

17 May 2022

Attn:
Mr. Naftali Bennett
Prime Minister

Mr. Yair Lapid
Alternate Prime Minister & Foreign Minister

Re: **Prevent the passage of the Jerusalem Day Flag Parade through the Muslim Quarter and Damascus Gate area**

This year, Jerusalem Day falls on May 29, 2022.

We urge you to prevent the passage of the annual Jerusalem Day Flag Parade through the Muslim Quarter and the Damascus Gate area.

These days are a test for Jerusalem and for Israel's conduct towards the Palestinian residents of the city. The Palestinian community in East Jerusalem is amid a challenging and delicate time of mourning and pain following the death of renowned journalist Shireen Abu Aqleh and the subsequent violence by Israeli police at her funeral. A unique opportunity lies before you to undertake reform in Israel's treatment of this community by refusing to concede to extremist actors, acting to calm tensions in Jerusalem, and demonstrating the necessary respect and tolerance towards all peoples living in the city.

We are not suggesting that you "surrender to violence." Rather the passage of the Flag Parade through the Muslim Quarter and the Damascus Gate area is by its very nature a capitulation to violence and to extremist voices, including those found within the Knesset itself.

For the past two years, the Flag Parade was prevented from marching through the Muslim Quarter. Last year, however, the police lingered in making the decision and it was only in the opening moments of the parade that the route was diverted. The police's insistence up until the last minute on allowing the route to pass through the Damascus Gate and the Muslim Quarter only added to the tensions at the time and joined a number of harmful and incendiary decisions it made that contributed significantly to a sequence of difficult events in Jerusalem. Under pressure from various actors, a substitute parade was approved to take place nearly a month after Jerusalem Day. Although the police did not permit the marchers to enter the Muslim Quarter, they allowed for their arrival at the Damascus Gate plaza. [Here](#) you can see the conduct of the marchers at that time.

The Flag Parade and its passage through Damascus Gate and the Muslim Quarter is a display of incitement, Jewish dominance, and racism. Moreover, this parade constitutes the only demonstration that despite the repeated violent behavior by marchers has yet to be halted.

The violent conduct of the marchers has been well documented in footage from Flag Parades since 2010, including the one which took place last year. Incidents of

intimidation and physical violence occur throughout and following the Parade, including verbal assault in which participants chant en masse: "Death to the Arabs", "Idbah al Arab", "Death to the leftists", "The temple will be rebuilt / The mosque will be burned", "Listen carefully you Arabs / We do not want forgiveness/ And the chorus is already familiar / May your village be set ablaze", "Muhammad is dead / Muhammad is dead", "May I be this once avenged of Palestine for my two eyes. / May their name be erased" and more.

As the years have proven, the police are unable to enforce the law throughout the parade. In the face of these yearly manifestations of violence and racism, the passivity of the police has been evident every year. They neither deal with the physical violence nor the verbal violence perpetrated by the demonstrators against Palestinians, even if it occurs in close proximity to them.

At this time, specifically following the images of the police's abhorrent conduct during Shirin Abu Aqleh's funeral as well as at the funeral for Walid al-Sharif, who was injured at al-Aqsa Mosque during Ramadan, the professional decision concerning the parade should not be left only in the hands of the police. The police's violence at the funerals was incomprehensible and unconscionable to anyone who cares for human dignity and respect for the dead.

Approving the Jerusalem Day Flag Parade to march through the Palestinian space of the Damascus Gate and its environs is disrespectful and unreasonable.

Therefore, we urge you to prevent the passage of the Jerusalem Day Flag Parade through the Muslim Quarter and the Damascus Gate area.

All residents of Jerusalem are entitled to live in a city which upholds and respects their lifestyles and public spaces. East Jerusalem residents and all residents in the city yearn for quiet and the prevention of violence and other tensions. Fulfill your duty and reject the extremism that begs otherwise.

Respectfully,

Dr. Yudith Oppenheimer
Executive Director
Ir Amim