

East Jerusalem Lexicon



מחנך לנחמה הנכים
מרכז الدفاع عن الفرد

עמק שווה
عمق شبيهه
Emek Shaveh

האגודה לזכויות האזרח בישראל
جمعية حقوق المواطن في اسرائيل
The Association for Civil Rights in Israel



עיר עמים
ir amim
عير عميم

WHAT IS EAST JERUSALEM?
◦ RESIDENCY STATUS ◦ THE SEPARATION WALL AND NEIGHBORHOODS BEYOND THE WALL ◦ SHUAFAT REFUGEE CAMP ◦ HOME DEMOLITIONS ◦ DISCRIMINATION IN PLANNING AND HOUSING RIGHTS ◦ HOME EVICTIONS AND DISCRIMINATORY PROPERTY LAWS ◦ ARCHAEOLOGY AND POLITICIZED HERITAGE ◦ NATIONAL PARKS ◦ THE STATUS QUO ON THE TEMPLE MOUNT / AL-HARAM AL-SHARIF (AL-AQSA) ◦ DAMASCUS GATE ◦ POLICE VIOLENCE ◦ EDUCATION ◦ POLITICAL SOLUTION



What Is East Jerusalem?

Until 1948, Jerusalem was a mixed city of Jews and Arabs, alongside Armenians, Greeks, and others—all of whom had deep religious, cultural, and collective ties to it. The rise of national movements—Zionism on one hand, and the Palestinian national movement on the other—interrupted a long history of shared coexistence, mostly peaceful, of Jews, Arabs, and others in Jerusalem.

In November 1947, the United Nations voted to partition the land between Jews and Arabs, designating Jerusalem as a *corpus separatum* - a separate zone under international management. Despite this plan, the 1948 war erupted, and by its end Jerusalem was divided. The Jordanian army controlled the eastern part, including the Old City and surrounding historical areas, while the Israeli army controlled the western part. The ceasefire line between them became known as the Green Line. Each side formally annexed the territory under its control, with West Jerusalem declared Israel's capital. The UN and most other countries, however, did not legally recognize these actions.

During the 1967 war, Israel occupied the West Bank, including East Jerusalem. A few weeks later, it annexed East Jerusalem and surrounding villages, applying Israeli law to these areas. Most countries around the world continue to regard this unilateral annexation as a violation of international law and do not recognize it. The annexation also incorporated a large Palestinian population, who have since lived under Israeli occupation (see below: Residency Status).

Since 1967, Israel has treated East Jerusalem as an inseparable part of its sovereign territory. Large Jewish neighborhoods—considered illegal





settlements under international law—have been built there, and various policies have sought to erase the Green Line, consolidate Israeli control, and diminish the Palestinian presence.

Today, Jerusalem embodies a deep anomaly: more than a third of its residents are Palestinians living under occupation, facing profound inequalities in civic status, political and legal rights, planning and building rights, access to services, and public resources. Many also face ongoing attempts to displace them from the physical and symbolic space of the city.

At the same time, Jerusalem is also where both populations live side by side, sharing a degree of interdependence in many areas of life: work, education, leisure, commerce, and more. Demand for language classes

is rising on both sides—Hebrew among Palestinians and Arabic among Israelis—and cooperation among civil society and activist groups is increasing. This interdependence helps the city continue functioning, even during times of tension, including after October 7. Yet, since that date, Israeli government policies of dispossession, settlement expansion, and displacement have intensified.

A sustainable solution for Jerusalem as part of a broader political agreement must recognize the right of both peoples to the city and establish an equitable reality in which each can conduct their daily and public lives—religious and political—side by side, independently and sovereignly, without fear.

Residency Status

Permanent residency—the civil status granted to Palestinians in Jerusalem—is not the same as citizenship. In practice, permanent residency is not truly permanent; it can be revoked in several situations, such as when a resident lives outside Israel for seven years or obtains permanent status in another country.

East Jerusalem residents are subject to frequent security investigations requiring constant proof that their “center of life” remains in Jerusalem, especially those living in neighborhoods beyond the Separation Barrier. These ongoing investigations and the persistent uncertainty surrounding their status affect nearly every aspect of their lives—the ability to pass on residency to their children, eligibility for social benefits under the National Insurance Law, and access to public health care. The interrogations themselves involve constant invasive questioning, endless paperwork, and a deep sense of humiliation.



Permanent residents cannot vote in national elections, run for the Knesset, or hold official government positions, leaving them with very limited political representation. Instead of Israeli passports, they hold Laissez Passer travel documents, which make it harder to travel abroad or return to Israel. Their children do not automatically inherit residency status; each case requires a lengthy and uncertain investigation process.

In practice, Israel treats East Jerusalem Palestinians under the same regulations that apply to non-Jewish immigrants, even though these families have lived in Jerusalem for generations. They did not immigrate to the city, rather, their status was imposed on them as a result of the city's occupation and annexation.

Family Unification

When a Palestinian resident of East Jerusalem marries a Palestinian from the West Bank or Gaza—someone without legal status in Israel—the couple must apply to the Ministry of Interior for "family unification" in order to live together in Jerusalem.

Before 2002, these applications were reviewed individually, much like those of foreign residents seeking family unification. If all criteria were met, the non-resident spouse could begin a gradual process, potentially leading to permanent residency in Israel.

That changed in 2003, when the Citizenship and Entry into Israel Law (Temporary Provision) came into effect, following a government decision in 2002. Since then, East Jerusalem residents who marry Palestinians from the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPT) can no longer complete the family unification process and obtain permanent status for their spouses.



Instead, spouses are granted only temporary stay permits—and only if they meet strict age requirements: at least 25 for women and 35 for men.

Even after more than a decade of such permits, couples can only apply for temporary residency, which must be renewed every two years. Renewal depends on a clean security and criminal record and ongoing proof that the couple’s “center of life” remains in Jerusalem and/or Israel.

A government decision in 2008 went even further, declaring that residents of the Gaza Strip are permanently barred from obtaining any legal status in Israel through family unification—without exception, even under later amendments to the law.

The Separation Barrier and Neighborhoods Beyond the Barrier

In 2002, during the wave of violence that marked the Second Intifada, Israel began building a separation barrier between its territory and the West Bank. The barrier, however, does not follow the 1949 Armistice Line (the “Green Line”), as international law requires. Instead, it cuts deep into East Jerusalem and the West Bank, carving up Palestinian territory and creating isolated enclaves of land and communities. In 2004, the International Court of Justice in The Hague ruled that the barrier's construction violates international law, citing its severe and harmful disruption of Palestinian space and daily life.

Around Jerusalem, the separation barrier acts as both a physical and psychological barrier between the city and the West Bank. It also isolates and physically detaches several East Jerusalem neighborhoods—whose residents hold permanent residency status—from the rest of the city. Accessing essential services such as healthcare, education, and government offices requires passing through military checkpoints, often entailing long waits during rush hours, repeated inspections, arbitrary delays, and frequent infringements on residents’ dignity.

Two of the areas most affected by this situation are Kufr Aqab–Semiramis and the Shuafat Refugee Camp area, which includes the camp itself and the surrounding neighborhoods of Ras Khamees, Ras Shehadeh, and Dahiat a-Salam in Anata. Together, these neighborhoods are home to an estimated 150,000 people.

Residents of these neighborhoods petitioned the courts to change the barrier's route, but their appeals were rejected. In two key rulings, the





Shuafat Refugee Camp 2023. Credit: Alex Libak

Israeli Supreme Court acknowledged that the barrier infringes on residents' rights, yet still upheld its route, accepting the government's assurances that residents' quality of life would be maintained. The government pledged to guarantee reasonable access to Jerusalem and to provide municipal and state services within the neighborhoods—but those commitments were never fulfilled.

One of the most striking developments in the neighborhoods beyond the barrier is the rapid surge in unregulated construction, particularly high-rise residential buildings of ten stories or more. This building boom has emerged largely because construction laws are not enforced in these areas—unlike in the rest of East Jerusalem (see below: Home Demolitions). As a result, many East Jerusalem residents, who face nearly insurmountable restrictions on legal building elsewhere in the city, have been effectively pushed into these neighborhoods, where infrastructure is poor, essential services are lacking, and legal housing options do not exist.

Kufr Aqab, in particular, has experienced the fastest population growth of any East Jerusalem neighborhood. Official estimates indicate that more than 50,000 permanent residents now live there—a figure that excludes those who have not updated their registered address or who hold only Palestinian IDs. The neighborhood’s infrastructure is severely deteriorated and entirely insufficient for its population size, leaving residents with chronic shortages of essential services. For example, in the summer months, water provision has been limited to only one or two days a week.

In 2024, residents had to petition the Supreme Court to claim their basic right to water. Even now, the problem remains only partially addressed.

Shuafat Refugee Camp

The Shuafat Refugee Camp was established in 1965–1966 by the Jordanian government together with the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) to house Palestinian refugees who had been living in Jerusalem’s Old City since 1948. The camp was built in northeast Jerusalem, next to the neighborhood of Shuafat.

After Israel’s occupation of East Jerusalem in 1967, the camp was incorporated into Jerusalem’s municipal boundaries, making it the only refugee camp under the jurisdiction of an Israeli local authority. Despite this, it has been administered by UNRWA and has more than doubled in size since 1967.

However, following new legislation passed in 2025 that bans UNRWA’s operations in Israel and in areas annexed by Israel, the future of the essential services the agency provides—such as education, health care, and sanitation—has become uncertain.

Next to the Shuafat Refugee Camp, three neighborhoods—Ras Khamees, Ras Shehadeh, and Dahiat a-Salam—were established. When the Separation Barrier was built, about 20,000 people lived in these neighborhoods. Like Kufr Aqab, these areas, which were left beyond the Separation Barrier, have seen a construction boom since the Barrier’s completion, with their population growing by more than 400%. Yet municipal and government infrastructure has not kept pace. Residents face chronic shortages of basic services such as water, sewage systems, internet access, electricity, roads, public transportation, and essential institutions for health, welfare, and education.

Home Demolitions

Years of discriminatory planning and building policies have led to widespread unpermitted construction in East Jerusalem. Because building permits are extremely difficult for Palestinians to obtain, many have no choice but to build without them—leaving their homes under constant threat of demolition. Every year, the municipality destroys over 100 housing units in Jerusalem's Palestinian neighborhoods, a number which is only increasing. In 2024, a record 181 housing units were demolished. In addition to residential demolitions, dozens of commercial and agricultural structures are destroyed each year.

The scale of demolitions of Palestinian homes surged in 2019, when Amendment 116 to the Planning and Building Law came fully into effect. This amendment severely limits the courts’ ability to delay demolition orders and dramatically increases fines on those living in homes built without permits. Right-wing politicians admitted that the amendment was designed to target the Arab population. It triggered a sharp rise in demolitions overall, and particularly in self-demolitions, in which families—under threat of increased fines—“choose” to demolish their own homes.



In 2024, enforcement intensified further when the National Enforcement Unit began operating in East Jerusalem alongside the municipal enforcement authorities. Formerly part of the Ministry of Finance, the National Enforcement Unit was transferred that year to the Ministry of National Security. As a result, East Jerusalem is now under an exceptional system in which two separate enforcement bodies operate simultaneously—highlighting the extent of state resources devoted to demolishing Palestinian homes in the city.

Since the formation of the Netanyahu–Smotrich–Ben Gvir government in early 2023, both ministers have made it a stated goal to increase demolitions in Palestinian communities on both sides of the Green Line. Since October 7, 2023, demolition rates—including in East Jerusalem—have risen sharply, as part of what appears to be a government campaign of collective punishment against the Palestinian population following the Hamas attacks.

Discrimination in Planning and Housing Rights

Israel’s discriminatory policies in urban planning and construction are designed both to create irreversible “facts on the ground” and to limit the Palestinian population in East Jerusalem. Since 1967, the State of Israel has built tens of thousands of housing units in Israeli neighborhoods/settlements, on lands expropriated from East Jerusalem residents.

At the same time, the zoning plans prepared by Israeli authorities for Palestinian neighborhoods severely restrict their ability to grow. Large portions of land within and around these areas are classified as non-residential, where construction is prohibited. As a result, most Palestinian landowners in East Jerusalem cannot obtain building permits for their own property, since their land lies outside the very limited zones designated for housing. The land officially available for construction falls far short of the needs of the population.

Over the years, East Jerusalem residents have invested significant private resources to submit updated zoning plan proposals that would allow for necessary construction and development. Yet most of these plans have been rejected by planning committees controlled by the Jerusalem Municipality and the Ministry of Interior, even when they met all professional planning standards.

Consequently, a large proportion of East Jerusalem’s residents are unable to obtain building permits or purchase homes built legally. This long-standing discrimination has forced tens of thousands of Palestinians to leave the city, with some moving to the West Bank and others relocating to East Jerusalem neighborhoods beyond the separation barrier, where authorities largely ignore widespread unauthorized construction—effectively encouraging residents to move there at the cost of exclusion from the city. Those who choose to remain in their original communities live under the constant threat of home demolition—a threat that grows more serious with each passing year.

Home Evictions and Discriminatory Property Laws

Multiple Israeli laws reinforce structural inequalities between Israelis and Palestinians in Jerusalem, affecting land ownership, housing rights, and even the ability to remain in one’s home.

The Israeli Land Law, which allows property to be expropriated for public purposes, is not discriminatory on its face. In practice, however, the government has used it to seize land from residents of East Jerusalem and construct housing for Israeli Jews. Since 1967, about 35% of East Jerusalem’s lands has been expropriated in this way, with roughly 55,000 housing units built on them in Israeli neighborhoods/settlements beyond the Green Line.

The Absentee Property Law, enacted in 1950, granted the State of Israel ownership over properties belonging to Palestinians displaced in the 1948 war. Several neighborhoods in West Jerusalem—such as Har Nof and Kiryat Hayovel—were built on lands of villages like Deir Yassin and Beit Mazmil, whose residents were uprooted in 1948. Other areas, including



Anti- eviction solidarity demonstration, Sheikh Jarrah 2025. Credit: Jess Flom

Ein Kerem, Talbiya, and Baka'a, contain many homes that had belonged to Palestinians before 1948.

After 1967, when Israeli law was extended to East Jerusalem, the Absentee Property Law was applied there as well. Over the years, Israeli courts and attorneys general have criticized its use in East Jerusalem, and the Supreme Court even imposed certain restrictions. Nonetheless, right wing governments continue to invoke this law to seize Palestinian property, often transferring it to settler organizations. In some cases, the law is used manipulatively to evict Palestinian families who have lived in their homes for generations, based on claims that a co-heir can allegedly be classified as an “absentee.”

While the Absentee Property Law stripped Palestinians of properties they fled or were expelled from in 1948, article 5 of the Legal and Administrative Matters Law passed in 1970, granted Jews the right to reclaim property they had lost in that same war—regardless of the property’s current condition or the Palestinian families now living there. This creates a stark discriminatory reality: Jews retain ownership rights to land and property lost in 1948 beyond the Green Line, while Palestinians cannot reclaim homes or lands on the Israeli side of it that they lost in the same war. Palestinians also risk losing their current homes if there are pre-1948 Jewish ownership claims to the land or if any relative is later identified as an "absentee."

In recent years, the state has launched a Land Registration Process in East Jerusalem to formalize ownership in the land registry. As with land expropriations, the laws themselves are not inherently discriminatory. However, in practice, Palestinians are required to meet onerous standards of proof, often leading to the loss of their property, which is then registered as state land or transferred to settler organizations. Examples include the combined use of the Absentee Property Law and the Legal and Administrative Matters Law (1970), as well as demands for historic property tax records that are difficult or impossible for families to obtain. In this way, routine bureaucratic procedures become discriminatory tools—using auxiliary laws whose effect has been, over time, to expand dispossession rather than curtail it.

Archaeology and Politicized Heritage

The scientific discipline of archaeology studies past societies through their material remains. The territory included in both the State of Israel and the West Bank is rich in archaeological sites that reveal the diversity of peoples and cultures that have lived in the region for hundreds of

thousands of years. In ancient cities like Jerusalem, excavations over the past two centuries have illuminated the layers of history and the cultural interplay between different communities that have inhabited the area across millennia.

Yet in Israel—as in many other countries—archaeology is used selectively to advance political and ideological agendas. When this occurs, archaeology ceases to function as a neutral scientific endeavor and becomes a tool for re-shaping the space and promoting particular narratives and political agendas.

A notable example is the City of David archaeological site, which has been developed over the past thirty years largely isolated from the surrounding Palestinian neighborhood of Silwan. The presentation of the site emphasizes a narrow historical narrative that strengthens ideological



claims denying Palestinian historical connections to the area. In this way, archaeology becomes a central instrument in the broader process of excluding Palestinians from their land, homes, and heritage.

National Parks

Roughly a quarter of Israel's land area has been designated as national parks. In principle, these areas are meant to protect sites of natural beauty or historical significance, preventing overdevelopment and ensuring public access. In practice, however, the designation of land as a national park can be deployed as a political tool to restrict the rights of minority communities to their land. The national parks established in East Jerusalem are a clear example of this trend. Created in areas unilaterally annexed to Israel after the 1967 war, they often serve to further dispossess East Jerusalem's Palestinian residents from their lands and heritage.

Under Israeli law, the Nature and Parks Authority has ultimate authority over the development and management of national parks, exceeding even that of the local municipality. Recognizing this, right-wing groups identified the Authority as a means of asserting control over Palestinian lands to advance their political goals. Over the past two decades, several national parks have been established in East Jerusalem, many of them built on the last remaining open spaces previously available to local communities.

In most cases, these designations are not driven by a desire to serve the general public or to develop the area for the benefit of all residents. Rather, they are aimed at preventing Palestinians from expanding their neighborhoods or cultivating their lands. Where historical or heritage sites exist, the national parks are often used to promote a narrowly defined Jewish-national narrative while erasing the area's broader multicultural history.



In the Old City Basin—covering the Old City and its surroundings—many of these national parks have been handed over to settler organizations that use them to advance a messianic vision of “Judaizing” East Jerusalem. This process excludes the local Palestinian population and overlooks the true cultural diversity, historical richness, and natural character of the area. In some cases, ancient agricultural terraces have been destroyed, access routes used by residents have been blocked, and families have been removed from lands cultivated by them for generations.

The Status Quo on the Temple Mount / Al-Haram al-Sharif (al-Aqsa)

The “status quo” governing the Temple Mount/ al-Haram al-Sharif (al-Aqsa) Compound has been in place for centuries. Under this arrangement, the site is designated for Muslim worship, while the Western Wall is designated for Jewish prayer. After 1967, Israel formally upheld this arrangement; in fact, it was used to justify the decision to demolish the Mughrabi (Moroccan) Quarter, which had stood adjacent to the Western Wall. On the ruins of that neighborhood, Israel created the large plaza that continues to serve as a space for Jewish prayer and national gatherings. For many years, Palestinian East Jerusalemites have been, and remain, prohibited from entering this area, except for a small number of nearby residents who hold special police permits.

For decades, successive Israeli governments generally upheld the status quo. The 1994 peace treaty between Israel and Jordan included Israel’s recognition of “Jordan’s special role in the holy places,” under which Israel agreed not to take actions on the site without Jordan’s coordination and approval. In recent years, however, these understandings have been increasingly violated.





Ramadan prayers, Al-Aqsa Mosque 2021

Over the past two decades, Jewish activist groups advocating the reconstruction of a Jewish temple have gained increasing influence. Once considered fringe movements, these organizations have, since the early 2000s, become more accepted within mainstream religious and political circles on the Israeli right. They now maintain close ties with government ministers, members of parliament, and official state institutions.

In recent years, the Israeli government—working in coordination with Temple movement organizations and the police—has fundamentally altered the status quo. Jewish prayer groups now openly hold daily prayer services at the site, under police protection. At the same time, Muslim access has become increasingly restricted. These restrictions include



arbitrary denial of entry (particularly for young men) by police stationed at the gates; official policies that bar tens of thousands of worshippers based on age; and the broad use of bans preventing East Jerusalem activists from entering the compound.

These breaches of the status quo have repeatedly sparked mass protests by Palestinians in East Jerusalem. Violent police responses, which have included barring Muslim worshippers from the site, have elicited international responses and occasionally fueled broader unrest.

The Israeli government bears responsibility for maintaining the status quo, preventing efforts to undermine it, and acting against incitement and violations targeting Muslim holy sites. This duty is not only essential

for preventing violence but is also a fundamental to upholding its legal obligations and political agreements. Fulfilling this responsibility requires renewed coordination with the Jordanian government, the Waqf (the Jordanian-appointed Islamic trust responsible for managing the al-Aqsa compound), and the Palestinian Authority.

Damascus Gate

Damascus Gate is one of the main entrances to Jerusalem’s Old City. Archaeological evidence shows that it was first built during the Roman period in the second century CE. The gate even appears on the Byzantine-era Madaba Map, which depicts major cities across the ancient world—attesting to its historic significance. Over the centuries, Damascus Gate has been known by different names in Hebrew, Arabic, and English, each reflecting its symbolic meaning for various communities and faiths.

The English and Hebrew names—Damascus Gate and Sha’ar Shekhem (“Nablus Gate”)—refer to the ancient road that began at the gate and led north toward Nablus and Damascus. Its Arabic name, Bab al-‘Amud (“Gate of the Pillar”), recalls a Roman-era victory column said to have stood at the center of the gate, topped by a statue of Emperor Hadrian.

Today, Damascus Gate serves as the main entry point to the Old City for Palestinians from East Jerusalem and the northern West Bank. It functions as a central public square for East Jerusalem and holds deep cultural and symbolic significance for the Palestinian community. The area is also a major commercial hub. Historical sources show that trade and market activity have long flourished in and around the gate. The Old City’s central market begins at Damascus Gate and runs south along al-Wad Street, which cuts through the heart of the Old City.

In recent years, Damascus Gate has become a focal point of tension over control of public space. Israeli authorities have prohibited street vendors from selling goods in the plaza in front of the gate and have established permanent security posts nearby. The constant presence of border police makes everyday life difficult for Palestinians in the area. In 2019, the steps leading down to Damascus Gate were renamed by Israel in memory of Hadar Cohen and Hadas Malka, two border police officers who were killed there while on duty—a move widely viewed by Palestinians as an attempt to symbolically assert Israeli sovereignty over the site.

Police Violence

Policing of East Jerusalem’s Palestinian population is characterized by systemic discrimination and frequent use of force. This includes various forms of profiling, collective punishment, and selective enforcement, frequently involving harsh or violent tactics. Police regularly disperse nonviolent gatherings and demonstrations in East Jerusalem using stun grenades, tear gas, “skunk” water (a foul-smelling liquid sprayed from trucks), and rubber bullets.

Reports from human rights organizations have documented numerous cases of excessive force against minors, including beatings and violent arrests that violate basic rights. In one tragic case, a ten-year-old boy lost an eye and suffered a broken jaw after being struck by a rubber bullet fired by a border police officer.

Beyond physical violence, Israeli authorities employ systematic forms of collective punishment that disproportionately affect Palestinians. Following violent attacks or security incidents, entire neighborhoods—such as Jabal Mukaber or Issawiya—may face sweeping punitive measures, including

road closures, checkpoints, daily raids on homes and businesses, arbitrary fines, and mass arrests. In Issawiya, for example, dozens of violent raids have occurred, resulting in serious injuries and the killing of a young man who was shot by a soldier.

Municipal enforcement is also used as a tool of control. City officials and police frequently target Palestinians with heightened scrutiny over building permits, property taxes, and other regulations. These practices have created a discriminatory system in which hundreds of thousands of residents live under constant surveillance and threat, with their civil rights routinely curtailed and their communities treated with hostility.

Education

East Jerusalem has approximately 140,000 school-age children. About 75% of them study in official and recognized but unofficial education systems. Alongside them, thousands more are enrolled in private education. Additionally, there are thousands more "invisible" children whose whereabouts and educational status are unknown to the authorities, even though they bear full responsibility for their rights. Moreover, thousands of classrooms are missing in East Jerusalem, despite years-long legal proceedings as well as court decisions and rulings that ordered the municipality and the state to build new classrooms. In 2024, the municipality announced that approximately 1,200 classrooms are in various stages of construction—but even this number falls far short of meeting the deficit.

The vast majority of East Jerusalem students study according to the Tawjihi, the Palestinian Authority's curriculum. Recent governmental initiatives have sought to increase the number of schools adopting the Israeli curriculum, and a gradual shift has occurred. This change is influenced by disparities



Community center, Al-Bustan Silwan 2024

in funding and infrastructure: schools teaching the Israeli curriculum often receive greater investment, while those following the Palestinian curriculum continue to face neglect. Nevertheless, only a small minority of East Jerusalem students currently study under the Israeli curriculum. The promotion of the Israeli curriculum at the expense of the Palestinian curriculum violates Palestinian students' basic right to study according to their own culture and heritage.

The attack on the Palestinian curriculum has reached new heights within the Israeli Knesset. In late 2024, the Israeli government enacted new legislation—commonly referred to as the “Prohibition on Employing Teaching Staff and Withholding Funding from Educational Institutions Due

to Expressed Affiliation with Terrorist Acts or Organizations (Amendment)” (5785/2024). Under the guise of combating terror, the law grants the Minister of Education and the Ministry’s Director General the authority to quickly dismiss teachers or withdraw funding from any school accused of allegedly expressing support for terrorism.

The bill's notes explain that it was written to address a “phenomenon that generally occurs in schools in East Jerusalem,” in which “expressions of identification with acts of terror by teaching staff—and at times even by the school administration—take place or are enabled.”

The law was passed despite the fact that the Minister of Education and the Director-General of the Ministry of Education—both political actors—have no qualifications to interpret the statements in question, certainly not those spoken or written in Arabic, and despite the fact that existing legislation—the Counter-Terrorism Law and the Penal Code—already provides the necessary tools for combating terrorism.

Similar legislative proposals, which deal with statements in academia, are currently being discussed in the Knesset’s Education Committee.

Political Solution

Jerusalem lies at the heart of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, yet it also holds the potential to be central to its resolution. The city embodies most of the issues at the core of the conflict, as well as the populations directly involved. The intense friction and complexity of life in Jerusalem accelerate the dynamics of the conflict, but they also create opportunities for resolution. For this reason, Jerusalem serves as both a model for the future and a test case for any policy aimed at addressing the conflict.

The project of “unifying Jerusalem” has demonstrated that annexing a large Palestinian population produces a repressive and deeply unequal bi-national reality, placing the core principles of Israeli democracy under increasing internal strain. Jerusalem, like the state as a whole, cannot function as a true democracy while roughly 40% of its population lives under occupation and faces severe inequality. This reality has worsened significantly since the current government came to power and following the events of October 7.

A just and sustainable political resolution requires equal rights for both peoples who share the city and the land—not only in terms of human and civil rights, but also in the recognition of the right to self-determination. Such an arrangement can be realized through the classic two-state model, as well as through various confederative approaches. Any sustainable solution must recognize Jerusalem as the capital of both peoples. There are multiple ways to achieve this: from a rigid division of the city into two separate entities to an open-city model with an “umbrella municipality,” enabling free movement between Israeli and Palestinian sovereign areas with interdependence and cooperation across many spheres of civic life.

Since 1967, deep interconnections have developed between the two parts of the city, creating mutual dependence—even under conditions of occupation and profound discrimination. Israeli construction beyond the Green Line has reduced the physical distance between Israeli neighborhoods/settlements and Palestinian neighborhoods, rendering the seam lines exceptionally narrow. A rigid division of the city is not only undesirable from an urban fabric perspective—it is, in many respects, no longer feasible. Recent proposals aim to preserve the patterns of daily life and freedom of movement within an open city, where each community maintains its independent and sovereign life while remaining interlinked.

Any political arrangement in Jerusalem will inevitably be complex and accompanied by significant challenges. Yet, unlike the current reality, it offers hope for a better future for both peoples. In the absence of a foreseeable political solution, the immediate improvement of existing conditions is essential, alongside the creation of pathways toward a sustainable agreement. Living conditions and personal security must be equally afforded to all residents, while sources of tension must be minimized. Residents of East Jerusalem should be able to thrive within the urban space, preserve the integrity of their communities and environment, and manage their affairs through their own institutions. Simultaneously, conditions in West Jerusalem must be strengthened, fostering a positive horizon for dialogue. The shared experience of interdependence can and should serve as the foundation for a just, equitable and sustainable arrangement in Jerusalem and the wider region, grounded in the recognition that, under any political scenario, the two peoples will live side by side in Jerusalem and throughout the region.



We thank the organizations, countries, and individuals who support our activities in pursuit of human rights. The majority of our funding comes from foreign governmental entities, as published on the Registrar of Associations website.

<https://www.ir-amim.org.il>

<https://www.acri.org.il>

<https://hamoked.org.il>

<https://emekshaveh.org/he>



Norwegian Embassy
Tel Aviv

2025





עמק שווה
عمق شبيه
Emek Shaveh

האגודה לזכויות האזרח בישראל
جمعية حقوق المواطن في اسرائيل
The Association for Civil Rights in Israel



עיר עמים
ir amim
عير عميم



Norwegian Embassy
Tel Aviv