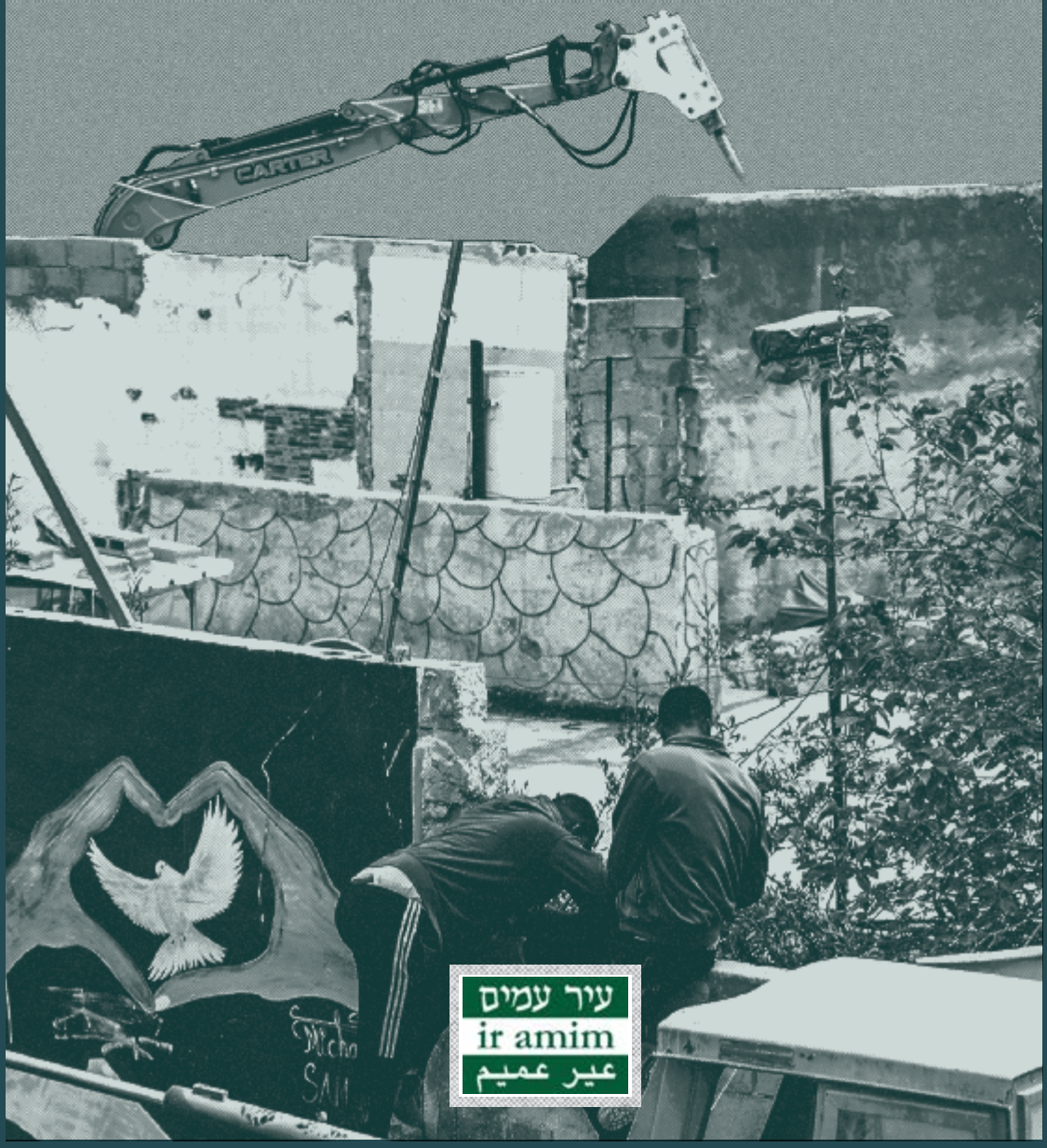
Expulsion:

The State Architecture of Dispossession in East Jerusalem

2026



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Cover image: **Demolitions in Al Bustan, Silwan, 14.5.26**
Photo Credit: **Avishai Mohar, Activestills**

Executive Summary

Ir Amim's new report describes a network of state authorities that operate in an integrated manner to take over Palestinian land and property in East Jerusalem. The report maps the activities of six government ministries, the Jerusalem Municipality, and statutory bodies, and exposes how, in recent years, Israeli authorities have stopped hiding behind settler organizations and now act openly to expel Palestinians from East Jerusalem. As a result of these efforts, six Palestinian communities in East Jerusalem are currently subject to ongoing or imminent expulsion: Batan al-Hawa and al-Bustan (Silwan), Umm Haroun (Sheikh Jarrah), Umm Tuba, Walajeh, and Nu'man.

Each section of this report examines a distinct mechanism. Taken together, they expose how these elements converge into a single coordinated, multi-layered system of dispossession, utilizing a combination of existing and new mechanisms. As the report demonstrates, Israeli authorities are deeply intertwined, and therefore, certain mechanisms appear across multiple sections.

This summary is provided for the reader's convenience, but it is essential to read each chapter in full. The strength of each chapter—and of the report as a whole—lies not only in its systemic analysis, but above all in its careful factual documentation of the role played by each authority.

1. Introduction – Background and Legal Status

Israel's unilateral annexation of East Jerusalem in 1967 has never been recognized as lawful under international law. East Jerusalem is considered occupied territory, and therefore subject to the international law of occupation. The expropriation of private Palestinian property in occupied territory is unequivocally prohibited and permits no exceptions. When such dispossession is used to establish or expand settlements, as described in detail in the report, the breach of international law is even graver. The mechanisms described in this report also violate prohibitions on discrimination and infringe on a range of civil, political and socioeconomic rights, including the rights to shelter, to family and community life, and to housing security, all on an ethno-national basis.

This report focuses on the state architecture of dispossession used to strip Palestinians of their property in East Jerusalem directly, rather than the combined additional policies and practices which also lead indirectly to their expulsion.

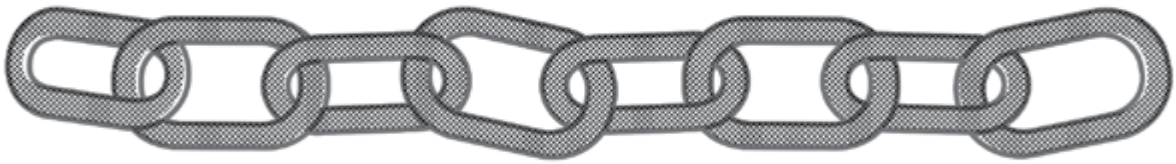
2. Mechanisms of Dispossession Outlined in the Report

Jerusalem Municipality
- Mayor and Deputy Mayors
- City Council
- Local Planning Committee
- Building Enforcement Department

Ministry of Interior
- Planning Administration
- District Planning and Building Committee

Ministry of Jerusalem Affairs
- Minister and Director General
- Jerusalem Development Authority
- East Jerusalem Development Ltd

Ministry of Justice
- SOLT/Land Registration Officer
- General Custodian
- Registrar of Trusts



Statutory Bodies
- Israel Nature and Parks Authority
- Jewish National Fund

Ministry of National Security
- Minister
- Israel Police
- National Enforcement Authority

Ministry of Housing & Construction
- Jerusalem District Planning Division
- Israel Land Authority

Ministry of Finance
- Custodian of Absentee Property

Ministry of Justice

The Land Registry and Settlement of Rights Authority – SOLT/Land Registration Officer

After a freeze of more than 50 years, in 2018, Israeli authorities renewed official land registration procedures, formally known as settlement of land title (SOLT), in East Jerusalem. These procedures permanently reconfigure and finalize property rights in a nearly incontestable manner and, as such, breach international law. Under international law, occupation is, by definition, temporary; therefore, the occupying power may not introduce irreversible changes in the territory. SOLT produces a final and near irrevocable legal reality.

Palestinian residents of East Jerusalem are trapped in an impossible bind. Participation in the SOLT process may expose landowners to the risk of confiscation by Israeli authorities, ultimately leading to dispossession and displacement. Conversely, opting not to participate and submit title claims will result in the land being automatically registered in the name of the state.

Based on Ir Amim's ongoing monitoring of SOLT's implementation, it is unequivocally clear that the SOLT process is being leveraged to seize property in East Jerusalem for the benefit of Israeli authorities and affiliated actors, including for the establishment of new settlements.

The General Custodian

The General Custodian manages properties identified as having been under Jewish ownership prior to 1948, pursuant to a discriminatory legal framework that affords land restitution rights to Jews, but provides no equivalent rights to Palestinians. Its actions, including direct involvement in SOLT procedures, have resulted in the transfer of extensive Palestinian lands into the hands of Jews and settler organizations and has led to the eviction of Palestinian residents. Since 2017, after the management of East Jerusalem properties was transferred to the General Custodian's Economic Unit, these measures significantly intensified, while more recently the Custodian itself has begun to initiate large-scale settlement plans in East Jerusalem.

Registrar of Trusts

The Registrar of Trusts serves as the regulator responsible for overseeing the operation of charitable trusts. Some of these trusts assert pre-1948 Jewish ownership over extensive property in East Jerusalem and seek to reclaim possession of these assets under Israel's discriminatory legal framework. In practice, the Registrar's role has been marked by lax oversight of these trusts' activities, acquiescence to demands to artificially reshape their stated purposes to align with settler and settlement interests and the approval of substitute trustees who are affiliated with settler organizations and exploit the trusts as vehicles to advance their own objectives.

Ministry of Finance

Custodian of Absentee Property

On the basis of the 1950 Absentee Property Law, the Custodian of Absentee Property is given the power to seize land of any Palestinian broadly deemed "absentee" by the state. Various Israeli authorities and settler organizations have exploited this legal provision over the years to evict Palestinian families and seize their properties for Jewish settlement in East Jerusalem. The Custodian's role significantly increased as a result of his inclusion in the SOLT process launched in 2018, and his installment as the person in charge of implementing the urban planning chapter in the second governmental five - year plan for East Jerusalem (Government Resolution 880 for 2024 - 2028).

As a result, the Custodian of Absentee Property is now involved in promoting settlements in East Jerusalem, potentially resulting in the loss of Palestinian lands on an unprecedented scale. In addition, a new planning procedure introduced in 2022 subjects every planning and building permit application in East Jerusalem to the Custodian's review and has already brought Palestinian planning processes in East Jerusalem to a complete standstill.

Ministry of Jerusalem Affairs and Jewish Heritage

Minister and Director General

The ministry manages dozens of government resolutions concerning Jerusalem and funding allocated to the city, totaling hundreds of millions of shekels. It is a partner in promoting settlement projects in the Old City Basin and throughout East Jerusalem, in part through a division of labor between the corporations under its purview and by channeling funding to them. The ministry's Director General sits on the Planning and Land Registration Team established under the government resolution and plays a central role in advancing SOLT.

Jerusalem Development Authority (JDA)

The JDA is a statutory corporation that serves as a joint executive arm of the Government of Israel and the Jerusalem Municipality. Roughly one-third of its funding is allocated to the Old City Basin and to settlement-oriented projects. The corporation also initiates new settlements inside Palestinian neighborhoods in East Jerusalem, each of which includes hundreds of housing units.

East Jerusalem Development Company Ltd. (EJD)

EJD is a government-owned company with a budget of hundreds of millions of shekels. It is involved in promoting numerous settlement projects in East Jerusalem disguised as tourism projects.

Ministry of Construction and Housing

Senior Planning Department and Jerusalem District Planning Division

The Ministry's Senior Planning Department is one of the main bodies shaping Israel's planning and construction policy as a central arm that initiates and submits zoning (outline) plans. Its longstanding policy and decisions, together with those of other planning bodies described in the report, have produced deep discrimination and generated a severe housing crisis in East Jerusalem. As a result of these policies,

land zoned for residential use within Palestinian neighborhoods accounts for only 8.5% of Jerusalem's total area, while as of 2023, Palestinians make up 40% of the city's population.

Israel Land Authority (ILA)

The Israel Land Authority is responsible for managing state land. Since 1967, Israel has expropriated approximately 35% of East Jerusalem's area (about 23,000 dunams), the majority of which was private Palestinian land, and designated it as state land managed by the ILA. Since 1967, the ILA has published tenders for the construction of more than 60,000 housing units in Israeli settlements built on expropriated land in East Jerusalem, while it publishes no construction tenders in the city's Palestinian neighborhoods. In addition, the ILA transfers land expropriated from Palestinians to settler organizations without tenders.

Ministry of Interior

Israel Planning Administration – Jerusalem District Planning and Building Committee

The Jerusalem District Planning and Building Committee is also responsible for discriminatory planning policies in East Jerusalem. Among the plans it has decided to advance in recent years are several major projects to build large settlements inside Palestinian neighborhoods. Each year, the District Committee promotes dozens of detailed zoning (outline) plans in Jerusalem, together providing for tens of thousands of housing units. Yet in the plans advanced in recent years, housing units in Palestinian neighborhoods account for only 12% of the total number of units the Committee has promoted citywide, even though Palestinians make up 40% of Jerusalem's residents. A new procedure adopted by the Committee in 2023 has made it even more difficult to promote new Palestinian plans.

The absence of adequate zoning plans also generates a severe shortage of infrastructure, public spaces, and public buildings. More than 100,000 East Jerusalem residents are forced to live in homes

built without permits, many of which are under threat of demolition. The shortage of housing built with permits pushes East Jerusalem residents into the Palestinian neighborhoods that Israel physically cut off from the city when it constructed the Separation Barrier, where today, more than a third of East Jerusalem's residents live in crowded, neglected conditions.

Ministry of National Security

Minister of National Security

An amendment to the Police Ordinance expanded the Minister of National Security's involvement in police operations. The minister has pushed to increase the rate of home demolitions in East Jerusalem, both through public statements and by leveraging the National Enforcement Authority, which carries out demolitions and was transferred to his ministry under the coalition agreements.

The Israel Police

The Israel Police accompanies home demolitions and settler takeovers of homes as Palestinian families are forcibly evicted.

National Enforcement Authority

Since 2016, the National Enforcement Authority has operated in East Jerusalem alongside the municipal enforcement apparatus, resulting in a dual—and intensified—state investment in home demolitions in the area. Together with the municipal enforcement system, this has produced a sharp and consistent increase in demolitions in East Jerusalem, from an annual average of about 50 housing units to almost triple that number. In 2024 alone, 181 housing units were demolished in East Jerusalem by this dual enforcement apparatus.

Jerusalem Municipality

Mayor of Jerusalem, Deputy Mayors, and City Council

All members of the current Jerusalem City Council sit in the municipal coalition, and not a single one represents the city's Palestinian residents. One of the deputy mayors is the head of the far-right Meuhadim (Hebrew for united) party and, by virtue of this role, also serves as the municipality's representative on the board of East Jerusalem Development Company Ltd.

Planning and Building Subcommittee (Local Committee)

The Local Planning and Building Subcommittee advances plans for settlements and frequently joins plans promoted by settler organizations or settler-affiliated companies, easing their passage through the planning system. It does not join efforts to promote plans for developing Palestinian neighborhoods.

Building Permits Subcommittee

Due to a stringent procedure for obtaining building permits introduced in recent years, the committee's work has become a significant obstruction to Palestinian planning procedures.

Building Enforcement Department

Each year, the Building Enforcement Department issues and executes demolition orders against dozens of structures built without permits in the city's Palestinian neighborhoods. Between 2019 and 2024, the department demolished more than 100 structures per year on average. In addition to the relatively random demolition of individual homes, the department also implements mayoral directives for largescale demolitions of specific Palestinian neighborhoods in East Jerusalem, resulting in the expulsion or threat of expulsion of entire communities.

Statutory Bodies

Israel Nature and Parks Authority (INPA)

As part of the longstanding policy of preventing development in Palestinian neighborhoods in Jerusalem, the state frequently declares national parks on privately owned Palestinian land. Over the past 15 years, the INPA has submitted three plans for new national parks in East Jerusalem, two of which have been approved. The INPA is the body charged with, and in many cases initiating, the takeover of Palestinian areas in the city, including thousands of dunams of privately owned Palestinian land, and preventing their use for the development needs of Palestinian neighborhoods. It also transfers management powers in declared parks to settler organizations, advances and supports settlement projects under the guise of tourism initiatives and even carries out demolitions of Palestinian structures in areas under its responsibility.

Jewish National Fund (JNF)

The Jewish National Fund is working to register thousands of properties in East Jerusalem in its name. On land already registered to it, the JNF promotes plans for settlements and conducts proceedings for the eviction of dozens of Palestinian families from their homes.

3. Conclusion

The report exposes a comprehensive, coordinated inter-governmental apparatus that works to take over Palestinian land and properties in East Jerusalem. In recent years, the activity of this apparatus has intensified, and the authorities now pursue this goal openly and in coordination.

Six government ministries, the Jerusalem Municipality, and statutory bodies work in concert to create facts on the ground that deepen annexation and drive Palestinians out of East Jerusalem. They do so through discrimination in planning, home demolitions, forced evictions, land registration, new Israeli settlement plans, takeovers

of properties, and more. The synergy between these mechanisms turns the policy of expulsion and dispossession into a national project designed to cement Jewish supremacy and block a sustainable diplomatic solution.

As detailed in the report, what is unique about annexation and displacement in East Jerusalem is that they are carried out under the guise of Israeli law, through official state bodies and procedures. In this way, state mechanisms become instruments of displacement, both through discriminatory laws, exploitative application of these laws and through the deployment of old and new measures whose sole purpose is to facilitate dispossession and expulsion.

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i. Introduction – State Architecture of Dispossession and Breaches of International Law

Since 1967, Israel has developed a range of mechanisms to take over Palestinian land and property in East Jerusalem. They employ a combination of discriminatory legislation and actions by governmental bodies, statutory authorities, and settler organizations. Working in close coordination, they intensify and expand the dispossession of Palestinian communities in East Jerusalem. Through discriminatory planning, home demolitions, forced evictions and takeovers of Palestinian properties, land registration, new Israeli settlement plans, and other measures, Israeli authorities are expanding their efforts to drive Palestinians out of East Jerusalem.

At present, these combined mechanisms have placed six Palestinian communities in East Jerusalem under threat of largescale displacement: in Batan al-Hawa and al-Bustan in Silwan, in Sheikh Jarrah, in Umm Tuba, in Walajeh, and in Nu'man.

According to Israel, Israeli law applies to the entirety of Jerusalem. Under international law, however, the annexation of East Jerusalem has never been recognized as lawful. The international community has repeatedly maintained that the territory captured in 1967 and subsequently annexed to Jerusalem is not sovereign Israeli territory, but rather illegally occupied territory governed by the international law of occupation. This recognition appears in UN Security Council and General Assembly resolutions, in concluding observations of UN human rights bodies, and, most recently, in the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice (ICJ) dated 19 July 2024[1].

As affirmed in the ICJ's July 2024 advisory opinion, under international law, the expropriation of private Palestinian property in the occupied territory, including in East Jerusalem, is absolutely prohibited. This prohibition has no exceptions. When the seizure of Palestinian homes and land is also used to establish or expand settlements in East Jerusalem, the breach of international law is graver still (paragraphs 121–123 of the ICJ opinion).

1 Advisory Opinion of The International Court of Justice, Legal Consequences Arising from The Policies and Practices of Israel in The Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, 19 July 2024

As such, in carrying out the policies and practices presented in this report, the Israeli authorities are not only in breach of the law for the act of dispossession itself, but aggravate the harm caused, as this dispossession usually serves to expand existing settlements or establish new ones.

The mechanisms of dispossession deployed by Israeli authorities in East Jerusalem also violate the prohibitions on discrimination and the civil, political, economic and social rights rights enshrined in international conventions, which have been accepted as basic principles of Israeli law as well. The human right to housing and shelter has long been recognized in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and is now protected in many treaties, including some ratified by Israel. The right to housing includes a person's right to security of tenure, including the right not to be evicted (i.e. the right to continue living in one's home)[2]. This right is closely linked to the right to family life and the right to community life.

These mechanisms are expressly identified as prohibited in the ICJ's advisory opinion, including settlement of land title (SOLT) procedures (i.e. official land registration), application of the Absentee Property Law, discrimination in urban planning, and home demolitions carried out through Israeli planning and permit committees, as detailed in this report.

While this report focuses on the state architecture of dispossession and displacement that strip Palestinians of homes and lands in East Jerusalem directly, it can be said that all aspects of the severe discrimination suffered by residents of East Jerusalem are mechanisms of dispossession. This holds true for the extreme poverty among Palestinian residents of East Jerusalem, with approximately 60% living

2 Prof. Eyal Benvenisti Prof. Orna Ben-Naftali Dr. Natalie Davidson Prof. David Kretzmer, The right to housing of long-term occupants and the competing rights of owners in the case of vulnerable communities, amicus curiae brief on international law submitted to the Supreme Court in Batan al-Hawa eviction case. October 2021

below the poverty line;[3] it holds true as well for the discrimination in civil status, freedom of movement, personal security, employment, education, healthcare services, infrastructure, and more. In all these spheres, Palestinians are subjected to severe harm, potentially leading to their effective expulsion. Nevertheless, in this report, we concentrate on state mechanisms that lead directly to expulsion through eviction, home demolition and dispossession of Palestinians and Palestinian communities from their homes and properties.

In addition, the report focuses exclusively on the formal mechanisms used by Israeli authorities in the expulsion efforts. For years now, settler organizations, registered as charities, private companies or other configurations, have been known to operate in East Jerusalem in collusion with state bodies. The most prominent are Elad, Ateret Cohanim, Nahalat Shimon, Reshit Yerushalayim, Ateret Yerushalayim, Regavim, and the Israel Land Fund. These organizations rely on generous private donations alongside government funding. Their members now occupy positions in official state bodies, and they enjoy close ties to high-ranking officials, including ministers.

Settler organizations work to seize properties, evict the Palestinian families who live in them, and turn them into settlement enclaves in the heart of Palestinian neighborhoods. They are involved in taking over open areas – especially in the Old City Basin – which previously served Palestinian neighborhoods and turning them into Israeli tourism projects for settlement purposes. These are often run by the settler organizations themselves, cater to Israeli visitors, and fragment the Palestinian urban space of East Jerusalem. Settler groups mobilize Israeli authorities for their efforts to dispossess Palestinians of their homes in East Jerusalem, and, conversely, help those authorities obscure the depth of their own involvement in these processes. It is also an open secret that, although these organizations are officially private entities, they receive close support from the Israeli authorities, including the government.

3 Jerusalem Institute for Policy Research, Jerusalem Facts and Trends 2025.

Ir Amim monitors the actions of settler organizations and addresses the harm they inflict on the Palestinian community in East Jerusalem in general, and their efforts to displace and dispossess Palestinians and their communities from their homes and lands in particular. This report, however, examines the key mechanisms within Israeli authorities: government ministries, the Jerusalem Municipality, and statutory bodies. For each authority covered, the report presents the institutional infrastructure and demonstrates how, in recent years, it has come to lead, or actively participate in, displacement and dispossession measures in East Jerusalem.

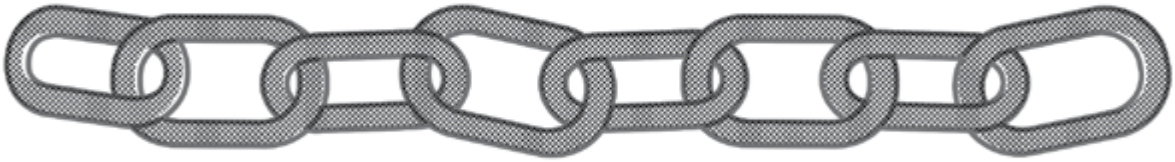
As will become evident, in the past few years, Israeli authorities have stopped hiding behind settler organizations. The entrenchment of the situation, the radicalization of the government, and the outspoken declarations made openly by ministers now enable the authorities to pursue the expulsion of Palestinians in full public view.

Jerusalem Municipality
- Mayor and Deputy Mayors
- City Council
- Local Planning Committee
- Building Enforcement Department

Ministry of Interior
- Planning Administration
- District Planning and Building Committee

Ministry of Jerusalem Affairs
- Minister and Director General
- Jerusalem Development Authority
- East Jerusalem Development Ltd

Ministry of Justice
- SOLT/Land Registration Officer
- General Custodian
- Registrar of Trusts



Statutory Bodies
- Israel Nature and Parks Authority
- Jewish National Fund

Ministry of National Security
- Minister
- Israel Police
- National Enforcement Authority

Ministry of Housing & Construction
- Jerusalem District Planning Division
- Israel Land Authority

Ministry of Finance
- Custodian of Absentee Property

Forced Eviction, Batan al-Hawa, Silwan, 25.3.26
Photo credit: Avishai Mohar, Activestills

ii.Ministry of Justice – Instruments of Dispossession

The Land Registry and Settlement of Land Rights Authority – Land Registration Officer at the Jerusalem Settlement of Land Title Office

In the past, the State of Israel acknowledged that land registration, officially known as settlement of land title (SOLT), should not be carried out in occupied territory. This is reflected in Israel's decision, shortly after occupying and annexing East Jerusalem, to freeze SOLT procedures that had been initiated under the British Mandate and continued under Jordanian rule.[4] For many years, Israeli governments attributed the freeze in East Jerusalem to practical and political difficulties. This continued until the process was renewed more than 50 years later, in 2018, as part of Government Resolution 3790, a five-year plan to "reduce socioeconomic gaps and promote economic development in East Jerusalem." The Minister of Justice at the time, Ayelet Shaked, moved to ensure SOLT was included in the plan, and approximately six months after the plan was publicized, she appointed a new SOLT Officer for the Jerusalem area.

In essence, SOLT is intended to create certainty in the land market. As explained in a legal opinion by Advocates Carmel Pomerantz and Michael Sfard prepared on behalf of Ir Amim, SOLT permanently alters the configuration of rights to land within the area undergoing the process. In practice, the process nullifies claims to property rights that were rejected (or not examined) within its framework, and permanently and conclusively establishes the rights of a particular party to the land in question. Once SOLT for a given parcel is completed and the rights recognized are recorded in the Land Registry, any claims to property rights that were not registered become invalid and title can only be transferred through the registry.

4 An order signed by the IDF Commander in the West Bank on December 19, 1968, ordered the suspension of all settlement of title procedures: Order concerning Settlement of Land and Water (Judea and Samaria) (No. 291), 5729 – 1968, Compendium of Proclamations, Orders and Appointments 16 (January 22, 1969) p. 591

SOLT also makes large-scale construction economically and commercially viable. Settlement of land title clears the way for bank financing of construction projects and, subsequently, the sale of residential units. Without SOLT and registration in the Land Registry, many banks avoid lending to developers; developers are reluctant to invest large sums in projects on unregistered land, and potential buyers have difficulty obtaining mortgages. SOLT therefore removes these barriers to development, construction, and sales.

Government Resolution 3790 ordered the establishment of a team responsible for preparing a work plan and overseeing its implementation. The Resolution mandated that the team be headed by the Director-General of the Ministry of Justice and include representatives from the Ministry of Finance, the Cabinet Secretary, the Director of the Israel Land Authority, the Ministry of Jerusalem and Heritage, the Survey of Israel, the Planning Administration in the Ministry of the Interior, and the Jerusalem Municipality. It is worth noting that no Palestinian residents were included on this team, nor was anyone elected or appointed to represent their interests at any point in the decision-making process.

Ir Amim's monitoring of the implementation of the five-year plan indicates that, in addition to the representatives listed in the original government resolution, the land registration sub-team also included the Custodian of Absentee Property, a department within the Finance Ministry (*see chapter on Finance Ministry for further details*) and the General Custodian, a department within the Justice Ministry (*see below*). These two government entities have long been involved in the displacement of Palestinians and the confiscation of their properties. In the current government five-year plan for East Jerusalem (Government Resolution 880 for 2024–2028), the operational work plan for the urban planning section specifies that the Custodian of Absentee Property will manage and coordinate this area, and that its work on it will receive four million ILS in government funding.

Thus, submitting claims through the SOLT process could open the door to largescale confiscation of Palestinian lands by the Custodian

of Absentee Property. However, choosing not to submit claims under SOLT is also unfavorable for Palestinian residents, as the ordinance provides that if ownership claims are not filed during the process, land rights will automatically be registered to the state.

These features of the SOLT process contradict the principles of international law. Occupation, by definition, is temporary, and all actions taken by an occupying power should be reversible. In contrast, the settlement of land title and the official registration of land are final and permanent. Accordingly, under international law, SOLT constitutes an act of governance reserved for a sovereign authority alone, not for a temporary administrator of territory, such as the State of Israel in East Jerusalem.

SOLT's inconsistency with the fundamental principles of the law of occupation is further compounded when it forms part of a system designed to facilitate the dispossession and displacement of the local population and establishment of settlements, which, in itself, constitutes a fundamental breach of those laws. The prohibition on transferring the occupying power's population into occupied territory admits no exceptions and is clearly and explicitly set out in Article 49(6) of the Fourth Geneva Convention. A violation of this prohibition has been recognized as a punishable war crime under the Rome Statute, which established the International Criminal Court (ICC).[5] Thus, SOLT constitutes a serious violation of international law and may even amount to a war crime.

5 Article 8(2)(b)(viii) of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (1998)

Source of Authority in Law

• Settlement of Land Title Ordinance [New Version], 1969

Israel operates five SOLT offices, according to geographic districts. They are responsible for settling land rights and are subordinate to the Land Registry and Settlement of Rights Authority within the Ministry of Justice. The Jerusalem SOLT Office, one of the five, is headed by the SOLT Officer for the Jerusalem area.

The Authority's Involvement in De Facto Dispossession

Since the adoption of Government Resolution 3790 in 2018, SOLT has been advanced in approximately 240 blocs in East Jerusalem, covering an area of about 8,400 dunams. In 47 of these blocs, comprising roughly 2,260 dunams, the process has been completed. In approximately 150 additional blocs, the process remains at a preliminary, pre-SOLT stage.

An examination of the blocs in which SOLT has been completed or is currently being advanced, as well as the manner in which the process is conducted, indicates that it is being used to facilitate state and/or settler takeover of Palestinian land by registering it in the name of state authorities or Jewish owners. This effectively both dispossesses Palestinians of their land and paves the way for the further establishment and expansion of Israeli settlements in East Jerusalem.

Since 2018, SOLT has been conducted in eight areas where new settlements are being built or planned, the majority of which, are within Palestinian neighborhoods: Atarot, Givat HaMatos, Givat Shaked in Beit Safafa, the Menachem Begin Complex in northern Sheikh Jarrah, Nahalat Shimon Complex in Umm Haroun-Sheikh Jarrah, Nofei Rachel in Umm Tuba, Nof Zahav in Jabal Mukabber, and Um Lisun. In total, plans for these settlements include approximately 20,500 housing units. The promotion of SOLT procedures in Givat Shaked, Um Lisun, and Umm Haroun has also been carried out in

cooperation with the General Custodian (*see more below*).

The SOLT Officer is also advancing SOLT processes within built-up urban Palestinian neighborhoods, on plots housing dozens of families who are consequently at risk of displacement. This is the case in the abovementioned settlement plan for Umm Haroun and Umm Tuba. In Umm Tuba, a bloc of land was registered in 2023 to the Jewish National Fund (JNF) following completion of the SOLT process, without the knowledge of the 150 Palestinians residing there. Upon learning that their land had been registered to the JNF, the residents filed a petition to revoke the completed SOLT process (HCJ 32329-10-24). The court dismissed the petition but ruled that the residents could pursue legal recourse vis-a-vis the District Court. Even before the case was filed with the District Court in July 2025 (4315-07-25), the residents of Umm Tuba were issued eviction notices by the JNF, claiming they are squatters on their own lands.

Additionally, SOLT processes are being advanced in dozens of blocs in both Beit Hanina and Wadi Hilweh in Silwan. In Beit Hanina, SOLT is being advanced in 87 blocs, and in Wadi Hilweh 15 blocs. In both neighborhoods, residents are hesitant to submit claims as part of the SOLT process due to the involvement of the Custodian of Absentee Property, who can confiscate land deemed "absentee" and transfer to the state. Completion of SOLT and the registration of land in the name of state authorities or settlers in these areas could fundamentally alter the character of the neighborhoods and inflict severe harm on residents, who risk losing land on an unprecedented scale.

Of all the blocs where SOLT has been advanced, there is not a single case in which the process within one entire bloc can be confirmed to have been promoted entirely for the benefit of Palestinian residents. Within the blocs where registration has been completed, only about 1% of the land has been registered to Palestinian owners. By contrast, approximately 42% of the land has been registered for existing Israeli settlements (such as French Hill and Neve Yaakov) or for public infrastructure; around 38% has been registered to state authorities or the JNF despite being located within Palestinian neighborhoods

and adjacent open areas, and about 5% has been registered to Jewish owners, either private individuals or companies promoting settlement projects. [6]

General Custodian

The General Custodian operates under the General Custodian Law and is responsible for managing abandoned assets. Under this law, such properties must be held in trust for the benefit of individuals with legal rights or connections to the property, until they are located or until the assets are lawfully transferred to state ownership.

In East Jerusalem, the General Custodian assumed management of properties identified by the Jordanian authorities as owned by Jews prior to 1948, which had been held by the Jordanian Custodian of Enemy Property between 1948-1967. These assets passed into the hands of the General Custodian under section 5(a) of the Legal and Administrative Matters Law, 1970, which provides that such assets be restored to their Jewish owners. Until the owners are located—or if they cannot be located—the assets are to be managed by the General Custodian for the benefit of their Jewish owners or heirs.

The combination of laws enacted by Israel has created a situation in which the right of restitution for property lost during the 1948 War is granted only to one side—Jews. Following the occupation and illegal annexation of East Jerusalem in 1967, Jews who lost property there in 1948 are able to reclaim it from the General Custodian according to the 1970 law. However, Palestinians who lost property in West Jerusalem or elsewhere in what became Israel during the same period have no equivalent legal recourse.

6 Bimkom – Planning and Human Rights, Land Registration = Land Confiscation: Analysis of land registration in East Jerusalem 2018–2024, September 2025

Government Resolution 3790, which directed the Ministry of Justice to advance SOLT procedures (see above), called for the establishment of a team responsible for creating a work plan and overseeing its implementation. Ir Amim's monitoring of implementation of the five-year government plan indicates that, in addition to the representatives listed in the original resolution, the sub-team for land registration also included the General Custodian and Custodian of Absentee Property.

In 2017, management of East Jerusalem assets was transferred to the economic unit of the General Custodian's Office. The General Custodian is one of the state institutions most identified with facilitating evictions of Palestinians and aiding settler takeovers of Palestinian properties in East Jerusalem on the basis of the aforementioned 1970 law. Since the transfer of these assets to the economic unit in 2017, there has been an increase of eviction claims against Palestinians and Palestinian property transfers into settler hands. From 2021 onwards, the Custodian began expanding its activities in an unprecedented manner to include the formal initiation and submission of largescale settlement plans in East Jerusalem, namely in the heart of Palestinian neighborhoods.

Source of Authority in Law

- General Custodian Law, 1978
- Legal and Administrative Matters Law, 1970

The Authority's Involvement in De Facto Dispossession

Actions taken by the General Custodian in recent decades have placed several communities in East Jerusalem at risk of displacement. One such community is in Batan al-Hawa in Silwan.

In 2002, the General Custodian "released," in the language of section 5(b) of the 1970 Legal and Administrative Matters Law, two parcels of land in Batan al-Hawa to the Benvenisti Trust—a 19th century Jewish trust that claimed land ownership in the area. Three temporary

trustees were appointed to the trust with the approval of the General Custodian and the Registrar of Trusts (*see below*). A pending lawsuit brought by Batan al-Hawa residents together with Ir Amim (CC 42528-09-23), argues that these trustees are not acting on behalf of the trust, but rather on behalf of—and in the name of—the settler organization Ateret Cohanim, which is allegedly using the trust to pursue its own agenda and to evict Palestinian families from the neighborhood for Jewish settlement.

In 2005, the General Custodian sold four additional parcels under its management in Batan al-Hawa—adjacent to the land allegedly owned by the Benvenisti Trust—to Ateret Cohanim without a tender process. Together, these parcels covered more than three dunams, and the families living there were not given the opportunity to apply to purchase the land or any part of it. In 2015, after the settlers failed to prove the boundaries of the four parcels and consequently lost a court case, the General Custodian amended the release certificate for the four parcels to explicitly define their location. This amended certificate enabled the settlers to prevail on appeal and to evict families from their homes in the area.

As a result of these measures, carried out with the involvement of the General Custodian, approximately 85 families—around 700 residents—in Batan al-Hawa have been under threat of displacement. In 2014–2015, 20 families were evicted from their homes in the neighborhood. In 2024, six more families were evicted through similar proceedings, and their homes were taken over by settlers. At the end of 2025, six additional families were forcibly evicted with many more under threat.

Another community at risk of displacement due to the actions of the General Custodian is Umm Haroun in Sheikh Jarrah. The General Custodian manages the Umm Haroun assets under section 5(a) of the Legal and Administrative Matters Law. The 43 Palestinian families living on these properties face eviction, with lawsuits filed either by the General Custodian or by settlers and/or settler organizations to whom the General Custodian has released the properties.

Grounds for the eviction lawsuits include claims that the families have lost their status as protected tenants or have violated the terms of their protected tenancy. To date, settler organizations have succeeded in taking over two homes in the compound: one remains uninhabited, while settlers occupy the other.

Actions taken by the General Custodian have also placed a Palestinian community in Umm Tuba at risk of displacement. In this neighborhood, the completion of the SOLT process, initiated by the General Custodian, now puts approximately 150 residents at risk of eviction (see above, section on the SOLT Officer). The residents have filed a case against their eviction in the District Court (4315-07-25), after their petition to the High Court of Justice (HCJ 32329-10-24) was dismissed.

The state's response to the petition notes that in 2021, the General Custodian, on his own initiative, requested that the SOLT Officer advance a SOLT process for a bloc under his management, covering approximately 19.5 dunams. After the SOLT process was completed and registered in 2023, the General Custodian released about 98.5% of the bloc to the Jewish National Fund (JNF), whose title was recorded in the Land Registry in 2024. These actions enabled the JNF to issue eviction notices to the residents in 2025.

As mentioned above, since 2021, the General Custodian, through its economic unit, began initiating and submitting large-scale settlement plans. For example, the General Custodian initiated the construction of roughly 1,850 housing units across four settlement projects located within or adjacent to Palestinian neighborhoods in Givat Shaked, Um Lisun, Umm Haroun, and Kidmat Tzion.

The plans in Givat Shaked, Um Lisun, and Umm Haroun were advanced through the planning authorities in 2024 and 2025, in areas where SOLT has already been completed. In Givat Shaked, two plans are being advanced for the construction of approximately 1,150 housing units on land belonging to Beit Safafa. One of these plans, which received final approval in 2024, was the first settlement plan initiated by the General Custodian, while the second plan began its approval process in the same year.

By 2025, a settlement plan for 316 housing units was promoted in Umm Haroun in the very area where the 43 aforementioned Palestinian families have faced forced eviction by the General Custodian and settlers for years. The plan is defined as an "urban renewal" project, which calls for the demolition of existing buildings and the construction of new apartment towers in their place. Now, under the guise of "urban renewal," authorities can bypass protections associated with protected tenancy and uproot the entire community in one sweeping move, replacing it with a large Jewish settlement.

In Um Lisun, a plan is being advanced for 450 housing units on a 12-dunam area in the heart of the neighborhood—land largely managed by the General Custodian. The plan was submitted jointly by the Custodian and a settler-affiliated company called Topodia, which appears to have purchased the rights from those to whom the General Custodian had previously released portions of the land.

Through these practices, and by exploiting bureaucratic changes and the SOLT process, the General Custodian has recently expanded its role: from land stewardship and the release of assets to proactive and direct involvement in the permanent transfer of properties into Jewish hands and the promotion of settlements on those properties. While the General Custodian has long favored settler interests by facilitating evictions of Palestinians and settler takeovers of their homes, it has only recently begun to take a leading role in advancing large settlement plans, through building on and exploiting the existing tools of dispossession.

Registrar of Trusts

The Registrar of Trusts is the regulator overseeing the operation of charitable trusts.

As outlined in the section above on the General Custodian in East Jerusalem, the Custodian, pursuant to Section 5(a) of the 1970 Legal and Administrative Matters Law, assumed control over properties that the Jordanian authorities had identified as having been owned

by Jews prior to 1948 and had been held by the Jordanian Custodian of Enemy Property between 1948-1967. The 1970 law stipulates that these properties are to be restored to their Jewish owners or their heirs; until such owners are located, they are to be administered by the General Custodian for their benefit. This provision also applies to property in East Jerusalem that was owned by Jewish trusts prior to 1948.

Therefore, under this law, such trusts are able to reclaim properties they claim to have owned in the past. Through the actions of their trustees, Jewish trusts have consequently become involved in efforts to evict Palestinian families residing in these properties, replace them with ideologically driven settler families, and establish settlement enclaves in the heart of Palestinian neighborhoods.

Most trust properties are located in the Old City of Jerusalem and its vicinity: Silwan, Sheikh Jarrah, Ras al-Amud, and the Mount of Olives - Palestinian neighborhoods with a combined total of more than 100,000 residents. This area is the heart of Palestinian Jerusalem, and such actions significantly erode the identity and national and religious fabric of East Jerusalem and the Palestinian people as a whole.

Trusts' involvement in the takeover of Palestinian properties takes four main forms:

1. A trust can take direct action to evict Palestinian families living in properties among its assets. For example, in the 1970s the Sephardic Community Council took action to evict families from homes in Sheikh Jarrah.

2. Members of settler organizations are appointed to positions within a trust, exploiting their official roles to promote the eviction of Palestinian families living in the properties associated with a respective trust. This is how Ateret Cohanim members took control of the Benvenisti Trust. The Registrar of Trusts approved their appointment as temporary trustees in 2001, and since then, they have been working to evict some 85 families from their homes in

the Batan al-Hawa area of Silwan (*see above*).

3. Trusts that are in possession of properties authorize individuals identified with settler interests to manage eviction lawsuits in their name against Palestinian tenants living in those properties.

4. In some cases, the trust sells the property to a settler organization or settler-owned company, which then takes action to evict the Palestinian families living there. This was the modus operandi used in the case of land in the Kerem al-Ja'ouni area of Sheikh Jarrah, which the Knesset Yisrael Trust sold to Nahalat Shimon, a company working at the behest of settlers.

Source of Authority in Law

• Trust Law, 1979, Chapter Three

The Authority's Involvement in De Facto Dispossession

In 2001, the Registrar of Trusts issued a brief decision approving an application filed with the District Court (Originating Summons 750/01) to appoint temporary trustees for the Benvenisti Trust in place of the public officeholders named as trustees in the trust deed. This "temporary" appointment has now been in place for more than 24 years. By the end of 2025, Ateret Cohanim, through their associates serving as trustees, have used the trust to evict a total of 32 Palestinian families from their homes in Batan al-Hawa in Silwan, while many more families face the same threat, placing a total of some 85 families, numbering 700 people at risk of displacement (see above).

In 2020, after Ir Amim and Batan al-Hawa residents filed a claim against the Registrar of Trusts, the Registrar announced an in-depth audit of the trust's conduct. Some three years later, with the conduct unchanged, Ir Amim and the residents filed a new claim against the Registrar and others (CC 42528-09-23). During the discovery proceedings, the Registrar produced his audit report. Its findings were extremely serious even in his own view, and it concluded that

"the trust has in practice been managed by the Ateret Cohanim association, not by the trustees." Nevertheless, the Registrar chose to make do with appointing an overseer for the trust and did not insist on replacing the trustees or calling for halting its operations. The claim filed by Ir Amim and Batan al-Hawa residents is still pending and seeks the dismissal of the trust's trustees.

In 2020, a separate petition filed by Ir Amim and Batan al-Hawa residents against the Registrar of Trusts led to the blocking of the trust's plan to open a visitor center in a home in Batan al-Hawa from which Palestinian families had been evicted (AP 39706-12-20). In that case, the Registrar of Trusts barred the trust from establishing the visitor center on the grounds that it contravened the trust's deed. In line with this decision, the Registrar also instructed the Ministry of Jerusalem and the East Jerusalem Development Company not to provide public funding for the project.

However, plans for the visitor center resurfaced in late 2022, after Israeli government ministers approved renewed funding for the project in the amount of 4.5 million ILS (roughly 1.4 million USD), with about three million ILS from the Ministry of Jerusalem's budget. The plan was pursued again after an alleged change in the Registrar's position and a settlement agreement signed with the trust. This puzzling shift in the Registrar's stance, including the revelation that the settlement agreement involved another subsidiary association of Ateret Cohanim, led Ir Amim to file a new lawsuit on the matter (CC 41400-07-23). In September 2024, the District Court granted the request made by Ir Amim and Batan al-Hawa residents for an interim injunction against funding for the visitor center and ruled that no funds may be transferred for this purpose until the claim is fully adjudicated. The state's request to file a leave to appeal the District Court's decision concerning the injunction was denied.

iii. Ministry of Finance – Instruments of Dispossession

Custodian of Absentee Property

The Custodian of Absentee Property (hereinafter the Custodian) is given the power, under the Absentee Property Law of 1950, to identify, declare, and confiscate properties whose Palestinian owners are deemed "absentee" by the state. This classification applies to Palestinians who were expelled, fled, or otherwise left the boundaries of the State of Israel after November 1947 and obtained citizenship and/or ever visited one or more of the seven listed countries or their territories.[7] According to the law, such properties, whose owners are defined as "absentee" under its provisions, are vested to the Custodian of Absentee Property. The law grants the Custodian broad powers regarding the use, management, and release of these assets.

Following the 1967 War and the occupation of East Jerusalem, the Israeli government issued the Government and Law Procedures Ordinance (No. 1), 5727-1967, which effectively annexed the area and applied Israeli law, jurisdiction, and administration to it.

The Order's plain text should have applied the Absentee Property Law to residents of East Jerusalem. This would have made all East Jerusalem residents automatically "absentees" in their own homes, as they were residents of Jordanian territory and living outside Israel's borders during and after the 1948 War. To avoid this outcome, section 3 was introduced into the Legal and Administrative Matters Law of 1970,[8] stipulating that any person present in East Jerusalem at the conclusion of the 1967 War would not be considered an absentee with respect to property owned in that area. However, many Palestinian families in East Jerusalem have family members that would be defined as "absentee" according to the definition in the 1950 law and therefore their properties would be subject to confiscation. Various

7 The countries include: Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, Syria or Yemen (excluding Egypt and Jordan after the peace agreements)

8 Originally, The Legal and Administrative Matters Law 5728-1968 was enacted. A revised version, Legal and Administrative Matters Law 5730-1970, was passed two years later, and remains in effect to this day.

Israeli authorities and settler organizations have exploited this legal provision over the years to evict Palestinian families and seize their properties for Jewish settlement.

The law should still have ostensibly applied to West Bank (excluding East Jerusalem) residents who own property in East Jerusalem, causing them to lose these respective properties. To prevent this, in November 1968, following guidance from Attorney General Meir Shamgar,[9] a forum chaired by the Minister of Justice at the time excluded such cases. Over the years, various attempts have been made to erode the exclusion of these properties from the law.

In 1992, the report of the Committee to Examine Buildings in East Jerusalem (i.e. Klugman report), appointed by the Rabin government and headed by the Director General of the Ministry of Justice,[10] exposed how the Custodian of Absentee Property was exploited to seize the properties of East Jerusalem Palestinians and evict families from their homes, in cooperation with settler organizations. As a result of these findings, the practice was halted after publication of the Klugman Report, but in 1997, under the Netanyahu government, it was resumed. In 2004, a ministerial decision, later given the force of a government resolution under the Sharon government, sought to remove all restrictions on the use of the Absentee Property Law in East Jerusalem, including its expansion to include properties owned by West Bank residents. However, the move was heavily criticized and ultimately blocked by Attorney General Mazuz in 2005.[11]

Government Resolution 3790, which was passed in 2018 and instructed the Ministry of Justice to advance SOLT procedures in East Jerusalem, ordered the establishment of a team responsible for

9 Letter of the Attorney General to Israel Land Administration, dated August 18, 1969, referenced within Letter of the Attorney General to the Minister of Finance, dated January 31, 2005, p. 2.

10 See Ministry of Justice, Report of the Committee to Examine Buildings in East Jerusalem, September 10, 1992 (Klugman Report).

11 Letter of the Attorney General to the Minister of Finance, dated January 31, 2005.

creating a work plan and overseeing its implementation. Ir Amim's monitoring of the five-year-plan's implementation reveals that, in addition to the representatives listed in the original government resolution, the sub-team for land registration also included the Custodian of Absentee Property and the General Custodian. In the second government five-year plan for East Jerusalem (Government Resolution 880 of 2023) for 2024–2028, the Custodian plays an even larger role in promoting SOLT. The operational work plan for the five-year-plan's section on planning stipulates that the Custodian of Absentee Property will manage and coordinate the planning section with a budget of four million ILS in government funding (approximately one million USD at the time).

The Custodian's involvement in shaping and overseeing SOLT procedures raises concern that these procedures will serve as a mechanism for locating Palestinian "absentees" and declaring their lands as "absentee property" (in parallel to declaring Palestinian properties as formerly owned by Jews and subsequently transferring them into Jewish hands through the General Custodian, see above).

Within the SOLT framework, every claim of rights to land must pass through the Custodian, who has the authority to examine the chain of ownership and to declare an owner "absentee." Accordingly, filing a claim may lead to the confiscation and registration of the land, in whole or in part, to the Custodian of Absentee Property or the Development Authority—to which such assets are legally transferred—or to private owners who acquired rights from the Development Authority.

Given the law's broad definition of "absentee," many Palestinian residents risk losing their property. Over decades, ownership has passed to numerous heirs, and if even one meets the definition of "absentee," the Custodian may assert rights to the property. As a result, many East Jerusalem residents refrain from taking part in the SOLT process. Yet, as noted above in the section on the Registration Officer, the Settlement of Rights Ordinance provides that where no ownership claims are filed, the properties are automatically transferred to the state.

Another procedure that compounds the Custodian's involvement was established in 2022 by the Deputy Attorney General (for civil affairs). It concerns the submission of zoning plans for unregistered, unregulated land[12] — the most common situation in East Jerusalem. Under this procedure, new guidelines were issued specifying the documents required to establish an interested party's legal standing as a condition for submitting privately-initiated zoning plans on unregulated and unregistered land which overwhelmingly impacts Palestinian landowners. The procedure effectively brings planning processes under the authority of the Custodian of Absentee Property by requiring its approval as a threshold condition for filing a plan

Here too, Palestinians who wish to promote planning expose themselves to the risk that the Custodian will seize their properties. The change in procedure had an immediate impact on the situation in East Jerusalem: planning procedures in East Jerusalem almost completely ground to a halt.[13]

Between late 2024 and March 2025, a new Custodian of Absentee Property was appointed, who had previously served as head of the Economic Unit in the General Custodian's office at the Ministry of Justice. The new appointment in the Ministry of Finance, under Minister Bezalel Smotrich, is expected to further accelerate the use of the Absentee Property Law in East Jerusalem.

Source of Authority in Law

- Absentee Property Law, 1950
- Section 3 of the Legal and Administrative Matters Law, 1970
- National Planning Headquarters Procedure: Guidelines on submission of documents to prove status as an interested

12 As indicated in the summary of a discussion at the Ministry of Justice on "Advancing Plans on Unregistered and Unregulated Land," June 23, 2022.

13 Bimkom and Ir Amim, Planning in East Jerusalem Completely Halted by New Protocol, November 2024.

party with respect to land that is unregulated, unregistered, and not undergoing SOLT.[14]

The Authority's De Facto Involvement in Dispossession

The involvement of the Custodian of Absentee Property in dispossessing Palestinians of their properties in East Jerusalem is not new. As far back as in 1992, the report of the Committee to Examine Buildings in East Jerusalem (the Klugman Report) revealed that dozens of properties in East Jerusalem had been declared "absentee" by the Custodian through a highly questionable process. The Custodian's declarations were based on information supplied by an individual brought in by settler organizations, and the Custodian never verified who that person was, whether he was reliable, how he received the information and what remuneration he received.

According to the report, the Custodian neither visited the properties nor verified whether they were occupied and failed to allow other claimants to present competing claims or objections. The Klugman Report found the Custodian's conduct to be severely flawed and called for a comprehensive review and immediate corrective action. It further identified the Elad settler organization as the primary beneficiary of properties in Silwan that had been declared 'absentee,' having received 14 such properties. Following the transfer of these properties, eviction lawsuits were filed against neighborhood residents, and many were forcibly removed from their homes.

In more recent years, in 2020, the Israel Nature and Parks Authority (INPA) began carrying out maintenance and development works in the Hinnom Valley (Wadi Rababa), on lands with olive groves belonging to Silwan residents, pursuant to a permit it received in 2018 from the Custodian of Absentee Property. The INPA later transferred

14 National Planning Headquarters, Planning Administration, Ministry of Interior: Guidelines on submission of documents to prove status as an interested party with respect to land that is unregulated, unregistered, and not undergoing SOLT, May 15, 2024.

the development work in the valley to the Elad association.

In 2024, the District Court held that the Custodian of Absentee Property's attempt to evict Palestinians residing in the northern part of the Gilo settlement by issuing eviction orders under the 1950 law, without conducting legal proceedings, was inadmissible, since this was not a case involving recent trespassers or an evacuation required urgently.[15]

In a separate proceeding pending at the time of this report's publication, the Custodian of Absentee Property sought to overturn a 1985 court ruling in order to register itself as the owner of a plot of land in Beit Hanina as part of the SOLT process, at the expense of residents whose titles were registered some 40 years ago.

In the southern part of the Gilo settlement, a new plan to expand the settlement by 1,900 housing units (TPS 1284223) is being advanced on land, part of which was taken over by the Custodian of Absentee Property.

The Custodian of Absentee Property is also involved in promoting settlements, for example, in a plan to expand Ramot by some 800 housing units (TPS 189232) and in a tender for the construction of hundreds of housing units in Ramat Shlomo (363/2024).

The Custodian of Absentee Property's growing involvement in SOLT proceedings in East Jerusalem is highly significant. For example, in Beit Hanina, SOLT is being advanced in 87 blocs, and in Wadi Hilweh in Silwan, in 15 blocs. In both neighborhoods, the Custodian's involvement is deterring residents from submitting claims as part of the process. The completion of SOLT and registration of the land in the name of state authorities or settlers, as a result of the Custodian of Absentee Property's involvement, could completely transform these neighborhoods and inflict severe harm on residents, who may lose their lands on an unprecedented scale.

15 CC (Jerusalem) 58422-04-24

iv.Ministry of Jerusalem Affairs and Jewish Heritage – Instruments of Dispossession

Minister and Director General

The Ministry of Jerusalem Affairs was first established in 1990 to implement the Basic Law: Jerusalem, Capital of Israel, enacted in 1980. The current ministry, named the Ministry of Jerusalem Affairs and Jewish Heritage, was established with the formation of the right-wing government in January 2023 pursuant to Government Resolution No. 60, which defined its areas of responsibility. The ministry's work focuses on advancing government resolutions for development and investment in the city. In 2024, the ministry was responsible for implementing 24 government resolutions, most of them concerning Jerusalem.[16]

The core activity of the Ministry of Jerusalem Affairs rests on three multi-year programs: the Lavi program for economic development in West Jerusalem; the second five-year plan to reduce economic and social gaps in East Jerusalem, with a budget of 3.2 billion ILS (roughly 870 million USD, Government Resolution 880 of August 2023); and the five-year plan to strengthen and enhance the area of the Old City Basin, with a budget of 476 million ILS (roughly 130 million USD, Government Resolution 543 of May 2023). The latter two plans, together with several smaller-scale government resolutions, channel substantial funding to projects in East Jerusalem. These funds are transferred either directly from the ministry or from other government ministries, or via one of three main bodies under the responsibility of the Ministry of Jerusalem Affairs and Jewish Heritage: the Jerusalem Development Authority (JDA), East Jerusalem Development LTD (EJD) (see below), and the Company for the Reconstruction and Development of the Jewish Quarter in the Old City of Jerusalem.

16 See Ministry of Jerusalem Affairs and Jewish Heritage, 2024 Annual Report (hereinafter: 2024 Annual Report).

Source of Authority in Law

- Basic Law: Jerusalem, Capital of Israel.
- Government Resolution No. 60 of January 22, 2023.

The Authority's De Facto Involvement in Dispossession

The five-year plan to reduce socioeconomic gaps and promote economic development in East Jerusalem is the largest program managed by the Ministry of Jerusalem Affairs in budgetary terms. The current plan, adopted in August 2023 (Government Resolution 880), is a continuation of the first five-year plan adopted in 2018 (Government Resolution 3790).

In the 2018 resolution, the government decided, among other things, to promote SOLT in East Jerusalem with a budget of 50 million ILS (approximately 15.5 million USD) (see above under Registration Officer). Pursuant to Government Resolution 3790, the Director General of the Ministry of Jerusalem Affairs sat on the Planning and Land Registration Team, which was responsible for land regularization in East Jerusalem. The ministry also played a key role in advancing settlement of land title given its Director General served as chair of the standing committee that oversaw implementation of all sections of the resolution and followed its progress. Today, a representative of the ministry sits on the committee responsible for the planning chapter of Resolution 880, which also deals with SOLT and its advancement.

The Ministry of Jerusalem Affairs also funds settler organizations that work to *judaize* East Jerusalem and promote projects involving the takeover of Palestinian land. Funds are often transferred under the government resolution to strengthen and enhance the Old City Basin area, which the ministry has led for 17 years. The current government (since 2023) adopted Resolution 543 (Old City Basin Plan D), with a budget of 476 million ILS (approximately 146.7 million USD).

The ministry allocates and manages additional budgets in the Old City Basin area, including for the Mount of Olives, under further programs.

For example, under the National Plan to Reveal Ancient Jerusalem (Shalem Plan – Phase E), the ministry invested more than 76 million ILS (approximately 23.5 million USD) in 2024 in multiyear projects in the Old City Basin area.[17] Since 2012, contracts for the development of the Old City Basin have totaled approximately 358 million ILS (approximately 110 million USD).[18]

The Ministry of Jerusalem Affairs decides how work is divided among the three companies under its responsibility and where funds go. So, for example, under the ministry's detailed 2024 work plan for Old City Basin Plan D, 700,000 ILS (approximately 217k USD) were earmarked as funding for the JDA to complete the upper floor of the City of David (Silwan) visitor center's operated by the Elad settler organization; 5 million ILS (approximately 1.55 million USD) for the development of the Northern Trail and the Shimon HaTzadik compound (Sheikh Jarrah); and 6 million ILS (approximately 1.86 million USD) for infrastructure on Mount of Olives.[19]

The Ministry of Jerusalem Affairs used its budget to provide additional funding for projects associated with the Elad settler organization, including: other elements connected to the City of David visitor center, whose expansion was approved in December 2022 in the amount of 1.5 million ILS (approximately 465,000 USD), bringing its total cost to 37 million ILS (approximately 11.5 million USD), of which the Ministry of Jerusalem Affairs and Jewish Heritage financed 11.5 million ILS (approximately 3.6 million USD), Elad provided 16.5 million ILS (approximately 5.1 million USD), and the Ministry of Tourism contributed 9 million ILS (approximately 2.8 million USD).

17 See, Ministry of Jerusalem Affairs and Jewish Heritage, 2024 Annual Report.

18 Office of the Accountant General, Ministry of Finance, Budget Execution Reports 2024, p. 155.

19 See on the website of the Accountant General, Ministry of Finance, Exemption Notice: Principal Approval for Engagement with the Jerusalem Development Authority under Old City Basin Plan D, appendices to the protocol.

Out of 20 million ILS (approximately 6.2 million USD) provided by government ministries to Elad to finance construction of a suspension bridge inaugurated in the summer of 2023 in the Hinnom Valley (Wadi Rababa), the Ministry of Jerusalem Affairs' share was the largest, at about 8 million ILS (approximately 2.5 million USD). The construction of the Beit Shatz visitor center, built on land Elad owns near the Goldman Promenade, and the construction of a zipline from there toward the Peace Forest, were both funded in December 2022 at 8.5 million ILS (approximately 2.6 million USD), half of which came from the ministry's budget.

In addition, the Ministry of Jerusalem Affairs, through the East Jerusalem Development company, operated the free shuttle from the First Station compound in West Jerusalem to the Dung Gate of the Old City (see further below), via sites managed by Elad – the City of David and, more recently, the biblical agriculture demonstration farm in the Hinnom Valley known as "Farm in the Valley."

The Ministry of Jerusalem Affairs has also increased its funding for the development and upgrade of Shimon HaTzadik burial compound, a Jewish holy site and place of pilgrimage. Located in the Palestinian neighborhood Sheikh Jarrah, this project is managed by the Holy Sites Authority, with a budget of 4.25 million ILS (approximately 1.3 million USD). The ministry's total investment in developing and upgrading the compound reached 6.05 million ILS (approximately 1.9 million USD), about 77% of the project's budget. The ministry also led, including through the East Jerusalem Development company (see below), the Mount of Olives visitor center project, at a cost of several million shekels.

The ministry does not stop at providing funding and administering "development" decisions made by the government. It can also, theoretically, make far-reaching decisions that may result in the immediate dispossession of residents. This occurred in July 2025, when, as his final decision before leaving office, Minister Meir Porush ordered to expropriate properties on Chain Street at the edge of the

Jewish Quarter, pursuant to a 1968 expropriation order.[20] This is an extremely sensitive area near the Western Wall, that leads to an entrance to Al Aqsa/Temple Mount, and is used by Temple movement activists[21] exiting the Mount through the Chain Gate. Most of the properties on this street are Palestinian. Previously, the authorities had implemented the expropriation only partially, and the minister then decided to complete it.

The minister conveyed this instruction to the Director General of the Company for the Reconstruction and Development of the Jewish Quarter in the Old City of Jerusalem, in his capacity as the minister responsible for the company's affairs.

Jerusalem Development Authority (JDA)

The Jerusalem Development Authority is a statutory corporation that serves as a joint executive arm of the Government of Israel and the Jerusalem Municipality, implementing governmental and municipal projects totaling hundreds of millions of shekels each year. The bulk of its funding is allocated through multi-year government plans, particularly the fiv-year plans for Jerusalem's economic development (the current plan is "Lavi," under Government Resolution 1512) and the five-year plans to strengthen and enhance the Old City Basin (the current plan is Old City Basin Plan D from 2023, under Government Resolution 543).

Source of Authority in Law

- Jerusalem Development Authority Law, 1988

20 Letter from the Minister dated 16 July 2025: Implementation of the expropriation of properties on Chain Street (published as part of a report on a Haredi news website).

21 Movements seeking to overturn the status quo on the Haram al-Sharif/Temple Mount, achieve Jewish prayer rights on the mount, and ultimately build the third temple in place of the Dome of the Rock

A large proportion of the JDA's budget is allocated to activity centering in the Old City Basin. In 2023, for instance, estimated project implementation in the Old City Basin totaled about 146 million ILS (approximately 45.3 million USD), more than three times the estimated implementation in its second-largest budget item, tourism, which stood at about 48 million ILS (approximately 14.9 million USD). In 2024 as well, the budget submitted for approval for its activity in the Old City Basin was the highest in its overall budget, with 31% of that year's expenditures directed to projects in this area.[22]

The five-year plan to strengthen the Old City Basin includes development of the Hinnom Valley (Wadi Rababa). This area is a focal point of settlement activity, where over the years the JDA has invested tens of millions of shekels in projects run by Elad. The five-year plan also allocates tens of millions of shekels through the JDA for the completion of the contiguous national park in Emek Tzurim, rehabilitation, conservation, and development in "Emek HaMelech" (Al Bustan) in Silwan, the establishment of an information center on Mount of Olives, and for the advancement projects in the City of David/Wadi Hilweh.

For the Kedem Compound – a planned Elad visitor center at the entrance to the City of David/Wadi Hilweh in Silwan– the JDA has engaged Elad as a sole-source provider of services, without tender, and the project's multi-year budget is about 52.5 million ILS (approximately 16.3 million USD). The area designated for the Kedem Complex, along with extensive surrounding areas in the City of David/Wadi Hilweh, is currently undergoing SOLT.

The Kedem Compound is also slated to include the final station of the planned cable car - the flagship Old City Basin project, led by the JDA as developer. The project will directly link touristic settlement

22 All budget figures in this section are taken from the Jerusalem Development Authority's 2024 budget and work plans.

projects in the City of David with West Jerusalem. In 2024, the JDA spent 12.5 million ILS (approximately 3.9 million USD) on the project, and in 2025 the municipality has already allocated 20 million ILS (approximately 6.2 million USD) for it. The project's approved budget stands at about 210 million ILS (approximately 65.1 million USD), but according to a recent updated estimate presented this year, the cost is now assessed at 473 million ILS (approximately 146.7 million USD). Notably, the economic justification for the project is entirely unclear. The JDA commissioned an economic feasibility report but has reportedly refused to disclose its conclusions.

The cable car is planned to pass over the Hinnom Valley, which, as noted, is another major arena of JDA activity in the service of Elad, where Palestinian residents have already lost their land to touristic settlement and recreational projects. The JDA's multi-year budget for the Hinnom Valley Project stands at about 70 million ILS (approximately 21.7 million USD), with tens of millions of shekels having already been used for construction of the suspension bridge over the valley leading to Elad's House in the Valley, for funding Elad's burial-caves project, and for sponsoring and financing events and activities at Farm in the Valley and House in the Valley, both operated by Elad.

East of the Old City, the JDS is advancing a project for an information and services center on the Mount of Olives, including a police station, with a multiyear budget of about 19 million ILS (~6.02 million USD).

To the northeast of the Old City, the JDA, together with the Israel Nature and Parks Authority (see below), initiated work to build a promenade and park on the land of the al-Yusufiya cemetery (outside the eastern wall of Al Aqsa/Temple Mount). This is a touristic settlement project, formally promoted as part of the Jerusalem Walls National Park, which serves Israeli visitors to the area while preventing the expansion of the Muslim cemetery.

Further north, the JDA is promoting the Northern Trail project – a tourist walking route from Damascus Gate to Ammunition Hill – with a multiyear budget of about 7 million ILS (~2.2 million USD).

The route passes a route that passes through settlement compounds in the heart of the Palestinian neighborhoods of Bab a-Zahra and Sheikh Jarrah. The project is being advanced in cooperation with the Reshit Yerushalayim organization, whose members are key figures in efforts to take over Palestinian properties.

Recently, the JDA has also taken on a more significant role in advancing new settlements in East Jerusalem where thousands of housing units are planned. These settlements are liable to lead to the eviction of dozens of Palestinian families from their homes and land and to turn Palestinian neighborhoods into enclaves surrounded by settlements. This includes plans submitted for the Givat Shaked settlement (about 700 housing units) in southern East Jerusalem; the initiation of the Wadi Joz–Business District plan (known as Silicon Wadi); and the urban renewal zoning plans in Umm Haroun (316 housing units) and in the adjacent Begin Government Complex (1,500 housing units) both in Sheikh Jarrah, which were recently advanced in the planning committees. The following provides details of these plans and the JDA's involvement in them:

The JDA, together with the Jerusalem Municipality, initiated the Silicon Wadi project (TPS 977694, Wadi Joz–Business District), which includes highrise construction of 8–14 stories over a total area of 127,000 square meters, of which about 87.4% is designated for employment and commerce while only 12.6% is designated for housing. The JDA is allocating about 4.5 million NIS to the project, under which 37 existing buildings on privately owned Palestinian land are slated for demolition, most of them Palestinian businesses. There is concern that some of the plots will be transferred from private Palestinian ownership to the Custodian of Absentee Property.

The Silicon Wadi project will surround Sheikh Jarrah from the east, while the "urban renewal" zoning plan for Umm Haroun, submitted by the JDA at the end of 2024, will hedge-in the neighborhood from the west, and both will serve as tools for Israeli takeover. The plan (TPS 1237767) calls for 30-story towers with 316 housing units in an area where the homes of some 43 Palestinian families stand. These

families have, for years, faced eviction attempts by the state and settler organizations. The JDA's "urban renewal" project will likely expedite their removal from their homes.

As mentioned above, the JDA has submitted a plan in the northern area of Sheikh Jarrah for a new settlement in the area of the Menachem Begin Government complex (120 dunams), where about 1,500 housing units are planned along with commercial spaces (TPS 1181593). The JDA's current multi-year budget for the project is approximately 5.5 million ILS (approximately 1.7 million USD), earmarked for advancing the plan's approval. Together with the projects in Wadi Joz and Umm Haroun, Sheikh Jarrah will become an isolated Palestinian enclave surrounded by settlements and Israeli built-up areas in West Jerusalem.

Finally, the JDA is the body that submitted the Givat Shaked plan (TPS 969162), a new settlement with about 700 housing units on roughly 40 dunams of land in the Beit Safafa area (see more above under General Custodian), and it allocated about 1.5 million ILS (approximately 0.5 million USD) to advance the plan.

East Jerusalem Development Company Ltd.

East Jerusalem Development Company Ltd. (hereinafter: EJD) is a government-owned company under the Ministry of Jerusalem Affairs responsible for implementing tourism projects in East Jerusalem, including development of tourism infrastructure and maintenance of the public domain. It also provides consulting services to government ministries and the Jerusalem Municipality. EJD is also currently the only company that provides the full range of public-participation services for governmental and municipal activity in East Jerusalem.

The company was originally established in 1966 to rehabilitate the Yemin Moshe and Mamilla neighborhoods, outlying neighborhoods on the eastern edge of West Jerusalem. After the occupation of East Jerusalem, it effectively became the executive arm of the government and municipality in East Jerusalem although it has never been

formally recognized as such.

The company's board of directors includes a representative of the Jerusalem Municipality; the current municipal representative is the Deputy Mayor and head of the "United" party, one of the two far-right parties in the municipal coalition.

EJD receives high-level funding from the Government of Israel via the Ministry of Jerusalem Affairs. A framework agreement signed in November 2021 stipulated EJD's budget between 2022 and 2026 would not exceed 750 million ILS (approximately 232.5 million USD).[23] Under the previous framework agreement, between 2015 and 2020, EJD's budgeted allocation was up to 300 million ILS (approximately 93 million USD). In 2021, an extension agreement of 35 million ILS (approximately 10.9 million USD) was approved. In total, over 11 years, EJD received approximately 1.085 billion ILS (approximately 336.4 million USD).

During the first five-year plan from 2018 to reduce disparities in East Jerusalem, EJD hired a team of consultants that worked to promote implementation of the resolution.

The Authority's De Facto Involvement in Dispossession

In May 2025, EJD's tenders committee published a notice of its intent to enter into an agreement with the Elad settler organization to carry out a joint project titled "Restoring a Green Lung to the Urban Space of Jerusalem in the Hinnom Valley." This is another project in a series of projects in the Hinnom Valley that the Israeli authorities advanced using the Absentee Property Law and other mechanisms to take control of the land. The project's estimated cost is about 2.9 million

23 Prime Minister's Office, Decision HT/6, Ministerial Committee on Social and Economic Affairs (SocialEconomic Cabinet), Approval of principles of a framework agreement between the Ministry of Jerusalem Affairs and Heritage and the East Jerusalem Development Company Ltd., and amendment of a government resolution, 30 December 2021.

ILS (approximately 0.9 million USD). Elad is set to cover around 53% (1.53 million ILS) of the cost, while EJD will cover 47% (1.35 million ILS).

In recent years, EJD has also operated the free shuttle funded by the Ministry of Jerusalem Affairs, with stops at Elad sites, namely the City of David and the agricultural farm in the Hinnom Valley. The Mount of Olives visitor center project, also run by Elad, is likewise being implemented through EJD.

In Batan al-Hawa in Silwan, the Ateret Cohanim settler organization (through the Benvenisti Trust) plans to establish a visitor center inside a house from which Palestinian families were evicted in 2015. The Ministry of Jerusalem Affairs was put in charge of establishing the center and allocated 3 million ILS (approximately 0.9 million USD) for its construction. EJD was selected as the implementing company. The company issued a tender for the building's renovation, but following a petition filed by Ir Amim and an audit opened by the Registrar of Trusts into the trust's conduct (*see above*), the ministry halted the project and sent an order to that effect to EJD's Director General (*see above under Registrar of Trusts*).

v. Ministry of Construction and Housing – Instruments of Dispossession

Senior Planning Department and Jerusalem District Planning Division

The Ministry of Construction and Housing is one of the main bodies shaping Israel's planning and construction policy, as a central actor in the initiation and submission of zoning (outline) plans. The Ministry has representatives on the various planning bodies, in particular the Jerusalem District Planning and Building Committee (see the chapter on the Ministry of Interior below). The Senior Planning Department in the ministry creates and promotes a planning inventory for housing and guides the work teams in the different districts. The Jerusalem District Planning Division serves as the executive arm that initiates and advances zoning plans.

Jerusalem has had a decades-long planning policy that discriminates against Palestinian neighborhoods in order to secure a Jewish majority in the city and Israeli dominance over the space. As a result, land zoned for residential use within Palestinian neighborhoods constitutes only 8.5% of Jerusalem's total area, while as of 2023, Palestinian residents make up 40% of the city's population.[24]

Source of Authority in Law

- Planning and Building Law, 1965.

The Authority's De Facto Involvement in Dispossession

Under the Planning and Building Law, government ministries may initiate and submit zoning plans. By virtue of its mandate and powers, the Ministry of Construction and Housing is one of the main ministries responsible for planning in general and for expanding the housing supply in particular. The zoning plans Israel approved for Palestinian neighborhoods in the 1980s and 1990s left large areas designated

24 Jerusalem Institute for Policy Research, Jerusalem Facts and Trends 2025, p. 14.

as open spaces where construction is prohibited. Since then, most Palestinian neighborhoods have seen approval only of localized spot plans rather than new zoning (outline) plans, which are necessary for development and for adjusting the scale of land zoned for housing to the needs of the population.

By contrast, over the years, the ministry has initiated and submitted major plans for Israeli neighborhoods/settlements beyond the Green Line in Jerusalem. Recent examples include the plan for Har Homa West, approved in 2021, which provides for 2,000 housing units on 440 dunams, and the plan for the new Atarot settlement, now in the approval process, which includes 9,000 housing units on an area of approximately 1,250 dunams.

Through its representatives on the planning committees, the ministry also takes part in decisions to approve or reject zoning plans in Jerusalem. For the extent of discrimination in approving zoning plans for Palestinian neighborhoods, see the section on the District Planning and Building Committee under the Ministry of Interior.

Israel Land Authority (ILA)

The Israel Land Authority (ILA) is responsible for managing state land. It initiates and submits building plans on such land and is responsible for issuing construction tenders where plans have been approved on state land.

The director of the ILA is appointed by the Minister of Construction and Housing and is subordinate to that minister. The minister serves as chair of the Israel Land Council, which sets the policy guiding the ILA's work. In addition to the minister, council members include seven representatives of various government ministries and six representatives of the Jewish National Fund (JNF) (see below).

About 93% of the State of Israel's territory is classified as state land. Since 1967, Israel has expropriated approximately 35% of East Jerusalem's area (around 23,000 dunams the majority of which was

private Palestinian land) and designated it as state land managed by the ILA.

Most construction in Israel, and particularly in Jerusalem, is government-led and based on construction tenders issued by the ILA. Since 1967, the ILA has published tenders for the construction of more than 60,000 housing units in nine Israeli neighborhoods/settlements established on expropriated land in East Jerusalem. By contrast, the ILA does not publish construction tenders in the city's Palestinian neighborhoods. The ILA has a representative on the District Planning and Building Committee and on the National Planning and Building Council (see below).

Source of Authority in Law

- Basic Law: Israel Lands
  This law prohibits the sale of state lands other than in exceptional cases where a sale receives specific approval. Under the law, citizens and permanent residents may lease state lands for periods of 49 or 99 years.
- Israel Lands Law, 1960
- Israel Land Authority Law, 1960, and its regulations

The Authority's De Facto Involvement in Dispossession

Between 2020 and 2024, the ILA published tenders for the construction of thousands of housing units in neighborhoods/settlements beyond the Green Line in Jerusalem, specifically, in the new settlement of Givat Hamatos, where tenders for 1,257 housing units were issued in 2021, and the Lower Aqueduct area between Umm Tuba and Beit Safafa, where tenders for 1,047 housing units were issued in 2024.

The ILA submits zoning plans beyond the Green Line in Jerusalem. In recent years, it initiated and submitted the Lower Aqueduct plan, as well as plans providing for thousands of housing units to expand

the existing settlements of Ramot, Har Homa, and Gilo.

The ILA transfers land expropriated from Palestinians to settler organizations without tenders. In 2020, the ILA approved an extension of an agreement under which expropriated land in Jabel al-Mukaber was transferred to the Kilas company, which intends to build 100 housing units there to expand the Nof Zion settlement (TPS 976597). Since 2007, the ILA has repeatedly extended an agreement under which a plot expropriated in the Sheikh Jarrah neighborhood was transferred free of charge to the Ohr Somayach association, which seeks to build an ultra-orthodox yeshiva on the site (TPS 68858).

The ILA files eviction suits against Palestinians living on land transferred to it on the basis of discriminatory Israeli laws, such as the Absentee Property Law and section 5(a) of the Legal and Administrative Matters (Judicial and Administrative Provisions) Law, 1970 (see above). In June 2025, the ILA served eviction notices to 39 Palestinian families in Umm Tuba, claiming their homes were built on land recently registered in the name of the Jewish National Fund (JNF).

vi. Ministry of Interior – Instruments of Dispossession

Israel Planning Administration – Jerusalem District Planning Bureau; Jerusalem District Planning and Building Committee

The Ministry of Interior is responsible for the Israel Planning Administration (IPA), under which the district planning bodies operate. The Minister of Interior appoints the head of the IPA, as well as the chair of the District Planning and Building Committee and the District Planner. The IPA sets national planning policy through the National Planning and Building Council and hears appeals against decisions made by district committees.

The District Committee and the District Planning Bureau are responsible for planning policy in the Jerusalem District, for implementing the provisions of national and district zoning plans, for overseeing the advancement of new plans, and for reviewing detailed zoning plans in the district. The District Planning Bureau serves as the professional arm of the Jerusalem District Planning and Building Committee. The District Committee discusses zoning plans and decides whether to approve them. Its members include representatives of government ministries, the public, and other bodies.

The planning processes run by the District Planning Bureau and the District Planning and Building Committee in Jerusalem determine how the city's urban tapestry develops. The housing supply, as well as public spaces and public buildings, are determined through zoning plans, with the Bureau and the District Committee exerting significant influence on the design of these plans, and the Committee deciding which plans are approved.

The chair of the District Committee and the District Planner are appointed by the Minister of Interior. They are the two dominant officials on the committee: they manage preliminary procedures ahead of committee deliberations, lead the discussions, and draft the decisions the committee ultimately adopts.

In addition, committee members include representatives of nine government ministries, including the Ministry of Construction and Housing and the Ministry of Justice, as well as a representative of the ILA. The committee also includes representatives of local authorities from the Jerusalem District, usually two to three of whom are members of the Jerusalem City Council.

Jerusalem has had a decades-long planning policy of discriminating against Palestinian neighborhoods in order to secure a Jewish majority in the city and Israeli dominance over the space. To advance these aims, the authorities promote and approve plans to build and expand Israeli settlements on land expropriated from Palestinians. By contrast, the District Committee approves very few zoning plans for Palestinian neighborhoods, and the plans it does approve allocate only limited residential areas, far from meeting the housing needs of the Palestinian population. As a result of this discrimination, land zoned for residential use in Palestinian neighborhoods constitutes only 8.5% of Jerusalem's total land area, even though Palestinian residents make up 40% of the city's population.[25]

The absence of adequate zoning plans makes it nearly impossible for Palestinians to obtain building permits, leading to extensive permit-less construction. This has also created a severe shortage of infrastructure and services. Palestinian neighborhoods lack public spaces and public buildings; they are short kilometers of sewage lines and thousands of classrooms and have little to no playgrounds.

With almost no realistic prospect of obtaining a home built with a permit, more than 100,000 residents of East Jerusalem are forced to live in homes built without permits and threatened with demolition.

The shortage of housing constructed with permits pushes East Jerusalem residents into the neighborhoods that Israel physically cut off from the city by means of the Separation Barrier. Today, more than 140,000 East Jerusalem residents (roughly 1/3 or more of the city's Palestinian population) live in these crowded, neglected

25 Jerusalem Institute for Policy Research, Jerusalem Facts and Trends 2025, p. 14.

areas, which make up less than 5% of East Jerusalem's total area. These neighborhoods formally lie within the Jerusalem municipal boundary, but the barrier and checkpoints separate them from the city, and they suffer from an almost total absence of basic services. Their population continues to grow due to the acute housing crisis in neighborhoods that remained on the 'Jerusalem side' of the barrier, as well as residents' fear of losing their permanent residency status if they relocate beyond the city's municipal boundary

This policy—blocking lawful planning and construction, strictly enforcing building laws within the barrier through selective home demolitions while largely refraining from enforcement in neighborhoods beyond it, and maintaining a constant threat to residency status—has come to be known as "the silent transfer." Political statements and legislative initiatives over the years indicate intentions to formally sever the neighborhoods beyond the barrier from Jerusalem, which could, in a single stroke, transfer tens of thousands of Palestinian residents from the city, even if they physically remain in their homes.[26]

Source of Authority in Law

- Planning and Building Law, 1965
- New Procedure for Proving the Applicant's Right and Ties to a Respective Plot of Land[27]

The Authority's De Facto Involvement in Dispossession

Each year, the District Committee advances dozens of detailed

26 Ir Amim, Displaced in Their Own City: The Impact of Israeli Policy in East Jerusalem on the Palestinian Neighborhoods of the City beyond the Separation Barrier, June 2015; Ir Amim, Destructive Unilateral Measures to Redraw the Borders of Jerusalem, January 2018.

27 Planning Administration, Ministry of Interior, Submission of Documents to Prove Standing as an Interested Party in Land, December 2022.

zoning plans (outline plans) in Jerusalem, together providing for tens of thousands of housing units. Ir Amim monitors significant plans (those for 100 housing units or more) promoted through the planning committees. According to this monitoring between 2019-2024, although Palestinians make up 40% of the city's residents, the number of housing units in plans advanced in Palestinian neighborhoods constitutes an annual average of only 12% of the total housing units advanced in plans citywide:

Year	Housing units advanced in Israeli neighborhoods/ settlements	Housing units advanced in Palestinian neighborhoods	Total housing units advanced	Share of units in Palestinian neighborhoods
2019	19,658	1,570	21,228	7.4%
2020	16,575	4,808	21,383	22.5%
2021	35,436	7,254	42,690	17%
2022	37,900	5,900	43,800	12.5%
2023	41,454	6,314	47,768	13%
2024	50,000	2,050	52,050	4%

Among the plans that the District Committee has decided to advance in recent years, several stand out for establishing large settlements inside Palestinian neighborhoods. These include 650 housing units in a new settlement called Nofei Rachel, to be built on the edge of the built-up area of Umm Tuba (TPS 1159920); 450 housing units in a new settlement inside Umm Lisun (TPS 1049873); 300 housing units in two plans to expand the Nof Zion settlement in Jabel al-Mukaber (TPS 976597 and 1305804); and 384 housing units in a new settlement called Kidmat Tzion in Ras al-Amud (TPS 120709).

In 2025, the District Committee also decided to advance the plan to build an ultra-Orthodox yeshiva inside Sheikh Jarrah (TPS 68858).

Meanwhile, the Committee has rejected most of the plans initiated by Palestinian landowners to develop their own neighborhoods. Over the past decade, only one significant zoning plan for a Palestinian neighborhood has been brought for approval, the municipality's zoning plan for the neighborhood of Issawiya.

Additionally, since 2023, the District Planning Committee has been operating under a new protocol requiring proof of a plan applicant's ties to the respective land—a necessary precondition for submitting a zoning plan application. The procedure greatly tightened the criteria and documentation required for private parties, as opposed to state bodies, to be recognized as interested parties concerning unregistered land. In the first year that the procedure was applied, not a single new Palestinian plan met its stringent requirements.[28] As a result, the District Committee refused to advance a plan to develop a large residential complex in Arab a-Sawahreh (TPS 477943), claiming it did not comply with the new procedure, even though the Committee had already discussed the plan and approved it for deposit before the procedure entered into effect. The Committee likewise blocked the advancement of a plan to develop a residential area in Khalet al-Ein in A-Tur (TPD 113274).

28 Bimkom and Ir Amim, Planning in East Jerusalem Completely Halted by New Protocol, November 2024

vii. Ministry of National Security – Instruments of Dispossession

At the beginning of 2023, with the formation of Israel's 37th government, the Ministry of Public Security was renamed the Ministry of National Security, and Itamar Ben Gvir was appointed minister.

The Minister of National Security

In January 2023, a petition filed with the High Court of Justice sought the revocation of Amendment 37 to the Police Ordinance. The amendment in question expanded the powers of the National Security Minister and transferred to him powers previously held by the Police Commissioner. The amendment authorized the National Security Minister to set "police policy and general principles for its operation." The petition argued that the amendment injects political considerations into sensitive professional police decisions. The court handed down a judgment on 2 January 2025, partially accepting the petition, while holding that the general provision empowering the National Security Minister to set policy would not be struck down. The Court did clarify that this does not permit interference in operative policing decisions.

Under the banners of "governance" and "enforcement," Minister Ben Gvir repeatedly demanded, among other things, to escalate home demolitions in East Jerusalem. In January 2023, less than a month after the government was formed, Ben Gvir capitalized on a deadly attack against Israeli civilians in an East Jerusalem settlement to demand an increase in home demolitions.[29] In the weeks that followed, he continued to press for extensive house demolitions in the eastern part of the city, diverting police forces from other tasks.[30] According to the Attorney General, in so doing, Ben Gvir exceeded his authority.[31] Contrary to the longstanding policy of refraining from demolitions during the month of Ramadan, Ben Gvir insisted that demolitions in

29 Yael Freidson and Hagar Shezaf, "Israel's AG Denies Ben-Gvir's Claim That She Refused to Seal Jerusalem Terrorist's Home", Haaretz English edition, January 28, 2023.

30 Josh Breiner, "Ben-Gvir, Israel's Police Chief Spar Over Expediency of East Jerusalem Home Demolitions", Haaretz English edition, February 14, 2023.

31 Chen Maanit, "Israeli AG Tells Far-right Minister: Don't Tell Police How to Handle Pro-democracy Protests", Haaretz English edition, 16 March 2023.

East Jerusalem continue during Ramadan as well, signaling that for him, demolishing homes is also a means of triggering an escalation that would pave the way for further repressive measures against East Jerusalem residents.[32]

As part of the coalition agreements of the current government, in the summer of 2024, the National Enforcement Authority (see below) was transferred from the Ministry of Finance to the Ministry of National Security, which Ben Gvir used to demand that the Authority prioritize demolitions of inhabited structures.[33] The number of home demolitions in East Jerusalem has skyrocketed during Ben Gvir's tenure as National Security Minister.

The Israel Police

The Israel Police operate under the authority of the Ministry of National Security. It has seven districts, including the Judea and Samaria District (in the West Bank), with commanding officers holding the rank of major general. The term of office of the Commander of the Jerusalem District is not fixed and usually ranges from two to three years. The Jerusalem District includes the cities of Jerusalem and Beit Shemesh, local authorities such as Mevaseret Zion, and the Mateh Yehuda Regional Council. In addition to East Jerusalem, it also covers the West Bank settlements of Har Gilo, Givat Ze'ev and its vicinity, and Har Adar. The district is divided into precincts with commanders holding the rank of brigadier general. The David Precinct covers the Old City and, in particular, the Al Aqsa/Temple Mount compound, while the other Palestinian neighborhoods of Jerusalem fall under the Kedem Precinct.

32 Avihai Hever, "Ahead of Ramadan: Ben Gvir's sensitive directive that could heighten tensions," Behadrei Haredim, 6 March 2023

33 Josh Breiner, "Ben-Gvir Instructs Israel Police to Demolish Illegal Family Homes in Apparent Bid to Target Arab Community", Haaretz English edition, 9 January 2025.

The Israel Police has been a key instrument for repressing the Palestinian population of East Jerusalem since 1967, enforcing Israel's discriminatory policies and enabling dispossession. A substantial share of the policing forces deployed in Palestinian neighborhoods in Jerusalem are, in fact, Border Police units. Their training, as well as their self-perception, is far more militarized, treating the Palestinian population as a threat, rather than a civic approach that sees policing as a public service.

Source of Authority in Law

- Police Ordinance [New Version], 1971

The Authority's De Facto Involvement in Dispossession

Police forces are directly involved in concrete instances of dispossession as they escort home demolitions and carry out forced evictions of Palestinians and settler takeovers of their homes.

National Enforcement Authority

As noted, since July 2024, the National Enforcement Authority has been under the purview of the Ministry of National Security. The National Enforcement Authority (formerly the National Unit for Enforcement of Planning and Construction Laws) is a nationwide governmental unit responsible for enforcing planning and building laws.

The National Enforcement Authority has been active in East Jerusalem since 2016, producing a unique situation in which it operates in parallel to the municipal enforcement unit. Under Amendment 116 to the Planning and Building Law, the Authority is empowered to operate across the country, but it is meant to focus its operations according to the priorities laid out in a document entitled "Enforcement Policy for Planning and Building Offenses," issued in 2021 by the Authority's Director. According to this policy, the Authority is meant

to concentrate enforcement efforts on lands designated for national infrastructure, the coastal environment, agricultural land, and land zoned as a national park, nature reserve, or open area.[34] The document also stipulates that areas within the planning jurisdiction of an independent local committee are low priority for enforcement by the Authority.

According to these criteria, enforcement activity by the National Enforcement Authority in Jerusalem should have low priority, and there is no need for it to operate within the city. Aside from a few specific exceptions, the city's territory does not fall within the categories of land on which the Authority is meant to focus. Moreover, the Jerusalem Municipality operates its own enforcement unit, which works systematically and intensively, carrying out scores of demolitions in the city's Palestinian neighborhoods every year (see below).

Nevertheless, since 2016, the National Enforcement Authority has been operating in East Jerusalem, following Government Resolution 1559. This resolution sets a goal and prescribes measures aimed at generating aggressive enforcement within Arab local authorities in Israel. Since it was adopted, the National Enforcement Authority has operated in the city's Palestinian neighborhoods, even though Jerusalem is not explicitly mentioned in the resolution.

Source of Authority in Law

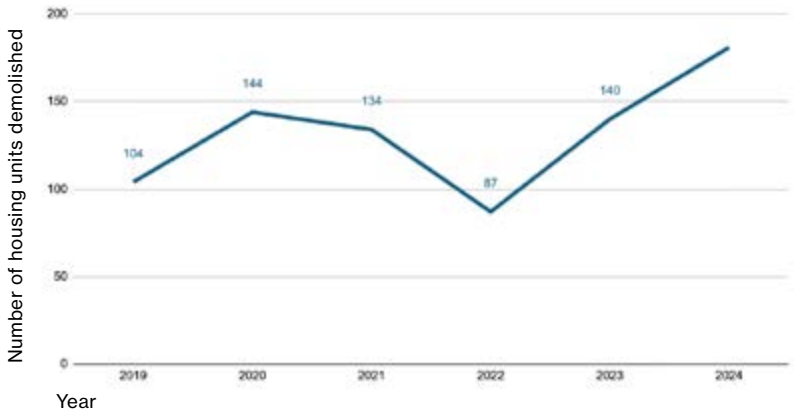
- Planning and Building Law, 1965
- In particular, Planning and Building Law (Amendment No. 116), 2017, known as the Kaminitz Law

34 Real Property Enforcement Authority (then in the Ministry of Finance), "Enforcement Policy for Planning and Building Offenses – Real Property Enforcement Authority," 13 May 2021.

The Authority's De Facto Involvement in Dispossession

Since 2016, and following Government Resolution 1559, the National Enforcement Authority has been active in East Jerusalem, even though Jerusalem is not explicitly mentioned in the resolution. In this way, the severe discrimination in planning in East Jerusalem is compounded by the state's duplicate efforts in enforcement and demolition of permit-less construction.

As a result, and especially since 2019, when Amendment 116 to the Planning and Building Law came into full effect, there has been a sharp and consistent rise in the scope of demolitions in East Jerusalem. Until then, demolitions averaged about 50 housing units per year. By contrast, in 2024, 181 housing units were demolished, and the annual average number of demolitions since 2019 stands at 131 housing units per year (carried out both by the municipality, see below, and by the National Enforcement Authority).



* In 2022, the Bennett-Lapid government was in power

viii. Jerusalem Municipality – Instruments of Dispossession

Mayor of Jerusalem, Deputy Mayors, City Council

Municipal elections are held every five years in Jerusalem. Almost 40% of the city's residents are Palestinians who have permanent residency status, not citizenship. They do not enjoy the basic right to vote for or be elected to the Israeli parliament, the Knesset,[35] and do not have Israeli passports. They are, however, entitled to vote in Jerusalem's Municipal elections[36] and can run for any office other than mayor.[37] The vast majority of East Jerusalem residents do not participate in the local elections; only 1–2% of eligible Palestinian voters actually exercise this right.

The most recent Jerusalem municipal elections were held in February 2024. Incumbent mayor, Moshe Leon, was re-elected, and for the first time, a party running on representing East Jerusalem's population and defending its rights ran for city council (Kol Toshaveha, meaning All Its Residents). It failed to get seats on the council.

Eleven parties are represented on the current Jerusalem City Council, and all of them joined the municipal coalition. This means that since the last elections, the council has been operating without an opposition. The Jerusalem City Council has 31 members, and not a single one is a Palestinian resident of East Jerusalem.

Of the 31 council seats, ultra-Orthodox parties hold 16, two parties identified with a liberal constituency hold seven, and two far-right parties hold three. Under the coalition agreements, Mayor Leon appointed eight deputy mayors, one of whom is the head of one of the two far-right parties - Meuhadim (Hebrew for United). The coalition agreement between the mayor's party and Meuhadim states: "the Parties declare Jerusalem as the united capital of Israel, while safeguarding the Jewish people, and will act in every way to safeguard,

35 Sections 5 and 6 of Basic Law: The Knesset.
36 Local Authorities (Elections) Law, 1965.
37 Local Authorities (Election of Head of the Authority and his Deputies and their Term of Office) Law, 1975.

formally and practically, the sovereignty of the State of Israel and the Jewish people in all parts of the city. In this regard, it is emphasized that the Mayor recognizes the importance of law enforcement and the application of sovereignty in all parts of Jerusalem, including East Jerusalem, and it is agreed by the Parties that this recognition will also be reflected in the municipal work plans and the municipality's fiscal management."[38]

The head of Meuhadim was also appointed by the Jerusalem Municipality as a Director on the Board of the East Jerusalem Development Ltd[39] (see above). The coalition agreement between the mayor's party and Noam, the other far-right party in the coalition, further states that "the factions place foremost among their concerns the importance of strengthening, building and preserving the character of Jerusalem as the [Jewish] Holy City and City of the Temple."[40]

The Planning Committee – The Planning and Building Subcommittee (Local Planning Committee)

The Jerusalem Municipality's Planning Committee is made up of city council members and chaired by one of the deputy mayors, usually from one of the ultra-Orthodox parties in the mayor's coalition. It operates through two subcommittees: the Planning and Building Subcommittee and the Permits Subcommittee.

Statutory plans within Jerusalem's municipal jurisdiction are discussed both in the Planning and Building Subcommittee of the municipality (hereinafter: the Local Committee) and in the District

38 Section 5 of the coalition agreement.
39 Section 13 of the coalition agreement.
40 Emphasis added, Section 7 of the coalition agreement.

Planning and Building Committee, which is subordinate to the Ministry of Interior (see above). In rare cases, plans are brought directly to the District Committee. The Local Committee's decisions are generally not binding (except in unique cases, such as re-parcellation plans). They are recommendations that do not formally bind the District Committee, but they carry substantial weight in shaping its position.

Like the District Committee, the Local Committee frequently promotes building plans for Israelis, particularly beyond the Green Line, and, by contrast, makes it difficult to promote plans for Palestinians. In practice, both bodies pursue a similar policy of severe discrimination against Palestinians in the field of planning and building.

An important tool the Local Committee uses to advance planning is its power to decide that the municipality will join private landowners who initiate plans in cases where the Planning and Building Law requires the involvement of a statutory body. This involvement is necessary in order for a plan to include infrastructure components, such as building access roads, which are a precondition for its approval. When the municipality joins the plan, private landowners are also exempted from having to meet the stringent requirements of the new procedure for proving a connection to the land (see the section on the District Committee and the District Planning Bureau).

Source of Authority in Law

- Planning and Building Law, 1965
- Planning and Building Order (Jerusalem), 994 (published in the 1994 Regulations Gazette, p. 1154)

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The Local Committee has recommended approving plans for settlements such as Givat Hamatos, Har Homa West, and Lower Aqueduct. It has simultaneously opposed advancing most of the

major plans for developing Palestinian neighborhoods. For example, the Local Committee withdrew its previous consent to advance the Tel Adasa plan in Beit Hanina (TPS 185306). It also opposes advancing the plan submitted by residents of Al-Bustan in Silwan (TPS 693440), along with other plans.

The Local Committee has joined more than a few plans promoted by settler organizations. These include the plan to build an ultra-Orthodox yeshiva in Sheikh Jarrah (TPS 68858, which is being advanced toward approval in 2026), a plan for a settlement inside the Um Lisun neighborhood (which the District Committee decided to advance in 2024), and a plan to expand the Ramat Shlomo settlement (TPS 11094, approved in 2019).

By contrast, the Local Committee has not joined the submission of plans to develop Palestinian neighborhoods such as Walajeh (TPS 1161348) or Sawahreh a-Sharkieh (TPS 477943). These plans are not moving forward due to requirements that would have been waived had the Local Committee joined them.

The Planning Committee – Building Permits Subcommittee

Members of the Jerusalem Municipality Planning Committee are city councilors, and it is normally co-chaired by a deputy mayor and the City Engineer. The Building Permits Subcommittee is the second of the Planning Committee's subcommittees and is also known as the Local Licensing Authority. It is authorized to approve building permit applications that conform to the applicable zoning plans.

The number of building permits approved in the city's Palestinian neighborhoods is far lower than their share of the city's population. According to a 2016 State Comptroller report, only 16% of the permits approved in Jerusalem were for construction in Palestinian neighborhoods, while 38% of Jerusalem's residents lived in these

neighborhoods at the time.[41] Of 57,737 housing units granted permits in Jerusalem between 1991 and 2018, only 16.5% were in the city's Palestinian neighborhoods.[42]

A key condition for issuing a building permit is conformity to the relevant zoning plan. Therefore, until recently, much of the discrimination in permit approvals did not stem from the work of the Building Permits Subcommittee itself, but from discriminatory planning that produces a very limited supply of land zoned for Palestinian residential use, as described above in the sections on the Planning and Building Subcommittee (Town Plans) and the District Planning and Building Committee.

Source of Authority in Law

- Planning and Building Law, 1965
- In particular, Planning and Building Law (Amendment No. 116), 2017 (known as the Kaminitz Law)

The Authority's De Facto Involvement in Dispossession

The work of the Building Permits Subcommittee has become another significant constraint since the entry into force of a stringent procedure adopted by the Licensing and Enforcement Department of the Jerusalem Municipality for "examining ties to unregulated and unregistered land" for the purpose of issuing building permits.[43] This procedure was drafted as a complementary measure, with

41 State Comptroller, "Jerusalem Municipality – Local Planning and Building Committee Jerusalem," 22 November 2016.

42 Peace Now, Jerusalem Municipal Data Reveals Stark Israeli-Palestinian Discrepancy in Construction Permits in Jerusalem, September 12, 2019.

43 The text was updated in 2024: Licensing and Enforcement Department, Jerusalem Municipality, Guidelines for Submitting Ownership Documents for Unregulated Land in East Jerusalem, (Version V), updated September 2024.

similar requirements to the stringent procedure for proving ties to unregulated and unregistered land as a precondition for submitting zoning plans (see above on the District Committee).

Because there is virtually no government-built housing in Palestinian neighborhoods, almost all the housing supply in East Jerusalem relies on private Palestinian-initiated construction. Since most Palestinian land is unregulated and unregistered, landowners seeking a building permit must prove their "ties to the land." For decades, the state assessed this based on the Mukhtar Procedure, which largely relied on recognition of the local Palestinian community's knowledge regarding land ownership. In 2022, following lobbying by right-wing organizations, the state created a new, far more stringent procedure. In addition to requiring documents that many landowners do not possess, the procedure mandates an examination by the Custodian of Absentee Property, which may lead to the Custodian seizing the land. The new procedure creates a further obstacle to obtaining building permits even on the very limited number of plots zoning plans had previously allowed residential construction.

Building Enforcement Department

The Jerusalem Municipality has an Urban Planning Administration headed by the City Engineer. It includes the Licensing and Enforcement Division, which has two departments: the Licensing Department and the Building Enforcement Department. The Building Enforcement Department is in charge of enforcing construction laws in the city, including issuing demolition orders against and demolishing un-permitted construction.

The department employs 38 enforcement officers, subordinate to the department head and divided into three geographic units and an additional unit dedicated to new construction. The east unit, which includes the city's Palestinian neighborhoods, has nine enforcement officers. The department is supported by the Municipality's Legal Counsel and Municipal Prosecution departments.

Source of Authority in Law

- Planning and Building Law, 1965
  A law that defines the powers of building enforcement officers, planning and building offences, and associated penalties
- Administrative Offences Law, 1985
  A law that allows the imposition of administrative fines for planning and building offences

The Authority's De Facto Involvement in Dispossession

Each year, the department issues and executes demolition orders for dozens of structures in the city's Palestinian neighborhoods that were built without permits. Between 2019 and 2024, the unit executed 617 demolition orders in East Jerusalem, demolishing on average more than 100 structures per year.[44]

Beyond the demolition of individual homes, the Building Enforcement Department also implements mayoral directives to demolish entire neighborhoods in East Jerusalem. For example, after more than a decade during which residents of the Al-Bustan neighborhood in Silwan worked to regularize their homes, the mayor decided he was unwilling to advance the regularization outline negotiated with the residents. The Municipality likewise refused to advance the zoning plan prepared and submitted by the residents and instructed the Building Enforcement Department to execute the demolition orders issued for all 115 homes in the neighborhood. Between 2024-2025, the department demolished 36 housing units in al-Bustan.

In 2025, the unit's enforcement officers began summoning residents of the village of Nu'man, at the southern edge of East Jerusalem, for interrogation on suspicion of building without a permit, while threatening all 45 homes in the village with demolition.

44 Knesset Research and Information Center, Data on Enforcement of Building Offences in East Jerusalem, January 2025.

ix. Statutory Bodies – Instruments of Dispossession

Israel Nature and Parks Authority

The Israel Nature and Parks Authority (INPA) is a statutory corporation responsible for managing, operating, and enforcing the law in national parks and nature reserves. It also initiates and submits statutory plans for national parks.

Israel frequently declares privately owned Palestinian land in Jerusalem as national parks as part of the longstanding policy of preventing development in Palestinian neighborhoods in the city. Over the past 15 years, the INPA has submitted three plans for new national parks in Nahal Refaim, on the slopes of Mount Scopus, and for the expansion of the Jerusalem Old City Walls National Park. To date, two of these plans have been approved.

The INPA is, therefore, both the authority in charge, and in many cases also the body that initiates the takeover of spaces in the city's Palestinian areas. This includes the takeover of thousands of dunams of privately owned Palestinian land, blocking its use for the development of Palestinian neighborhoods and instead developing and using the lands for Jewish or Israeli heritage sites that primarily serve Israeli visitors. The INPA is headed by a Director General appointed by the Minister of Environmental Protection. It also has a Public Council, likewise, appointed by the Minister of Environmental Protection, whose members include representatives of the public, scientists, and government officials. East Jerusalem is part of the INPA's Jerusalem Region, which is headed by a regional director. The following national parks in East Jerusalem are under the INPA's responsibility:

National Park Name	Approval Year	Size of Area (dunams)	Passes through land in
Jerusalem Walls	1974	1,100	Wadi Rababa (Hinnom Valley – eastern section), Silwan, a-Sawaneh, Wadi Joz
Emek Tzurim	2000	165	Wadi Joz, a-Sawaneh, a-Tur, Mount of Olives
Nahal Refaim	2013	1,200 (park area beyond the Green Line)	Walajeh
Mount Scopus Slopes	2025	585	a-Tur, Issawiya,
Expansion of Jerusalem Old City Walls	Not yet approved	275	a-Thuri, Silwan, a-Tur, Mount of Olives, a-Sawaneh
Total		**3,325**	

Source of Authority in Law

- National Parks, Nature Reserves, National Sites and Memorial Sites Law, 1998
- Planning and Building Law, 1965
  A law that authorizes the INPA, like any statutory body, to submit zoning plans and sets out the enforcement powers of its officers, including INPA rangers

The Authority's De Facto Involvement in Dispossession

The settler organization Elad has operated the City of David site, which is part of the Jerusalem Old City Walls National Park since the

1990s. It received the power to operate the site from the INPA and has close working relations with it. For example, the INPA and Elad jointly submitted TPS 13542 for the Kedem compound, a planned colossal visitor center at the entrance to Silwan. The INPA also supports the cable car project, which is being advanced through Elad's initiative and active lobbying and is designed to link Elad's settlement compounds in Silwan and in the Hinnom Valley (Wadi Rababa) to West Jerusalem.

The INPA has also signed a 10-year contract with Elad, allowing the settler organization to develop and operate extensive parts of the Jerusalem Walls National Park in the Hinnom Valley. As a result, Palestinians have been effectively blocked from accessing their lands between the Palestinian neighborhoods of Silwan and Abu Tor, and the area has been turned into an Elad tourist and recreational site, hosting Erev Shabbat events, "biblical-era" handicraft workshops, cultural performances, and more.

When residents of a-Tur and Issawiya submitted plans to develop their neighborhoods on privately owned land, the INPA submitted a plan to turn those same private lands into the Mount Scopus Slopes National Park. Although, after a years-long struggle, the area designated for the national park was slightly reduced, its approval now poses a major barrier to a-Tur residents' ability to promote adequate planning for their neighborhood.

The INPA also submitted a plan for the Nahal Refaim Park, which included turning some 1,000 dunams of Walajeh farmland into a national park.[45] The plan was advanced in parallel to the construction of the Separation Barrier directly adjacent to village homes, cutting Walajeh farmers and their families off from agricultural land and grazing areas that the INPA sought to turn into a national park. The Separation Barrier and the national park thus acted as two complementary measures to push Palestinians off their agricultural

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land and enable Israeli takeover. In a particularly cynical move, the plan cited the need to preserve the agricultural terraces as justification for the national park, without mentioning the villagers who have built, preserved, and utilized these terraces for farming.

The INPA also submitted an expert opinion to the High Court of Justice supporting the security establishment's position in a petition filed by Walajeh residents against the route of the Separation Barrier in this area. In its opinion, the INPA argued that the route was justified because it would facilitate turning the area into a national park. Today, Walajeh residents are barred from accessing their lands on the Israeli side of the barrier, and the INPA manages the area.

Both in the Hinnom Valley and in the areas of Issawiya included in the Mount Scopus Slopes National Park plan, the INPA has used the enforcement powers granted to it under the National Parks Law to demolish Palestinian property.

Jewish National Fund

The Jewish National Fund (JNF) has title to land and houses in areas of East Jerusalem that came into its hands in two main ways. First, the 1970 Legal and Administrative Matters Law applies to properties that belonged to the JNF prior to 1948, restoring ownership to the organization. As noted, these assets are managed by the General Custodian until formally transferred to the JNF. Second, some of the properties confiscated from their Palestinian owners over the years by the Custodian of Absentee Property were later transferred to the JNF.

Some of the land and properties the JNF manages in East Jerusalem are owned by Himanuta, a private subsidiary wholly owned by the JNF. Himanuta was established in 1938 to serve as a legal entity that would purchase and manage land the JNF was considering selling, in a departure from its own bylaws prohibiting land sales, and while sidestepping basic transparency requirements, especially regarding transactions beyond the Green Line. Himanuta also holds properties that the Custodian of Absentee Property transferred to the JNF.

Source of Authority in Law

- Basic Law: Israel Lands
- Israel Land Law, 1960

The Authority's De Facto Involvement in Dispossession

In 2021, the JNF's Board of Directors decided to move ahead with registering ownership of properties listed in 2,050 asset files held by the organization.[46] Registering lands or homes in the JNF's name opens the door to establishing settlements and evicting the Palestinian families living on the respective properties.

Land registered to the JNF also exists in the northern part of East Jerusalem, where the Ministry of Construction and Housing is advancing a plan to build the large Atarot settlement with 9,000 housing units (TPS764936). The area in question lies between the Palestinian neighborhoods of Beit Hanina, Kufr Aqab, the village of Qalandiya, and the town of a-Ram in the West Bank. Building a settlement there would carve the Palestinian space into isolated enclaves and block the development of these severely overcrowded and neglected residential areas. A settlement at this location would also prevent urban contiguity between East Jerusalem and Ramallah.

Another tract of land that came into the JNF's hands through application of the Legal and Administrative Matters Law is an 18-dunam area (bloc 31784) in the Umm Tuba neighborhood. Some 35 Palestinian families live in the area in houses built with building permits issued by the Jerusalem Municipality after residents, by their account, presented proof of ownership. Nevertheless, in 2023, SOLT procedures were completed owing to cooperation between the SOLT Officer, the General Custodian, and the JNF. At the culmination of the process, conducted without notifying the Palestinian families or

46 Hagar Shezaf and Nir Hasson, "JNF Set to Approve Plan That Could Lead to Palestinians' Eviction", Haaretz English edition, August 5, 2021.

allowing them to present their title documents, the land was registered in the JNF's name. In 2025, the ILA, which manages JNF lands, served eviction notices to the families living on the site.

The JNF also holds properties in Silwan, received from the Custodian of Absentee Property. According to the Ministry of Justice's Klugman Committee report from 1992, the JNF transferred at least five of these properties to the Elad settler organization, and worked, often in conjunction with Elad, to evict the Palestinian families living in these properties. For decades, the JNF, through Himanuta, repeatedly filed eviction suits against the Sumarin family, whose home had been seized by the Custodian of Absentee Property (and transferred to the JNF), on the grounds that a relative was an absentee. In 2023, the Supreme Court accepted the Sumarin family's appeal against Himanuta's eviction suits (LCA 4936/20).

The JNF also funds projects spearheaded by settler groups in East Jerusalem. For example, it transferred hundreds of thousands of ILS, at minimum, to the settler organization Reshit Yerushalayim for virtual tours in the Old City area.[47] The JNF also funded, in the amount of approximately 1 million ILS (roughly 312k USD), the expansion of a military memorial site in Sheikh Jarrah as part of the organization's Northern Trail project.[48]

47 "Notice of JNF's intention to participate in a joint venture with the Reshit Yerushalayim NGO," JNF website, November 2022.

48 Nir Hasson, "Israeli Veterans Oppose Plan to Expand East Jerusalem War Memorial", Haaretz English edition, April 28, 2021.

x. Conclusion – Ending the Expulsion Today

The October 7 attack and the war in Gaza thrust the Israeli-Palestinian conflict back onto the regional and international agenda and exposed the failure of "conflict management" and "decisive victory" paradigms, underscoring the urgency of a just and sustainable political resolution. At the same time, Israel's architecture of dispossession has markedly escalated annexation efforts, the seizure of Palestinian land, and the expulsion of its residents

As this report details, since the illegal occupation and annexation of East Jerusalem in 1967, Israeli authorities have steadily expanded and refined the methods they employ to take over the area. In recent years, the link between annexation and expulsion has become even clearer, with an alarming surge in displacement measures accompanying the deepening and entrenchment of annexation. This trend has further escalated under cover of the war in Gaza. **What is unique about the entrenchment of annexation and displacement in East Jerusalem is that they are carried out under Israeli law, through official state authorities and procedural tools.** In this way, state institutions are transformed into instruments of displacement—sometimes through discriminatory laws, exploitative application of these laws, and at other times through the deployment of old and new measures whose sole purpose is to facilitate dispossession and expulsion.

The Ministries of Justice, Finance, National Security, Jerusalem Affairs and Jewish Heritage, Construction and Housing, and Interior, together with the Jerusalem Municipality and other statutory bodies, all operate separately yet in close cooperation to deepen annexation and drive Palestinians out of East Jerusalem. They do so through discriminatory planning, home demolitions, forced evictions and settler takeover of Palestinian homes, land registration, new Israeli settlement plans, property takeovers, and additional measures. The synergy between these mechanisms, the tools at their disposal and their constant refinement, and the close cooperation among those who oversee them, make displacement and dispossession a statewide project designed to cement Jewish supremacy and block the possibility of a sustainable political agreement.

The only way to achieve peace and security for both peoples is an agreed political resolution based on equality and human rights. No such agreement is possible without Jerusalem as the capital of both nations.[49] But, as international efforts to advance a solution are being renewed, and in the hope that they succeed, all measures to expel Palestinians from East Jerusalem, as described in detail in this report, together with the state mechanisms involved, must be halted immediately.

49 Read about Ir Amim's plan, Hope from Jerusalem - 13 Principles for an Agreement on Jerusalem in the Framework of a Political Solution, October 2024.

Ir Amim is a non-partisan Jerusalem-based human rights organization working towards a just, democratic, and equitable Jerusalem with an agreed political future.

Forced eviction, Batan al Hawa, Silwan 25/3/26
Credit: **Avishai Mohar, Activestills**

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