



**Palestine Economic Policy Research Institute**

**Background Paper**

**Roundtable (5):**

**The Current State of the Markets in the Old City of  
Jerusalem**

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<sup>1</sup> The views expressed here are solely those of the author and do not necessarily represent the views of MAS.

## **The Current State of the Markets in the Old City of Jerusalem**

Jerusalem has always been the Palestinian national hub for trade, transport, tourism, and culture. The Old City (less than 1 sq km) was the heart of Jerusalem's trade, with its markets providing numerous services and goods for the residents as well as the local and foreign visitors. However, the Judaization plans that followed Israel's seizure of East Jerusalem in 1967 – and the resulting extensive demographic and economic encroachments and transgressions including settlement expansion activities, the displacement of Palestinians, and looting their lands and property – have impaired Jerusalem's leading economic role.

A look at the Old City's markets and the recession they experience presents a microcosm of the broader scene of the barriers and arbitrary actions placed on the development of East Jerusalem's economy when the occupying power annexed East Jerusalem and isolated it from the Palestinian economy. The constraints on trade activities, which produced recession, constitute only one method that Israel has constantly used to control the city and displace its indigenous population.

This paper examines the current state of the Old City's markets and attempts to identify the changes they have experienced since 1948, focusing on the changes in the last two decades and the factors that led to these changes. The paper also looks at the impact of the recent *habba* (wave of protests) on the market activities. The paper concludes with a set of policy recommendations that are expected to help address this stagnation.

### **Limitations of the Study**

The author encountered two limitations: a scarcity of reliable data and a conflict between figures from different sources. This problem is not new. For example, according to the Arab Chamber of Commerce and Industry-Jerusalem, in 1998 there were 956 shops/stores in the Old City, while Israeli sources show that the number of shops, craft shops, commercial real estate, and offices that paid the Arnona tax in 1995-1996 reached 1,896<sup>2</sup>. Currently, the Chamber of Commerce estimates the number of shops in the Old City at 1,400, including 942 registered at the Chamber<sup>3</sup>. Different sources also give different figures for the number of closed shops. In a 1999 survey cited in a Welfare Association study (2004), there were about 300 closed stores. According to current statistics, the figure is 200 (the Chamber of Commerce) or 250 (Jerusalem Center for Social and Economic Rights).

There is also a scarcity of data. For example, the PCBS's *Statistical Yearbook of Jerusalem* has no data on the Old City, leaving many unanswered questions: the share of the commercial market in East Jerusalem GDP; employment potential for the commercial sector in the Old City; the average number of employees in shops; fluctuations in commodity prices over time; current unemployment rate in the Old City; etc. The conflicting figures and the scarcity of data will definitely produce inaccurate findings. However, the findings of this paper are certain about one thing: the performance of the commercial sector in the Old City of Jerusalem has worsened over time.

### **1. Historical Overview of the Markets in the Old City of Jerusalem**

The Old City market was built by the Umayyads and later renovated by the Abbasids, the Mamluks, and the Ottomans. Shops selling the same lines of goods were built along the same street in the Old City, which gave these markets special names, each corresponding to the line of goods sold there:

- Souq Al-'Attareen (lit. spices market) sold spices, incense, and perfumes;
- Souq Al-Lahameen (lit. butchery market) sold fresh fish and meat;
- Souq Al-Qattanin (lit. cotton market) sold all types of textile;
- Souq Al-Khawajat (lit. foreign merchants market) sold traditional clothes and textile for social occasions;

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<sup>2</sup> Welfare Association, 2004. The Old City Revitalization Plan.

<sup>3</sup> An interview with officials from the Chamber of Commerce, 13 June 2016.

- Souq Khan El-Zeit (lit. oil market) – after an inn named Oil Khan – was home to olive oil presses, with a large depot of olive oil in each press;
- Souq Al-Dibagha (lit. tanning market) featured tanneries for leather manufacturing.

These names suggest that the city had a strong economy with a diversity in traditional industries and trades which provided goods/services to the city's residents and visitors from neighboring towns and villages. However, the structure of business activities has changed over time, and the economy has gradually lost its niche markets. This will be illustrated below through a historical survey of the commercial market in the Old City.<sup>4</sup>

In the early years after the 1948 Nakba, the majority of the markets had the potential of meeting the demands of the local population, while souvenir shops became rare because of the restrictions the Jordanian authorities placed on tourism in the post-war situation and because only rich tourists could afford to visit the Old City in the 1950s. However, in the 1960s, tourists from the middle class started to choose Jerusalem as a tourist destination. Nationals of the Gulf states, Jordan, and Lebanon represented the majority of tourists, and they used to spend a lot of money in the Old City. For example, the Old City became a main destination for rich buyers from Jordan seeking bridal apparel. The Christian Quarter, being one of the most prestigious quarters at the time, was a prime destination.

Following the 1967 War, there emerged what shopkeepers named "the invasion of Israeli shoppers." Jerusalem dealers used to sell relatively cheap imported foreign goods, such as cleaning agents, which the Israeli Jews had never seen before. The Israelis were also stunned by the traditional handicrafts which the Palestinians sold. It is reported that one Palestinian shopkeeper in Jerusalem sold 93 carpets in one day at that time.

Manufacturing handicrafts using electric machinery started as early as 1970. Although this saved time and cut labor, it had unfavorable impact on the quality of local handicrafts and flooded the market with very similar goods of inferior quality. During that time, the number of visitors to the Old City started to rise. In the five years that followed the 1967 setback, more than 3 million people, mostly Jews, visited Jerusalem. In 1970, Jewish tourists represented 60 percent of the total tourists visiting Israel.

The rise in the number of tourists had changed the structure of the markets in the Old City. This coincided with the establishment of new business centers outside the Old City, such as in Salah Al-Din Street, Bab Al-Sahira, Nablus Street, Sheikh Jarrah, Shuafat, Beit Hanina, and others. With the influx of tourists, many shopkeepers turned their shops (whether groceries, restaurants, or sewing shops) into souvenir retails – a profitable business at the time – which gradually stripped the Old City of its traditional character. Although the retail activities continued to constitute the major share of the Old City's business activity in the 1970s, they did not produce such high returns as they did before and the tourism sector became the biggest hope for the city's businesses.

In the 1970s and 1980s, the Old City's markets became more dependent on tourism with increases in the number of tourists coming to Jerusalem in general and the Old City in specific. To keep commodity prices low, merchants started to rely more on importing foreign and Israeli goods. As a result, the market, which had for long maintained the high quality of products, deteriorated into a market that relies heavily on low-quality products.

After the outbreak of the 1987 Intifada, business activity in the old city started to dwindle as the Jews, who had before breathed life into the markets on Saturdays, boycotted the Palestinian markets, and the operation hours declined significantly. With the dramatic decline in the number of tourists, many shop owners returned to retailing, which was far less profitable than tourism and still reeling from

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<sup>4</sup> The next section is largely based on "Jerusalem For Sale: Souvenirs, Tourists and the Old City", Elizabeth Price, *Journal of Palestine Studies* and an interview with Azzam Abu Saud, 13 June 2016.

competition with shopping centers in the suburbs (Beit Hanina, Shuafat, Ras Al-Amud, etc). As the next section shows, business activity started to move away from the Old City.

## **2. Factors That Have Affected the Old City's Markets from 1990s on**

### *A. Israeli Policies to Isolate Jerusalem and Dominate Its Markets*

Soon after the seizure of East Jerusalem in 1967, Israel started systematically pursuing policies aimed at separating East Jerusalem geographically, politically, and economically from the occupied Palestinian territories. The pace of Israeli action has accelerated over time, particularly following the Oslo Agreement in 1993. The Israeli government sped up its endeavors to integrate East Jerusalem within Israel's economy. Yet, the integration was partial and distorted aiming at gradually separating Jerusalem from the Palestinian territories<sup>5</sup>.

The security blockade placed on Jerusalem from January 1991 through March 1993 had a negative impact on the social and economic sectors in Jerusalem in general and the Old City in specific. According to a UNDP report, the average daily losses reached \$6.1 million. From February to April 1996, the tourism industry incurred a \$14.4 million loss (\$260,000 per day).<sup>6</sup> Israeli measures – checkpoints, gates, frequent closures, etc. – have also restricted the freedom of movement, which increased the unemployment rate and worsened the social, economic, and financial conditions, particularly after the Second Intifada. In 2002, Jerusalem was fully cut off from the occupied Palestinian territory and only holders of Jerusalem ID could enter the city and do shopping there<sup>7</sup>.

The Segregation Wall which Israel started to build during the Second Intifada has accelerated the separation of Jerusalem from the West Bank. The physical barrier has also cut off the Arab population of Jerusalem from the city center, and now more than 100,000 Palestinian Jerusalemites on the other side of the wall are denied access to the markets of Jerusalem. This coincided with the development of new business centers in Ramallah, Hebron, and other West Bank cities, which started attracting the residents of Jerusalem. For example, people living in Al-Ram satisfy their shopping needs in Ramallah, while those from Abu Dis or Al-Eizariya travel south to Bethlehem and Hebron. According to a report by the Association for Civil Rights in Israel (2012), “only 4 percent of those living beyond the wall have continued to do their shopping in Jerusalem, whereas 18 percent did so before.”<sup>8</sup> The obstacles created by the Israeli travel permit regime have restricted the entry of West Bank workers into Israel and West Bank Muslim Friday worshippers to Jerusalem attractive markets, thus depriving those markets of an important segment of their traditional clientele.

### *B. Israeli Restrictions on the Palestinian Tourism Sector*

The stagnation in the Old City is closely linked to the decline in the Palestinian tourism industry which has frequently suffered from Israeli actions which stifled Palestinian tourism and created alternative attractive tourist destinations in the Jewish market. This, in turn, led to a decline in the number of tourists, who were once an important source of income for the Old City.

Israel has put in place a set of measures to restrain the development of the Palestinian tourism sector: isolating East Jerusalem from the rest of the occupied Palestinian territories, especially after the construction of the segregation wall; reducing the areas available for Palestinian construction activities which resulted in high construction costs; weak physical infrastructure; high taxes; restrictions on constructing hotels or converting buildings into hotels; obstacles imposed on permitting new tourist companies; weak Palestinian/Arab investment in the tourism sector; poor coordination among Palestinian tourism developers; a lack of a unified strategy for developing Palestinian tourism in Jerusalem; and, intense competition from the Israeli tourism sector which

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<sup>5</sup> United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) 2013. Palestinian economy in East Jerusalem: Enduring annexation, isolation and disintegration.

<sup>6</sup> Welfare Association (2004), Op. cit.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid

<sup>8</sup> Association for Civil Rights in Israel (2012). Policies of Neglect in East Jerusalem: The Policies that created 78% Poverty Rates and a Frail Job Market

benefits from lavish incentives by the Israeli government. These restrictions, together with the negative portrayal of Palestinians and its tourist guides by Israel, have enabled Israel to dominate and weaken the Palestinian tourism sector in Jerusalem.

These factors led to a decline in the number of hotels in East Jerusalem from 29 in 2008 to 24 in 2014, with a total of 1,612 rooms<sup>9</sup>. There was also a drop in the number of East Jerusalem visitors, who would choose West Jerusalem hotels instead (in 2013, 88 percent of tourists chose to stay in West Jerusalem hotels<sup>10</sup>). Therefore, the Old City market, once bustling with tourists, became a ghost market, except during religious holidays when traffic increases slightly. This has also weakened Jerusalem's traditional craft industry, with a large number of families abandoning this no longer profitable business<sup>11</sup>.

### *C. Weak Consumer Purchasing Power*

The Israeli annexation and isolation of East Jerusalem led to a sharp deterioration in the social and economic conditions of the Palestinian population, with the poverty rate reaching 82 percent in 2014, up from 66 percent in 2006, according to Israeli statistics<sup>12</sup>, while the unemployment rate reached 19 percent in 2014. This weakened consumers purchasing power.<sup>13</sup>

### *D. Change in Consumption Patterns and Seeking Alternative Markets*

The change in consumer preferences and buying trends has created significant transformations in the markets. The demand for kitchen appliances, shoes, toys, cosmetics, and food has risen significantly. Consumers now prefer to buy olive oil and soap from other places outside the Old City, whose shops in Khan El-Zeit now rarely sell olive oil or soap, while in Souq Al-Lahameen, once bustling with dozens of shops that sold meat, there are currently only six butcheries. The Old City has gradually lost its niche markets, and productivity declined significantly as the majority of the goods are now imported from Israel and abroad. To meet the demand of the local population, business activities have become seasonal. During Ramadan, for example, quick meal restaurants turn into shops selling pastries and juices.

### *E. Heavy Tax Burden*

One of the key factors that restrained development in the commercial market in the Old City is Israel's extortionate tax system imposed on Arab businesses, which forces merchants to raise the prices of their goods, thus losing any competitive advantage over their Jewish counterparts.

In East Jerusalem, six types of Israeli taxes apply:

1. Arnona: paid annually based on the total area of the store;
2. VAT: 17 percent of sales value;
3. Income tax;
4. Workers tax;
5. National insurance tax: paid monthly;
6. Commercial Permit tax: paid annually and ranging from NIS 500 to NIS 5,000.

The tax system imposed on Palestinians in East Jerusalem is considered unfair, as Palestinians are required to pay the same rates of Arnona paid by the Israelis whose income is six-to-eight-fold that of the Palestinians. In addition, the services provided to the Palestinian neighborhoods are significantly inferior to those available in the Jewish neighborhoods. Huge budgets are allocated for the development of infrastructure in the Jewish neighborhoods, while East Jerusalem still suffers from ineffective infrastructure and a poor sewage system.

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<sup>9</sup> PCBS (2015). *The Statistical Yearbook of Jerusalem 2015*.

<sup>10</sup> Jerusalem Institute for Israel Studies, 2014. "Jerusalem: Facts and Trends."

<sup>11</sup> An interview with Azzam Abu Sa'ood, June 13, 2016.

<sup>12</sup> Haaretz. Four Out of Five East Jerusalemites Live in Poverty, a Sharp Rise Over Past Years. June 22, 2016. Retrieved from <http://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/premium-1.726357>

<sup>13</sup> PCBS (2015). Op. cit.

Imposing a burdensome tax regime is one of the most important measures the occupation uses to displace Palestinians, strengthen Israeli control over Jerusalem, and stifle business activity in the Old City. Delayed tax payments translate into the accumulation of debts that become too big to pay. Many shopkeepers say that the tax staff is focusing on Souq Al-‘Attareen, with reports on a settlement plan for operating a tourist itinerary with restaurants and pubs to be built there and around.<sup>14</sup> The Old City merchants are thus offered generous incentives to sell their stores, especially in Souq Al-‘Attareen.

All these hindrances have led to a commercial recession in the Old City. The unemployment rate reached 12 percent in 2012, with workers in tourism, trade, and industry being the most affected segment of the population<sup>15</sup>. The recession has forced many shops to close (200 shops, according to the Chamber of Commerce), while other stores could not cover their operating expenses or open for longer hours at night. This has led to the ‘Jerusalem sleeps early’ phenomenon, which has worsened after the *habba*.

### 3. Post October 2015 Market Conditions

According to the merchants which the authors met, the recent *habba* was a watershed that has further exacerbated the already declining conditions in the Old City. The period saw Israel tightening security measures, restricting Palestinian movement, and imposing arbitrary actions against Palestinian merchants.

#### A. Security Procedures and Restrictions on Movement

Since early October 2015, Israel has increased the presence of its security forces in the neighborhoods of East Jerusalem, especially in the Old City. The occupying authority has erected checkpoints and concrete roadblocks in different neighborhoods of Jerusalem such as Silwan, Mount Scopus, Issawiya, Ras Al-Amud, and others, in addition to barriers inside and outside the Old City markets as well as on all roads leading to the Old City. According to Al-Haq, nearly 33 barriers and checkpoints have been set up in the Old City, in addition to four electronic gates.<sup>16</sup> The occupation authorities have also arrested some merchants at the pretext of not providing assistance to Israeli victims of attacks.

Israel has always used ‘security’ as an excuse to impose severe restrictions on the movement of Palestinians, and these restrictions became significantly more stringent after the *habba*. On 4 October 2015, “Israel issued a 48-hour ban on Palestinians from entering the Old City of Jerusalem, with the exception of residents. Israeli Jewish citizens and tourists, however, retained right of entry.”<sup>17</sup> Such Israeli measures have further compounded the state of isolation which Jerusalem was already facing. The Arab neighborhoods are separated from one another, and the residents of the city are now increasingly cut off from the rest of the occupied territories.

Old City tourism activities, as a result, have been severely impaired with tourists gaining a perception of an unsafe environment in the Arab neighborhoods. Such a perception has been further fueled by the negative Israeli portrayal of these neighborhoods, which eventually scared foreign tourists who became unwilling to ‘take the risk’ of shopping in the Arab neighborhoods. Meanwhile, potential Israeli visitors joined hands with the Israeli government and stopped dealing with Palestinian merchants. Worse, stringent security procedures have created fear among Palestinians, who have become reluctant to do shopping in the Old City. The shrinking of the consumer base (tourists and Palestinian buyers) in the Old City has undermined the business activity, eventually forcing new shop into closures. According to Al-Haq, between 1 and 23 October 2015, 54 shops were forced to close down. The remaining shops open for shorter hours on some days of the week. The decline in the number of shoppers has forced some merchants to close their shops and seek employment in the Israeli labor market.

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<sup>14</sup> Al-Quds Grass Roots: The Old City. <http://www.grassrootsalquds.net/ar/community/%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A8%D9%84%D8%AF%D8%A9-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%82%D8%AF%D9%8A%D9%85%D8%A9-0#fivePage>

<sup>15</sup> ARIJ (2012). ‘Jerusalem: Old City Profile.’

<sup>16</sup> Al-Haq (2015). East Jerusalem: Exploiting Instability to Deepen the Occupation.

<sup>17</sup> Op. cit.

### *B. Arbitrary Action against Arab Merchants*

With the start of the Palestinian *habba*, Israeli municipal inspectors, accompanied by police officers, began to conduct enforcement campaigns in the Old City, issuing fines and warnings on alleged offences that, according to merchants, were not considered illegal before. For example, a coffee shop owner in Bab Al-Wad was fined NIS 5,000 after municipal inspecting staff found cigarettes and hookahs inside the shop. The staff also claimed that the shop did not put the “no smoking” sign inside. According to one of the interviewed merchants, a smoker also pays a fine of NIS 1,000 if found smoking inside.<sup>18</sup> Although smoking is permitted outside the shops, the merchant has to pay NIS 1,000 if somebody throws cigarette butts on the ground. Shoes and souvenirs retailers received warnings because they showcased products protruding into the street by more than 40 cm from the store entrance. While the Palestinian merchants incur hefty fines and taxes, Israeli merchants have enjoyed great privileges, especially after the *habba*. In addition to security escorts provided by the occupation authorities, Palestinian merchants report that each Jewish merchant in the Old City received NIS 70,000 in support from the Jerusalem municipality and 50 percent breaks on the Arnona tax, in addition to the financial support they receive from the settlement institutions.<sup>19</sup>

## **4. What to Do? Policy Recommendations**

Jerusalem is the center of conflict with Israel, and it is the future capital city of the Palestinian state. This important economic status has been vulnerable, turning it a source of concern that requires specific strategies to strengthen economic resilience and provide the needed support. The Palestinian Authority (PA), the private sector as well as the Arab and Islamic funds are able to immediately act to address this dilemma through:

### *A. Developing a Well-Defined, Strategic Vision for Jerusalem*

While Israel has established policies aiming at Judaizing Jerusalem and, for this, has succeeded in developing long-term plans, Palestinians lack an inclusive, clear vision for the future of the holy city. Though the PA considers East Jerusalem a national priority area and the capital of the future State of Palestine, the current National Development Plan 2014-2016 lacks any strategy for Jerusalem, and all it has is a remnant of the National Development Plan 2011-2013 published in 2010 and in need of update. Furthermore, only 0.44 percent of the PA’s 2015 budget was allocated to the Ministry of Jerusalem Affairs and the Jerusalem governorate.

Because the revival of the markets in the Old City is closely linked to economic development in East Jerusalem, there is an urgent need to establish a clear vision for Jerusalem and elaborate a development plan (rather than an immediate relief plan) based on resistance and well-defined practical steps designed to: counter the Judaization policies and enhance the productive capacity of the Palestinian economy in Jerusalem; improve the productivity of the Jerusalem economy; and strengthen its ties with the economy of the West Bank and Arab countries. To this end, it is important to establish a representative body, the absence of which remains one of the key challenges, as reported by all Jerusalem institutions that no longer trust the PA and the role it plays in Jerusalem.

Among the efforts to re-energize the flagging economy in the Old City, in 1994 the Welfare Association proposed a special program designed to develop a comprehensive plan to revive the Old City, preserve the cultural heritage of Jerusalem, and promote social and economic development of the Old City. The plan was published in Arabic in December 2001, and the final draft was published in English in 2003. The plan has promising goals, but it has yet to be implemented. While it is still possible to build on that plan, it is important for the future action to create executive units that can turn goals into actions.

### *B. Developing the Palestinian Tourism Sector*

As tourism is a lever for Jerusalem’s economy in general and business activity in the Old City in particular, it is important to create innovative solutions to stimulate the economy and increase the

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<sup>18</sup> Op. cit.

<sup>19</sup> An interview with merchants from the Old City, 27 June 2016.

number of tourists as well as the length of their stay in the Old City. To achieve this goal, it is necessary to build a new tourism model that is based on two elements:

- Diversifying products and developing new types of tourism side by side with Islamic and Christian tourism (which also needs development), such as political (for solidarity), cultural, recreational, and environmental tourism. Such diversification will help overcome tourism seasonality, one of the biggest obstacles to tourism growth. This, however, requires re-exploring the cultural, historical/architectural, and human resources in Jerusalem, such as the Sufi shrines and the different ethnic communities, such as African, Assyrian, Coptic, and Armenian;
- Promoting local tourism through branding Jerusalem within a Palestinian package: Hebron-Bethlehem-Jericho-Jerusalem-Nablus-Nazareth, for example. This must be supported by a campaign to raise awareness and encourage shopping in the Old City.

To achieve this, it is important to develop a well-defined promoting strategy that targets tourists from local communities (especially for Palestinians in Israel) and around the globe. This would be further enhanced through coordination between the various developers of the sector (from the occupied Palestinian territories and among Palestinians in Israel). It is also necessary to: improve marketing strategies; increase presence in international tourist exhibitions and conferences; and improve opportunities for investment in tourism, such as building new rooms and hotels and investing in restaurants, transportation, tourism companies, etc.

#### *C. Direct Support to Jerusalem's Commercial Sector*

It is important to support the production of high-quality products in the Old City of Jerusalem. In the absence of the public sector, the private sector can play a significant role through different channels: supporting new opportunities to invest in small-scale industries that would boost domestic production; and providing soft loans to small-scale industries and workshops, especially those run by women. It is important to coordinate with the technical and vocational education centers to build all the necessary skills to rebuild the production base in Jerusalem.

Though the financial support alone will never be enough to stimulate growth, it is important in current conditions to support the Old City merchants directly in order to enhance their resilience. The Supreme Committee for Jerusalem Affairs has allocated \$3,000 to each merchant in the Old City. However, according to the interviews conducted with merchants, the amount is too small – less than the annual Arnona tax – and can only cover part of the merchants' debts. According to one of the merchants, only 450 merchants did actually receive the grant because in order to receive the amount, the merchant must first pay a fee to the Chamber of Commerce (NIS 800-1,300), and then the Jerusalem governorate prepares the claims. It is thus important to create a funding body to help merchants pay the exorbitant tax bill; provide credit facilities; revive the commercial sector; and help it stand the intense competition from the Israeli market.

#### *D. International Political Lobbying*

It is necessary to establish and maintain good relations with the Arab and international community, especially the countries that show solidarity with the Palestinian cause. The efforts of the international community can be harnessed to hold Israel accountable for its illegal annexation of East Jerusalem. Palestinians need to work at full capacity and at all levels – including the United Nations Security Council, General Assembly, and Human Rights Council – to expose the Israeli policies in East Jerusalem in general and the Old City in particular and urge UN states to fulfill their legal obligations. The Organization of Islamic Cooperation can play a major role by providing direct support to Palestinian businesses, pressuring the European Union and the United Nations to provide support and take necessary measures to stop Israel's Judaization and violations policies, and forcing the occupying power to compensate the Palestinians for the damages resulting from those policies.



## 5. Building a Database on the Old City's Economy

A consolidated, reliable source of information and statistics on business activity in East Jerusalem does not exist. A unified approach to collecting data and providing key statistics on the socio-economic conditions in East Jerusalem is thus urgently needed. The Welfare Association, using sectoral studies and surveys conducted as part of the plan the Association designed to develop the Old City, has built a database for the Old City. Therefore, it is possible to look at the methodology which the Association has adopted in that effort and use it to build a stronger database.

### Questions for Discussion

- What are the future plans and strategies for Jerusalem? How does the Chamber of Commerce plan to support the commercial markets in the Old City?
- Has the PA/Jerusalem governorate considered budget plans to directly support the merchants in the Old City?
- How important is it to promote high-quality traditional craftsmanship in the Old City? How can Palestinians encourage this industry?
- What programs can the private sector build to support businesses in Jerusalem? For the purpose of enhancing the competitiveness of East Jerusalem merchants, can the West Bank private sector provide these merchants with products at cost price?
- Why cannot the PCBS conduct an economic survey of the Old City of Jerusalem?

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