

Planning, Building, and Settlements in East Jerusalem

2015 Year End Review

January 2016

Following the failure of the Kerry talks in April 2014, the promotion of Israeli building plans over the Green Line, particularly in East Jerusalem, slowed significantly. In previous years, Israel forwarded building plans and published tenders for construction in East Jerusalem in the range of thousands of housing units each year. In 2015, the picture was different, with the scope of building plans and marketing of tenders much more limited than in past years. Most of the major building plans in East Jerusalem were already approved in 2012. The number of tenders issued in 2015 for approved plans was relatively minor and very few new plans reached the planning committees, even when the authorities explicitly stated that plans would be promoted.

During the nine months of negotiations led by US Secretary of State John Kerry – from July 2013 through April 2014 – Israel published tenders for 3,020 housing units in East Jerusalem. Since the failure of the talks in 2014 and through the end of November 2015, Israel published almost no tenders over the Green Line, in East Jerusalem in particular. Strong pressure by the Jewish Home party to advance construction as a condition for its support of the state budget finally led to the publication of a significant tender for 438 housing units in Ramat Shlomo.

This being said, actual construction related to previously approved plans continued. In addition to the construction of hundreds of housing units in Ramot (to the west of Begin Highway, toward the Givat Ze'ev settlement bloc) and preparations for the construction of 708 housing units on the western slopes of Gilo, rapid construction is underway in Har Homa C, which will extend the wedge between Bethlehem and East Jerusalem.

The slow pace of plan promotion since the second half of 2015 contrasts with the unprecedented wave of seizures of Palestinian properties in the Old City and Historic Basin by private settler associations, with the support of state bodies. This trend includes the eviction of Palestinian families from seized properties. The two areas of most concentrated activity are the Muslim Quarter of the Old City and the Batan al-Hawa neighborhood of Silwan, where members of the

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Ateret Cohanim settler organization have been responsible for the eviction of 17 Palestinian families, more than doubling the number of properties it has managed to seize. Eviction claims were submitted against 15 additional Palestinian families, and approximately 70 more families face the threat of similar action.

On Ma'alot Khalidiya Street in the Muslim Quarter of the Old City, settlers seized a living space after evicting a Palestinian resident, two Palestinian families on the street received eviction notices for imminent dates and new claims were submitted against four additional families at the end of the year. Efforts to evict Palestinian families are also underway in Sheikh Jarrah.

Over the past year, the authorities demolished 52 housing units in East Jerusalem, displacing 81 people. The authorities also demolished 37 structures used for non-residential purposes.

All of these trends must be given serious consideration when evaluating the pace of settlement building in Jerusalem over the last year.

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I. ISRAELI BUILDING PLANS

A. Promotion of Building Plans

Approval of Achuzat Nof, Southern Compound plan (TPS 13677A)

Number of units: 93

This land reparcelization plan was deposited for objections in January 2015. No objections were submitted and the plan was approved in June. The plan involves an area of 25.8 dunams (approximately 6.5 acres) in east Gilo, alongside Road 60. It was submitted by a private Israeli contractor registered as owner of one part of the area. An additional 38 registered Palestinian owners were not located by the planning authorities; consequently, they did not receive notification of the plan's deposit and were not involved in the planning process.

Since TPS 13667A is a unification and parcelization plan, it does not alter zoning, which remains determined by previous plans. The area is not zoned for construction: part of it is designated for a road (Road N. 60), part for public space, and the remainder is unplanned. An earlier plan (TPS 13677) that sought to rezone the land for construction was closed; nonetheless, plan 13677A – intended to be based on plan 13677 – was approved. Despite building permits being contingent on the initial plan being zoned for construction, the unification and reparcelization plan was approved.

Approval of deposit of plan in northeast Ramot (TPS 192815)

Number of units: 201

The District Committee approved TPS 192815 for deposit in August, though to date it has yet to be deposited. The plan applies to an area of 12 dunams (approximately 4 acres) on the northeast edge of Ramot (below Harry Truman Street, toward the Bir Nabala enclave and the area overlooking Begin Highway to the west). Just before approval of the state budget at the end of November 2015, the Jewish Home party applied pressure to advance construction over the Green Line. In response, the prime minister announced promotion of an unnamed plan to construct 300 housing units in Ramot. The units to which he referred evidently correspond to this plan and to TPS 103754 referenced below.

Approval of deposit of a plan within the built-up area of Ramot (TPS 103754)

Number of units: 100

The District Committee approved TPS 103754 for deposit in August. To date, it has yet to be deposited. The plan relates to a built-up area of 21 dunams (approximately 5 acres) inside the neighborhood (Mirsky Street), where 100 additional housing units would be added to existing buildings. Just before approval of the state budget at the end of November 2015, the Jewish Home party applied pressure to promote construction

over the Green Line. In response, the prime minister announced promotion of a plan to construct 300 housing units in Ramot. The units to which he referred evidently correspond to this plan and TPS 192815 above.

Unification and parcelization plan, Gilo, Southern Slopes (TPS 175505)

This unification and parcelization plan relates to a plan (TPS 13261) calling for 891 housing units, approved in 2012. The unification plan appeared on the agenda of the Local Committee in November (just after the prime minister's visit to the US), but was removed from the agenda after a brief discussion, apparently due to the need for further examination. In mid-December, the Local Committee discussed and approved the plan for deposit. Unification and parcelization plans are the responsibility of the Local Committee and are not discussed by the District Committee.

B. Israeli Building Plans Currently Stalled

Givat Hamatos A (TPS 14295)

Givat Hamatos A calls for the construction of 2,600 new housing units, which would have the effect of further isolating adjacent Beit Safafa. Together with the expanding neighborhoods of Gilo and Har Homa, the plan helps complete a strip of Israeli construction separating Bethlehem and the south of the West Bank from East Jerusalem. Given this undermining of East Jerusalem-West Bank land contiguity required for a future Palestinian state and the feasibility of a Palestinian capital in East Jerusalem, the plan has provoked vehement international opposition.

The plan was approved at the end of 2012 and approval published in September 2014. Approximately 10% of the plan area is privately owned and therefore can bypass the tender process, moving directly to request for building permits. Marketing of units began just after the plan's approval, with estimates that building permits would be granted within a year. To date, no building permits have been approved and no preliminary infrastructure work has been started. Tenders for the remainder of the area, all of which is classified as state land, have not yet been published.

Gilo Master Plan

The master plan for Gilo outlines new plans (not yet in the approval pipeline) for a total of 5,380 housing units. The plan was scheduled for discussion at the Local Committee at the end of 2014 but removed from the agenda. There were no discussions held on the plan in 2015.

Ramat Shlomo (TPS 11094)

This plan for 500 housing units in the west of Ramat Shlomo would extend the neighborhood to the north toward Beit Hanina and the area overlooking Begin Highway

to the east.¹ In November 2014, the District Committee approved the plan, which would require the confiscation of Palestinian land, instead of a unification and parcelization option that would have protected Palestinians' property rights. Ir Amim demanded that the District Committee nullify the decision and convene a proper discussion that would allow the Palestinian landowners – who had not been invited to participate in the previous hearing – to present their case. Although the committee approved the plan over a year ago, it has yet to be deposited for objections.

IDF College in A-Tur (TPS 51870)

This plan, originally intended for the construction of an elite military training center for high level national security officers, was deposited for objections at the end of 2012. Final discussion in the District Committee was scheduled several times over the course of 2013 and repeatedly cancelled. In February 2015 the plan was shelved and the press reported that an alternative site was being sought for the project.² Although the Municipality and the Defense Ministry maintained that the change was made after the original site was deemed unsuitable, discussion in the Knesset Internal Affairs Committee indicated that pressure from the US led to the rejection of a plan that would have exceeded the Green Line.³

Herod's Gate plan (TPS 122069)

The Herod's Gate plan incorporates 22 housing units, a synagogue, and public buildings on a 3-dunam (approximately .75-acre) site in the Muslim Quarter of the Old City, close to Herod's Gate. The plan violates provisions of the outline plan for the Old City prohibiting construction within close proximity to the Old City walls. Although formally submitted by the Ministry of Housing, the Ateret Cohanim settler organization was directly involved in the plan's preparation. Under the last administration, former Minister of Housing and Construction Uri Ariel attempted to advance the plan but was blocked.

In the beginning of November 2015, stabbing attacks in the Muslim Quarter led to demands by Ateret Cohanim to promote the plan. The Government Procurement Administration published a notification of exemption from tender for an NIS 105,300 contract between the Ministry of Housing and Construction and a private planning office for "statutory [planning] management regarding the Herod's Gate

¹ The plan was initiated by Israeli real estate developers who claim to be the owners of part of the area. However, in order to connect the land in question to Ramat Shlomo, it is necessary to pass through Palestinian owned land. In order to permit the confiscation of the Palestinian land, the Jerusalem Municipality added its name as a submitter. According to Ir Amim's inspection of the land registry extract, the land the Israelis claim to own is not registered in their name and the question of ownership is the subject of legal proceedings.

² "Jerusalem Forest is Proposed New Site for IDF Colleges," Ha'aretz, 16 April 2015: <http://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/business/.premium-1.652180>

³ Record of the discussion in *Open Knesset* (in Hebrew): <https://oknesset.org/committee/meeting/10208/?page=3>

[plan]”. Following exposure of the contract, sources in the Ministry claimed there had been a mistake and ordered its nullification.

Har Homa West (TPS 13308)

Har Homa West is a plan for 398 housing units extending the built-up area of Har Homa to the west, toward Hebron Road and Givat Hamatos. The plan has not been forwarded by a planning committee since 2008 and the Jerusalem Municipality website states that it was closed in October 2014. Despite the plan’s status, in October 2014, responding to pressure from the Jewish Home party, the prime minister announced that the plan would move forward.⁴ To date, no steps have been taken and in March 2015 a report was published claiming that the plan in Har Homa West has been frozen. The report also stated that the scope of planned construction had risen to 1,500 housing units.⁵ Last year Nahal Daraga Road was constructed between the built-up area of Har Homa and Hebron Road. The road crosses the area encompassed by the Har Homa West plan and could serve as an access road to the neighborhood if construction is approved.

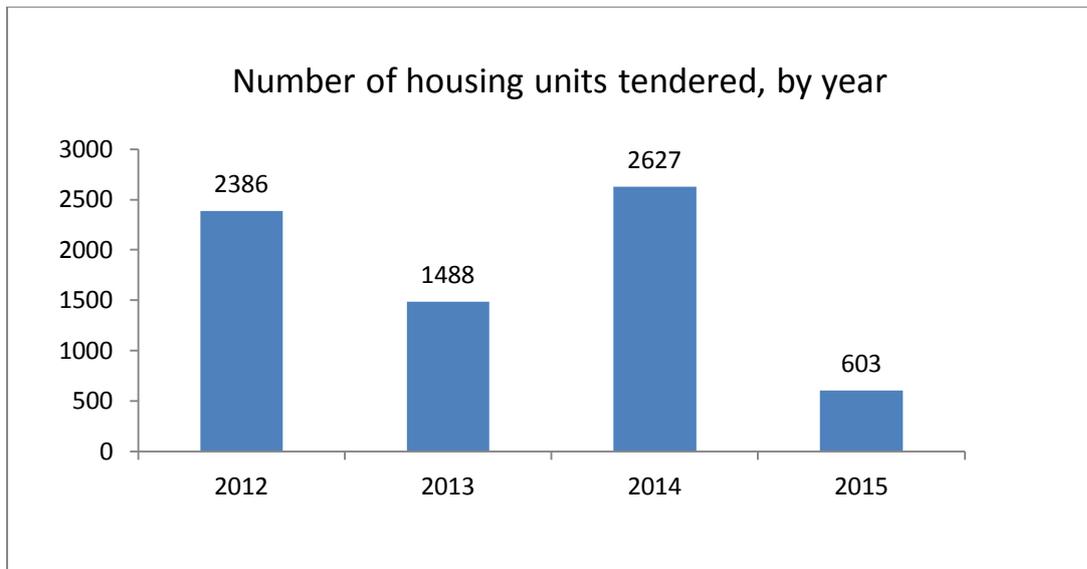
C. Publication of Tenders

In 2015, the pace of tender announcements paralleled the relative slowdown in planning and construction in East Jerusalem that began in 2014. However, strong pressure to advance construction has not abated, and it cannot be assumed that the current situation will continue in 2016.

Neighborhood	Town planning scheme (TPS) number	Number housing units	Number housing units sold
Neve Ya’akov	6513A	56	20
Pisgat Ze’ev	4430A (North)	23	23
	11647 (West)	86	86
Ramat Shlomo	11085	438	Tender not yet closed
Total		603	129 (with potential for an additional 438 units)

⁴ “Netanyahu Orders Plans Be Advanced for 1,060 New East Jerusalem Housing Units,” Ha’aretz, 27 October 2014: <http://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/premium-1.622950>

⁵ “Plan for 1,500 homes in East Jerusalem reportedly frozen,” Times of Israel, 25 March 2015: <http://www.timesofisrael.com/plan-for-1500-homes-in-east-jerusalem-reportedly-frozen/>



A tender for 438 housing units in Ramat Shlomo was published despite the fact that a requisite planning modification – construction of an interchange at the entrance to Ramat Shlomo needed to increase the number of housing units – has not yet been made, and that publication of the tender therefore allowed for issuance of building permits prior to the obligatory change being made.⁶

⁶ As noted above, alongside his statement of intent to publish the tender, Netanyahu declared that two building plans would be promoted in Ramot in the range of 300 housing units. As of the end of 2015, these plans have not yet been promoted.

II. EVICTIONS AND SETTLEMENTS

In contrast to the slowdown in promotion of building plans, the second half of 2015 saw an unprecedented wave of seizures of Palestinian property in the Old City and the Historic Basin by settlers, resulting in numerous evictions of Palestinian families. Senior government ministers have publicly supported settler activities, which are aided and sometimes coordinated by state bodies – from the transfer of property to settler organizations, to use of security forces in the removal of Palestinians from their homes, to settlers capitalizing on support from government agencies to consolidate their presence in Palestinian neighborhoods. Settler organizations are particularly active in the Muslim Quarter of the Old City and in Silwan, with efforts to evict Palestinian families also documented in Sheikh Jarrah.

A. Silwan – Batan al-Hawa

Batan al-Hawa, a congested and severely under-resourced neighborhood in Silwan, is likely to become the location of the largest settlement in the Historic Basin. This Ateret Cohanim stronghold is strategically positioned between the Ma’ale Zeitim settlement in Ras al-Amud and the Wadi Hilweh neighborhood of Silwan, where the Elad settler organization is based. Ateret Cohanim’s settlement campaign puts some 100 Palestinian families at risk of eviction, heightening friction between the local population and settlers and security forces in a densely populated area in the heart of Silwan. Moreover, bolstering the ring of settlements around the Old City undermines the possibility of a future political solution in Jerusalem.

Over the past year, the Benvenisti Trust – two directors of which, appointed with the support of the authorities, are members of the Ateret Cohanim settler organization – seized control of 17 apartments, summarily evicting their Palestinian residents. Toward the end of the year, four more families received notices from the Executor’s Office that orders had been issued for their immediate evictions. The trust submitted eviction demands against 15 additional families, mostly over the course of 2015, and is now pursuing two claims against families whom directors of the trust allege undertook construction in areas under the trust’s ownership.

TABLE OF SEIZURES AND ANTICIPATED EVICTIONS IN BATAN AL-HAWA

	Units controlled prior to 2015	Units added during 2015	Eviction demands	Families under threat of eviction	Vacant lots
# Units	Approximately 15 units in: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Beit Yonatan • Beit Hadvash • Two additional buildings seized by settlers in 2014 	17 units: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5 Abu Nab family homes • 12/13 of the units located in Beit Sarhan • Additional Abu Nab family prevented access to its home as of October 2015 	21 units: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eviction demands submitted against 15 families • Claims submitted against 2 families for alleged construction on plots owned by the trust • In December, 4 families received 20 day eviction notices from the Executor's Office. The families were unaware that they were the subjects of proceedings and have secured legal representation to challenge the evictions. 	Between 65 and 75 additional families: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 57 families in an area allegedly owned by the trust in the 19th century • Some 15 apartments in plots sold to the trust by the General Custodian in 2005, without tender. 	The plots sold to the trust by the General Custodian in 2005 without tender include vacant lots. Ateret Cohanim submitted a request in 2015 to permit the construction of a 3-story home in one of these lots.

As previously noted, in 2002 two members of Ateret Cohanim were appointed trustees to the Benvenisti trust. The trust was founded in the nineteenth century for the purpose of holding a 5.2 dunam area (approximately 1.3 acres) in Batan al-Hawa, at the time inhabited by Yemenite Jews. After the trustees were appointed, the General Custodian released plots 95 and 96 of the parcel to the trust's possession, validating the trust as the rightful owner of the property. The area is home to 88 Palestinian families now threatened with eviction.

In 2005 the General Custodian sold four additional plots to the trust, bypassing the tender process. The plots include several vacant lots and an unknown number of housing units (estimated at 15). The trust is likely to demand that the Palestinian families living in these units vacate their homes. As detailed in the table above, 17 of the 88 families in plots 95 and 96 were evicted over the past year:

- In February 2015 the District Court ruled in favor of the trust's demand for the eviction of five Abu Nab families. Three of these families were evicted in May 2015.
- In August, Ateret Cohanim seized 12 of the 13 apartments in a large building owned by the Sarhan family. The seizure took place after a member of the Sarhan family responsible for letting the apartments compensated the Palestinian tenants for vacating the units, explaining that such action was necessary to

oppose the trust's eviction claim against the Sarhan family. One family has refused to leave despite mounting pressure from the settlers, who have gone so far as to disconnect the water supply to the apartment. The lessor's parents contacted the police to claim that they – not their son – are the rightful owners of the building, maintaining he had no authority to evict the residents or to transfer the building to the trust.

- In October, the two remaining Abu Nab families related to the February court ruling were evicted. A week later, officials from the trust blocked another of the Abu Nab families from crossing the yard of one of the apartments in order to access their home. Since then the family has been unable to enter its apartment and has submitted a request for a Court order allowing the family to traverse the yard.

Four families recently received eviction orders and legal proceedings for eviction are pending against 15 additional families. In 2015, the Maliah 73 Company, whose authorized signatories are members of Ateret Cohanim, submitted an application to build a three-story building on one of the plots sold to the trust in 2005. Eviction claims have not yet been submitted against the families living in these plots.

In December, 4 additional families received 20 day eviction notices from the Executor's Office. The families were unaware that they were the subjects of proceedings and have secured legal representation to challenge the evictions.

B. Silwan – Wadi Hilweh

In the fall of 2014 settlers from the Elad association entered seven buildings, comprising 27 housing units, in the Wadi Hilweh section of Silwan. Right wing government ministers such as Naftali Bennett declared that thanks to these actions, a Jewish majority would be created in the neighborhood. Although entirely inaccurate, Bennett's statement evidences the political intentions behind settlement expansion in the area.

In March 2015, Elad settlers entered a building consisting of three housing units inhabited by the Freij family. The building is situated in the upper section of the neighborhood's main road, Wadi al-Hilweh Street, close to the City of David National Park. After protracted legal proceedings settlers, accompanied by police forces, seized possession of the building.

C. Old City

Settlers seized a living space on Ma'alot Khalidiya Street in the Muslim Quarter after forcing the eviction of its Palestinian resident. Two other families on the street have also received eviction orders – dates imminent – and new claims were submitted against four additional families at the end of the year.

- **Hussein Al-Qaisi** – In December settlers, accompanied by police forces, evicted Hussein Al-Qaisi from his home on Aqbat al-Saraya Street (adjacent to the Sub Laban home – see below). The trustees of the Wittenberg trust submitted the eviction claim and the Magistrate’s Court ruled against Al-Qaisi in May. Al-Qaisi did not appeal against the Court’s decision.
- **Sub Laban family** – The Sub Laban family is the last Palestinian family remaining in a long contested building on Ma’alot Khalidiya Street. Additional Palestinian families living in the building were evicted years ago and their apartments transferred to the Kollel Galicia trust. In September 2014, the Magistrate’s Court ruled in favor of the trust in its 10th eviction demand against the family. Over the past year, two attempts to evict the Sub Labans were ultimately halted following legal interventions. In October the District Court rejected the family’s appeal against eviction. The family submitted a request for permission to appeal to the Supreme Court⁷ and a temporary order postponing the family’s eviction pending a decision was granted on November 18, 2015.
- **Four new eviction claims:** In December four Palestinian families on Ma’alot Khalidiya Street in the Muslim Quarter, opposite the home of the Sub-Laban family, received notices of legal action submitted by the Pinchas Aharon Naminsky Trust, the Kollel Volin Association, and the Chayei Olam Talmud Torah and Yeshiva and Soup Kitchen Society.
- **The Sharbati family** – On December 29 the Sharbati family, also residing on Ma’alot Khalidiya Street a few dozen meters from the Sub-Laban family, received an eviction order from the Executor’s Office. The order is due to take effect on February 7, 2016.

D. Sheikh Jarrah

- **Shamasneh family** – The 10 member Shamasneh family has lived in a house in the Um Harun area (Shimon Ha’tzadik) in Sheikh Jarrah since 1964. The house is built on land that allegedly belonged to Jews before 1948; on this basis the General Custodian empowered the Israel Land Fund, directed by Jerusalem city councilor Aryeh King, to submit a claim on its behalf for the family’s eviction. In August 2013 the Court ruled that the family must vacate the home, delaying execution of the ruling for 18 months, through February 2015 (PCA 9383/12). In the beginning of March, King appeared at the family’s home to demand that it vacate the premises. The family has refused to leave the apartment and to date the authorities have not made any attempt to remove them.
- **Legal proceedings against three additional families** – Over the course of 2015, the District Court held hearings on appeals by the Sabah and Hamad

⁷ RPA 7641/15.

families after losing their cases in the Magistrates Court. The first hearing of the eviction claim against the Diab family was held at the end of December.

III. TOURISTIC SETTLEMENT

Kedem Compound in Silwan (Plan 13542)

In June 2015, the Appeals Committee of the National Planning and Building Council accepted some of the points made in appeals submitted by Ir Amim and other bodies, resulting in the significant reduction of the proposed scope of the project. In the first week of 2016, the Committee's decision was summarily nullified and a new hearing scheduled.

In 2014, the District Committee approved this plan for a massive visitor center in Silwan, promoted by the Elad settler organization, marginally modifying the plan by reducing its height one story. Several groups submitted appeals against the plan, including the residents of Silwan. Ir Amim argued that such a large compound would be intended for uses that far exceed those of a visitor center, meaning that the proposed construction contradicts the criteria for building within a national park. Ir Amim further argued that a visitors' center located in a national park cannot be established by a private political organization; moreover, that the organization in question has a history of exploiting its properties in order to coerce the Nature and Parks Authority to acquiesce to its demands. Additional appeals were submitted by Israeli NGO Emek Shaveh, and dozens of public figures, public planners, architects and conservation experts.

The Appeals Committee of the National Planning and Building Council held a hearing on the appeals in May 2015, determining that the scale of construction should be reduced by 50 percent and that the plan should specify building uses consistent with practices permissible within a national park. It rejected the argument that a public compound defined as a visitors' center in a national park should not be managed by a private organization.

Since the Appeals Committee's decision, the plan's promoters have worked on a variety of fronts to invalidate the ruling. At a July 21, 2015 Knesset Interior Committee discussion of the plan, representatives of Elad claimed that one of the members of the Appeals Committee faced a conflict of interests. Elad also submitted a petition to the District Court against the Appeals Committee's decision based on the allegation of conflict of interests. The appeal was denied on December 15, 2015 and Elad ordered to pay legal expenses.

Amir Sofer, head of Merom Hagalil Regional Council and a member of the Appeals Committee, submitted a request for further discussion of the appeals submitted against the plan in the plenum of the National Planning and Building Council. The Council held a preliminary internal discussion of the request on January 5, 2016. Contrary to expectations, the Justice Ministry did not support confirmation of the original decision despite the Ministry being represented at the May 2015 Appeals Committee discussion

by the chairperson of the Appeals Committee. Through the Director-General of the Ministry of Justice (the Minister of Justice is Ayelet Shaked of the Jewish Home party), the representative requested that the plenum of the Council hold a new discussion of the plan thereby, for all practical purposes, nullifying the Committee's original decision. The discussion is expected to take place in the coming weeks.

IV. "GREEN" ACTIVITIES

Mr. Scopus Slopes National Park (Plan No. 11092A)

In September 2014, the Appeals Committee of the National Planning and Building Council disqualified a decision by the District Committee approving a plan for a national park on an area of 750 dunams (approximately 185 acres) between the neighborhoods of Issawiya and A-Tur, close to E-1. Petitions against the District Committee's decision were submitted by the Khalt El-Ein association of A-Tur, together with Ir Amim, and by residents of Issawiya together with Bimkom – Planners for Planning Rights. The appeals centered on the claim that the plan for the national park extends into the areas of both neighborhoods and would consume any remaining space for local development to address the grave shortage of housing and public buildings.

The Appeals Committee ruled that since the Jerusalem Municipality had not undertaken an examination of the development needs in the two neighborhoods (contrary to its claim), the last remaining land reserves in the area could not be earmarked for a national park. The Appeals Committee demanded that the Municipality conduct a community needs assessment; only thereafter would it be possible to discuss the size of the area required for the development of the neighborhoods and the area that may be allocated for a national park.

Despite the committee's ruling, to the best of the residents' knowledge no such survey has been undertaken to date. Instead, in July 2015 the Municipality issued orders seizing the entire open area between the two neighborhoods (the area designated for the national park) for landscaping purposes. The residents of the neighborhoods, together with Ir Amim and through Bimkom, submitted court appeals against the orders.

Landfill Site in Issawiya (Plan No. 13900)

In February 2015, the District Committee approved a plan for a landfill site and building on a 500 dunam (approximately 125 acres) area between Issawiya and the Shuafat refugee camp. Most of the land belongs to Palestinian residents of Issawiya, Shuafat, and Anata, with the remainder under Jewish ownership. The plan zones the homes of some 30 Palestinian and Bedouin families living in the area for demolition. Operation of the site will inflict noise and air pollution onto the residents of the adjacent neighborhoods of Issawiya, the Shuafat refugee camp, and French Hill. The decision to establish the landfill site inside the course of the Ogg Wadi contradicts a policy of the Ministry the Environment prohibiting dry river beds from being used for this purpose. Landowners,

residents of the Palestinian neighborhoods, Bimkom, and residents of French Hill all submitted appeals against the decision. The Appeals Committee discussed the appeals at the end of November but has yet to publish its decision.

V. ROADS

Begin Highway – South

In March 2015, a new stretch of the Begin Highway cutting through the Sharafat section of Beit Safafa before connecting to Dov Yosef (leading to Gilo) was opened. Work continues on a new section that bisects Beit Safafa itself. A notice that work will be launching on the planned intersection at the edge of Beit Safafa, connecting to Rosemarin Street, has now been published. Completion of the highway and the connection via the Rosemarin Intersection to the Tunnel Road (the major thoroughfare leading to the Gush Etzion settlement bloc) will create a continuous expanse of highway from Gush Etzion in the south of the West Bank, through Jerusalem to the northern settlement bloc of Givat Ze'ev. The eastern Ma'ale Adumim/E-1 bloc is already connected via Highway 1. With completion of the Begin Highway extension, all of the settlement blocs adjacent to Jerusalem will be linked to the city by a network of highways, with Begin Highway as its backbone.

The Begin Highway passes next to Jewish neighborhoods along its entire length. Only in a Palestinian area does it cut through the heart of a residential area for a two-kilometer stretch. In addition to generating air and noise pollution in a residentially zoned area, the highway will further disrupt the community fabric of a village that has now been dissected into four enclaves by the highway and Dov Yosef Street.

The Jerusalem Municipality and Ministry of Transportation thwarted a campaign by the residents to oppose the highway's construction and rejected subsequent attempts to minimize the highway's impact by covering its most problematic stretch.

Nahal Daraga Road

The Nahal Daraga Road extends from the built-up area of Har Homa to Hebron Road, toward the entrance to Begin Highway South. The road crosses an area slated for the expansion of Har Homa. The plan for Har Homa West (see more above under "Currently Stalled Israeli Building Plans") entails construction of some 1,500 housing units.