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# Spatial Transformation of Jerusalem: 1967 to Present

Salem Thawaba<sup>1</sup> and Hussein Al-Rimmawi<sup>2</sup>

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## Abstract

This article investigates the spatial transformation of the holy city of Jerusalem from 1967 to present. Since the middle of nineteenth century, new foreign Jewish and other immigrants played a great role in changing the traditional landscape of this holy city. At present, this holy city is being transformed into segregated neighborhoods. New mega urban projects are being constructed regardless of the holiness of the place, in order to change its identity as well as its demographic balance. Only just and lasting peace between Palestinians and Israelis is the only guarantee to keep Jerusalem's traditional landscape in place and at the same it may be modernized.

## Keywords

Jerusalem, spatial segregation, urban planning, urban landscape

## Introduction

The aim of this article is to analyze the spatial transformation of the landscape of Jerusalem from 1967 to present. Throughout this period, landscape of Jerusalem was affected by several factors such as Israeli occupation of Arab land in 1967 and the annexation of East Jerusalem to its Western side. Israel planning machine stands behind the reshaping of Jerusalem's landscape.

Jerusalem is located on top of a plateau which is a part of Palestinian central mountains (Figure 1). It is about 60 km from the Mediterranean in the west and 35 km from the Dead Sea in the east. Its elevation is about 760 m above the sea level. This holy city is surrounded by dry valleys and fields of olives, grapes, figs, and pine trees. In order to hold soil back, Palestinian farmers built stone terraces along the slopes. But agricultural products have never been enough to support its residents since it is located in semidry lands. Throughout its history, Jerusalem always faced shortages in water supply. In order to get enough supply of water, Canaanites, who first found the city, established series of aqueducts, pools, tunnels, and cisterns. In addition, Jerusalem is surrounded by cities of Beit Jala, Bethlehem to the south, and Al-Bireh and Ramallah to the north. To the West, the city is surrounded by the villages of Ein Karem, Lefta, and Deir Yaseen and to the east it is very close to the village of Abu Deis.

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**Figure 1.** Study area.

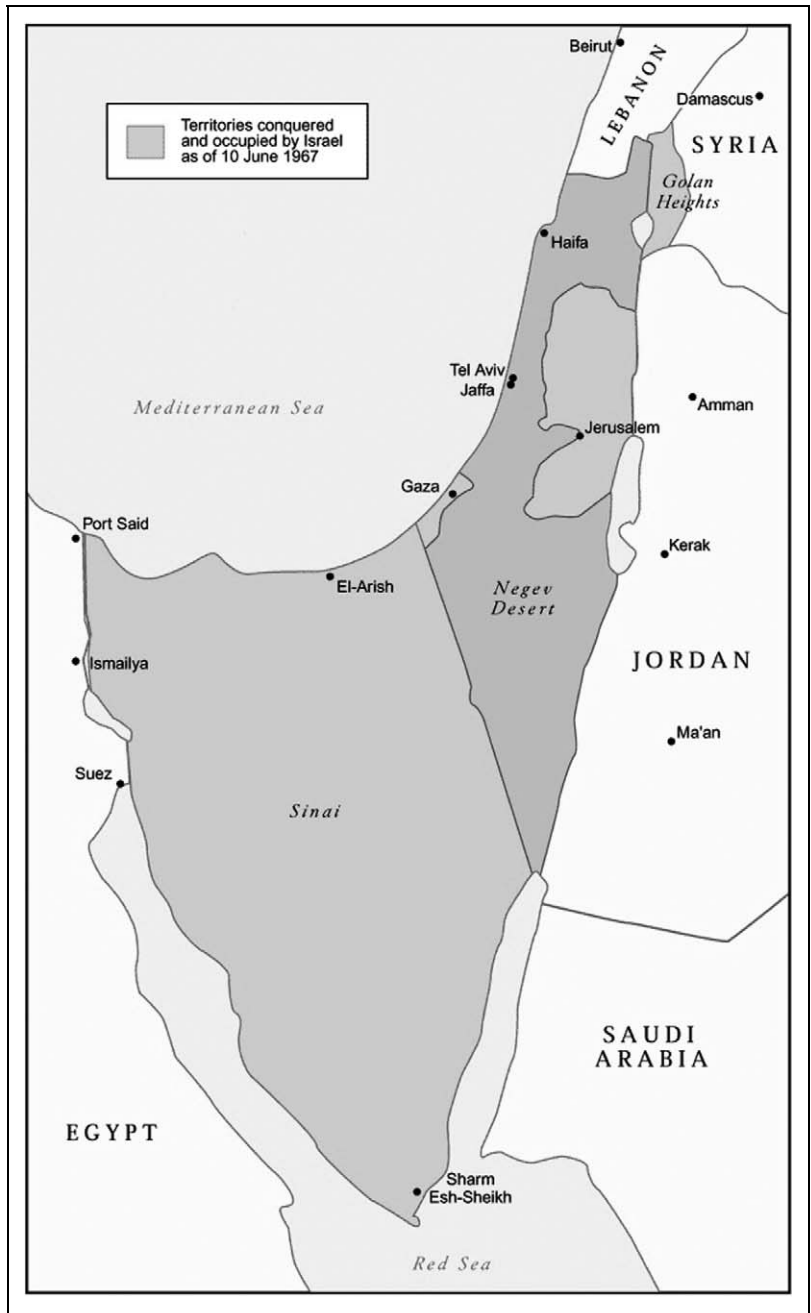
Jerusalem enjoys a Mediterranean climate which is characterized by hot, dry summer, and cold wet winter. July and August are the hottest months (24 Celsius), and January is the coldest month of the year (9 Celsius). Its rain season occurs between October and May and the average annual rainfall is about 550 mm.<sup>1</sup>

## Context

In 1948, Israel was declared on 78 percent of Palestine. The armistice line passed adjacent to the Old City of Jerusalem's wall, dividing the city into two parts eastern Part "under Jordanian rule" and the western part under Israeli authority. In 1967, Israel occupied the rest of the city as well as the whole West Bank in addition to Golan Heights and Sinai Peninsula (Figure 2).

After the 1967 war, Israeli policies toward the West Bank in general and in Jerusalem in particular were directed toward creating facts on the ground through several steps of annexations and land confiscations.<sup>2</sup> For example, Israel annexed East Jerusalem and in 1980 declared it an undivided united capital. In fact, the borders of Jerusalem have never been declared<sup>3</sup> and this was to help Israeli Government to apply its laws over its different sections and its proximity. In addition, Israeli government began a rapid process to build settlements in the newly occupied areas. The goal was to prevent any challenge to Israel's sovereignty over Jerusalem and to impede initiatives leading to an Israeli withdrawal from these areas.<sup>4</sup>

But the international communities, including the United States do not recognize the legitimacy of Israeli action and accordingly most states locate their embassies in Tel-Aviv rather than in Jerusalem.<sup>5</sup> In addition, in a Resolution number 478 of 1980, United Nations Security Council declared Israeli



**Figure 2.** Lands occupied after 1967.

Source: PASSIA (Palestinian Academic Society for the Study of International Affairs), Maps, accessed October 2011, <http://www.passia.org/>.

actions and other attempts to determine the status of the city were declared null and void.<sup>6</sup> Throughout the last four decades of Jerusalem’s occupation, Israel established new enclaves within and around the Palestinian built-up areas. The Likud political party wanted Jewish settlers to increase

the number of settlements throughout the occupied West Bank including Jerusalem, while the opposing Labor party sought to leave some areas free of Jewish settlements in order to make a possible future territorial compromise. Since 1967, Israel has been trying to limit Palestinian natural growth as much as possible.<sup>7</sup> After the illegal unification of Jerusalem, Palestinians were about 30 percent of the total population. Since then, Israeli authorities have been trying to keep this demographic balance or even reducing Palestinian proportion. But the most harming acts against Palestinian residents are that Israel limited the natural growth of Palestinian neighborhoods and very often revoked Palestinian residency permits, demolished Palestinian homes, and stringently limited building permits granted to Palestinians.<sup>8</sup>

According to many Israeli literature,<sup>9,10</sup> settlement polices are considered as problematic issue for both Palestinian and Israeli communities; this is due to many reasons such as the way the settlements endangered Palestinian existence and socioeconomic aspects, the negative influence on the urban fabric and texture of one of the important heritage oriental sites in the world.<sup>11</sup> In spite of that, Israel continued constructing settlements as a part of its national strategy; the state motivates settlers to live in the settlements through the lower price of the real state or through tax incentives.<sup>12</sup>

Jerusalem witnessed a gradual transformation of its boarders, changing in urban fabric, agricultural land; holly sites, water resources, and landscape are all melted by city's expanding networks. All planning schemes by the occupying power provided the city with a complex system of bypass roads, tunnels linking northern parts of the West Bank with the southern ones.<sup>13</sup>

### *Transforming and Segregating Urban Texture*

Settlement activities started in East Jerusalem immediately after 1967 War. First, Israel demolished over 135 homes in the Islamic Magharbeh quarter inside the Old city in order to expand the Jewish quarter and to create a large plaza for Jewish worshippers. This affected the old city urban landscape and demographic balance. Palestinian residents of the quarter were forced to move outside the city to be settled in a new refugee camp in the outskirt of the city, the "Shufat camp" (Figure 3).

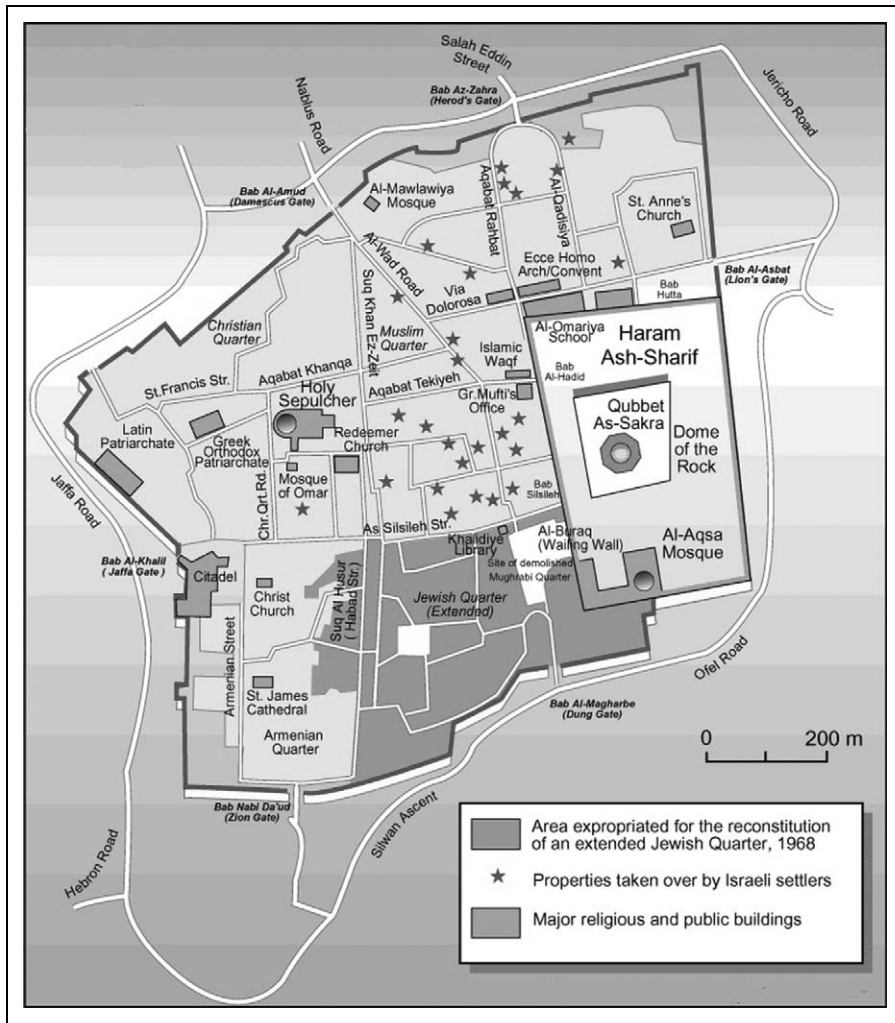
Under the Jordanian rule, the municipal boundary of East Jerusalem had covered 6½ square kilometers. After 1967, when East Jerusalem was occupied, Israel annexed additional 64.4 square kilometers. The aim of this annexation was to place (under the Israeli control), as much strategic high ground as possible, while at the same time minimizing the number of Arab residents that the annexation would add to the city's population (Table 1).

Immediately after 1967 war, Israel declared a new boundary for Jerusalem that reached to the major city of Ramallah in the north and Bethlehem in the south<sup>14</sup> (Figure 4).

In 1968, A. Hashimshony, Joseph Schweid, and Zion Hashimshiny prepared a new master plan for Jerusalem.<sup>15</sup> This plan covered the whole annexed area of the new city of Jerusalem. As a development plan, it consisted of two parts; one for the short term (through 1980) and the other for the long term (through 2010). The plan dealt with three major geographical areas; the core area of the old city and its boundary, the heavily populated area adjacent to the core, and the metropolitan area characterized by low-density population and a potential area for future satellite suburbs. The aim of the plan was to achieve balance between Arab population and Israelis living within the context, achieving the idea of a *Greater Jerusalem*, and isolating Jerusalem from its surrounding Arab communities (Figure 5).

The ring of illegal settlements around the historical core of the city served to separate it from Arab villages and the hinterland of the West Bank's cities.

In 1978, Israeli authorities started working on a new master plan for Jerusalem. The target year was 2020, and it sought to outline a united metropolitan Jerusalem. The plan aimed at keeping the demographic balance at 70 percent for Israelis and 30 percent for Palestinians. Furthermore, it proposed improvements in many areas such as public transportation system, the addition of a fast train



**Figure 3.** Jewish quarter (former Magharbeh Quarter).

Source: PASSIA (Palestinian Academic Society for the Study of International Affairs), Maps, accessed October 2011, <http://www.passia.org/>.

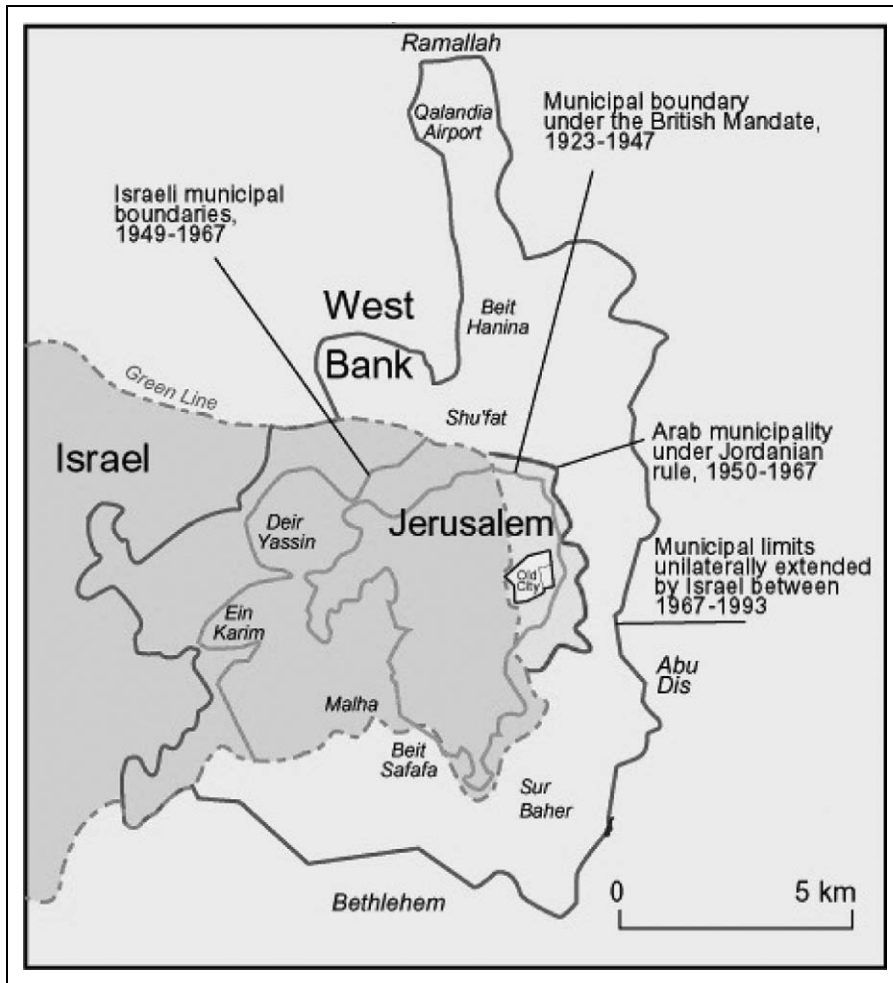
**Table 1.** Jerusalem (East and West Sides) Boundary Expansion

| Year                   | 1917 | Pre-1967 | Post 1967 | 1985  | 1993  |
|------------------------|------|----------|-----------|-------|-------|
| Area square kilometers | 19.5 | 38.1     | 108       | 108.5 | 126.4 |

Note: *Statistical Year Book of Jerusalem No. 20–2002/2003* (Jerusalem: The Jerusalem Institute for Israeli Studies, 2003).

system, upgrading Jerusalem’s airport, and a new road system. More Israeli settlements and Jewish institutions were also called for within the boundary of Greater Jerusalem (Figure 6).

The plan also aimed to marginalize and prevent any continuity between Arab neighborhoods, and other Palestinian urban centers in the West Bank, clearly weakening the possibility of being a Capital for future Palestinian state. However, the plan empowered the continuity and integrity of Israeli



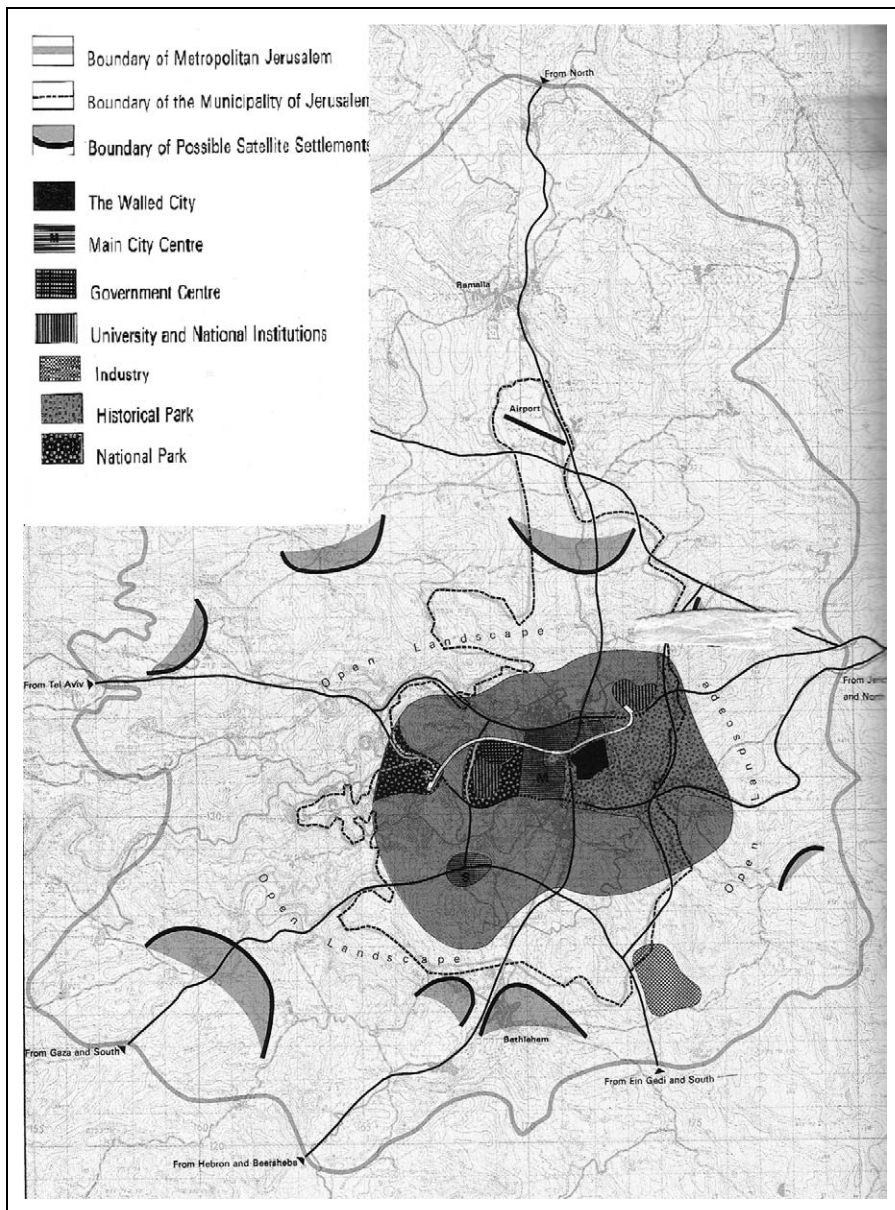
**Figure 4.** Annexed East Jerusalem.

Source: PASSIA (Palestinian Academic Society for the Study of International Affairs), Maps, accessed October 2011, <http://www.passia.org/>.

suburbs within and outside the city. In order to execute such a plan, Israeli authorities aimed at further confiscation of Palestinian lands, as well as hampering Palestinian development, ignoring Palestinian housing demands, and further isolation of Palestinian suburbs. The plan also failed to propose any new industrial, commercial, or service areas in East Jerusalem and in fact the plan proposed that the Wadi Al-Joz Industrial Area (north east of the Old city) be removed, while failing to specify an alternative location.

In 1999, the Israeli government, approved establishment of a light rail project for Jerusalem. The declared aim of this project was to link all neighborhoods around the city with each other, while the implicit aim was to link the Israeli suburban settlements (including Neve Ya'acov, Pisgat Ze'ev, French Hill, Ma'alot Dafna, and Ramot) with the western side of the city, where all these settlements are dormitory ones. The train is running at present time between neighborhoods of Jerusalem. In addition, bypass roads represents another means of barriers within the urban landscape of the city.

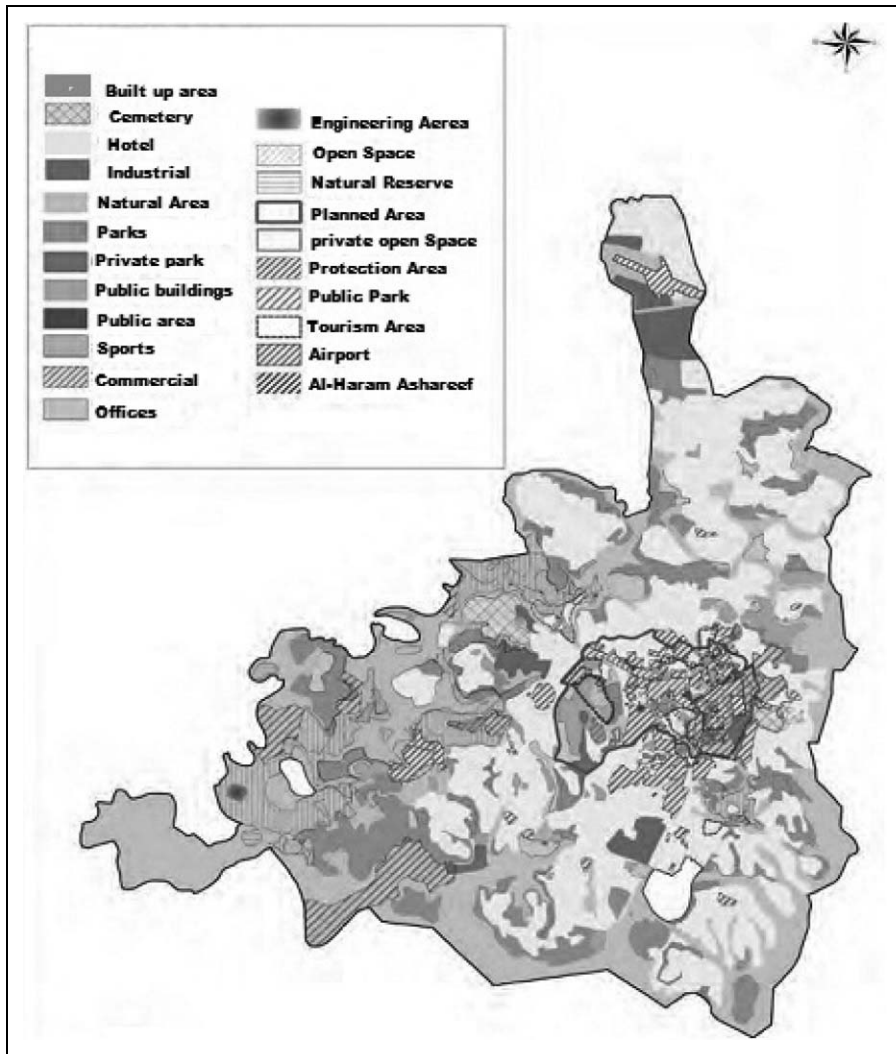




**Figure 5.** Jerusalem master plan 1968.

Source: A. Sharon, *Planning Jerusalem: The Old City and its Environs* (Jerusalem: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1973).

Settlement activities within and around Jerusalem has its geopolitical agenda. In addition to segregating the urban fabric within the city and turning the Palestinian built-up areas into enclaves, the agenda aimed at creating a Jewish urban belt around Palestinian East Jerusalem. This belt was shaped by the ring of settlements surrounding Jerusalem from all directions: Nof Yael (Northwest), Har Homa (south), Geva, Geva Binyamin (north), Givat Zeev, Agan HaAyalot (northwest), and Maale Adumim/E-1 (East; Figure 7).

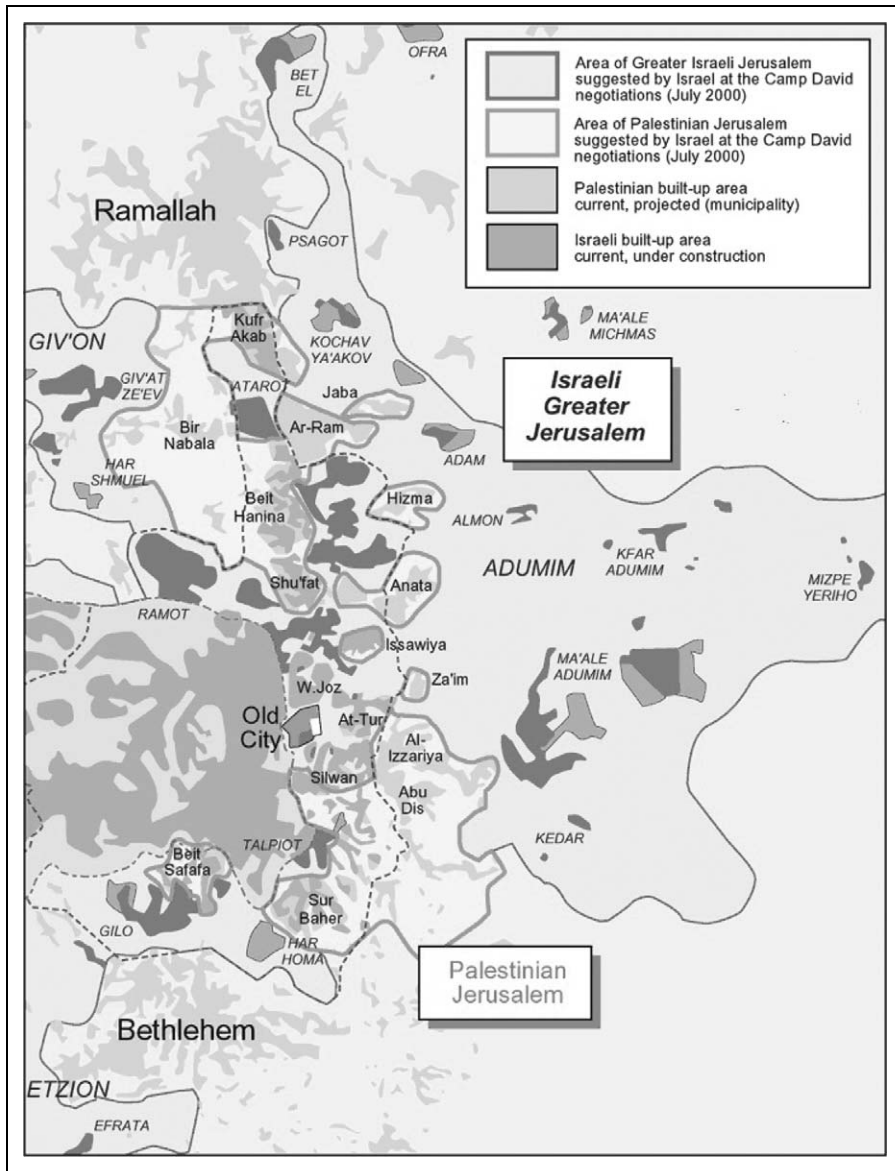


**Figure 6.** 2020 Master plan.

Source: Applied Research Institute–Jerusalem, *Report on the Israeli Colonization Activities in the West Bank & Gaza Strip*, 133 (2009), accessed August 22, 2010, from <http://www.arij.org>.

The Israeli government confiscated as much land as possible in East Jerusalem through regulations and spatial planning processes. In the master plan of East Jerusalem, 35 percent of land was directly confiscated for the sake of Israeli settlements, 22 percent was indirectly confiscated and assigned to be open spaces and green lands (in the future will be transformed into neighborhoods, as in the case of Har Homa), 30 percent was allocated and zoned without any kind of land-use designation, and 13 percent was allocated for Arabs needs. These allocations were done without taking into consideration any of the socioeconomic needs and institutions in the eastern part of the city (Figure 8).

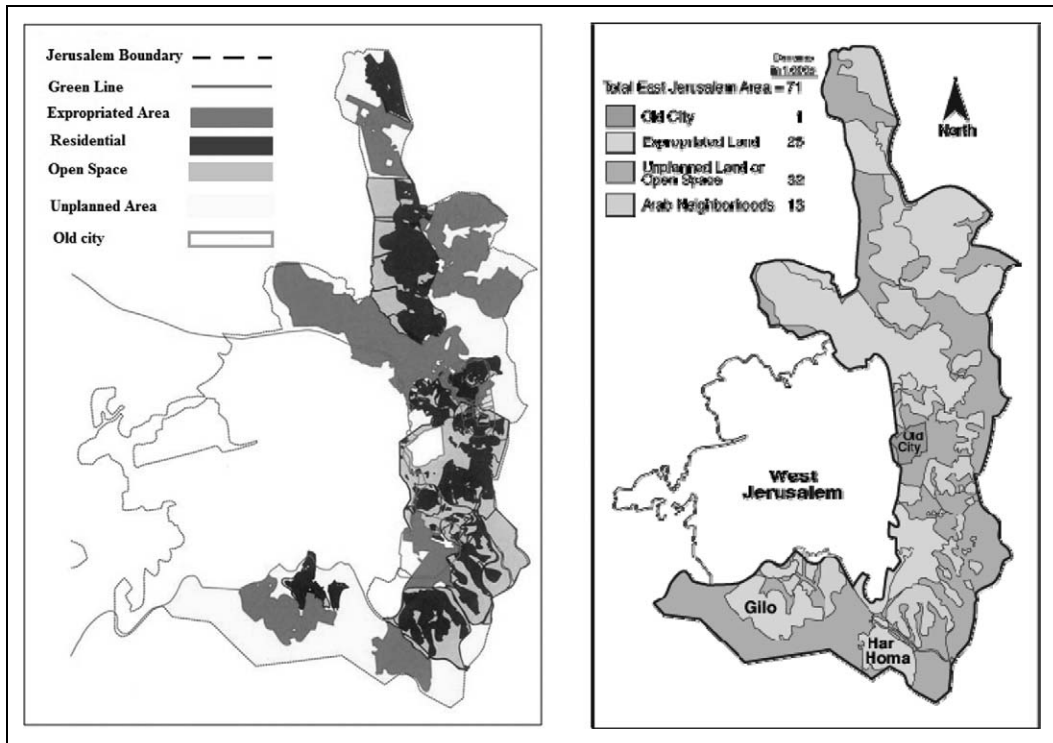
Urban structure of East Jerusalem is segregated, fragmented, and spatially torn up; it is a mosaic of enclaves within enclaves resulting in a nonhomogeneous urban fabric, where different building materials are used, and different urban space layouts are being implemented. Israeli settlements are



**Figure 7.** Segregating Jerusalem.

Source: PASSIA (Palestinian Academic Society for the Study of International Affairs), Maps, accessed October 2011, <http://www.passia.org/>.

provided with socioeconomic services if not within the settlement itself but along with the bypass roads and railroad to facilitate getting these services. Arab communities are under threat of demolition, and scattered with no basic services. What is called “open spaces” are taking the form of wedges penetrating these communities. No major transport means to link these neighborhoods with each other, neither with the whole metropolitan context. No Palestinian social, cultural, and economic center in the city. The historical central business district in East Jerusalem is being marginalized while enforcing the one in the western part. Instead, each village in the Eastern side has its own small social and economic center (Figure 9).



**Figure 8.** East Jerusalem land use.

Source: PASSIA (Palestinian Academic Society for the Study of International Affairs), Maps, accessed October 2011, <http://www.passia.org/>.

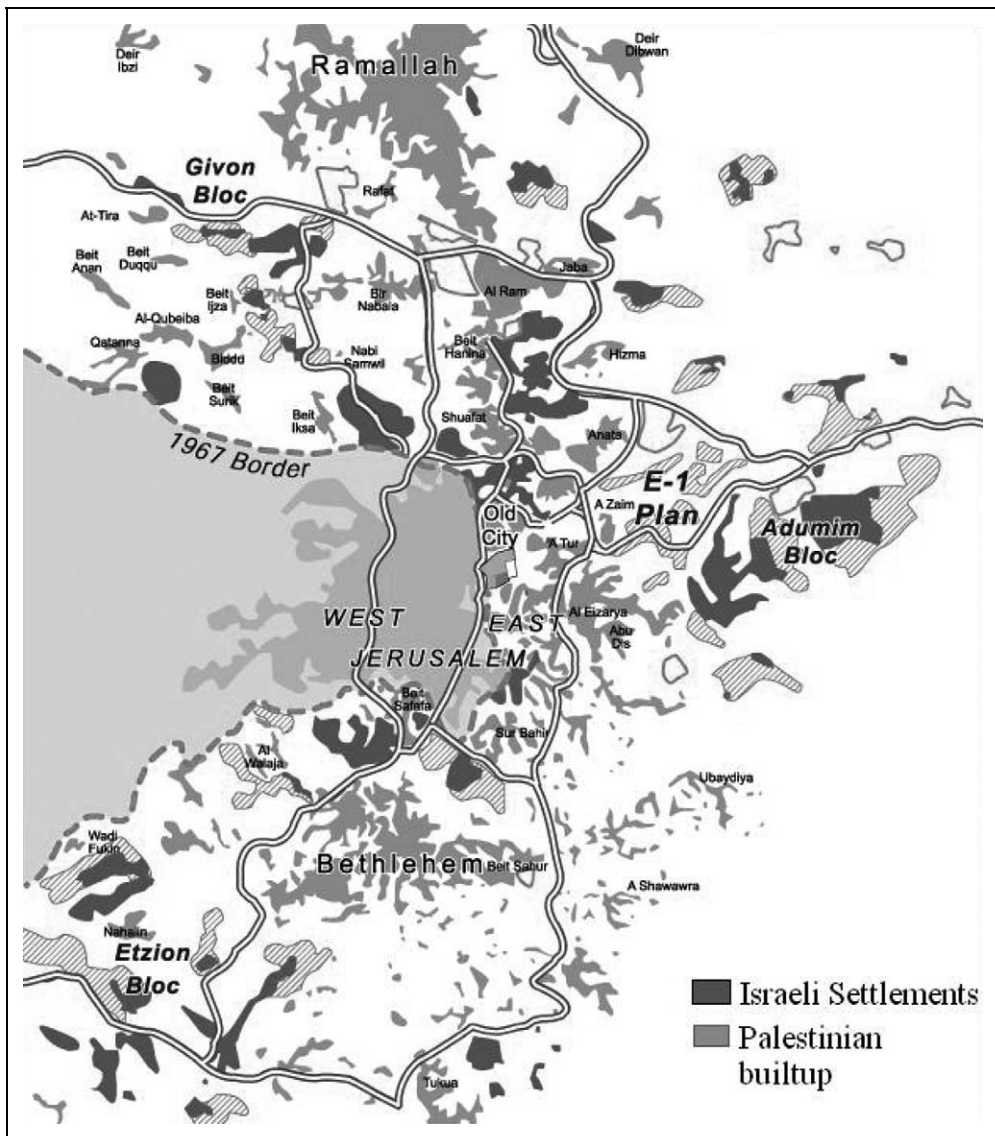
Since 1967, Israel established 121 settlements in the West Bank, fifteen within the municipal boundary of Jerusalem (Table 2). In addition, the Israeli authority has supported and facilitated establishing a few settler enclaves in the heart of the city.

More than 35 percent of the land in East Jerusalem has been confiscated for the sake of settling Israelis, and still many projects are being constructed to provide residential areas for the ones who work in West Jerusalem. These residential compounds are affordable when compared to the ones in the Western side. In order to encourage Israelis to live in the Eastern side, tax incentives, bypass roads, and the light rail were constructed through East Jerusalem adding more to fragmentation of the city. The number of Israelis settling in East Jerusalem was 32,000 in 1977 and grew by 2007 to 190,000 accommodated in fourteen colonies (Table 2).

Recently, Israeli authorities introduced a new master plan for Jerusalem targeting the year of 2030. If implemented, it would demonstrate more Israeli hegemony on space and Palestinian demographic representation will be decreased. For example, Israeli authorities will try to achieve Israeli residents' majority of about 85 percent. The Palestinian population will be decreased to 15 percent. In addition, such a plan includes establishment of highways which will connect Jerusalem with Amman (Jordan) and may be in future will extend to Kurdistan in northern Iraq.<sup>16</sup>

### *The Wall*

Known as the security barrier, security fence, or apartheid wall, the separation wall is either a concrete wall of approximately 8 m to 9 m high with watchtower and sniper positions, or an electric



**Figure 9.** East Jerusalem Segregation.

Source: PASSIA (Palestinian Academic Society for the Study of International Affairs), Maps, accessed October 2011, <http://www.passia.org/>.

barrier of approximately 3 m to 5 m high equipped with a buffer zone, ditches, razor wire, roads electronic sensors, and cameras.<sup>17</sup>

In June 2002, Israel started a new phase in segregating the West Bank by constructing its apartheid wall on Palestinian lands. The real intention for the Israelis was to confiscate more lands and to create segregation around Palestinian villages and towns. The Wall in some areas penetrates deep in the West Bank where it reaches 15 to 20 km, demolishing Palestinian homes and grabbing Palestinian land and water resources. The Wall is twice as long as the 1967 border, confiscating the most fertile Palestinian lands, and threatening the Palestinian communities' contiguity.

**Table 2.** Land Expropriation in East Jerusalem

|    | Israeli Settlements           | Area (Dunams = 1,000 m <sup>2</sup> ) | Date |
|----|-------------------------------|---------------------------------------|------|
| 1  | French Hill & Mt. Scopus      | 3,345                                 | 1968 |
| 2  | Ramot Eshkol & Givat Hamivhar |                                       | 1968 |
| 3  | Ma'alot Dafna (East)          | 485                                   | 1968 |
| 4  | Neve Ya'akov                  | 765/470                               | 1968 |
| 5  | Old City (Jewish Quarter)     | 116                                   | 1968 |
| 6  | Ramot Alon                    | 4,840                                 | 1970 |
| 7  | Shu'afat                      | 2,240                                 | 1970 |
| 8  | East Talpiyot                 |                                       | 1970 |
| 9  | Gilo                          | 2,700                                 | 1970 |
| 10 | 'Atarot (incl. the airport)   | 1,200/137                             | 1970 |
| 11 | Ben-Hinnom Valley             | 130                                   | 1970 |
| 12 | Jaffa Gate                    | 100                                   | 1970 |
| 13 | Ramat Rachel area             | 600                                   | 1970 |
| 14 | Pisgat Ze'ev                  | 4,400                                 | 1980 |
| 15 | Har Homa                      | 1,850                                 | 1991 |
|    | Total                         | 23,378                                |      |

Notes: The International Peace and Cooperation Center, *The Impact of the Wall on the Palestinian Spatial Fabric in East Jerusalem* (2008) [In Arabic], accessed August 6, 2010, <http://home.ipcc-jerusalem.org/en/ipcc/1/465/>.

B'Tselem, *Report on Land Confiscation in East Jerusalem*, accessed December 5, 2011, [http://www.btselem.org/English/Jerusalem/Land\\_Expropriation\\_Statistics.asp](http://www.btselem.org/English/Jerusalem/Land_Expropriation_Statistics.asp).

In 2005, the Israeli Government approved the route of the apartheid wall around Jerusalem. The wall was intended to redefine Jerusalem's borders with the intentions to control demographic balance, expel Palestinians out of densely populated lands, and expropriate lands with minimum Palestinian residents. The wall will envelop the "greater Jerusalem Area," amounting to a total area of 164 square kilometers. The wall will separate Palestinian residents not only from the city but also from each other.<sup>18</sup> The envelope has twelve routes and crossings which were constructed to enter Jerusalem, four of them are assigned for Palestinians and the others are for Israeli residents and non-Israelis with valid visas. As a result, 55,000 Palestinian Jerusalemites would be transferred to the West Bank outside the wall and annexing 435 Dunams for future Israeli settlements expansion<sup>19</sup> (Figure 10).

Nowadays, Israel has established a new military checkpoint for the purpose of pushing more Palestinians out of Jerusalem. A Palestinian Refugee Camp "Shufat" with about 50,000 Palestinian Refugees will be excluded from entering Jerusalem despite the fact that they carry Jerusalem identification which is called "the blue card." Many of these refugees were expelled from the "Almagharba Quarter" inside the Old city of Jerusalem just after the war of 1967.

### *Israeli Settlements and International Law*

International community has always condemned illegal Israeli settlements in the occupied Palestinian lands. For example, article 46 of The Hague Convention state that private property in occupied territory is prohibited from being confiscated. Article 49, paragraph 6 of the same convention explicitly stipulates that "the occupying power shall not deport or transfer parts of its own civilian population into the territory it occupies." In addition, in 1980 the United Nations Security Council Resolution 465 made it clear that Israeli policy and practices of population settlements in the occupied territories including Jerusalem constitutes serious obstruction to achieving comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East. Israel was asked to dismantle the existed settlements and cease

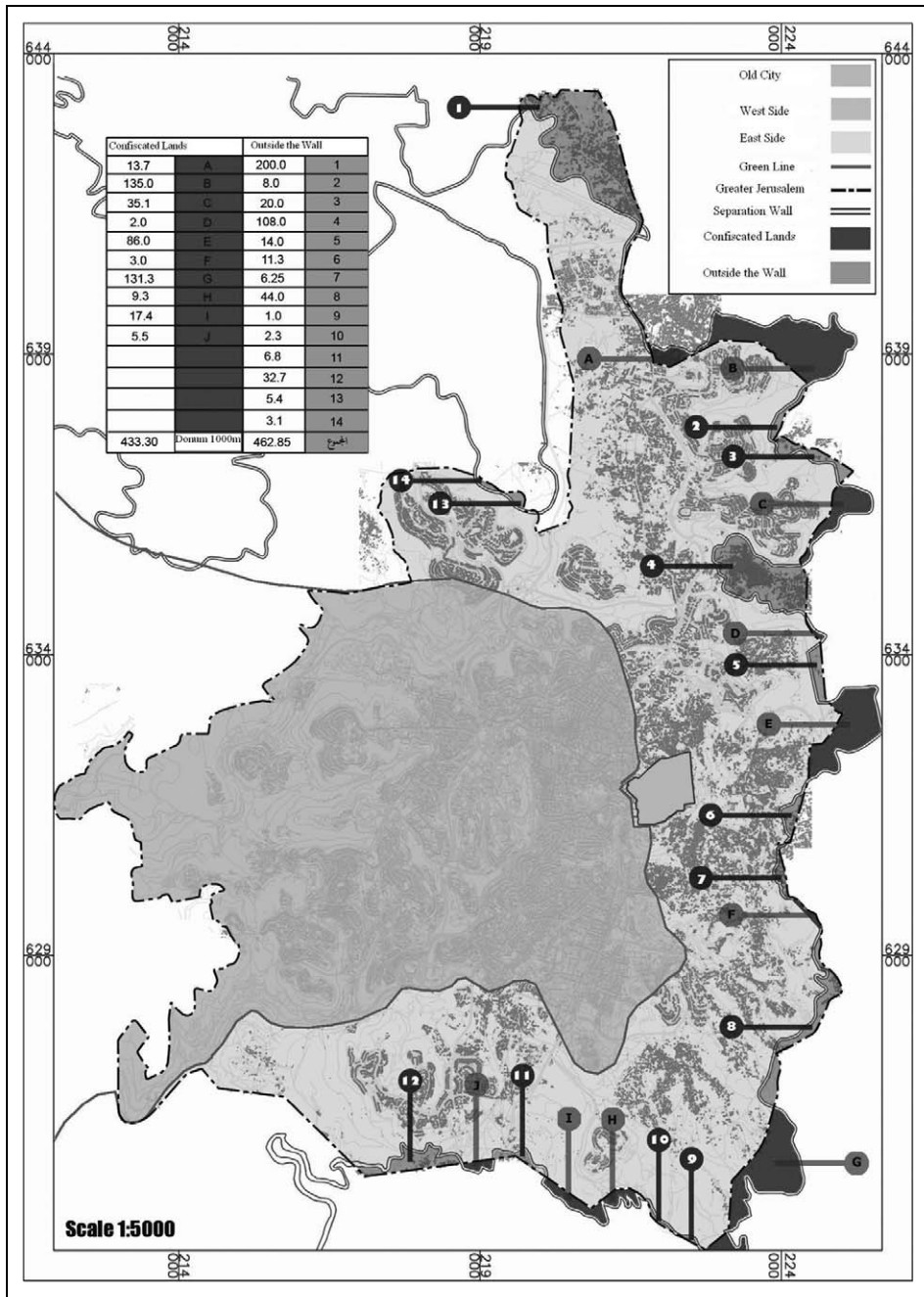


Figure 10. Wall impact.

Source: H. Diab, K. Abo Arafa, A. Abo Hasa, and S. Thawaba, *Jerusalem 2000 from an Engineering and Legal Perspective* (Ramallah Palestine, 2011) [In Arabic].

the establishment, construction, or planning of settlements in the Arab territories occupied since 1967. The International Court of Justice in The Hague has provided input in this matter. In 2004, it declared that Israeli settlements in the occupied Palestinian Territories, including East Jerusalem,

are illegal and an obstacle to peace and to economic and social development and have been established in violation of international law. Furthermore, Israeli and Palestinian conferees at the Annapolis conference in 2007 renewed their commitments under the Road Map in which Israel has to freeze all settlement activities including their natural growth in addition to dismantling of settlement outposts since March 2001. Despite these obligations, Israel continued construction of settlements and outposts and even doubled their number. Repeatedly, former Israeli Prime Minister Olmert and the present Prime Minister Netanyahu reiterated that Israel will continue building settlements in Jerusalem.<sup>20</sup>

## Conclusion

Throughout the last 150 years, Jerusalem's cultural heritage and landscape have been subjected to multiple interventions. Palestinian and Israeli stands regarding Jerusalem are varied. First, Palestinians are trying to enhance the demographic, cultural, social, and economic factors and look forward to get support of international community. Second, Israel authorities are trying to keep the city united and under their full control in order to unilaterally contain its urban expansion. In addition, Israelis are trying toward a functional approach, in which Palestinians may enjoy their very limited local rules in East Jerusalem. But Palestinians since the early days of Israeli occupation refuse such a solution and consider East Jerusalem as their future capital. This option is favored by Palestinians since it is consistent with United Nations Resolutions 242 and 338. Israel rejects such a solution because Jerusalem will be divided again and this goes against Zionism principles. Israel suggests a third option in which an alternative Jerusalem in which its borders may be expanded toward the West Bank. The new expansion will include the towns of Abu Deis and Al-Azariyyah and will be controlled by Palestinians. Israel favors this option since it will keep its control over a united Jerusalem. Palestinians rejects this option since it does not meet their claims of 4th June of 1967 borders.<sup>21</sup>

Whether the two sides reach a just solution or not, Jerusalem's landscape is being severely changed under the current Israel planning and policy, and such changes will limit the possibility of reaching a resolution acceptable to both sides.

As a result of a failure to reach a solution to Jerusalem, a new wave of violence may take place or the whole area may again be embroiled by conflict. By seeking a comprehensive and lasting peace, Jerusalem's holistic landscape may be managed and maintained.

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## Bio