

January 18, 2017

# Jerusalem: Israel's Vision vs. Palestine's Reality

US President-elect Donald Trump wants to move the US embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem. Such an unprecedented move would endorse Israel's occupation and illegal annexation of East Jerusalem and its efforts to "Judaize" the city - as Israeli daily Haaretz dubs it - efforts that have precipitated an economic collapse in Palestinian neighborhoods. No other country recognizes Israeli sovereignty over either East or West Jerusalem.

**Jerusalem 2050 Israel-Style** Israel has been "Judaizing" East Jerusalem since it occupied it in 1967. Its "idea" of Jerusalem is elaborated in its master plans for the future of the city. This involves maximizing the number of Jews and reducing the number of Palestinians through a gradual process of colonization, displacement and dispossession. For example, in the 2020 Master Plan, 2,300 dunums are allocated for Palestinian construction versus 9,500 dunums for Israeli Jews.

Methods include land expropriation for illegal settlements, discriminatory municipal services, and the revocation of Palestinians' permanent residency. Settler groups, who have strong links with the state institutions involved, are also evicting Palestinians and moving into Palestinian neighborhoods. One settler group, Elad, received donations of more than \$115 million between 2006 and 2013.

**Palestinians' Economic Collapse** Israeli policies have produced an economic collapse in East Jerusalem, including in key sectors such as tourism and the Old City's commercial markets. In 2013, 12% of tourists stayed in East Jerusalem hotels, compared to 88% in West Jerusalem, while less than 4% of Palestinians who live beyond the Israel-built Wall have been able to continue to shop in the Old City.

By 2014, 81.8% of East Jerusalem residents and 86.6% of Palestinian children were living below the poverty line, compared with 28.4% of residents and 41.6% of children within the Jewish population.

**Religious War?** Increasingly, Israeli authorities and settlers are framing escalating tensions in the city, especially at the Al-Aqsa compound, as a "religious war" when they are actually the outcome of Israel's illegal colonization of the city. In other words, religion is being exploited to serve Israeli political goals as it entrenches what is effectively an apartheid system.

*The international community should withhold recognition of unilateral Israeli moves, and hold it to account. It should also pressure Israel to re-open shuttered Palestinian institutions in East Jerusalem. The international community and the Palestinian leadership can help rehabilitate the East Jerusalem economy by creating a new development fund. And the Palestinians – leadership and civil society – must develop and implement their own vision for Jerusalem.*

## KEY FACTS

- 2,300 dunums are allocated for Palestinian construction versus 9,500 dunums for Israeli Jews.
- In 2014, 81.8% of East Jerusalem residents were living below the poverty line, compared with 28.4% of residents within the Jewish population.
- Settler group Elad received donations of more than \$115 million between 2006 and 2013.