

Israeli settlement policy in occupied Jerusalem

Sawsan Ramahi

REPORT | April 2013

MEM 
MIDDLE EAST M  NITOR

Israeli settlement policy in occupied Jerusalem

Sawsan Ramahi

Israel's insistence on establishing settlements on Palestinian occupied territory, despite the fact that this violates international law and legitimacy, is a very important issue and a problem everyone should be informed of and try to find a solution to. This is especially true since the problem is escalating - Zionist settlement ideology considers the land as one of the main pillars for its political project. Therefore, Jewish people are brought in from their countries of origin to take the place of Palestinians on Palestinian land, and Israel has made all possible effort to control the land and clear it of its original inhabitants.

Although the issue of Jerusalem is very significant within the overall Palestinian issue and conflict due to the sanctity of the city, Palestinian negotiators have succumbed to international pressures and agreed to postpone discussions of this issue to Permanent Status Negotiations in accordance with the September 1993 Declaration of Principles. Other thorny issues which are also to be postponed include settlements, refugees, borders and water - all of which were a result of the 1948 and 1967 wars as well as the establishment of (Israel) on 78 per cent of historic Palestine which resulted in the occupation of the remaining Palestinian land (in East Jerusalem), the West Bank and the Gaza Strip.

Since then, Israel has been working on changing the features of the holy city to enable it to impose a fait accompli if forced to negotiate permanent status issues.

Jerusalem, the core of the Zionist project

The policies and actions Israel has adopted in Jerusalem can be summed up as its attempt to Judaize the holy city, its residents, its history and culture and has been on-going since 1948. In an effort to do this, the (Israeli) authorities have taken planned measures to edge onto the land of Jerusalem and grant Jewish immigrants citizenship, resulting in the seizure of most of Jerusalem's territory.

According to the 1947 General Assembly Resolution 181, Jerusalem and its vicinities including Bethlehem, were put under international rule. However, the Zionist groups did not adhere to the resolution and displaced all the Arab residents of West Jerusalem during the war of 1948. It also used all means of violence and terrorism against the Palestinians, most notably during the Deir Yassin massacre in 1948/1949 (which is only 1.5 miles away from the western area of Jerusalem) when 300 men, women, children and seniors were killed. Israeli radio repeated the same message to the Arabs over and over again throughout the war - "Remember Deir Yassin" in an effort to provoke fear in the Palestinians and force them to leave their homes. This extended (Israel's) geographic control to include a larger area than that allotted to it by the UN. Despite this, the UN approved (Israel's) membership in the international organisation without requiring it to go back to the borders allotted to the Jewish state,

especially in Jerusalem, which it occupied.

With the announcement of the establishment of the state of (Israel) in May 1948, (Israel) annexed all the suburbs of (West Jerusalem) where prior to the Nakba, half the residents had been Arab and the other half Jewish. The Arabs lived in 15 residential quarters and owned three quarters of the land and buildings, while (Israel) occupied 13 of the residential quarters however, despite international opposition, (Israel) passed a law considering Jerusalem its capital.

In 1967, (Israel) occupied the remaining Palestinian territories along with some Arab territories, and adopted a 2-part policy aiming to occupy Arab territories on one hand, and establish Jewish settlements on these territories on the other. After the June war in 1967, the (Israeli Knesset) passed a law giving the Minister of Interior the authority to announce the expansion of municipality borders and enforce (Israeli) law on parts of the occupied territories. This aided in the escalation of settlements within major Palestinian cities, despite the clarity of articles 47 and 49 of the Geneva Convention which legally prohibit the occupying force from taking any action that may change the nature of the occupied territories, and states that its existence in the territories as an occupying state is temporary.

From early on, the (Israeli) authorities began its seizure, demolition and displacement operations to facilitate the isolation of Jerusalem and its surroundings from the neighbouring Arab areas and to change the features of Jerusalem. (Israeli) settlements were highly concentrated in Jerusalem in an attempt to enforce a Jewish presence that overrides the Arab landmarks in the city and makes it difficult for (Israel) to disengage from Jerusalem in the event of future negotiations. Israel took over 838 hectares of the West Bank territories surrounding Jerusalem and formulated a plan to grant citizenship to a large number of its Jewish inhabitants by establishing settlement blocs to isolate (East Jerusalem) from the other Palestinian cities in the West Bank. Many Jewish neighbourhood and settlements were established on hilltops, in valleys, on the remains of demolished Arab neighbourhoods and villages, and on Arab land in Jerusalem that had been confiscated or seized.

Israeli authorities were also able to establish two settlement rings surrounding the city from every side and separating it from other cities, villages and camps by escalating settlement activities. Now, approximately 180,000 Jewish settlers live in the settlements and there are Israeli plans to increase the Jewish population in the two occupied parts of Jerusalem to 1 million by 2020. The Israeli settlement projects in Jerusalem have posed a political challenge for the Palestinians and the Al-Aqsa Intifada in September 2000 emerged as a response and in a Palestinian attempt to preserve Palestinian civilisation, embodied by Jerusalem, and protect its Arab and Islamic heritage from being erased by the authorities who have been trying to impose settlements since 1967.

The Israeli policy of Judaising the city of Jerusalem by surrounding it with buildings and settlements that form an impenetrable wall aims at suffocating its residents and driving them out, as well as preventing Palestinians from the West Bank and Gaza Strip from accessing the city and contacting its residents.¹

The reality of settlements in Jerusalem and their importance for Israel:

Settlements in the Old City began in 1967 the day after Israeli law was imposed and the declaration of Israel's ownership of a 'unified and expanded Jerusalem', to include the eastern and western areas of the eternal city, was made. The aim of this was to defeat the Arab armies in June 1967 by destroying the Al-Magharbeh neighbourhood and controlling the surrounding buildings.

Then, the settlements within the Old City and the surrounding areas spread, and today, Israel controls 88 per cent of the area of the Old City, in addition to about 90 settlement blocs spread throughout the rest of the neighbourhoods, except for historic and archaeological sites and the tunnels that have, or are still being dug. In the areas surrounding the Old City, the "Holy Basin" project is being implemented which includes most of the critical areas that surround the Old City, such as Mount of Olive, Ram al-Amoud, Silwan, Sheikh Jarrah, Hinnom Valley/Wadi Rababa, and Wadi Hilweh. Most of the expansionary settlement projects in the city have been completed, and now the finishing touches are being made, including tightly closing the remaining gaps such as the southern area with the (Givat Hamatos settlement project) thus creating a barrier of settlements consisting of Gilo, Givat Hamatos, Har Homa, and Jabal Abu-Ghoneim which block the southern gate of the city.

At the beginning of December 2012, the expansion of the Torah National Park on the eastern slope of the Mount of Olives was announced in order to sever contact between Al-Issawiya, At-Tur, and 'Anata. The next step to be taken in the eastern area, known as the (E1) area and located east of the Mount of Olives, will link the Ma'ale Adumim settlement to Jerusalem. This will reinforce the eastern settlement barrier that links Jerusalem to the Jordan Valley.

As for the north, the settlements completed the process of enclosure and complete separation. Now, they are working on gradually increasing the number of residents in what they call "natural population growth". We are certain that the next steps taken by the settlements is to fill in all possible gaps between the outer settlement ring, such as Gosh Atzion in the south, and the inner settlement ring, such as Gilo and Har Homa.

There has been a noticeable growth of the phenomenon of tearing up and separating Palestinian villages and neighbourhoods with small or large settlement blocs, or with parks, roads and railways. This separates villages and neighbourhoods from each other, and then fragments each village and neighbourhood by implanting settlement blocs in them. ²

The Jerusalem Center for Social & Economic Rights warned against the qualitative escalation of Jewish settlements in occupied Jerusalem that aims to fully Judaise the Old City and tighten the occupation's grip on the holy city, especially the area known as the "Holy Basin", as well as the eastern slopes of the Old City starting with the villages of Sheikh Jarrah, As Suwanah, Mount of Olives, Ras al-Amoud, and ending with the western village of Abu Dis, located west of the city. Here, the occupation forces plan to build a settlement known as Kadmat Zion.

The Jerusalem Center wrote a report about this plan which mentions the strategic points the Ministry of Housing and Construction announced recently, in coordination with the West Jerusalem municipality, to establish these small settlement

neighbourhoods. The Jerusalem Center report named the proposed settlement neighbourhoods³ as follows:

First: Settlements in Sheikh Jarrah

The neighbourhoods of Sheikh Jarrah, along with Silwan, Wadi Al-Joz and Jabal Al-Masharif/Mount Scopus, have been considered targets for Zionist settlement construction activities since the British Mandate era when, in 1925, Zionist groups began building the Hebrew University campus on Jabal Al-Masharif/Mount Scopus. A number of other officially sponsored projects were established over the years, including the construction of Israeli government buildings, police headquarters, buildings for the Hebrew University and the neighbouring French Hill settlement.

Sheikh Jarrah was one of the first villages to be Judaized and its original Palestinian residents, amounting to 2,700 Palestinians, were replaced by settlers. This is due to its strategic location north of the Old City in East Jerusalem, and the fact that it is home to a number of archaeological, civilizational, and cultural sites such as the Orient House, the American Colony Hotel, the National Palestinian Theatre and a number of international and diplomatic delegations in the neighbourhood.

According to a report published by Al-Maqdese for Society Development, which specialises in settlement affairs in occupied Jerusalem, the Judaisation of the neighbourhood goes back to the early seventies when settlers tried to seize the land and property of its original residents. After that, the settlers made sure they always had a presence in the neighbourhood and resorted to using the Zionist legal system to establish their ownership of institutes using dates prior to the Zionist occupation of Palestine in 1948.

The Judaisation operation did not stop at the use of dates that preceded the Zionist entity as evidence of Jewish ownership of institutions and property in the neighbourhood. They surpassed this by illegally controlling Palestinian property. For instance, in 1999, the Zion Settlers Association illegally took over the homes of 6 Palestinians. The number of settlers in the area increased to 2,500 settlers.

In 2008, the extremist settlement groups continued, with the support of the occupation forces, to Judaize the area. The settlers carried out evacuation operations on Palestinian families and replaced them with more settlers.⁴

If the plans of the settlement groups to seize the land in Sheikh Jarrah are carried out, it will result in the expulsion and displacement of over 500 Palestinian citizens, thus making way for the establishment of a new settlement bloc that can accommodate over 550 residential settlement units in its first phase.

The most significant landmarks of Sheikh Jarrah that are at risk of being Judaized by settler organisations and the occupation forces are:

1. The Um Haroun Compound which is a settlement organisation which claims it owns a number of its lands. This compound is located between the Nablus Road and the Green Line. It covers about 8,000 square meters, including 33 buildings inhabited by 175 people, most of whom are refugees expelled or displaced from different parts of Palestine, including West Jerusalem in 1948.

2. The Shepherd Hotel, also known as Karam al Mufti, was seized by the occupation forces after occupying East Jerusalem in 1967. The ownership of the hotel and the land surrounding it was transferred to a settlement organisation in 1985 which announced the intention to build 90 residential units, a synagogue, park and nursery in the area based on plans submitted to the occupation governorate in Jerusalem at the end of October 2005. This area is known as Karam al Mufti because its ownership goes back to the Jerusalem Grand Mufti, Haj Amin al-Husseini, since the twenties before it was occupied by the Israelis in 1967. Despite the fact that the Mufti's true heirs are still alive and live permanently in Jerusalem, the land and building was leased to the Israeli border police and is now being run by Moskowitz, the Ateret Cohanim Settlement Association, and C&M Properties.

In November 2006, the Committee for Preservation of Historical Sites recommended the demolition of the hotel, claiming that it had no particular archaeological value. The land of Karam al-Mufti extends under the hotel on 40,000 square meters of land, in addition to about 110,000 square meters of land at the bottom of the mountain. It is mainly planted with olive trees.⁵

Second: Settlements in Wadi Al-Joz

This neighbourhood is considered an important and strategic point in the settlement ring plan bordering Jerusalem, as it will link the proposed settlement bloc in Sheikh Jarrah with the main settlement bloc on Mount of Olives, known as Beit Orot. This neighbourhood extends over dozens of square meters starting from the Hebrew University Street and ending at Beit Orot. Throughout its different phases, 70 settlement units have been built. This project was designed by one of the most prominent architects of the West Jerusalem governorate, Elan Efrat, in the early nineties. Implementation of these plans was frozen by then Minister of Housing and Construction, Binyamin Ben-Eliezer.

The establishment of this settlement would enhance the demographic settlement presence in the area, especially since Israelis are currently working towards linking it to another settlement bloc that will be established on the slopes of the Mount of Olives bordering what is known as the "Jewish Cemetery". This is only a few meters from the Moskowitz settlement in Ras al-Amoud.

Third: Settlements in Ras al-Amoud

Work on establishing this bloc started about 3 years ago, and dozens of the planned 132 settlement units designed as castles and forts have been built. This bloc is only 150 meters away from Jerusalem and directly overlooks the Al-Aqsa Mosque. Its main nucleus is represented by 3 houses seized by extremist settlement groups and alternately inhabited by Jewish families.

Those building this bloc, led by the Jewish-American tycoon Irving Moskowitz, are planning on controlling the land and buildings surrounding the new settlement bloc, including the Palestinian youth club located on these lands.

Fourth: Settlements in Silwan

The area located south of the Old City's walls, known as Silwan, is one of the most fiercely targeted areas due to its historic significance to the occupation. Over the past

years, settlement organisations have been able to seize about 20 houses in various parts of Silwan, such as Ain Al-Luza and Ain Helwa, and have turned them into settlement blocs heavily protected by security. These groups also control vital areas in the neighbourhood. In the last few years, it has worked on preparing the area to reconstruct what is known as the “City of David”, which is the Hebrew name for Silwan. This area is the heart of the s-called “Holy Basin” and named as such by “Israeli” negotiators during the last Camp David Accords 3 years ago; the negotiators insisted at the time on maintaining Israeli control of it.⁶

Collapses in Silwan

Bulldozers are not the only tool of destruction in Jerusalem. In Silwan, residents noticed collapses and cracks in the main road of Wadi Hilwah, which is closest to the southern wall of the Al-Aqsa Mosque. The Wadi Hilwa Information Centre said that the excavations carried out by the El’ad Settlement and Archaeology Organisation are the reason for these collapses. They also highlighted the existence of an occupation tunnel in the area that links the historic Ain Silwan “Spring of Siloam” to the southern wall of the Al-Aqsa Mosque as a possible reason for this.

The Islamic-Christian Committee also commented on these collapses by warning that the grounds of the Old City have become fragile and weak and are prone to collapsing from light rain due to the large tunnel network under it. It is worth mentioning that this collapse is not the first of its kind in the area. There have been deteriorations and collapses in the wall of Al-ain Mosque and the floor of a Jerusalem primary school in the area of the Dung Gate when 17 students were hurt, not to mention the falling of several perennial trees in the courtyards of the Al-Aqsa Mosque.⁷

It is noteworthy that Silwan was famous for agriculture due to the fertility of its land and the abundance of water sources. It was a vital source of water for the Old City through underground stone channels drawing water from a number of sources, most important of which were Ain Umm al-Daraj “Gihon spring” and the Silwan Pool “Pool of Siloam”, where water flows to it from Ain Mariam “Mary’s Spring” through a stone tunnel 850 meters long that reaches the pool, as well as Al-Luza Spring and “Beir Yacoub” Jacob’s Well. The people of the West Bank depended on the vegetables planted in the city, but urban development led to the shrinkage of agricultural lands, as well as the occupation’s seizure of them, prohibiting the Arabs of using it for agriculture or construction in order for it to be used for Jewish interests.

Forces of the occupation took control of the water supply of the historic “Jacob’s Well” located in Silwan, south of Al-Aqsa. It is 130 meters deep and is considered the area’s underground water supply after the occupation forces placed large pumps and prepared large tankers to expedite the seizure of the water.

The occupation totally changed Silwan’s landmarks, as it demolished the resident’s houses and constructed parking lots and parks for their children extending to “Ain Silwan” which Arabs are prevented from reaching.

The occupation forces also gave evacuation warnings to 1900 homes, each housing 10-13 individuals, to enable their seizure or demolition.⁸

Fifth: Settlements in Jabel Mukaber

Jabal Mukaber is located south of the settlement bloc in Silwan. The West Jerusalem governorate approved a series of plans to reinforce settlement presence on the western slopes of the Mukaber Mountain. The most recent was the approval given for the establishment of a neighbourhood called “Nov Zahav” i.e. “A view of gold”. The proposed neighbourhood directly overlooks the Old City from the south, and is directly connected to the Silwan settlement neighbourhood and its various settlement blocs.

Moreover, other plans were also approved in the same area, including hotels, a mobile restaurant, and a tourist area funded by foreign and “Israeli” investors, as well as the construction of dozens of settlement units for residence.

Sixth: Settlements in Abu Dis

This proposed neighbourhood is located west of the town of Abu Dis, directly overlooking Silwan and Jabel Mukaber. This neighbourhood is called “Kadmat Zion”, i.e. “the front of Zion”. “Israel’s” aim in establishing it is to prevent any Palestinian demographic contact with the Old City, Abu Dis and Al Azariya, and to prevent the future presence of any Palestinian authority in the area.

Seventh: Settlements in Al-Issawiya

The town of Al-Issawiya, located in the centre of occupied Jerusalem, is subjected to methodical repressive escalation carried out by the occupation forces. Some examples of the Zionist escalation are the two settlement expansion plans in the town: the national park plan, and the invisible expansion of the “E1” area.

The “national park” project aims to build a park on the lands of Al-Issawiya and At-Tur, which would mean the seizure of 740,000 square meters from both towns. The seizure of the land will directly link the Ma’ale Adumim settlement in occupied Jerusalem and the settlements north of the West Bank to Jerusalem. This will facilitate the preservation of the settlements and deepen the efforts to Judaize Jerusalem. In addition to this, there is also a plan to build a solid waste landfill in Wadi Cabina and the Qasim Valley, located between Shuafat Camp, ‘Anata, and Al-Issawiya. The area of the land that they plan to seize is 534,000 square meters, most of which is owned by residents of the surrounding neighbourhoods. The occupation forces are planning on filling the valley with solid waste in order to level the ground and ultimately build a park in its place.

The unannounced objective of this plan is to also connect the E1 area and the Ma’ale Adumim settlement to Jerusalem, thereby isolating East Jerusalem from the West Bank and preventing geographic contact between the northern and southern areas of the West Bank.⁹

Settlements in Jerusalem last year (2012) set a new record:

According to the anti-settlement activist group “Ir Amim”, last year witnessed a new record in the number of settlement construction projects that were approved in the eastern areas of occupied Jerusalem.

According to the data, the Israeli government made bids to build 2386 new settlement units in occupied Jerusalem, whereas the total number of settlement units bid on in

the last decade was 726 units a year.

The group explained that the Israeli government admitted to building 6,932 new settlement units last year in the West Bank and occupied Jerusalem, 1,772 in 2011 and 569 in 2010.

It pointed out that the large settlement plans that were approved in 2012 were concentrated in Gilo, Har Homa, and Givat Hamatos settlements, located south of Jerusalem, and the Pisgat Ze'ev and Ramat Shlomo settlements located north of the city. The group also noted that this data did not include the construction plans in the "E1" area located between occupied Jerusalem and Ma'ale Adumim settlement recently announced and includes the construction of thousands of settlement units.

The development of the demographic Judaisation project: "Jerusalemites are facing the dangers of silent expulsion"

Practically, the Israeli plans were drawn up in order to impose a crushing Jewish majority in occupied East Jerusalem in 1967. At the same time, this increase of Jewish people in Jerusalem will comply with evacuation policies programmed to silently expel Arab Jerusalemites by annulling their legitimate right to live in their city according to the following criteria:

1. If a Palestinian has lived outside Jerusalem for 7 consecutive years
2. If a Palestinian obtains other citizenship
3. If a Palestinian has registered as a resident in any other country

Based on these cases, Israeli sources estimate the number of Arabs in Jerusalem at risk of losing their identity card is about 50-60,000 which would mean their expulsion or exclusion from Jerusalem. It is important to point out that all Israeli measures to expel Jerusalemite Arabs have been put in place in accordance with precise and pre-arranged Israeli laws. For example, land owners, based on ownership and housing arrangements, are in danger of having their rights and residency revoked. Whereas all a Jewish person coming from any country in the world needs to do is express their intention of come to Palestine in order for them to become a resident of Jerusalem, and will not lose this right if they are gone 7 or 70 years, or if they have any other citizenship. This is contrary to Arab land owners, who are subject to Israeli laws that may seize their land, Judaize it, especially by seizing land in Jerusalem and building settlements to isolate the city from every side and from other cities and villages in the West Bank.¹⁰

Between the hammer of licensing and the anvil of the Arnona (property tax):
Jerusalemites face Israeli expulsion policies

On 1/1/2012, the occupation's Parliament decided to raise the Arnona tax, which was discussed in November 2011. Based on this decision, the tax was raised by 3 per cent at the beginning of 2012.

The Arnona, also known as property tax, is an Israeli tax that was imposed on residences and commercial buildings in West Jerusalem, which is predominantly

Jewish. The occupation also imposed it on the residents of East Jerusalem after occupying it in 1967. This tax is enforced by the municipality at rates which differ from one area to another, based on the neighbourhood, the building and area. The following table shows the tax rate per square meter according to the area and building type.

		Class			
	Criteria	A	B	C	D
1	Apartment with an area over 120 sq. meters	98.11	89.15	68.78	56.22
2	Apartment with an area up to 120 sq. meters	81.28	65.20	48.53	35.04
3	Apartment with an external or joint area	57.18	42.53	35.04	35.04
4	Apartment in a wooden or steel building	35.04	35.04	35.04	35.04

(Value in NIS- 1 NIS= \$0.27)

This tax, enforced in exchange for services provided by the municipality, is imposed on Jerusalemites without providing them with the bare minimum of services.

The head of the Jerusalem portfolio in the Palestinian President’s Office said that the services provided to the Palestinian residents do not exceed 12 per cent of the total amount of money taken for the Arnona.

According to international law, the occupying state may impose taxes on the local citizens, but this must be spent on them. However, the case isn’t so for East Jerusalem as the taxes collected by the occupation forces from the Jerusalemites are not spent on them. Instead, most of it is spent on the Jewish people and settlers.

“Israel” uses the Arnona to harass the Jerusalemites and drive them to leave the city or close down their businesses in Jerusalem. For example, the occupation forces delay tax collection and taxes, along with accumulated fines, reach amounts that exceed the value of the property; they then demand that these large amounts are paid or else they impound the property so as to push owners to sell them. It may also send the tax with the water bill and those who cannot pay both at the same time have their water cut off. It also imposes taxes on business owners that exceed their annual income due to the accumulation of fines – this forces the owners to shut down their businesses. As a result, these businesses are seized to pay off the tax along with their contents and result in Palestinian property being taken by the occupation. Moreover, the municipality prosecutes those unable to pay and makes sure court orders are issued to seize their furniture or freeze their bank accounts, if available.

Israeli violations of freedom of housing and residence

These violations include the issuance of orders to demolish and evacuate houses in Silwan, Al-Issawiya and several Jerusalem neighbourhoods.

In January 2012, teams from the Israeli municipality accompanied by military and

police forces distributed demolition notices in Silwan and Al-Issawiya in particular. 16 houses and 7 commercial offices in Silwan received these notices in addition to 2 houses in Shuafat and a 6-story building in Beit Hanina. The municipality bulldozers carried out 4 demolition operations in Shuafat, Sur Baher, and Beit Hanina, and bulldozers from the civil administration affiliated with the occupation army carried out 4 other demolition operations in Area (G) in Anata, Shuafat Camp and Al-Azariya.

In February, the occupation carried out 7 demolition operations and forced Jerusalemite citizens to demolish their own homes on the grounds they were constructed without a permit. Moreover, the “Nature and Parks Authority” bulldozed land in Silwan and destroyed the wall surrounding the city. However, the most notable escalation was embodied by the decision made by the Israeli government’s Attorney General, Yehuda Weinstein, to form a team to study the policy of executing demolition orders for “illegal” buildings in Jewish neighbourhoods of Jerusalem.

These operations were repeated in later months and were highlighted in April 2012 when the bulldozers from the civil administration demolished 17 establishments belonging to the Jahalin Bedouins in the al-Jeeb area, northwest of Jerusalem. This led to the displacement of 6 families consisting of 46 individuals, 31 of who are children. The occupation forces took it one step further by seizing the tents distributed by the Red Cross to the families who were then given a repossession notice, leaving them homeless, as a means to force them to leave.

In May 2012, the occupation municipality staff, with the protection of the police, distributed 7 demolition orders for houses and the residents were given one month’s notice before the demolition. The municipality court issued a ruling setting the end of September as the last date to demolish 29 out of 88 homes which make up the al-Bustan neighbourhood if construction permits were not issued. To ensure its determination to enforce the decision, the court delivered the court order to demolish the 29 houses to Ziad Kawar, the lawyer advocating against home demolitions in al-Bustan in Silwan. The decision came in light of the Israeli authority’s effort to cease control the entire neighbourhood in an effort to establish a park in an area called “King David’s Park”.

To justify the evacuation and demolition operations, “Israel” uses the excuse of a lack of construction permits, however, this is an excuse to harass the Jerusalemites and push them into an endless cycle that cannot be broken. First of all, since 1967, “Israel” has adopted a policy that is based on marginalising the Palestinian presence and hindering their ability to develop and construct new buildings despite their growing population that creates the need to increase construction and expand established buildings. Secondly, it imposes restrictions on them which make obtaining building permits almost impossible, either due to the difficulty of proving their ownership of the land they intend to build on, or the complicated and costly bureaucratic procedures that the Jerusalemites must go through in the event they are able to prove their ownership. As such, the occupation forces Jerusalemites to build without permits so as to have an excuse to demolish what they build, displace their families, and force them to leave.

The issue of house demolition raises the issue of “Israel’s” violation of international law, especially the Fourth Geneva Convention in 1949 regarding the protection of civilians during war. This is classified as a great violation and an arbitrary measure that

results in the large-scale destruction of property without being rendered necessary by military operations. In addition to this, this policy is also considered a violation of the right to a fair trial, as demolitions are carried out in accordance with administrative decisions which do not give those targeted a chance to make a statement or defend themselves. It is also worth noting that the demolition and evacuation policy are within the framework of the Israeli Judaisation operation that includes people and rocks. It works towards creating the necessary space to establish settlements and reinforce the Jewish presence in East Jerusalem, in addition to seeking to establish Jewish landmarks in place of the demolished buildings in an attempt to obliterate the original identity of the city.¹¹

The world's attitude towards Israeli settlements

In December 2012, the American position in the International Security Council, which was supportive of Israel, prevented the adoption of a draft resolution condemning settlements in Jerusalem and the West Bank. This occurred during a session held to discuss the project presented by Britain, Germany, France and Portugal and described as tumultuous. Voting during the session was thwarted by the US forcing other countries to leave with individual condemnation statements.

The four European members of the International Security Council issued a joint statement expressing their firm objection to settlement expansion projects, stressing that it is a policy that raises doubt about Israel's desire to reach a peace agreement.

In a joint statement, the representatives of Britain, France, Portugal and Germany emphasised that construction in the area known as (E1) between Jerusalem and the Ma'ale Adumim settlement would endanger the two-state solution, lead to a separation of Jerusalem from the West Bank and would also lead to forced expulsion of Palestinian citizens.

The statement also confirmed the need to immediately stop any settlement activity as it violates international laws and sabotages efforts to restart peace negotiations and the two-state solution.

In this context, UN Secretary-General, Ban Ki-Moon, expressed his concern over Israel's recent intensification of settlement expansion projects, which he said represent a dangerous turn that harm the horizons of dialogue and the future of bi-lateral negotiations.¹²

In a notable development, an EU internal report called on all 27 member countries to stop all financial dealings with settlements in the West Bank, based on recommendations made by heads and counsels of the Union's delegations in the occupied West Bank and East Jerusalem, describing the settlement construction in the West Bank and Jerusalem as methodological and provoking, as well as hindering to the two-state solution.

In the "Jerusalem 2012" report, the heads of the Union's delegations recommended that all member countries stop all financial dealings with the settlements, including direct investments from inside EU countries, which support the activities, infrastructure and services in the settlements. It also stressed the need to confirm that goods produced in settlements are not given preferential treatment, as well as placing

special labels stating they are settlement products. This report was submitted to the foreign ministers of EU countries and decisions regarding settlements will be made based on it.

The Israeli newspaper, “Haaretz”, described this report as being very dangerous and said that, “Although it is not a resolution, it will be very influential in EU deliberations regarding the Palestinian-Israeli portfolio.”¹³

International companies supporting settlements in Jerusalem and the West Bank should be globally boycotted

The Arab Organisation for Human Rights in Britain revealed that several companies were evading international laws by supporting illegal Israeli activities in the occupied Palestinian territories, as well as providing the occupation army and settlements with the most advanced electronic systems. Some of the companies exposed by the organisation’s report are:

1. Hewlett-Packard (HP)

This is the American information technology company that provides Israeli checkpoints in the West Bank with the Basel protection system despite its knowledge of Israel’s violations against Palestinians at these checkpoints.

The report also pointed out that the same company provided the Israeli Navy with surveillance equipment used in the blockade that has been imposed by Israel on the Gaza Strip for years, and in attacking ships trying to reach Gaza.

Although the company knows that the settlements are illegal, it still opened offices in some of these settlements. For example, in the Ariel settlement in the occupied West Bank, the company established an information system to store data and ease communication between the settlement’s facilities.

2. AFCON Holdings

It is considered one of the largest industrial groups in occupied Palestine and one of the main industrial groups that work towards supporting the Zionist project. It has branches in occupied Jerusalem, Haifa, and Beer al-Sabea. This company tries to conceal its Israeli identity in foreign dealings.¹⁴

This company specialises in producing and installing a wide range of electrical, control, industrial, security, fire detection, fire department, programming, communications, natural gas technology, wind energy technology, and wire and wireless communication systems.

The company’s main clients are Israeli ministries of defence, security, energy, transportation and agriculture. One of the most important projects that it carried out and supervises is the security system for the railway (over ground tram) which it began in 2002 and finished in 2012. It began operating in 2011 and operations were entrusted to two French companies, Veolia and Alstom, which were prosecuted in France for violating international law. The railway is 13.9 kilometres long and aims to connect illegal settlements in occupied Jerusalem to Jewish neighbourhoods in

Palestinian territories occupied in 1948.¹⁵ It is an international company with several branches worldwide.

3. Veolia Environment

This is a French company specialising in environmental matters, including water and waste recycling, energy, transport, and construction. It works towards providing a water supply to the Israeli settlers in the occupied Palestinian territories.

The Israeli Coalition of Women for Peace revealed new evidence of Veolia's involvement in the Israeli occupation's settlement projects on Palestinian land. Research done by the Coalition of official Israeli websites and its revision of official financial reports indicate the French company's participation in Israeli projects in the occupied West Bank through the provision of services to the Modi'in Illit settlement and the operation of seven "Veolia Israel" lines through occupied Palestinian territories providing transportation between the settlements and Israel.

Moreover, "Veolia Water-Israel" is also involved in sanitation projects for the Modi'in Illit settlement located between Jerusalem and Tel Aviv in the occupied West Bank. "Veolia Water-Israel" is affiliated with the international "Veolia Environment" company.¹⁶

4. The Alstom French Company

Alstom is considered a strategic partner to the Israeli occupation in implementing the Jerusalem train project. Its role consists of designing, planning and supervising engineering and infrastructure, as well as establishing the project, funding, operating, maintaining and supplying 46 train cars for it during its first phase. Alstom's participation in executing, funding and supporting this project certainly violates the rights of the Palestinian people based on related international laws and decrees.

After the media frenzy against it, Alstom is making efforts to decrease its activities in Israel without halting them fully, as it still benefits from maintaining the metro line which operates in Jerusalem. It is also in partnership with a number of Israeli companies working in the same field.¹⁷

5. Caterpillar

Caterpillar designs, manufactures, markets and sells heavy machinery and motors as well as financial products and client insurance through a network of dealers worldwide. It is the largest manufacturer of construction and mining supplies, diesel and natural gas engines, and industrial gas turbines in the world. The company was established in 1925, and in 1986 it restructured itself under its current name, Caterpillar. The company's headquarters is located in Peoria, Illinois, USA.¹⁸

Caterpillar manufactures the bulldozers used by the occupation to destroy Palestinian land, homes and property and to build settlements.

Falk calls on the UN to boycott companies supporting Israeli settlements

The United Nations Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967, Richard Falk, called on the UN General Assembly to take measures against Israeli and international companies that benefit from building Israeli settlements in the occupied Palestinian territories.

Falk stressed the need to boycott companies profiting from the Israeli settlement project until they bring their operations in line with international human rights and humanitarian laws and standards.

Richard Falk also pointed out to the General Assembly that these companies are violating international law and standards concerning businesses and human rights, including the UN Global Compact and the UN Guiding Principles on Businesses and Human Rights.

Falk also mentioned the names of companies participating in the establishment and maintenance of Israeli settlements, such as Caterpillar Incorporated of the United States, Veolia Environment of France, G4S of the United Kingdom, the Dexia Group of Belgium, Ahava of Israel, the Volvo Group of Sweden, the Riwal Holding Group of the Netherlands, Elbit Systems of Israel, Hewlett Packard of the USA, Mehadrin of Israel, Motorola of the USA, Assa Abloy of Sweden and Cemex of Mexico.

Mr Falk also noted that guidance developed by the International Committee of the Red Cross points to the prospect of corporate and individual criminal responsibility for violations committed during a situation of armed conflict.¹⁹

Conclusion

The matter of colonising and Judaising the city of Jerusalem in order to increase the Jewish population in it was a leading topic in the deliberation of the first Zionist Conference in the Swiss city of Basel at the end of August 1897. Since then, the Zionist movement and Zionist organisations have done all they can to impose a new reality on Jerusalem through a studied Zionist demographic policy serving the basic purposes of the Zionists movement; in particular, the establishment of a Jewish state. The steps taken to condemn settlements are below par if they are to prevent the occupation from continuing its activities.

Therefore, every free person in the world and all civilian community organisations must take real action to oppose Israeli plans and policies aiming to Judaise the city of Jerusalem. Particularly plans aiming to impose the silent expulsion of Arab Jerusalemites from their land, property, and businesses so as to increase settlements, and concentrate the largest number of Jewish people in Jerusalem, thus enforcing the demographic status quo.

In the face of this reality, we must work on two axes; the first is to support the housing sector in Jerusalem by legal and financial support for the issuance of building permits to prevent the occupation forces from demolishing homes and buildings based on the justification of Palestinians having no permits. The second is to raise awareness that the policy of forced expulsion is a blatant violation of international law, meaning that the countries involved in the Fourth Geneva Convention must force "Israel" to uphold

the terms of the agreement and put an end to the policy of demolition and expulsion, as well as to pressure “Israel” to end its occupation of the Palestinian territories.

It is also necessary to expose the Israeli policies practiced in Jerusalem by publishing documented files in Arab and foreign media that highlight the vigorous Israeli measures taken to falsify Jerusalem’s heritage and Arab, Islamic and Christian history. Moreover, the UN and affiliated organisations must be called on to enforce international resolutions regarding Jerusalem, beginning with those that emphasise the need to halt and nullify Israeli settlements in Jerusalem.

ENDNOTES

1. <http://www.alqudsonline.org/index.php?s=17&ss=17&id=658%20>
2. <http://www.almustaqbal.com/storiesv4.aspx?storyid=554423>
3. <http://www.nbprs.ps/page.php?do=show&action=i20>
4. <http://minbaralaqsa.com/detail.aspx?id=1195>
5. <http://www.palinfo.com/site/pic/newsdetails.aspx?itemid=107140>
6. <http://www.nbprs.ps/page.php?do=show&action=i20>
7. <http://www.alhayat-j.com/newsite/details.php?opt=2&id=189413&cid=2766>
8. <http://minbaralaqsa.com/detail.aspx?id=1195>
9. <http://aelyanews.net/permalink/103069.html>
10. <http://www.aljazeera.net/opinions/pages/8b9516b1-d5fd-4cd7-8317-893ff9b2a755>
11. https://docs.google.com/viewer?a=v&q=cache:Pk3XAkCBOqkJ:alqudsonline.org/userfiles/news%2520file/12345.docx+&hl=en&gl=uk&pid=bl&srcid=ADGEESiJb1to8BKnJh_gGI_8mZrwEROJ2O_S0OPWkQWwYB34XXumsie3CuXB1LTSCYGPcTU1IDykDDE_EnK8s7M8XMdWYBoCA5U68qVvCpaOWrOrUVVr4pu-5Zi11I5VZizWHKSZSKq&sig=AHIEtbT-FNXumLAGpxJgAYGpxvo6oVDJLg
12. <http://www.arn.ps/archives/37085>
13. <http://www.aawsat.com/details.asp?section=4&article=719056&issueno=12511%23.UTXp7TBA1kl>
14. <http://www.aljazeera.net/news/pages/2b534b61-96cf-4c00-8758-2b77560e3415>
15. <http://www.raya.ps/ar/news/803699-kairos-palestine-welcomes-the-decision-of-the-divestment-of-two-companies-linked-occupying.html>
16. <http://electronicintifada.net/blogs/adri-nieuwhof/veolia-treats-wastewater-modiin-illit-settlement>
17. <http://www.al-akhbar.com/node/22299>
18. http://ar.wikipedia.org/wiki/%D8%B4%D8%B1%D9%83%D8%A9_%D9%83%D8%A7%D8%AA%D8%B1%D8%A8%D9%8A%D9%84%D8%B1
19. <http://www.elsaba7.com/NewsDtl.aspx?id=32688>

MEM 
MIDDLE EAST M  NITOR