



# The Ghettoization of Arab Jerusalem

Nazmi al-Ju'be<sup>1</sup>

Palestinians and Israelis are exchanging accusations over the outbreak of the current *Intifada*, and there are international protestations against the mutual violence. At the same time, voices calling for an end to the strategic Israeli violence devouring the land, altering the demography and creating an irreversible impediment to peace have vanished.

Some people assume that upcoming negotiations will start from the point where the Camp David and Taba negotiations ended, as if nothing at all has changed. This assumption is unrealistic and ignores the results of the *de facto* clashes on one hand, and the results of the work of Israeli bulldozers, on the other.

Indeed, it may not be an exaggeration to

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say that it is too late to work towards an independent national state with Jerusalem as its capital, because a realistic understanding of Israeli activities leads us to conclude that Israel is doing its best to ruin hopes of Palestinian independence, or at least ruin the possibility for the Palestinian state to succeed. It may not be premature to predict that the end-result of these developments is the creation of townships, or, at best isolated cantons that are not viable and do not provide their residents with a decent living wage. These cantons will be forced to look east or west for political dependence for their survival. In other words, what is happening on the ground today is much more dangerous than the outcome of the entire settlement process since its inception three decades ago.

### **Crowning the Settlement Movement**

The features of the Israeli undertaking in Jerusalem and its environs have now become more apparent than they have been since 1967. This undertaking resulted from a series of consecutive plans. These plans affected a series of areas in overlapping time and geography, having no clear connection between them. Only in the last two years have the final touches been implemented. The Israelis have exploited the fact that the world is busy with the events of September 11<sup>th</sup>, the subsequent war on Afghanistan and preparations for war on Iraq, and have tied together all their previous endeavors.

### **The Isolation of Jerusalem**

#### ***The Outer Ring***

*The South:* This plan began by isolating the Bethlehem area from its southern

regions with a series of settlements in the Etzion Bloc. This bloc consists of the settlement of Bitar Ellit, located between the Arab communities of Wadi Fukeen and Nahhaleen, and inhabited by religious settlers (followers of the Shas Movement), and extending westwards to soon reach the Hadassa area, thus effacing the Green Line.

The second settlement in the bloc is Kfar Etzion and all its branches. This is the oldest settlement south of Bethlehem and extends to the highway joining the mountaintops of Jerusalem and Hebron. Then comes the settlement of Efrat, which occupies a series of mountaintops from the north to the south, thus closing the road between Bethlehem and Hebron and preventing the possibility of developing the Bethlehem area southwards.

The series is completed eastwards by the settlement of Teqoa, which has not been very attractive due to its location to the far east and its distance from the Green Line. That is why it is now being connected to a highway running south-north (the Za'tarah bypass road) towards eastern Beit Sahour to connect up with Har Homa (Jabal Abu Ghneim) settlement and the east ring road. Consequently, the Teqoa settlement will only be minutes away from East and West Jerusalem and will be a more attractive place for Israelis to live. The bypass ring road of Za'tarah will strangle the town of Beit Sahour and make it impossible for it to expand eastwards, while preventing the expansion of Za'tarah and al-Obeidiyyah villages westwards and rendering them separate villages and towns. With the completion of the streets and the expansion of settlements as planned, the Bethlehem area will become a semi-isolated island encircled between a large



outer ring and a smaller inner ring, with no enough space for future expansion.

*The East:* The eastern ring consists of the group of settlements of Qedar, Ma'aleh Adumim, Mishor Adumim and Kfar Adumim (The Adumim Bloc). These settlements have been linked together and will be connected to the Eastern Ring Road. Work on the tunnel connecting this bloc of settlements with Route No.1, which separates/connects East and West Jerusalem and passes under Al-Masharif Mountain (Mount Scopus), has been completed.

After the final touches to be completed in coming weeks, it will be possible to travel between Ma'aleh Adumim and West Jerusalem in less than five minutes with no obstacles. This settlement bloc is being inhabited now by more than 35,000 settlers (about 30,000 of these live in Ma'aleh Adumim alone). This bloc has an immense capability for expansion, as demonstrated by plans that nearly join it with the Jordan Valley and the Dead Sea. This means a fifteen-fold increase in its population.

Still, the most dangerous plan in the eastern ring is what has been called the E1 plan, which is aimed at settling the remaining vacant lands in the eastern region. These lands are located between 'Anata, Az-Zi'ayyim and 'Azariyyah, on one side, and the Ma'aleh Adumim Bloc, on the other. These plans have been ready for some time and are now awaiting approval on the desk of the Israeli Minister of Defense. The E1 plan includes of high-tech industrial areas, hotels and various areas for commercial services. This plan will consolidate the Ma'aleh Adumim settlement bloc and the total strangling of the Palestinian areas of

'Azariyyah, Abu Dis, az-Zi'ayyim, and 'Anata, preventing them from expanding eastwards. It is understood that these areas are the vital framework for developing Arab Jerusalem, in particularly for constructing future industrial and commercial areas. Closing the eastern gate of the Jerusalem area is viewed, therefore, as an extremely dangerous project certain to ruin the geographical basis for the peace process ("land for peace") by separating the northern part of the West Bank from its southern regions, and strangling Jerusalem and preventing its linkage with Jordan.

*The North:* The eastern settlement bloc (Ma'aleh Adumim) is connected to the Binyamin Settlement Bloc (north-east of Jerusalem) and is part of the northern ring. However, it is not possible for Israel to complete the circle between these two blocs because of the Arab areas that lie between Jerusalem and Ramallah. That is why two settlement blocs were constructed. The first was the Binyamin Bloc, made up of the settlements of Alamon, Adam, Sha'ar Binyamin, Kochav Ya'cov and Psagot. These settlements are linked to each other by the eastern bypass road. This road is currently being connected with the eastern ring road and the northern ring road. These settlements were successful in preventing the development of El-Bireh City eastwards. Hizma, too, has been strangled between the outer and inner rings. The Binyamin Bloc is being connected with the 'Atarot Industrial Area by the highway separating al-Ram and Qalandia (a small section of the road has not yet been paved due to the *Intifada* and the closure of Qalandia Airport).

'Atarot is now connected by highways with the Tel Aviv highway and the Western

Ring Road that passes west of Beit Hanina and Shu'fat (work has been completed and preparations are under way for inaugurating it). 'Atarot is also connected to the Givon Bloc (the settlements north-west of Jerusalem) made up of the settlements of Giv'at Zeev, Givon, Ramot, Har Adar, Har Shmuel, in addition to Ofer Camp (west of Rafat) and Qalandia Airport. This project will be able to expand quickly because of its link to West Jerusalem through the western ring road and the growing city of Modi'in. Work is already underway to expand the settlements in this area westwards along the Jerusalem-Tel Aviv Northern Highway.

The strategic importance of this area lies not only in encircling the Palestinian villages north-west of Jerusalem and isolating them from Jerusalem, but also in encircling the area located between the northern Jerusalem-Tel Aviv highway and the southern Jerusalem-Tel Aviv highway (Bab al-Wad) so as to widen the narrow road that prior to 1967 connected West Jerusalem with the coastal plain.

### ***The Inner Ring Road***

Most of the settlements in this ring are located within the borders and are largely aimed at preventing the expansion of Arab Jerusalem, ensuring that it will not develop, and imposing a de facto demographic situation that guarantees a greater number of Israelis not only in "unified Jerusalem," but also in Arab Jerusalem.

*The South:* The southern inner ring consists of the settlements of Gilo, Giv'at Hamtus, Har Homa (more than one hundred families already live there) and Eastern Talpiot. These settlements isolate Jerusalem from the Bethlehem area. This

separation is being completed through the expansion of Har Homa settlement and consolidated by its linkage with the ring road. This settlement has contributed to encircling the Bethlehem area between the outer and inner rings. The remaining gap in Jabal Al-Mukabbir and Sawahrah West area (south-east Jerusalem) is being separated by the ring road and prepared for settlement so as to be connected eastwards with the Qedar and Ma'aleh Adumim settlements by a bridge linked to Har Homa.

*The North:* The geographical continuity between the Old City and the Arab quarters north of Jerusalem (Shu'fat and Beit Hanina, which connect Jerusalem and Ramallah) has been disrupted by French Hill and Ramat Eshkol. This separation has been consolidated by the settlements of Rekhesh Shu'fat, Pisgat Zeev and Neve Ya'cov.

*The Old City:* With Jewish settler control established over the Jewish Quarter inside the Old City and the expansion of this quarter in all directions, settlement has moved on to the other quarters of the Old City. The number of properties now under Israeli control outside the expanded Jewish Quarter has risen to over 80. Efforts are underway to control more houses within the walls of the city. These settlement plans are directed towards consolidating the presence of settlers in several areas, the biggest of which is the Burj Al-Laqlaq area (in the north-east corner of the old city). Plans include the construction of tens of housing units. The second area is Sabrah (an extension of Suq al-Khawajat that was destroyed by an earthquake in 1927 and not renovated). It is expected that, through this Suq, the expanded Jewish Quarter will be

connected to the settlement of 'Aqbat al-Khaldiyyah by using the roofs of Al-'Attareen and Al-Lahhameen Suqs. The buildings located in the Jaffa Gate area are under heavy pressure from settler groups that exploit the acute economic crisis and massive debt facing small businesses in the Old City.

*Areas surrounding the Old City:* Since the completion of the outer rings, focus is now on several locations surrounding the Old City. The Ras Al-'Amoud settlement is completed, and preparations are under way to annex the neighboring police station which will be moved to Ma'aleh Adumim. Consequently, this settlement located in an Arab Quarter will be expanded. At the same time, and quickly, preparations are underway to expand the settlement in Shaykh Jarrah (Shimon the Friend). A total of 200 housing units will be constructed in this settlement project.

The other settlement bloc aims at consolidating settlement in Silwan (Ir David Settlement) by building housing units on a plot of land several dunams large that is twenty meters away from the southern wall (and is now being used as a parking lot). The last location we know of is the Moscovitch project in the southwest foothills of Abu Dis mountain. Prospects for this settlement's construction will be enhanced when the eastern ring road project is completed. The settlement will be directly located on the road's edge, which will directly connect it to West Jerusalem and Ma'aleh Adumim. As such, it will constitute a bridge closing the remaining opening southeast of the city.

### ***The Ring Road***

This road encircles the current borders of the Jerusalem Municipality and

connects all the settlements surrounding Arab Jerusalem with West Jerusalem. The road also consolidates the separation of Jerusalem from the Arab neighborhoods that fall outside the municipal borders, such as 'Azariyyah, Abu Dis, Az-Zi'ayyim, 'Anata, Hizma, Al-Ram, Al-Jeeb, Bir Nabala and Beit Hanina (the old village which is already isolated from any geographical expansion). These towns and villages will become encircled islands separated from their urban surroundings. This road will also consolidate the settlement process and land confiscation on both of its sides.

### ***The "Security" Wall***

Despite that not all is known about this wall, including its final length in the Jerusalem area, it intends to complete Jerusalem's isolation from West Bank towns. Entrance to the city will be from three places only, namely, the Az-Zi'ayyim Gate in the east, Abu Ghneim Gate in the south (the checkpoint near Rachel's Tomb, which will be included inside the wall, will be moved to the east between Har Homa and Beit Sahour), and Qalandia Gate in the north. Most probably, these gates will be connected by a wall, electrified barbed wires, trenches and cameras. In fact, the implementation of important parts of this wall has started in the south, the east, the northwest and the north. However, we do not know what it will look like over time, since several plans have been presented to date.

### **Conclusion**

It is very easy now to envision the Israeli plans to stymie the peace process and eliminate the possibility for a solution to the Jerusalem problem, as has been

demonstrated in this quick presentation based on maps, an analysis of Israel's plans, and what is being implemented on the ground. It will take two to three years to complete this project, after which it will be too late to discuss not only Jerusalem as the capital of a Palestinian state, but it will also be impossible to talk about a Palestinian state.

Among the visible results of the Israeli policy is that Arab Jerusalem will lose all possibilities for development and its residents will not have enough housing.

This will lead to impoverishment, a decline in the standard of living, and the confinement of its population in narrow, closed areas. Furthermore, isolating Jerusalem from its vital economic surroundings will aggravate the social crisis and spur an increased crime rate. All this will take place alongside the escalated development of services and standard of living in West Jerusalem and surrounding settlements. The final result of this policy will be the transformation of Arab Jerusalem into a ghetto and slum.

