000. The guests were surprised when Arafat lectured them on al-Aqsa, insisting that no Jewish Temple had existed in either Jerusalem or Nablus; rather, he claimed it had been in Yemen. Arafat said that he himself had visited Yemen and been shown the site upon which Solomon’s Temple had stood. A year earlier, another Palestinian public figure, Haj Zaki al-Ghul (Jerusalem’s “shadow” mayor from Amman), voiced a similar claim. In a 2002 lecture at the annual al-Quds conference in Jordan, al-Ghul stated that King Solomon had ruled over the Arabian Peninsula, and that it was there, not in Jerusalem, that he built his Temple.
It was not al’Ghul, however, who introduced Yasir Arafat to this Palestinian version of invented history and it was not even another Palestinian. The honor belongs to Kamal Salibi, professor emeritus at the American University of Beirut and subsequently Director of the Royal Institute for Interfaith Studies in Amman. By any Middle Eastern measure, Salibi is an unusual person. Born in Beirut a Protestant Christian, he earned his doctorate at the School of Oriental and African Studies in London under the direction of Bernard Lewis. Many years distant from Lewis’s mentorship, in 1985 Salibi published The Bible Came from Arabia, in which he claimed that the Children of Israel originated in the western Arabian Peninsula. This strange theory, which is largely based on the discovery and interpretation of an obscure sundial, lacks support from any other scholar. Salibi claimed that Biblical Jerusalem was located in the Arabian Nimas highlands, halfway from Mecca to Yemen. This is an instructive example of how a single book, however esoteric its theory, can have significant influence when one side of a polemical discourse finds it useful.

The real impetus for delegitimizing Jewish claim to Jerusalem, however, dates back further, to the denouement of the Six-Day War. The Palestinian need to refute Jewish history (and their own) regarding the Temple and Jerusalem in general arose only after Israel conquered the Old City of Jerusalem. Even though Israel left the administration of the Temple Mount to the Muslim waqf clergy (then under exclusive Jordanian control, and later joined by a Palestinian partner), the fall of the al-Aqsa Mosque into Jewish hands triggered a process of historical denial among Arabs and Muslims across the world. By 1981, this process yielded the first written denial by the PLO that there was any historical Jewish connection to Jerusalem. Four years before Salibi’s book saw light of day, Samir Jiryis (another Christian scholar, as it happens), stated in a PLO publication that there was no foundation for Jerusalem’s sacredness to Judaism.2

Post-1967 Palestinian historical revisionism stands in stark contrast to the Arab and Muslim narrative about Jerusalem dating back more than a thousand years. As recently as 1929, when bloody communal riots broke out in and over Jerusalem, the Supreme Muslim Council of Palestine published a Guide to al-Haram al-Sharif, which maintained the following: “Its identity with the site of Solomon’s Temple is beyond dispute. This, too, is the spot, according to the universal belief, on which David built there an altar unto the Lord, and offered burnt offerings and peace offerings (2 Samuel XXIV, 25).”

The 1929 Arab riots were fed by fantasy, but not a fantasy about the history of Jerusalem. Those bloody riots, fomented by the Mufti Haj Amin al-Husseini, flowed from an unfounded fear that the Jews were about to use the Western Wall as a launching pad to gain control over the Haram. Throughout it all, however, Palestinians never denied the existence of the Jewish Temple in Jerusalem. They merely claimed that the Western Wall, rather than being a remnant of the Temple’s outer wall, was instead the Wall of the al-Aqsa Mosque (meaning the entire Haram compound) where, according to Muslim tradition, the Prophet Muhammad tethered his steed Buraq on his Night Journey from Mecca to al-Aqsa (Quran 17:1) before he entered the Mosque. The tradition, however, says that Buraq was tethered to the “entrance” of the mosque, and gives no further information about location or which side of the entrance is meant. The Palestinian Arabs claimed that this site was the “Al-Buraq Wall”, a Muslim holy site. The commission that looked into the riots concluded that the Wall is Muslim-owned but is a holy site only for Jews.
The absence in 1929 of any Palestinian denial that Jewish Temples stood in Jerusalem was, as already suggested, no oversight. Rather, it reflected a Muslim historiographic tradition in all forms of Arab Muslim literature in which the story of the Jewish Temple and its construction, traditions about the divine worship that took place within it, and even details about the First Temple’s destruction by Nebuchadnezzar were all well-established motifs. Several widely known classical Arab sources identify the site upon which the al-Aqsa Mosque was built as the place where Solomon’s Temple stood. The 11th-century Jerusalem geographer and historian al-Maqdisi and the 14th-century Iranian religious-legal sage al-Mustawfi both linked the al-Aqsa Mosque to Solomon’s Temple. Similarly, the 13th-century poet Jalal al-Din al-Rumi defined the construction of the Solomonic house of worship as the building of the “al-Aqsa Mosque.”

The Arabs also have usually identified the rock that lies within the site as Solomon’s Temple and the heart of the al-Aqsa compound. Abu Bakr al-Wasiti, who preached at al-Aqsa in the early 11th century, also refers to various traditions related to the Temple’s Jewish past in his work in praise of Jerusalem. Several Arab classical sources maintain, too, that Caliph ’Abd al-Malik’s construction of the Dome of the Rock (in 691 or 692 CE) contrasted with the Christian custom of pillaging the Jewish Temple site by dumping the city’s garbage there. According to these sources, ’Abd al-Malik ordered the construction because he was influenced by his belief in the place’s connection to Abraham and the Binding of Isaac.

This historiographic tradition remained unbroken well into modern times and, indeed, beyond 1929. Writing in the 1950s and 1960s, a leading Palestinian historian, ‘Arif al-‘Arif, affirmed that the Jewish Temple was located where the Dome of the Rock stands today. In his two-volume history of Jerusalem (Ta’rikh al-Quds and Al-Mufassal fi Ta’rikh al-Quds) al-‘Arif wrote that the Haram al-Sharif is located on the Mount Moriah mentioned in Genesis, the site of Ornan the Jebusite’s threshing floor, which David purchased in order to build the Temple. He affirms, too, that Solomon built the Temple in 1007 BCE, adding: “Among the remnants of the era of Solomon is the structure that lies under al-Aqsa Mosque.” The place, al-‘Arif explained, was owned by the Jews for a certain period and afterward returned to Muslim proprietorship. The Muslims called it al-Haram al-Qudsi (the Jerusalem shrine) because it was sacred to all Muslims. Al-‘Arif also wrote that the quarry to the west of the Damascus Gate of the Old City is called “Solomon’s Mine” because it provided the stones that Solomon used to build the Temple.

These statements, written at a time when Jerusalem’s Old City was a part of the Kingdom of Jordan, are almost entirely absent from Arab history books written after 1967 and, generally, from the contemporary Arab discourse. Yet al-‘Arif himself wasn’t exactly an objective historian. He contended that the Temple Mount is no longer a holy site for Jews and has not been since the destruction of the Second Temple in the year 70 CE. He wrote that, in contrast to Muslims, who have hundreds of holy sites in Jerusalem (which he enumerates at length), and to Christians, who have dozens of them, sacred Jewish Jerusalem is limited to the Wailing Wall and to a handful of old synagogues and tombs of saints. Al-‘Arif attributes the dearth of Jewish holy places to the Jews’ absence from the city: “After the Jews were defeated by the Romans they were dispersed around the globe. There is, thus, no mention of the Jews in connection with Jerusalem for hundreds of years.”
In contrast to the classical sources, post-1967 Islamic writing (by Palestinians and others) that denies the Jewish connection to Jerusalem claims that the Temple never existed and that Solomon’s Temple, if there ever was such a thing, was at most the King’s personal prayer room. In any case, Solomon is regarded as an early Islamic figure, Sulayman. The mythology is so strong that it occludes its own origin.

To support this contention, Palestinians and other Muslim writers must logically contend that there are no archeological findings from the Temple period that would refute their view. This is rubbish of the archeological sort. British archeologist Kathleen Kenyon, who dug in Jerusalem before 1967, wrote, “The site of the Temple is not in doubt . . . . [T]he retaining walls of the platform of Herod’s Temple are still visible today, now crowned by that supreme example of Moslem architecture, the Dome of the Rock.” Arab writers deny this conclusion. For example, a Palestinian named Arafat Hijazi wrote in a 2002 article on the website of the Islamic Movement in Israel’s southern branch that “42 archeological teams excavated at al-Aqsa between 1891–1925, and hundreds [yes!] have excavated since 1967, but not one archeologist has found a remnant of the Temple or any indication of the existence of Jews in Palestine.”

There is no shortage of such stark denials of reality. Palestinian-Jordanian historian Kamil al-‘Asali maintains in his 1992 book on travelers’ accounts about Bayt al-Maqdis (the original Arabic name for al-Quds, or Jerusalem) that, “Modern archeology has not succeeded in proving that the site on which the Temple stood is located in this place, since no remnants of the Temple have survived.” The refuters neglect the fact that because the Temple compound rests underneath the Dome of the Rock—a Muslim holy shrine—excavations have never been conducted under the entire Haram compound. Sheikh Abd al-Hamid al-Sa’ih, the President of the Palestinian National Council from 1984–93, was until 1967 the highest Palestinian religious authority in Jerusalem. In his book he claimed that the Egyptian engineer who restored the Dome of the Rock during the 1960s told him that he had dug several meters under the Rock and “found no evidence of a more ancient structure.” In a January 2001 Die Welt interview with the former Palestinian Mufti, Sheikh Ikrima Sabri, Sabri claimed that there are no artifacts that support the Jewish claim that a Temple was located on this site, and that Jews themselves are not sure where their Temple was. In 2001, Egyptian waqf Minister Mahmud Hamdi Zaqzuq stated that the Jews have no connection to the Western Wall, which according to him “was never a holy site for them.” Zaqzuq added that no historical evidence exists to support the Jewish claims regarding the existence of Solomon’s “alleged” Temple anywhere in the city. The denial phenomenon is also manifested in official publications. A 2002 Palestinian Authority book on the history of the al-Aqsa compound makes no mention of the site’s sacred status in Judaism.

Another Palestinian claim is that the Jewish presence in Jerusalem was short-lived, consisting merely of some seventy years of David and Solomon’s reigns. The truth is that the First and Second Temples together functioned for about a millennium—from roughly 1006 BCE to 586 BCE, and from 516 BCE to 70 CE. The Palestinian al-Quds University website nonetheless underlines in the chronology of the city that the Jews ruled Jerusalem for only 73 out of 5,000 years.

While Palestinians were perhaps the first to deny the existence of a Jewish Temple in Jerusalem, today, 44 years after June 1967, the denial phenomenon is so widespread in both the Arab and the Muslim worlds that Palestinians have taken to relying on the writings of others. The most extreme assertion in this regard was made by the Egyptian
archeologist Abd al-Rahim Barakat, who wrote that “the legend of the alleged Temple is the greatest crime of fabricating history.” According to him, David and Solomon built small houses of worship, not a Temple, while the Israelites did not in any case adhere to the religion of Solomon, who preached faith in Allah, the One God. In other words, King Solomon was more a Muslim, some 1,600 years before the birth of Muhammad, than he was a Jew. This is a view shared by the vast majority of Muslims.

Indeed, many Muslim authors now refer to the Jewish Temple with the term al-haykal al-maz’um, meaning “the alleged Temple”, as if the Temple itself was a Jewish invention lacking any factual basis. For example, Egyptian writer Abd al-Tawab Mustafa writes in his book dedicated to refuting the “Jewish lie about the Temple”: “We came to realize that the Jews’ belief in the Temple is no more than a false allegation that does not hold up in the face of scientific criticism, since the Jews’ supposed scholarship on the topic is not true scientific research, but rather speculations and hypotheses.” In July 2000, after the second Camp David summit, Palestinian Authority Cabinet member Nabil Sha’ath told the al-Ayam newspaper that “Israel claims that its alleged Temple existed there [in Jerusalem].” Similarly, Ahmed Khalil, former Jordanian waqf minister, who served as the head of the royal commission charged with restoring the al-Aqsa Mosque, stated in a January 2003 press conference that Israel consistently tries to interfere in al-Aqsa affairs and to excavate underneath the Mosque “in order to establish the alleged Temple.”

There are noteworthy exceptions to the post-1967 trend. For example, Palestinian archeologist Dr. Marwan Abu Khalaf of al-Quds University has noted that a Christian pilgrim called Arculf, who spent nine months in Jerusalem around the year 670, wrote that “[o]n the site where the Temple once stood” a mosque had been erected by the Muslims. But these exceptions are few and far between. Whatever serious Palestinian scholars may think about such matters, most are reluctant to buck the party line in public.

For the sake of balance we should note that some right-leaning Israelis and diaspora Jews seek to belittle the importance of Jerusalem for Muslims. (Some also support and are undertaking politically incendiary archeological projects in, around and below the City of David.) They often emphasize the fact that Muhammad changed the direction of prayer (qibla) from Jerusalem to Mecca (“while facing Mecca Muslims from our area are turning their back to Jerusalem”), and they stress that the only period when Jerusalem was important to Muslim Arabs was the relatively short period of Umayyad rule between 661 to 750, particularly under Caliph ’Abd al-Malik, who built the Dome of the Rock. They also argue that the term al-Aqsa mentioned in the Quran could not refer to Jerusalem because the city was still in Byzantine hands during Muhammad’s entire lifetime.

Moreover, those who seek to undermine the importance of Jerusalem to Arabs and Muslims argue that Jerusalem is not mentioned by name in the Quran or in the early hadith literature, and that the classical Arabic name of the city Bayt al-Maqdis is a direct translation of the Hebrew Beit HaMikdash (the Holy House/Temple). The city has been called “al-Quds” (“the Holy”) only since the 10th century. In addition, they claim that the name “al-Aqsa” in the Quran refers, according to some Muslim interpretations, to a heavenly mosque and not to any building in earthly Jerusalem. They also point out that Jerusalem is only the third-holiest city for Islam after Mecca and Medina and has never been an Islamic political capital.
In contrast to the Muslim phenomenon of completely denying the Jewish attachment to Jerusalem, however, the Jewish counterpart does not deny the holiness of the al-Aqsa mosque and the Islamic affiliation with the Old City. Nor has this narrative ever been promoted by senior Israeli leaders, not even those in the current right-of-center coalition government. Jews do not deny that the Muslims consider Jerusalem and the Haram al-Sharif as their third holy city and shrine. However, they believe that the holy status of the city and the al-Aqsa compound is a late development aimed at strengthening their arguments in the political arena.

The political struggle for Palestine since 1967 has led Palestinians and many Muslims to intensify their efforts to discredit the Jewish connection to Jerusalem and the holy sites. Based on statements by Palestinians, Jordanians, Egyptians and others, this denial phenomenon has already taken root among a large proportion of the Muslim population in the Arab world and, presumably, beyond. Given that many Arab publications since 1967 have rejected the existence of the Jewish Temple in Jerusalem, Arafat’s denial of the Jewish connection to the site at the July 2000 Camp David talks should not have come as such a surprise to Jewish and American publics. But it did come as a great surprise. Since the Jerusalem question remains unresolved, and because Palestinians wield the al-Aqsa compound as a central identity symbol to foster Muslim solidarity, the denial tendency has remained strong since Yasir Arafat’s death.

Behind closed doors, in track II diplomacy meetings I have attended, I have heard from Palestinian leaders and academics that they understand that Arafat’s denial at the Camp David Summit of 2000 was a mistake. So far, however, not one has publicly expressed this understanding. Prominent Palestinian Authority leaders are careful not to repeat Arafat’s assertions, but they remain reluctant to correct his views.

It would be best if the two parties articulated their mutual respect for each other’s attachments to the city and to their respective holy places. Indeed, it seems absolutely a precondition to a sustainable end-of-conflict agreement. A joint Israeli-Palestinian project to educate people about the history of Jerusalem and the importance of the city to the three Abrahamic faiths would also be helpful. The sooner the Palestinians return to their own thousand-year-old traditions on the topic, the better.

Other current issues

23. Would East Jerusalem Arabs rather be citizens of Israel or Palestine?
Natasha Mozgovaya, Haaretz, 13/01/2011


In new survey, 35% say they are willing to relocate if their neighborhoods become part of a future Palestinian state; only 30% say they would prefer Palestinian citizenship over Israeli.
Arab residents of East Jerusalem are divided on whether they would want Israeli or Palestinian citizenship should a future Palestinian state be created, suggests a new poll released on Wednesday in Washington.

The survey, conducted by Pechter Middle East Polls in partnership with the Council on Foreign Relations, asked a simple question that the leaders both in Israel and the Palestinian authority seem to ignore all too often: What do the people themselves want? And the people seem confused.

When asked if they preferred to become a citizen of Palestine, with all of the rights and privileges of other citizens of Palestine, or a citizen of Israel, only 30 percent chose Palestinian citizenship – as compared to 35 percent that chose Israeli citizenship. Another 35 percent either had no answer or declined to provide it.

A follow up question asked respondents if “most people in your neighborhood” would prefer to become citizens of Palestine or of Israel: 31 percent thought that most people prefer Palestinian citizenship; 39 percent - Israeli citizenship; and 30 percent, once again, declined to answer or said they didn’t know.

When asked if they would move to a different location inside Israel, if their neighborhood became part of Palestine, 40 percent said they were likely to move to Israel, and 37 percent said they will not move. In comparison, 27 percent said they are likely to move to Palestine if their neighborhood became part of Israel, and 54 percent said they will not move.

When asked to provide the top reasons they chose one citizenship over the other, those who chose Israeli citizenship stressed freedom of movement in Israel, higher income, better job opportunities and Israeli health insurance.

Those who chose Palestinian citizenship referred to nationalism and patriotism. Both groups, in each possible scenario, expressed concern over the possibility of losing access to the Al Aqsa Mosque because it’s unclear where the permanent border will be.

Among other concerns about becoming Palestinian citizens that respondents cited were losing access to jobs and free movement in Israel, losing government provided health care, unemployment and disability benefits, and municipal services.

Those who chose to be Israeli citizens are concerned about discrimination, obstacles to receive building permits, problems with visiting relatives and friends in Palestine, and possible moral misconduct of the kids.

"I assume the Palestinian leadership wouldn’t be too happy about the results," Dr. David Pollock, a senior fellow at The Washington Institute, who supervised the survey and analyzed it, told Haaretz.

"But I think the results are very credible and solid. I was there supervising the survey in Jerusalem in November and I am very confident in the results," Pollock said, adding that he felt "the main reason so little attention was paid to the opinion of people living there is because people were nervous to find answers to these questions."
"The Palestinian leadership might have been nervous because they understood these Palestinians have special benefits and interests not to lose these benefits," Pollock added, saying that "from an Israeli point of view – people are more interested in the political significance of the city than perceptions of the Palestinians who live there."
"Neither side had obvious short term interests in finding out what was under the surface," he added.

"A Palestinian expert and colleague of mine suggested to me that he accepts the results and takes it as a signal that the Palestinian Authority must convince more Palestinians that they can provide employment opportunities and services as well as Israel can – it's a practical kind of challenge," Pollock said.

"From the Israeli point of view it's kind of a mixed message – on the one hand for the Israelis who'd like to keep these neighborhoods forever it's probably a pleasant surprise that a high percentage of Palestinians are willing to accept that," the senior researcher said, adding, however, that, "on the other hand around half of the Palestinians in East Jerusalem perceive that they are subject to significant amount of discrimination."

The Israeli government "should decide if they are indeed willing to integrate 270 thousand Palestinians," Pollack added.

"There is a real discrepancy between what policy-makers here, in Israel and in the territories assume about the Palestinians of East Jerusalem and what they actually want. I think that everyone – Israelis, Palestinians, other Arabs – should pay attention to these results," Pollock said.

24. The Lifta that never will be

Esther Zandberg, Haaretz, 3/2/2011


Instead of building luxury homes over the abandoned village, Israel could use the hillside ruins to preserve Arab memory and heal a rift. Don't hold your breath

The first Arab residents have begun to enter their new homes in the village of Lifta at the western approach to Jerusalem. Many of them are descendants of Palestinian families who lived there until the eve of the Israeli War of Independence in 1948. When they left the village, it remained abandoned for decades and its ruins became a symbol of the destruction of the Palestinian community in Israel.

The village has been reconstructed according to a building plan advanced by the Israel Lands Administration in cooperation with residents' families. The streets teem with life and tourism and commerce are flourishing; boutique hotels, bed-and-breakfasts, souvenir shops and a colorful market have opened.

The old mosque has been rebuilt. Fifty-five historical buildings have been restored and converted to new uses. One of them serves as a historical museum.
Jewish and Arab high school and university students visit as part of their civics courses, studying the Palestinian narrative in local history. The newer buildings are constructed in a blend of the many different styles characteristic of Arab communities, and more than a little of their traditional character was lost. But even the strictest adherents of preservation admit that the historical justice carried out here was worth the price. On second thought, it is a kind of authenticity in itself and a thread that connects history to our time.

None of this ever happened nor will it ever; it does not jibe with current Israeli reality.

The Israel Lands Administration has in fact advanced a new building plan for the decade, and has just issued a tender for the acquisition of plots of land in Lifta. But this plan is light years away from the vision above, and chances that descendants of refugees from Lifta will ever step foot there are nil.

The plan calls for 212 apartments and a commercial and tourist center; it will turn into a luxury complex in the style of David's Village in Mamilla or the Yemin Moshe artists colony.

Although it is termed a preservation effort, it is in effect, paradoxically, an erasure of all memory of the original village. And there is also no chance that a Palestinian museum will be erected there.

Urban building plan number 6036 for the ruins of the village was authorized about five years ago after opposition by a number of non-profit groups, including Zochrot and Bimkom, was rejected. They called on the village to be developed as a preserve of Palestinian memory and in this way contribute to reconciliation between Jewish and Arab citizens of Israel. In its opposition to the plan, Bimkom emphasized every nation's right to memory, and wrote that the issues of preservation and memory "should be the basis of common cultural knowledge for every element of the population in Israel."

But all of this is a distant dream. Unlike the designers' fantasies, the voices of village refugees and their families were not heard at the discussion of the plan, which was not meant for them from the beginning. Many of them live in East Jerusalem, not far from the homes they were not allowed to return to, and where they are to this day not allowed to build homes.

Frozen memory

Lifta is a place frozen in time. It is unpopulated and has not turned into an artists' colony, like Ein Hod or Old Jaffa. The core of the village remains almost in its entirety, with dozens of original buildings and a landscape which has not been covered with JNF forests, and not styled by landscape architects - the fate now expected to befall the village according to the new plan.

Behind all this beauty lies all the elements of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict: the refugee problem, the demand for the right of return, denial of memory and so on.

The building plan for Lifta cannot be considered innocent. There is no reason to slaughter this beautiful piece of land for 200 homes for the rich; it answers no vital need and does not solve any of the housing problems in Jerusalem, and it will not contribute
to reconciliation, but rather deepen the conflict and erase more proof that someone was here before us.

The only justification for the development of Lifta, and it too sounds like a fantasy today, is building that will serve Palestinian refugees and create a kind of historical justice with a symbol, a tribute.

This kind of effort would also be political and perhaps lack planning logic, but justice and ethics and the chance to turn the village from a memorial to destruction into a symbol of a shared future stand in its favor.

Because such an alternative is out of the question, there is nothing left to do but act to stop the plan, and raise funds to do the necessary work to strengthen existing buildings until a suitable solution is found.

It is to be hoped that such funds will be sufficient for an investigatory commission. This is the place to repeat the conclusions of the Or Commission on the events of September 2000, quoted by Bimkom in its opposition to the building plan and more relevant now than ever.

"The establishment of the state of Israel, which the Jewish people celebrated as the realization of the dream of generations, is connected to [the Palestinians’] historic memory, the most difficult trauma in their history, the Nakba," the Or Commission report said. "The programs and symbols of the state are also anchored in law that praises the victory in the conflict ... which is seen by the Arab minority as a defeat. It is appropriate to find ways to strengthen Arab citizens' feeling of belonging to the nation without hurting their connection to their culture and community."