

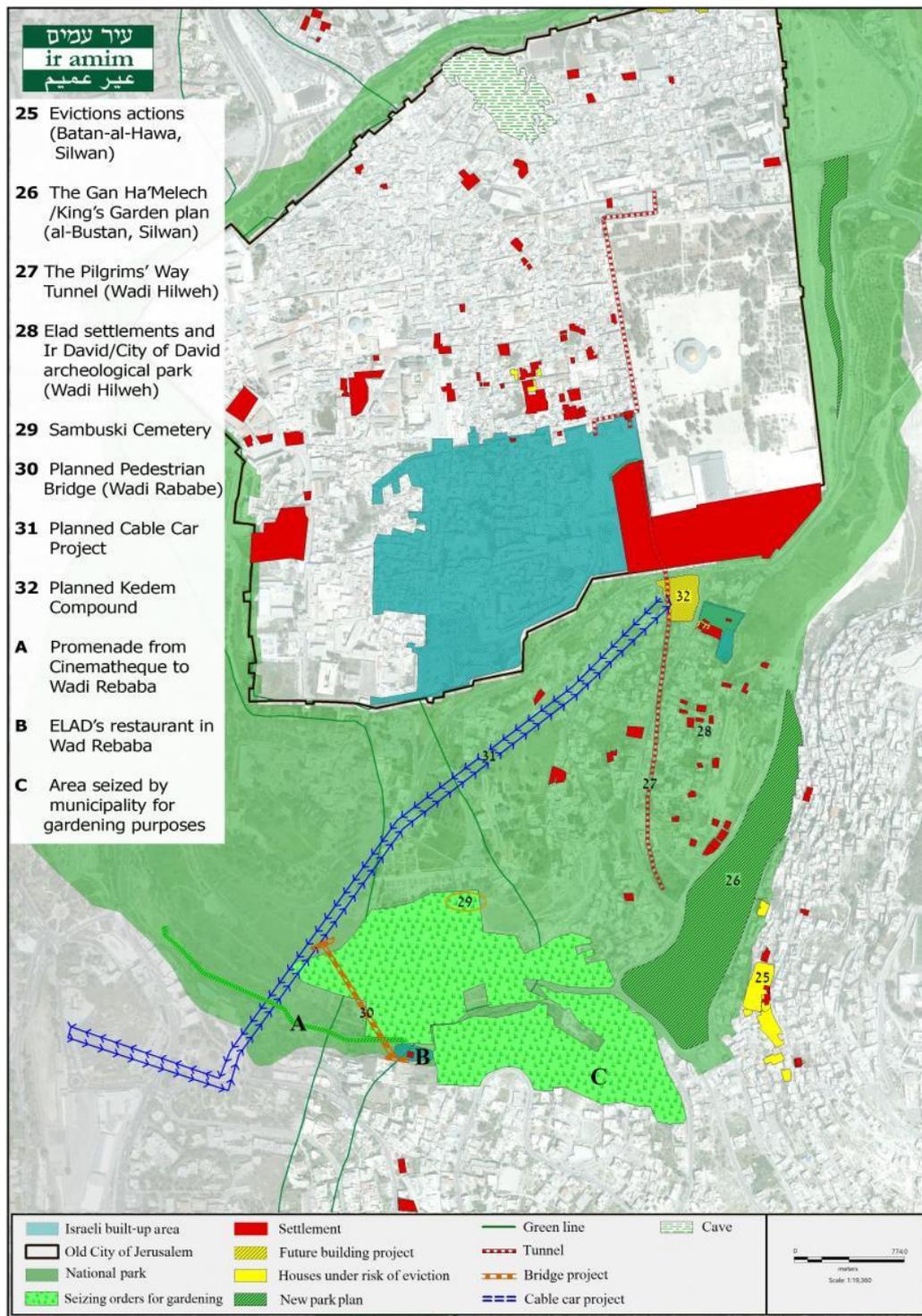
New Touristic Settlement Projects Further Linking West Jerusalem with Silwan

June 26, 2019

As part of the [intensifying belt of settlement activity in and around the Old City](#), there has been a recent burst in touristic settlement projects in the area of Gei Ben Hinnom/Wadi Rababe as well as developments within Silwan illustrated in Ir Amim's updated map below, offering a zoomed-in perspective of the space. While a small section of Gei Ben Hinnom/Wadi Rababe is situated in West Jerusalem, the remaining portion is located in East Jerusalem adjacent to Abu Tur and Silwan.

Further blurring the Green Line, these projects are being implemented around the vicinity of the [planned cable car recently approved](#) (#31 on the map), which will together create a more seamless link between West Jerusalem and particularly Silwan and divert tourist traffic from its traditional routes via Jaffa and Damascus Gates:

- Approximately two months ago, the **Elad settler organization opened a new cultural center, "A House in the Valley – the Center for Music and Culture" (marked B on the map)** replete with an on-site restaurant strategically located between the Palestinian neighborhoods of At-thuri and Silwan along the seam between East and West Jerusalem. The [planned pedestrian bridge](#) (#30 on map) over Gei Ben Hinnom/Wadi Rababe will ultimately originate from the new Elad center and lead towards Silwan.
- The **Jerusalem Municipality recently constructed a promenade (marked A on the map)** connecting the Jerusalem Cinemateque, a popular cultural establishment in West Jerusalem, directly to Elad's new complex in East Jerusalem. Public funds have been invested in this project which will lead unwitting Israelis and tourists alike into an arts and culture center owned and managed by a nationalist settler organization and from there onwards into the heart of Palestinian neighborhoods.
- Two weeks ago, the Jerusalem Municipality hung signs in Wadi Rababe, announcing **the municipality's intent to seize 40 dunams of private Palestinian land in the area, (marked C on map)** adjacent to the new Elad cultural center for landscaping purposes slated to include gardens, terraces and a walking path. Palestinian land owners have been given a 30-day period to appeal the decision. While according to the municipality, the land would be confiscated for a duration of five years with the declared intent of beautification of the space, there is no guarantee the five-year period will not be extended.



FOR A HIGH RESOLUTION MAP, LINK [HERE](#)

As a means to further tighten the band of settlement activity around the Old City and its environs, the abovementioned developments are part and parcel of measures being employed to facilitate seamless and attractive access from West Jerusalem to settlement sites scattered throughout Silwan. Portrayed as a seemingly innocuous new establishment for arts and culture designed to serve the Israeli public, Elad's "House in the Valley" serves as an entry point into the settlement ring around the Old City. The new promenade, constructed by the municipality to aid and abet Elad's efforts by connecting its center with the Jerusalem Cinematheque, not only enables access from West Jerusalem to an Elad-managed site beyond the Green Line, but it propagates the idea of a

contiguous Israeli space, while blurring its Palestinian surroundings and diffusing the political agenda behind these efforts.

Moreover, the confiscation of privately-owned Palestinian land for purported purposes of beautification is intended to serve the Israeli public projected to visit Elad's new complex and likely lead to additional settler activities in the area. ***Additional developments inside Silwan***

In parallel to the government's co-optation of tourism as a tool for erasing the seam between West and East Jerusalem and creating additional links between settlement projects around the Old City, the number of recent developments inside Silwan are further eroding its Palestinian presence.

- **On June 16, the Jerusalem municipality approved the naming of several streets in the Batan al-Hawa neighborhood of Silwan after prominent Jewish rabbis.** While the move is largely symbolic, it serves to further illustrate Israeli attempts to alter the character of the neighborhood and promulgate the idea of the area as an Israeli environment. [Batan al-Hawa is the hotbed of Ateret Cohanim's settler activity](#) where it is waging the most comprehensive settler takeover campaign in East Jerusalem, placing roughly 600 Palestinians at risk of eviction.
- **On June 18, after a 24-year-long legal battle, the Jerusalem District Court dismissed the appeal against the eviction of Jawad Siyam and his family, conveying the majority of the family's property in Wadi Hilweh, Silwan to Elad.** [Wadi Hilweh has been the locus of Elad's settlement operations](#) for the past three decades, where it manages the City of David National Park and taken over roughly 75 Palestinian homes. The ruling in particular deals a severe blow to the Palestinian community in Silwan since Jawad Siyam, a social worker and longtime community activist, who built community centers for local children and youth, serves as a central figure in community mobilization to safeguard the Palestinian presence of Silwan.

The escalation of new facts on the ground and touristic settlement projects in and around the Old City Basin serve to further entrench Israel's control of the most contested and politically sensitive area of Jerusalem.