

**EXTREME MAKEOVER? (II):
THE WITHERING OF ARAB JERUSALEM**

Middle East Report N°135 – 20 December 2012

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EXTREME MAKEOVER? (II): THE WITHERING OF ARAB JERUSALEM

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

For many Arab East Jerusalemites, the battle for their city is all but lost. Settlements have hemmed in their neighbourhoods, which have become slums in the midst of an expanding Jewish presence; trade with the West Bank has been choked off by the Separation Barrier and checkpoints; organised political life has been virtually eradicated by the clampdown on Palestinian institutions; their social and economic deprivation is rendered the more obvious by proximity to better-off Jewish neighbours. Israel may not have achieved its demographic goal. But its policies have had profound effects: Arab Jerusalemites are disempowered and isolated from the Palestinian polity as rarely before. Since 1967, Palestinians overwhelmingly have boycotted Israeli institutions in the city on the grounds that acting otherwise would legitimate occupation. This is understandable, but potentially obsolete and self-defeating. As Palestinian Jerusalemites increasingly are adrift, bereft of representation and lacking political, social, and economic resources, it is time for their national movement to reassess what, no longer a considered strategy, has become the product of reflexive habit.

Palestinian political life in Jerusalem has changed drastically since the Oslo Accords excluded the city from the temporary governing arrangements in the West Bank and Gaza. National institutions that sprung up in Ramallah competed for the spotlight with and eventually came to overshadow historic Palestine's traditional political, economic and social capital. In the 1990s Jerusalem held its own, barely, in no small part due to the outsized role played by a scion of one of its venerable families, Faysal Hussein. But the city never recovered from the triple blow of Hussein's death in 2000; the outbreak of the second intifada that same year and the consequent limitations on access to the city; and the subsequent shuttering of Orient House, the Jerusalem headquarters of the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO). The Palestinian Authority (PA), too distant and ineffectual, never provided an alternate address for its public in the Holy City. Fatah and Hamas withered as Israel prevented them from organising.

The city's large families to some extent filled the authority gap, but they could not stop the dissolution of the so-

cial fabric and even became one of its agents: with East Jerusalem largely a no-go area for Israel's police except when the country's own security interests were threatened, families got into the crime business. East Jerusalem today is a rough and angry place. As for local popular committees, despite their political roots in the first intifada and before, they have had to focus on re-stitching the social fabric. The Holy Esplanade is the only site where mobilisation seems to have a purpose – with predictably incendiary results, particularly in light of increasing Jewish activism there.

With Jerusalem cut off from its natural West Bank hinterland, Palestinian citizens of Israel and Israeli activists increasingly are entering the fray. Efforts of Israeli and international solidarity movements on behalf of Arab residents confronting Jewish settlers have ebbed and flowed, but on the whole they have not gained much purchase. The northern branch of the Israeli Islamic Movement, an Israeli Arab group under the leadership of Shaykh Raed Salah, has played a much greater role. Although its capacity for large-scale mobilisation in Jerusalem is limited, Arabs in the city appreciate the boost to the economy provided by the pilgrims it brings as well as Salah's loud voice on behalf of them and the Islamic holy sites. But many also consider his approach excessively religious and his language vituperative. Israel certainly does, deploring his incendiary and sometimes hateful rhetoric.

Arab Jerusalemites – who in 1967 overwhelmingly chose permanent residency over Israeli citizenship – have resorted to formal channels to protect a valuable status that seems ever more precarious given Israeli revocations of residency and construction of the Separation Barrier that has left some 50,000 Arab Jerusalemites on its east side. Numbers applying for Israel citizenship have grown over the past several years; the subject no longer is taboo. Some also have started to participate in municipal activities, including lobbying city hall for their due.

Without ever quite feeling that they fit in, Arab Jerusalemites have developed ties to the western part of the city, in terms of school, work and socialising. Their national address is Ramallah, but their executive and legislative rep-

representatives do not have jurisdiction over them; meanwhile their ostensible municipal representatives are their occupiers. For the vast majority of the population, this schizophrenic reality is the only one they have known.

A population that feels abandoned by everyone is in nobody's interest. It certainly does no good to the Palestinians themselves, but it does not help Israel either. Boundaries are porous, particularly for drugs and criminality; the problems confronted by Arab Jerusalemites do not stop at neighbourhood borders. The absence of a credible leadership likewise will hinder any effort to manage future tensions and prevent an escalation. Finally, and more broadly, any future political arrangement between Israelis and Palestinians will require a cohesive and capable Palestinian community in East Jerusalem.

The default Palestinian strategy, strongly urged by the leadership, long has been to boycott all voluntary contact with the Jerusalem municipality. Reluctance to engage with Israeli institutions is understandable. Palestinians fear this would create the impression of endorsing Israel's claim to the city. In the early years after 1967, the boycott was an active strategy that aimed at and achieved concrete if minimal gains, primarily in the form of limited Arab autonomy. This made sense in the 1960s and 1970s when East Jerusalem still was largely distinct. But today it has been simultaneously marginalised from, and integrated into West Jerusalem: marginalised, in that what used to be an autonomous city centre now is just a crowded and hemmed-in neighbourhood, with poor services and infrastructure badly in need of updating; integrated, in that no small number of Arab Jerusalemites work, study and socialise on both sides of the Green Line, and the roads, light rail and utilities that run through the eastern half are central to the entire city's functioning.

As currently devised, the boycott largely is an artefact of a bygone era. It is a product of inertia more than of conscious deliberation. It has become a symbolic form of politics that covers an absence of politics. From a Palestinian perspective, it arguably carries advantages – reinforcing separateness and identity while refusing to legitimise occupation – but also unmistakable costs. The material and distributive dimensions of politics have been left to the side; the question of how the community can capture resources to strengthen itself is not only unanswered but unasked. Ultimately, the absent national debate about how to maximise Palestinian power in the city has facilitated both Israel's and the Palestinian leadership's evasion of responsibility.

However difficult, a Palestinian discussion about whether the current boycott strategy makes sense is long overdue. Such self-examination could yield any number of potential responses: that it still does; that it needs revision; or that it ought to be abandoned wholesale. Too, there are sever-

al options for adjustment: Palestinian East Jerusalemites could stand in municipal elections and vote for candidates who are Palestinian citizens of Israel; they could establish a shadow municipality in Ramallah; or they could try to set up a kind of collective representation that works in concert with the Israeli municipality. Even asking the question of whether the boycott should be tweaked or ended will be anathema to many Palestinians. But the question of Palestinian strategy, in Jerusalem and beyond, is greatly in need of rethinking, and until difficult and unpleasant issues are raised, will not be answered.

Extreme Makeover? (I): Israel's Politics of Land and Faith in East Jerusalem, the first of two reports published simultaneously today, looks at Israel's territorial policies in occupied East Jerusalem and the religious shifts that underlie some of them. This report examines the effects of that policy on the Palestinian body politic.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To the Palestinian Authority and the Palestine Liberation Organisation:

1. Take steps to reduce fragmentation and duplication of efforts concerning Jerusalem, notably by creating a single address, headed by an official with access to all parts of the Jerusalem Governorate, to spearhead assistance to city residents.
2. Verify carefully allegations of Israeli impropriety in the Old City and at Islamic holy sites in cooperation with international organisations and particularly the UN Education Social and Culture Organisation (UNESCO), while refraining from levelling false charges.

To the Palestine Liberation Organisation:

3. Re-evaluate, within a restructured PLO, whether boycotting all voluntary contact with Israeli institutions in Jerusalem remains effective.
4. Begin, in preparation for such a re-evaluation, a dialogue, both in East Jerusalem and at the national level, about what kinds of representative structures might be set up in Jerusalem.
5. Evaluate on a case-by-case basis municipal initiatives by East Jerusalemites that aim at enhancing the Palestinian community's material welfare.

To the European Union (EU):

6. Keep East Jerusalem on the diplomatic agenda by implementing recommendations of the 2012 EU Heads of Mission report on Jerusalem.
7. Provide funding to Arab organisations in East Jerusalem and push back against Israeli pressure not to do so.

To Arab League Member States:

8. Fulfil funding pledges to the PA and to Jerusalem, particularly the \$500 million promised by the 2010 Arab League Summit in Sirte.

To the Government of Israel and the Jerusalem Municipality:

9. Launch a dialogue about what kinds of representation for Arab Jerusalemites – including, potentially, empowered *minhalim kehilatiim* (neighbourhood councils) or more broadly inclusive bodies – might be established.
10. Grant Jerusalem residency to West Bankers caught on the west side of the Separation Barrier if plans for redefining the area of municipal service provision in alignment with the Separation Barrier are put into effect, and do not withdraw it from Jerusalemites living on its east side.
11. Reopen the Jerusalem Chamber of Commerce and Orient House as required by phase one of the Quartet's 2003 Roadmap for Israeli-Palestinian peace.

To Members of the Quartet (European Union, Russia, UN Secretary-General, U.S.):

12. Encourage the Palestine Liberation Organisation and Government of Israel to take the above steps.

Jerusalem/Brussels, 20 December 2012

EXTREME MAKEOVER? (II): THE WITHERING OF ARAB JERUSALEM

I. INTRODUCTION

A Palestinian observer dubbed his home “an orphan city” – abandoned by both Israel and the Palestinian leadership in Ramallah.¹ This in large part flows from Israeli policy, since the government defines its security agenda more expansively in Jerusalem than it does in the West Bank. Following the trauma of the first half of the last decade, when nearly 40 per cent of Jewish deaths during the second intifada occurred in the city,² Israel aimed to bolster deterrence (via house demolitions and more permissive standards for incarceration of accused terrorists and others charged with security offences)³ and sought to “depoliticise” the Palestinian population to minimise the risk that a challenge to its control of Jerusalem might emerge.⁴ Among central actors is the Israeli Security Agency, whose mandate – in addition to counter-terrorism and intelligence – extends

to combating “political subversion”,⁵ which according to a former security official, includes active opposition to Israeli control.⁶ With Arab political forces united against the occupation, the policy amounts to de facto criminalisation of Palestinian political parties and their activities in the city.⁷

The cumulative effect of these policies, particularly since 2000, has been the virtual eradication of organised Palestinian political life in the city.

¹ Crisis Group interview, Raed Saadi, hotel owner, Jerusalem, March 2012.

² During the second intifada, from October 2000 until October 2005, 30 suicide bombings and other attacks killed 195 people and injured many more in Jerusalem. Of these, 186 casualties resulted from attacks perpetrated by Jerusalem residents. Israel Security Agency data cited in Hillel Cohen, *The Rise and Fall of Arab Jerusalem 1967-2007* (Hebrew) (Jerusalem Institute for Israel Studies, 2007), p. 76.

³ “Involvement of East Jerusalem Residents in Terrorist Activity”, Israel Security Agency, September 2008. East Jerusalemites are often asked to present a criminal report from the police when applying for jobs with an Israeli employer, which deters them from participating in demonstrations. Crisis Group interview, East Jerusalemite businessman, Jerusalem, December 2010.

⁴ Crisis Group interview, Arie Hess, chairman of the Movement for Strengthening Jerusalem, Jerusalem, March 2011. He added that satisfying the population’s material needs helps reduce politicisation: “The investment in paying national insurance to East Jerusalem’s Palestinian population is the best security policy we have and is worth every shekel”. A former defence official added that Israeli policy led Palestinians “to focus on their income rather than their national project”. Crisis Group interview, Jerusalem, February 2011.

⁵ See www.shabak.gov.il/English/about/Pages/valuseEn.aspx.

⁶ Crisis Group interview, Jerusalem, January 2011. He noted Hizb ut-Tahrir is an exception Israel allows precisely because it does not actively oppose Israeli control.

⁷ Not all Israelis agree with the blanket application of the policy: “The enemy of my enemy should be my friend. By preventing the Palestinian Authority [PA] from operating in East Jerusalem, we are only strengthening Hamas, which is better organised for underground mobilisation. We know what the PA is doing, due to their clear hierarchy and formality, and can stop it when necessary. Hamas by contrast is better at staying below the radar”. Crisis Group interview, foreign affairs official, Jerusalem, February 2011. A former Israeli negotiator who advocates the division of the city said, “PA presence in East Jerusalem is an Israeli interest”. Crisis Group interview, Jerusalem, April 2011.

II. THE WITHERING AWAY OF ARAB JERUSALEM

A. THE WEAKENING OF TRADITIONAL PALESTINIAN ACTORS

The opportunity for the contemporary Palestinian leadership to gain a foothold in Jerusalem and develop national institutions was short-lived, informally stretching from the mid-1980s with the opening of Orient House – the PLO’s de facto headquarters in the city – and formally from the signing of the Oslo agreement in 1993 until the closure of Orient House in 2001.⁸ The Oslo Accords⁹ in principle forbade PA activity in the city,¹⁰

⁸ Orient House has remained closed ever since, despite the Quartet’s 2003 Roadmap for Israeli-Palestinian peace, which provided, in its first phase: “G[overnment][O][f][I][srael] reopens Palestinian Chamber of Commerce and other closed Palestinian institutions in East Jerusalem based on a commitment that these institutions operate strictly in accordance with prior agreements between the parties”. Israel expressed a reservation about this point in accepting the Roadmap that the Quartet did not accept. See “A performance-based roadmap to a permanent two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict”, news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/2989783.stm.

⁹ The Agreed Minutes to the Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements to the 1993 Declaration of Principles (Oslo I) specify: “Jurisdiction of the Council [Palestinian Authority] will cover West Bank and Gaza Strip territory, except for issues that will be negotiated in the permanent status negotiations: Jerusalem, settlements, military locations, and Israelis”. On 11 October 1993, Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres promised his Norwegian counterpart, Jørgen Holst: “I wish to confirm that the Palestinian institutions of East Jerusalem and the interest and well-being of the Palestinians of East Jerusalem are of great importance and will be preserved. Therefore, all the Palestinian institutions of East Jerusalem, including the economic, social, educational and cultural, and the holy Christian and Moslem places, are performing an essential task for the Palestinian population. Needless to say, we will not hamper their activity; on the contrary, the fulfilment of this important mission is to be encouraged”. www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/Archive/Peace+Process/1993/Peres-Holst+Letter+regarding+Jerusalem+-+11-Oct-93.htm. Palestinians interpret these documents in combination to mean that the PLO is permitted to work in the city, whereas the PA is not.

¹⁰ The PLO in certain cases evinced more flexibility toward Israel with regard to the city than the Palestinian Jerusalem leadership. Dore Gold, adviser to the Israeli delegation to the 1991 Madrid Peace Conference and foreign policy adviser to Netanyahu in 1996-1997, claimed that the PLO’s willingness to exclude Jerusalem from the Oslo arrangements was crucial: “[O]ne of the reasons that Israeli prime minister Yitzhak Rabin was willing to pursue a secret negotiating track with the PLO in Oslo ... was precisely because the PLO was willing to exclude Jerusalem from any interim self-governing arrangements for the Palestinians. In contrast, a local Pales-

tinian delegation to peace talks in Washington under the leadership of Faisal al-Husseini ... insisted on including East Jerusalem in any future Palestinian government. In short, the PLO position on Jerusalem was softer, so Rabin went with the PLO option”. Dore Gold, *The Fight for Jerusalem* (Washington, 2003), pp. 162-163.

but Israel saw certain benefits in turning a blind eye so long as its involvement remained modest. The PA created a rival Waqf to manage religious assets,¹¹ including by reestablishing the post of Grand Mufti;¹² deployed a limited number of plain-clothed Palestinian security offers, particularly from the Preventive Security Organisation;¹³ established Jerusalem branches of several PA ministries; and, by providing funds and pushing for Ramallah loyalists to assume administrative positions, co-opted certain East Jerusalem institutions.¹⁴

Most significantly, Orient House became the PLO’s political address in East Jerusalem, coordinating Palestinian activity (both political and social) and receiving diplomatic delegations from around the globe. The institution hosted some two dozen groups and organisations supporting Arab life in the city, funded in part by the PA and PLO. The cosmopolitan character of Jerusalem – along with the fact that it was governed under relatively permissive Israeli domestic law as opposed to the military system that prevailed in the rest of the Occupied Territories – enabled East Jerusalem to emerge as the centre of gravity of Palestinian political activity. At the head of Orient House, Faysal Husseini¹⁵ gained

tinian delegation to peace talks in Washington under the leadership of Faisal al-Husseini ... insisted on including East Jerusalem in any future Palestinian government. In short, the PLO position on Jerusalem was softer, so Rabin went with the PLO option”. Dore Gold, *The Fight for Jerusalem* (Washington, 2003), pp. 162-163.

¹¹ Waqf (pl. Awqaf) is a religious endowment, a trust that manages assets for charitable or religious purposes. The Jerusalem Waqf refers to the body that does so on the Holy Esplanade as well for nearby properties.

¹² The PA reestablished the defunct post of Grand Mufti in 1993 under Sheikh Suleiman Jaabari and created a new religious affairs ministry under Hassan Tahboub as counterweights to the Waqf director, still appointed by Jordan. When Jaabari died a year later, Jordan appointed Sheikh Abdel Qadir Abdeen to the post, while Arafat named Sheikh Ikrama Sabri to the same position. In 1998 Jordan abandoned its claim on the title and Abdeen retired. Elie Rekhess, “The Palestinian Political Leadership in East Jerusalem After 1967” in *Jerusalem: Idea and Reality* Tamar Mayer (ed.) (London, 2008), pp. 266-274.

¹³ Preventive Security agents settled disputes, enforced strikes, prevented land sales to settlers, punished drug dealers, silenced PA critics and intimidated political rivals. According to several Jerusalemites, in certain cases they would kidnap suspects and take them to the organisation’s headquarters in Jericho for interrogation. Crisis Group interviews, Jerusalem, March-April 2012.

¹⁴ The most active ministries included education, youth and sports, local government and finance; the institutions included al-Maqasid Hospital, the Palestinian Tourism Council and Al-Quds University.

¹⁵ Husseini’s authority with Jerusalemites derived from his charisma, family name and record of anti-occupation activism. Crisis Group interview, Khalil Toufakji, Arab Studies Society, Jerusalem, March 2012. Given Jerusalemites’ refusal to participate in the city’s municipal elections, and Israel’s limitations on the participation of East Jerusalemites in PA elections, they were unable to choose their leaders through the ballot box, as occurred in West Bank cities in the 1970s. Instead they looked towards notable local

international stature that at times caused tension with PLO chief (and PA President) Yasser Arafat, who feared the creation of rival power centres.¹⁶ Consulting widely and frequently with other political factions, he was careful to maintain unity.¹⁷ Jerusalemites today nostalgically recall his integrity¹⁸ though he also is remembered as a “mini-Arafat”, who ran Orient House as his personal fiefdom.¹⁹

families. Husseini came from one of the most distinguished. His father, Abd al-Qadir, who commanded an armed nationalist group in the 1936-1939 Arab Revolt in Palestine, was one of the few Palestinian leaders whose reputation was enhanced by the 1948 war, in which he died defending Jerusalem. Husseini himself was a founder of Fatah’s network in Jerusalem and repeatedly was arrested by Israel during the first intifada. “Faysal always put himself on the front line at protests, unlike subsequent leaders. He and his bodyguards were always the first to smell the tear gas and to get hit with batons”. Crisis Group interview, Jerusalemite journalist, Jerusalem, March 2012.

¹⁶ Crisis Group interview, former PA official, Jerusalem, March 2012. Zakaria Odeh, head of the Civil Coalition Forum in Jerusalem, a union of civil society organisations, said, “the conflict between Arafat and Faysal Husseini dates back to Madrid [in 1992], when Husseini was the point of contact for the international community. Arafat did not like that, and he tried to reduce Husseini’s financial and political powers. Later, when Faysal Hussieni got funds from Arab states for housing in Jerusalem, Arafat ordered that the money be redirected to Gaza and Ramallah. He did not want anyone getting too big or important, becoming a rival who might challenge him. He preferred that there be several leaders for Jerusalem, so that none could accumulate too much power”. Crisis Group interview, Jerusalem, March 2012.

¹⁷ A former leader of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine said that Husseini regularly coordinated meetings of all factions at Orient House. Crisis Group interview, Jerusalem, December 2011. A Hamas supporter noted that Husseini offered economic and legal assistance to Jerusalemites without political distinction. Crisis Group interview, Jerusalem, March 2012. Others highlighted his ability to settle disputes between families and his willingness to keep open channels to Israeli groups. Crisis Group interviews, Jerusalem, March-April 2012.

¹⁸ “He surrounded himself with technical committees comprised of genuine experts. As a result, Orient House was effective in taking care of the people’s legal grievances, planned where to buy property, recommended to the leadership where this could be done, conducted research on Israeli policies and settlements and established proper records of properties owned by Palestinians in East Jerusalem”. Crisis Group interview, former PA Jerusalem affairs minister, Jerusalem, April 2012.

¹⁹ Crisis Group interview, former Orient House employee, Jerusalem, July 2012. The head of a large Jerusalem NGO recalled: “Arafat was charismatic, but when he fell, everything fell with him. Faysal was in the same category. He gave financial support, but when he died, everything died with him. We can’t afford to do things like this, with a sys-

tem built around a single personality. We can’t afford another Arafat”. Crisis Group interview, Jerusalem, July 2012.

Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin and his successor, Shimon Peres, architects of the Oslo process, largely tolerated this activity. Their successor, Benjamin Netanyahu, adopted a more confrontational stance. He periodically closed offices run from Orient House,²⁰ banned senior Palestinian officials from entering Jerusalem and on more than one occasion threatened to shut down Orient House itself.²¹ Prime Minister Ariel Sharon finally did so in August 2001, following the death of Husseini a few months earlier. Sharon seemed to have been emboldened by several factors: the lack of a clear successor at its head; the violence unleashed by the Palestinian uprising, which had discredited the PA in the U.S. and Europe;²² and the fact that Israel’s reoccupation of West Bank cities overshadowed much else.

Israel subsequently arrested the PA’s Jerusalem affairs minister, Ziad Abu Zayyad; closed more than twenty city institutions suspected of having ties to Ramallah;²³ and strengthened enforcement of regulations that encumbered ties between Jerusalem and the West Bank.²⁴ The Separation Barrier –

tem built around a single personality. We can’t afford another Arafat”. Crisis Group interview, Jerusalem, July 2012.

²⁰ In 1994, the Knesset passed a law known as “Implementation of the Agreement on Gaza and Jericho (Restrictions of Activity)”. It forbade Palestinian activity “unless with the agreement of the Israeli government, to prevent the Palestinian Authority or PLO diplomatic or governmental activity or anything similar within the borders of the state of Israel that was not consistent with respect for the sovereignty of the State of Israel”. Cohen, *op. cit.*, p. 28. In 1996 Arafat acceded to Israel’s demand to close a number of PA offices in Jerusalem that it claimed violated the Oslo Accords. Gold, *The Fight for Jerusalem*, *op. cit.*, p. 162.

²¹ Netanyahu made the closure of Orient House a central part of his campaign for re-election in 1999. “Netanyahu moves on Orient House”, *Al-Ahram Weekly*, 29 April 1999.

²² The decision to close Orient House was taken by the Israeli cabinet two days after a Palestinian militant bombed the Sbarro pizza house in West Jerusalem, killing fifteen.

²³ Crisis Group interview, Adnan Husseini, governor of Jerusalem, Jerusalem, August 2010. He said that attempts to reopen many of the institutions have failed. “We tried to negotiate their re-opening many times, to no avail. The closure is political. Take the case of the Chamber of Commerce, which was established in 1937, before the State of Israel was even created. Many people, including the French government, tried to persuade Israel to reopen it but without success. It has nothing to do with security. It is about eradicating the Palestinian presence in Jerusalem as much as possible”. Crisis Group interview, Jerusalem, August 2010. After its closure the Chamber relocated to the Arab neighbourhood of Beit Hanina – within municipal Jerusalem but on the Ramallah side of the Separation Barrier – though when the Israeli government subsequently shifted the route of the Barrier, the Chamber once again found itself on the Jerusalem side. Its historic location, just outside the Old City, remains shuttered. Crisis Group interview, Mazen Sinokrot, businessman and member of the Chamber’s board of trustees, Ramallah, July 2012.

²⁴ These included an increase in house demolitions; control of educational materials; enforcement of health regulations that en-

the construction of which started in 2002 – reduced West Bankers' ability to circumvent the restrictions Israel had instituted on entry into Jerusalem in the early 1990s.

Palestinian political life in East Jerusalem never recovered. Israel banned national activity in the city, and no alternative leadership was able to take root. Within the PA and PLO, various bodies and agencies have attempted to compensate for Orient House's closure but with little success,²⁵ and Ramallah's policy toward the city has been dogged by inconsistency and fragmentation.²⁶ The most effective figure of the past decade in Ramallah was Rafiq Hussein, who became President Abbas's chief of staff in 2007 and served as the doyen of Jerusalem until a scandal forced his resignation in February 2010.²⁷ By dint of his senior position, access to Abbas and British citizenship, he enjoyed a greater ability than others to mobilise resources for East Jerusalem. He oversaw the creation of the Jerusalem Fund,²⁸ founded the

cumbered the entry of meat and dairy from the West Bank into East Jerusalem; stricter regulation of pharmacies; enforcement of the requirement that shops have signs in Hebrew and not only Arabic. Crisis Group interview, former Orient House employee, Jerusalem, July 2012.

²⁵ These have included the Jerusalem Unit at the PA president's office, the PA Jerusalem affairs minister, the Jerusalem governor, the PLO's Jerusalem file holder and the Popular National Conference for Jerusalem; one might also include the Mufti of Jerusalem and the Palestinian Legislative Council's Committee on Jerusalem. Another body, the Presidential Committee on Jerusalem, was established in late 2009 but "never met, did nothing, had neither budget nor a plan". Crisis Group interview, Palestinian analyst, Jerusalem, October 2010. A year later the Higher Committee for Jerusalem was established to bring together PA and PLO representatives, Jerusalem Palestinian Legislative Council members, Jerusalem Chamber of Commerce board members and other public figures. Crisis Group interview, former Jerusalem affairs minister, Jerusalem, April 2012.

²⁶ "You can feel the tension among the PA's Jerusalem leaders. Their organs are essentially job creation mechanisms; they have titles but in practice they don't do anything". Crisis Group interview, PA official, Jerusalem, March 2012.

²⁷ "The only Fatah leader who even came close to filling Faysal's role was [former PA Chief of Staff] Rafiq Hussein. He led demonstrations, gave speeches, used his position at the president's office to ensure money continued to be directed at Jerusalem. He had popular respect as he came from the Hussein family and enjoyed freedom of movement because of his foreign passport. He was able to provide financial support to needy families but was unable to institutionalise the struggle as Faysal had done with Orient House". Crisis Group interview, former Orient House official, Jerusalem, June 2011.

²⁸ It functioned from 2009 to 2011. Five countries contributed a total of \$12 million that was disbursed (in amounts up to \$25,000) to small organisations in Jerusalem. Crisis Group

Jerusalem Unit²⁹ and ramped up contacts with the international community. But his effectiveness in Ramallah and in the diplomatic community was not reflected on the ground in Jerusalem, and even at the height of his influence, ties with the West Bank continued to fray.

After Hussein was forced from office, senior Palestinian political leaders – convinced that Israel had orchestrated his humiliation in order to remove a leader who had become a thorn in its side – have been very reluctant to pursue high-profile activism in the city.³⁰ A Jerusalem policy adviser complained: "We can't even get anyone to host an *iftar* [a Ramadan breaking of the fast] here".³¹

The PA is still a source of employment and salaries for several thousand Jerusalemites,³² controls the educational curriculum in most schools,³³ operates a Sharia (Islamic law)

interview, Ashraf Khatib, PLO adviser on Jerusalem affairs, Jerusalem, August 2012.

²⁹ The Jerusalem Unit, established in 2007, was based in President Abbas's office. It employed 35 staff and in 2009-2010 had a budget of \$3.8 million. Its role was to help maintain Palestinian life in the city – funnelling money to individuals and supporting organisations as well as compiling information. It updated a strategic plan for Jerusalem's development that called for \$428 million over three years. (See "Strategic Multi-Sector Development Plan for East Jerusalem", Jerusalem Unit, Office of the President, November 2010.) The Jerusalem Unit fell victim to infighting after Rafiq Hussein resigned. Its former head, Ahmed Rueidi, was absorbed into the president's office. Other staff wound up with Fatah Central Committee member Uthman Abu Ghabyya's Palestinian Popular Conference (which also works on Jerusalem affairs) and Jerusalem Governor Adnan Hussein (who is also PA Jerusalem minister).

³⁰ A PLO policy adviser said, "Rafiq tried to do something for the city. He worked with the Europeans and international community to get them to focus on E-1, Silwan, and other Jerusalem settlements. Before he started in his position, we would talk to the Europeans about these things, and they would reply, 'Get your leadership to tell us'. They needed a certain level of seniority pushing the case. Israel realised that and set him up [in an influence-peddling sex scandal]. Nobody in the leadership is willing to stick his neck out now. They are terrified". Crisis Group interview, Ramallah, July 2012.

³¹ Crisis Group interview, PLO policy adviser, Ramallah, July 2012. On the limited occasions when PLO and PA representatives do appear, their participation is not announced ahead of time, as the Israeli police otherwise would prevent the event from taking place. Crisis Group interview, PLO official, Jerusalem, September 2012.

³² The PA reportedly employs 7,400 civilian and security staff with Jerusalem residency. Crisis Group interview, Preventive Security official with responsibility for Jerusalem, Ramallah, September 2012. Most, with the chief exception of Waqf officials, work outside Jerusalem.

³³ There are four competing education systems in East Jerusalem, run by the municipality, the Waqf, the UN Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) and private (mostly church) operators.

court³⁴ and administers the Palestinian matriculation (*tawjihi*) exams.³⁵ But in most other respects, the PA's and PLO's influence in the city is limited, particularly given that the restricted funds they have can only be deployed via third parties, mainly civil society organisations.³⁶ The paucity of resources devoted to the city is a bone of contention between Arab Jerusalemites and Ramallah.³⁷ Prime Minister Salam Fayyad's efforts to expand the PA's presence in Jerusalem in 2010 drew media coverage but were blocked by Israel,³⁸ as were the PA's attempts in 2009 to organise events to mark the Arab League's designation of Jerusalem as a "cultural capital of the Arab world".³⁹

³⁴ Another Sharia court operates in West Jerusalem and reports to Israel's religious affairs ministry.

³⁵ Crisis Group interview, Ahmad Rweidi, former Jerusalem Unit head, Jerusalem, October 2010.

³⁶ In 2010, only \$30 million of the PA's nearly \$3.28 billion budget was for Jerusalem. PA finance ministry, General Government Operations 2010 statement. So far in 2012, the EU has given €8 million. At the Arab League meeting in Sirte in March 2010, \$500 million was pledged for Jerusalem of which only \$69 million has been transferred to Palestinian coffers. Crisis Group interview, Ahmad Rweidi, adviser for Jerusalem to President Abbas's chief of staff, Jerusalem, July 2012.

³⁷ In June 2009, the PA Jerusalem affairs minister, Hatem Abdel Qader, resigned over the lack of resources dedicated to the city. Another PA official claimed that in addition to the two dozen PA institutions in Jerusalem Israel had closed, many more had been closed by the PA itself because of lack of funds. Crisis Group interview, Ramallah, March 2012. A scion of a leading family in the city said, "the Arab League never made good on its pledges, but I know of other regional institutions that have. The problem is not just that there's no money; it's that there's no transparency. I want to see it laid out: what was pledged, what was received, and who got it". Crisis Group interview, Ramallah, July 2012. Several Jerusalemites, including a trustee of the Jerusalem Chamber of Commerce, pointed out that while the population of the Jerusalem Governorate is about 10 per cent of the West Bank, its share of the budget is only a fraction of that. Crisis Group interview, Ramallah, July 2012.

³⁸ The PA earmarked \$17 million to renovate fifteen private schools around East Jerusalem and a further \$300,000 for paving roads and upgrading infrastructure in parts of the Jerusalem neighbourhood of Anata outside the Separation Wall. "PA funds street repairs in East Jerusalem", *Haaretz*, 11 October 2010; "Fayyad to inaugurate E. J'lem schools renovated on PA's dime", *Haaretz*, 27 October 2010; "Fayyad: Jerusalem suburbs will one day be part of Palestinian capital", *Haaretz*, 2 November 2010. "Police threaten to shut East Jerusalem hall if it hosts PA's Fayyad", *Haaretz*, 2 November 2010.

³⁹ Crisis Group observations, Jerusalem, May 2009; "Police disperse 'Palestinian Cultural Festival' events", *Haaretz*, 20 March 2009. The director of a Palestinian non-governmental organisation in the city said his group did not participate be-

In parallel, Palestinian security services have lost their ability to work in the city. In the early days of Oslo, Orient House organised "security committees", equipped with batons, that for a time patrolled certain Arab neighbourhoods.⁴⁰ Soon, however, they were confined to dealing with theft and social strife, chiefly through families and clans. Crimes considered security-related – that is, involving weapons and drugs, as well as the sale of land to Israelis, which Palestinians view as a betrayal of their national movement – were left to the PA's Preventive Security Organisation. It was able to exercise a certain degree of influence by running networks of informants and occasionally kidnapping suspects to Ramallah.⁴¹ Jerusalemites appealed to the police in Ramallah for help at home.⁴²

At first, Israel by and large tolerated these violations of the Oslo Accords, which helped preserve order in the city; but, with the outbreak of the second intifada, leniency toward PA security activity all but disappeared. Since 2003, Jerusalem residents are forbidden to work for PA security forces.⁴³ The PA still occasionally intervenes in social issues, but a Preventive Security officer responsible for the city admitted: "Jerusalemites look at the PA and its security forces with disdain and see them as impotent – which is pretty much the situation".⁴⁴

cause "we had been told by the Israeli security services that they would limit our activities if we did. We decided not to risk our delivery of social services. The community needs them". Crisis Group interview, Jerusalem, October 2010. A Jerusalemite NGO leader commented: "What did the PA think was going to happen? Rafiq tried to organise the whole thing from Ramallah by remote control. Of course Israel didn't allow that". Crisis Group interview, Ramallah, 29 July 2012.

⁴⁰ Israel wasn't the only limiting factor. A prominent Jerusalemite who worked with Faysal Hussein in the early 1990s to set up a "shadow municipality" – of which more below – said, "Arafat had Preventive Security kidnap and beat a member of the 'security committee' that Faysal had set up. And that was that". Crisis Group interview, Jerusalem, August 2012. In 2002, PA security forces kidnapped one of the 100 or so arbitrators in the Jerusalem police's social reconciliation unit. Cohen, *op. cit.*, p. 31.

⁴¹ Crisis Group interviews, Preventive Security officer with responsibility for Jerusalem and neighbourhood organiser in Jerusalem's Al-Tur neighbourhood, Jerusalem and Ramallah, August 2012. The officer said Preventive Security, General Intelligence, the civil police and Military Intelligence all still have personnel in the city, and all are equally ineffective.

⁴² For instance, a scholar reported overhearing, in a Ramallah police station in 1999, a Jerusalemite begging the police chief to intervene in Beit Hanina, where her son's car had been torched repeatedly. Crisis Group email correspondence, October 2012.

⁴³ Crisis Group interview, Preventive Security officer with responsibility for Jerusalem, Ramallah, August 2012.

⁴⁴ Crisis Group interviews, Preventive Security officer, Jerusalem, August 2012. As a result, he said, the city has become a refuge for wanted Palestinians, who, for all intents and purposes, live under

The main political movements also have lost influence in the city. Fatah's Jerusalem branch, its prominent history notwithstanding,⁴⁵ today is fractured, mirroring the movement writ large. A Fatah member said:

Fatah per se doesn't really exist in Jerusalem. Omar Shalabi [Fatah's Secretary General in Jerusalem] has a small group of ten to fifteen people who work with him. That's it. The rest are just ordinary people who might label themselves Fatah, but that doesn't mean they consider themselves loyal to the movement's elected leadership.⁴⁶

Jerusalemites – including no small number of Fatah supporters – acknowledge that the movement has eroded.⁴⁷ Fatah blames heightened Israeli surveillance after the outbreak of the second intifada,⁴⁸ which has forced it to organise activities through family structures.⁴⁹ But

an Israeli umbrella. "If we want to arrest someone, we have to coordinate with the Israelis, by which time the person we are looking for has long escaped". Some neighbourhoods have formed self-defence committees.

⁴⁵ This included a significant role in organising the first intifada, when the movement's status grew because Husseini and other local leaders acted as conduits for funds and instructions from the exiled PLO leadership in Tunis to activists in the occupied territories. As a result, Jerusalem members of Fatah came to hold a disproportionate number of posts in the Palestinian national leadership; Husseini himself was appointed head of Fatah in the West Bank and brought into Fatah's Central Committee in 1989. Cohen, op. cit., p. 15. By contrast, the movement played only a subordinate role in the city during the second intifada, which, a Fatah member said, reflected disagreements about the effectiveness of armed struggle in Jerusalem and fear of a severe response from Israel. Crisis Group interview, Jerusalem, March 2012.

⁴⁶ Crisis Group interview, Jerusalemite Fatah member, Jerusalem, February 2010. Another joked that any small West Bank village had more senior Fatah officials than were to be found in the entire city of Jerusalem. Crisis Group interview, Jerusalem, March 2012. On Fatah's crisis, see Crisis Group Middle East Report N°91, *Palestine: Salvaging Fatah*, 12 November 2009.

⁴⁷ "The Fatah leadership is not committed. Everybody sees this. They do not resist the occupation if it means being sent to jail. But that should be their role as leaders! Faysal [Husseini] was always in and out of prison". Crisis Group interview, Jerusalemite Fatah member, Jerusalem, December 2010.

⁴⁸ "As soon as Fatah announces an event, most of its field leaders are arrested by the police, a security siege is imposed on the event's area, activists are summoned to the police station for investigation, and there is soon an intensive presence of the army and the police in the area where the event is to take place". Crisis Group interview, Demitri Delyani, Fatah Revolutionary Council Member, Ramallah, March 2011.

⁴⁹ "It is true people do not see any active work. This is because we can't act clearly in front of the Israeli authorities, or we will be arrested". This doesn't necessarily mean the im-

the PA has been a factor as well, in that its state-building project centralised resources, government institutions and civil society organisations in Ramallah.⁵⁰

Fatah leaders and members still confront Israeli authorities in Jerusalem, including when Palestinian families are evicted,⁵¹ houses are demolished in Silwan⁵² and protests occur at the Holy Esplanade.⁵³ But like today's Palestinian activism as a whole, their endeavours tend to be highly localised and reactive; given the lack of a centralised leadership and disciplined base, mobilisation takes place almost exclusively on the neighbourhood level and reflects the efforts of particular individuals. An exception of citywide scope is Fatah leader and former Jerusalem Minister Hatem Abdel Qader's push for an anti-normalisation agenda since 2011, which has found a receptive audience among frustrated grassroots activists in Jerusalem.⁵⁴

pact of covert activities is lower: "To address social problems Fatah now works through the *hamulas*. It is a good mechanism for solving problems, and it is not clear to the police that Fatah is behind the effort". Crisis Group interview, Jihad Abu Zneid, Jerusalemite Fatah Palestine Legislative Council (PLC) member, Ramallah, March 2011.

⁵⁰ Crisis Group interview, Palestinian analyst, Ramallah, March 2012.

⁵¹ Crisis Group interview, Demitri Delyani, Fatah Revolutionary Council member, Ramallah, March 2011. Many East Jerusalemites accuse Fatah leaders of showing up at such events only to take credit for struggles in which they play no role. Crisis Group interviews, Jerusalem, May 2010-December 2011. Less contested are Fatah leaders' claims that they mediate social problems in Jerusalem, such as murder cases, drug use and family violence. Jihad Abu Zneid, a Jerusalemite Fatah PLC member, said such activities were considered a "national duty", because Israel "aims to destroy people's lives as part of the effort to Judaize the city". Crisis Group interview, Ramallah, March 2011.

⁵² Fatah's secretary general in Silwan, Adnan Ghaith, led the popular struggle against a municipal plan to demolish dozens of homes in Silwan's Bustan neighbourhood to make way for a park known as King's Garden. Crisis Group interview, Adnan Ghaith, Jerusalem, October 2010. After several short arrests, he was expelled from Silwan in 2011 for eight months. "IDF general uses 1945 law to bar East J'lem resident from capital", *Haaretz*, 23 December 2010.

⁵³ Fatah leaders claim that the movement plays a role in mobilising protests at the Holy Esplanade, including stone-throwing at Jewish worshippers at the Western Wall, when they fear "there is a threat to the mosques". Crisis Group interview, Fatah leader, Ramallah, March 2011.

⁵⁴ The sudden visibility of the anti-normalisation movement in the city appears to reflect general Palestinian disillusionment with Israeli peace groups, many of them based in Jerusalem, as well as a more specific despair at the Palestinian leadership's inability to protect Jerusalem. "Fatah official quizzed for blocking meeting between Israeli, Palestinian activists", *Haaretz*, 30 December 2011. A Palestinian peace activist said, "it is increasingly difficult to find venues. Most hotels now reject our requests. We will soon

Similarly, Hamas has been much weakened as a political force in Jerusalem since its strong showing in the 2006 legislative elections in which it won all four of the city's contested seats. After the results became public, Israel gave the four representatives an ultimatum to renounce their posts or lose their Jerusalem residency. They refused; Israel jailed them and revoked their residency.⁵⁵ Asked to assess Hamas's strength in Jerusalem, a prominent Islamist educator in the city with close links with the movement, replied:

Israel has gone after all the political movements without exception. The factions might be present in the sense that people identify with certain positions or ideologies, but today it makes no sense to try to figure out how the political pie is divided among Hamas, Fatah and anyone else. The question has no meaning. What would the standard be for answering it? The factions cannot hold activities. There is nobody you can point to as a leader. There is no prospect of elections. I don't have a barometer that can measure nothingness.⁵⁶

That said, some of Jerusalem's characteristics play to Hamas's advantage. One is the city's conservative outlook;⁵⁷ another is the prohibition on PA police activity, which has made it something of a safe haven in comparison with the rest of the West Bank.⁵⁸ Although the

be forced to meet in West Jerusalem". Crisis Group interview, Jerusalem, March 2012.

⁵⁵ "Since we did not resign, we were all arrested and served between three and four years in jail". Crisis Group interview, Muhammad Totah, Hamas PLC member, Jerusalem, October 2010. Upon their release, the four had their Jerusalem residencies revoked, because they refused to leave the city. PLC member Abu Tir was jailed again in June 2010, while the three others sought refuge at the headquarters of the International Committee of the Red Cross in Sheikh Jarrah. Abu Tir is currently in administrative detention, after Israeli forces arrested him in September 2011 in his village, Kafr Aqab. Ahmad Atoun was seized outside the Red Cross compound the same month and forcibly transferred to the West Bank three months later. Israeli police stormed the compound to arrest the other two PLC members, Totah and Khaled Abu Arafah, in January 2012.

⁵⁶ Crisis Group interview, Jerusalem, 5 August 2012.

⁵⁷ "Many East Jerusalemites originally come from Hebron, arguably the West Bank's most conservative city [where political Islamic movements are strong], and social links between the two cities remain tight to this day. This makes Jerusalem's population particularly receptive to the Islamist social message". Crisis Group interview, Palestinian analyst, Jerusalem, October 2010.

⁵⁸ Crisis Group interview, Palestinian Security Service officer in the Jerusalem Governorate, Jerusalem, October 2010. Another officer added: "Israel closes its eyes to weapons as long as they are not being used against them. Our fear is that

movement is not able to mobilise openly, a civil society leader familiar with its activities said it has managed to retain a modest influence in certain religious educational institutions (though, in the interest of self-preservation, neither the schools nor Hamas admits to it).⁵⁹ Hamas also is said to be active in some city mosques – as opposed to those in the West Bank, which are under PA control⁶⁰ – and to a certain extent can work through them to help needy families.⁶¹ Also unlike the West Bank, where sermons are dictated by the PA's Waqf ministry and imams must be PA employees, East Jerusalem mosques fall under the responsibility of the Jordanian Waqf, which affords greater autonomy.⁶² As a result, some mosques are identified as pro-Hamas.⁶³

they will be turned against the PA". Crisis Group interview, Ramallah, 2 August 2012. Both said that the areas east of the Separation Barrier but within Jerusalem's municipal boundaries (thus off-limits to Palestinian security agencies and, in practical terms, the Israeli police) are among the easiest places for Hamas to organise. An East Jerusalemite civil society leader argued Hamas was strong in the peripheral areas of Jerusalem – Sur Baher, Um Tuba, the old part of Beit Hanina, areas outside the wall, Shuafat Refugee Camp and the area north of Qalandiya. Crisis Group interview, Jerusalem, December 2011. An Israeli official criticised his government's policy, arguing that as a result of the void, "Hamas controls places like Shuafat". Crisis Group interview, Jerusalem, April 2011.

⁵⁹ Crisis Group interview, Palestinian Jerusalem expert, Jerusalem, June 2011. *Haaretz* reported in January 2012 that over the previous year Israel had shut down twelve institutions in East Jerusalem that were reported to have ties to Hamas, including kindergartens, charities and a soccer club. An unnamed senior police officer told the paper: "The institutions we have shut down are not involved in Hamas military activity. They are involved more in the recruitment of people and the channelling of funds The public receives social services from Hamas, and, in return, Hamas gets the support of the public". "Security forces close Silwan soccer club on suspicion of Hamas activity", *Haaretz*, 30 January 2012. An Israeli-Jewish civil society leader in Jerusalem observed: "Islamic charities are being shut down as a principle – even when they are not a security threat of any sort. This is part of a misconstrued policy of dismantling the so-called social infrastructure of terror". Crisis Group interview, Jerusalem, September 2010.

⁶⁰ In the West Bank, imams are PA employees, all of whom must obtain security clearance; their *khutbas* (Friday sermons) are prepared by the PA religious affairs ministry and surveilled by the security services. See Crisis Group Middle East Report N°98, *Squaring the Circle: Palestinian Security Reform under Occupation*, 7 September 2010.

⁶¹ "Through the mosques Hamas provides Quran lessons, charity and food to needy families". Crisis Group interview, East Jerusalemite civil society leader, Jerusalem, December 2011.

⁶² However, as a Jerusalem mosque-goer pointed out, if an imam says anything too extreme, he may well be arrested. Crisis Group interview, Jerusalem, 31 July 2012. The imams' autonomy has led some Fatah leaders to claim that "Hamas has a kind of undeclared and unwritten agreement with Israel against its common enemy – the PA and Fatah". Crisis Group interview, Demetri Delyani, Jeru-

Hizb ut-Tahrir (The Liberation Party) – an international Islamist organisation that seeks the reestablishment of the Caliphate⁶⁴ – has grown in number and visibility in East Jerusalem.⁶⁵ Many Jerusalemites, basing themselves on anecdotal evidence, believe that it is the fastest growing group in the city, though its secretive nature and contempt for politics make it something of a mystery. Since 2006, the party has held mass rallies worldwide to mark the abolition of the caliphate in 1924; tens of thousands participate around the West Bank and Gaza, including in East Jerusalem.⁶⁶ Hamas and Israel, surprisingly enough, both seem to agree that its narrow focus on religion limits its political significance. Whereas some Israeli officials worry that its activists could join global jihadi groups and that “turning a blind eye will backfire”,⁶⁷ most seem to believe that it does not pose a

salemite Fatah Revolutionary Council member, March 2011. Friday sermons in Jerusalem mosques are somewhat less influential, since many worshippers in the city attend Friday prayers at the Al-Aqsa Mosque, not in their neighbourhood.

⁶³ Crisis Group interview, former Orient House official, Jerusalem, June 2011.

⁶⁴ The party seeks “the establishment of the caliphate in all Muslim lands, in accordance with Islamic law” and is “truly Islamist in the sense that it believes all national issues must be subordinated to this overarching goal”. Crisis Group interview, Hizb ut-Tahrir spokesman, Hebron, February 2010. The party rejects armed struggle, he said, and will refuse to participate in elections, “at least as long as the occupation continues”, because it considers democracy un-Islamic and does not recognise the legitimacy of the PA. The party also rejects welfare and charitable activities, which it denounces as a “cover-up for the deficiencies of the state”. The party instead reaches out mostly through religious education to the poor and uneducated, as opposed to Hamas, whose influence in Jerusalem is felt mostly among the middle and upper classes. Crisis Group interview, Palestinian analyst, Jerusalem, April 2011.

⁶⁵ Their brochures, fliers and posters are visible around Jerusalem. Crisis Group observations, April, October 2011. A PA official from Jerusalem described the party’s outreach as “very active”, claiming that “very few other groups currently have such dynamism”. Crisis Group interview, Jerusalem, September 2010. A secular East Jerusalemite claimed that ten years ago in her neighbourhood of Ras Amud, “there were no Hizb ut-Tahrir people in my apartment building. Today, five out of eight apartments support Hizb ut-Tahrir, as does the grocery store owner downstairs, so you can’t buy cigarettes”. (Smoking is forbidden by Islamic law.) Crisis Group interview, Jerusalem, January 2011.

⁶⁶ Crisis Group interview, Palestinian analyst, Jerusalem, October 2010.

⁶⁷ Crisis Group interview, Likud Arab affairs adviser, Jerusalem, November 2010. The Intelligence and Terrorism Information Centre shares this view and argues Hizb ut-Tahrir is “potentially dangerous”, as its activists may be recruited to “both the Palestinian terrorist organisations and global jihad”. “Islamic Liberation Party (HuT1) rallies in the PA-administered territories and around the world, 26 August 2007”, www.

threat and siphons off support from Hamas⁶⁸ even though Hamas itself claims not to view it as a competitor.⁶⁹

Factions, of course, are not the only forms of political organisation. Extended family structures, of different and fluid types,⁷⁰ long have been a mode not only of social but also political organisation in Jerusalem, as elsewhere in Palestinian and Arab society.⁷¹ Israel, like its predecessors,⁷² has sought to manipulate families to its advantage, hoping to prevent the establishment of a truly representative leadership. After 1967, one way it did so was to appoint dozens of *mukhtars* (local leaders), who were supposed to represent their fami-

terrorism-info.org.il/malam_multimedia/english/eng_n/html/islamic_lp0807e.htm. Hizb ut-Tahrir is banned in a number of countries, including Pakistan and Germany, where it is counted among terror organisations.

⁶⁸ Crisis Group interview, former Israeli Security Agency official, Jerusalem, October 2010.

⁶⁹ A Jerusalemite Hamas leader added: “Hizb ut-Tahrir has grown in East Jerusalem, but neither we nor the Israelis pay much attention to them. We don’t regard them as a threat. They’re not active politically like us and do not have a comprehensive political program. Also many of their supporters are social misfits, who don’t work and are not ready to sacrifice anything for the Palestinian people”. Crisis Group interview, Muhammad Totah, Jerusalemite Hamas PLC member, Jerusalem, October 2010.

⁷⁰ The *hamula* (a traditional Arab family structure, often translated as “clan”) plays an important political role in Israel/Palestine like elsewhere in the Middle East. Not all large families, however, are *hamulas*, nor are the relationships between families and *hamulas* fixed. The original Jerusalemite families (such as the Husseinis, Khalidis, Nashashibis and Nusseibehs) by and large do not constitute *hamulas*, like many families of urban origin around Palestine. *Hamulas* were brought to Jerusalem over the past 150 years by migrants, particularly from Hebron and Bethlehem, or via the incorporation of neighbouring villages such as Beit Hanina and Shuafat into the city’s boundaries.

⁷¹ The size and strength of extended families in East Jerusalem vary by neighbourhood. One of the distinguishing features of a neighbourhood is whether it has maintained the social structure of the village from which it grew, as in Beit Hanina and Silwan, or is comprised largely of relative newcomers, which is the case in parts of Sheikh Jarrah and the Old City. A Palestinian analyst noted that in the former case, their familiarity and solidarity “makes their capacity to organise much higher”, whereas in the latter “the lack of organic solidarity weakens the people’s ability to resist as a community”. Crisis Group interview, Khalil Toufakji, director of the Maps Department of the Arab Studies Society, Jerusalem, June 2010.

⁷² The authority of Jerusalem’s most venerable families, such as the Husseinis and the Nashashibis, was recognised by both British Mandate authorities and the Jordanians, who approved their appointment to key political and religious posts despite the risk of empowering a nationalist leadership. Both powers also encouraged families from Hebron to migrate to Jerusalem in order to create a rival elite. With the city’s veteran families dominating religious, political and administrative positions, the leaders of the Hebronite clans tended to be drawn to business and commercial activities, making them more eager for stability.

lies and neighbourhoods. They never gained legitimacy and were widely mistrusted for their connections with the state.⁷³ During the first intifada, a younger leadership emerged that organised in each neighbourhood and used family networks to mobilise support.⁷⁴ This was how Faysal Hussein, who eventually emerged as the undisputed leader of Jerusalem during the 1990s, initially gained stature.⁷⁵

Hussein's influence in the city masked deep changes that were occurring in the families' political role. Although some reminders of their influence endure – thus Adnan Hussein today serves as PA Jerusalem minister and Jerusalem governor – their political weight gradually eroded as Arab society changed, kinship ties weakened, and the PA grew.⁷⁶ A PA leader from Jerusalem noted that the inroads made by Ramallah during the Oslo process weakened the families' influence:

The heads of the important families stopped considering themselves responsible for the city and its political future. They expected the PA to pick up that burden. The tradition of duty towards Jerusalem

shared by the elite families died, and it's not likely to come back.⁷⁷

A scion of a prominent Jerusalem family – who in an earlier generation would have been well positioned for citywide leadership – noted that urban elites today use their social advantage for professional advancement, not political organising.⁷⁸

Even so, extended families continue to play a significant role in formal Jerusalem politics in at least one way. During PA elections, the *hamula* heads still mobilise voters within each clan in large numbers and therefore constitute a key address for political factions during campaigns.⁷⁹ Also, there are initial signs that, with a total absence of political authority in East Jerusalem, the larger families – as opposed to the notable families that formerly had the most influence in the city, such as the Husseins, Nashashibis and Nusseibehs – may be trying to assert their power. A civil society leader noted that in the past two years the biggest families had established a “Committee of the Hamulas” that is trying to assume a political role. “You see these families pushing forward some of their members: they start to organise political events, they hold press conferences, they produce leaflets, and they play a prominent role in resolving conflicts”.⁸⁰ But with few opportunities for formal political activity because of a widely observed boycott of Jerusalem municipal elections, it is far from clear what this involvement might yield.

A. SOCIAL BREAKDOWN

The breakdown of the urban leadership, the PA's inability to operate and tensions fuelled by the second intifada have created a social crisis in East Jerusalem's neighbourhoods, which rapidly are being transformed into what a Palestinian expert on the city called “slums”.⁸¹ While the area long has suffered from crime, particularly drug-related,⁸² over the past decade there has been a rapid proliferation of organised criminal gangs that engage in drug smuggling, gun-running, robberies and extortion. Many criminals work through the strongest clans;⁸³ former members of the Palestinian security

⁷³ The *mukhtars* were used as a practical channel of communication between the authorities and the biggest families in the city, and helped Jerusalemites with administrative matters such as seeking a building permit or an official document and even delivering the post. *Mukhtars*, however, often were despised by the local population because they typically charged extortionate amounts for their services and usually were assumed to be collaborating with Israel. Today, although some people have retained the title of *mukhtar*, they play no practical role. Crisis Group interview, Amir Cheshin, former adviser on Arab affairs to the Jerusalem mayor, Jerusalem, March 2012.

⁷⁴ Crisis Group interview, former senior PA official, Jerusalem, April 2011.

⁷⁵ Crisis Group interview, Khalil Toufakji, Jerusalem, March 2012.

⁷⁶ “In the 1930s and ‘40s being a member of those notable families was in and of itself enough. In the 1980s you still needed to be a member of these families, but you also needed a formal position, charisma and talent. Nowadays, affiliation with the families makes virtually no difference”. Crisis Group interview, former PA official, Jerusalem, March 2012. In the words of a PA leader from Jerusalem, the most notable families – the Husseins, Nashashibis and Nusseibehs – today “lack the power to lead the people. The notables were a Turkish creation that is no longer relevant. Adnan Hussein [of the Hussein family] was nominated Jerusalem governor but he holds little power”. Crisis Group interview, Jerusalem, September 2010. A Palestinian youth worker observed that members of the young generation of elite families are now best known for their talent at “office work, not mobilising the masses”. Crisis Group interview, Rami Nasreddin, head of PalVision youth empowerment NGO, Jerusalem, March 2012.

⁷⁷ Crisis Group interview, PA official, Ramallah, March 2012.

⁷⁸ Crisis Group interview, Ramallah, July 2012.

⁷⁹ Crisis Group interviews, Jerusalem, March-April 2012.

⁸⁰ Crisis Group interview, Zakaria Odeh, Jerusalem, March 2012.

⁸¹ Crisis Group interview, Ramallah, July 2011.

⁸² Jerusalem became a hub for drug smuggling in the 1970s, when borders between Israel and the West Bank were in effect erased following Israel's occupation. East Jerusalemite criminals established ties with drug runners in Israel, including among the Palestinian minority there. The most commonly traded drugs are cannabis and heroin.

⁸³ The most powerful gangs are said to be drawn disproportionately from the largest Hebronite families and from the Issawiya

forces in Jerusalem, particularly Preventive Security, also are alleged to set up their own rackets.⁸⁴ East Jerusalemites sometimes describe these groups as “mafias” that have exploited increased opportunities for criminal activity following Israel’s crackdown on Palestinian institutions in the city⁸⁵ as well as the reluctance of most crime victims to cooperate with Israeli authorities, including the police, for fear of public opprobrium. The result is “chaos” and “lawlessness”.⁸⁶

Gangs take advantage of the close-knit clan structure as well as the protection provided by the sheer numbers of their members.⁸⁷ A civil society worker observed:

Unless you’re from a large clan yourself, it’s almost impossible to set up a business in Jerusalem without one of the gangs coming to demand money to provide protection. I have my own business idea but never dared to go ahead with it because my family is just too small.⁸⁸

In a well-known case, a restaurant in the Sheikh Jarrah neighbourhood was fired upon by an armed gang, even though the restaurant is close to the tourist area of the Old City and Israel’s national police headquarters.⁸⁹ Business people who resist have been intimidated with death threats, beatings or shots fired at their homes.⁹⁰ A Palestinian journalist in Jerusalem, who has followed the rise of the gangs, said they were getting bolder. Sev-

eral apartment blocks in the Shuafat refugee camp, for example, had set up gun emplacements on their roofs: “They won’t be used since that would force Israel to act. But their presence is a way of showing who’s top dog. It is deterrence, a warning to others that it would be too dangerous to take on such a powerful family”.⁹¹

Many Palestinians accuse Israel of purposefully turning a blind eye to crime in their neighbourhoods to weaken social solidarity and therefore their ability to organise politically.⁹² However, when Israeli authorities do turn up in Arab areas, they are anything but welcomed. Given that the same authorities who enforce Israeli control are responsible for public security, tension is inevitable and certain areas have become virtual no-go zones for official Israeli representatives. Police avoid involvement in minor – and sometimes major – disputes in East Jerusalem because, as a community organiser in al-Tur said, they quickly become a lightning rod that makes a bad situation even worse.⁹³ Fire trucks, ambulances and several other municipal services require a police escort to enter certain neighbourhoods such as Shuafat; the police themselves sometimes are attacked.⁹⁴ Palestinians, not surprisingly, focus on the results of this reality: lives lost and communities destroyed because of the lack of government services.⁹⁵

The eastern part of the city, in sum, has become a rough and angry place. Almost everyone has a story of a fight – sometimes large and violent – that broke out over trivial matters

neighbourhood. Crisis Group interview, PA official, Jerusalem, March 2012.

⁸⁴ Crisis Group interviews, Jerusalem, March-April 2012.

⁸⁵ Adnan Husseini, governor of Jerusalem, explained that the PA, regarding social policing as part of a “national mission”, used its security services to root out drug dealers during the Oslo period. He added that today Palestinian security officers secretly working in the city were ineffective. “They are not respected because they are not armed and have no power to question or arrest someone with a blue [Israeli residency] ID card. They can do nothing to control or stop crime or restore order”. Crisis Group interview, Jerusalem, March 2012.

⁸⁶ Crisis Group interviews, Jerusalem, March-April 2012. An East Jerusalem shop-owner claimed that when a Jerusalemite was killed in a brawl near his shop, the Israeli police were never called – not least because the involved parties feared being labelled collaborators for doing so – nor did they come; the family simply took the body away for burial. Crisis Group interview, East Jerusalem, August 2010.

⁸⁷ “Some families are gangs, and some gangs originate within a family but break away from it”. Crisis Group interview, civil society activist, Jerusalem, March 2012.

⁸⁸ Crisis Group interview, Jerusalem, March 2012.

⁸⁹ “When the owner refused to hand the restaurant over to them, they shot it up with M16s. That’s what happens when no one is in charge”. Crisis Group interview, Palestinian journalist, Jerusalem, March 2012.

⁹⁰ Crisis Group interviews, Jerusalem, March-April 2012.

⁹¹ Crisis Group interview, Jerusalem, March 2012. He added: “There are lots of guns in East Jerusalem. But as long as they are used internally, Israel often turns a blind eye”.

⁹² The head of a Palestinian NGO claimed, “The Israeli police protect the drug dealers. I know a case on the Mount of Olives where the neighbourhood got together to force a drug dealer out of the house from which he was dealing. The police arrested the neighbours and moved him back in. He was never even investigated”. Crisis Group interview, Rami Nasreddin, head of PalVision, a youth empowerment NGO, Jerusalem, March 2012. This echoes Palestinian complaints that Israel recruits criminals, and particularly drug dealers, as collaborators in the West Bank.

⁹³ He explained: “When the Israeli police show up, they become the problem. One second two people or groups are fighting and the next second they both together turn against the Israeli police”. In the past several years, the police experimented with forming reconciliation committees, composed of local residents, holding special police-issued IDs, “but it didn’t work out because Jerusalemites considered them Israeli agents”. Crisis Group interview, Jerusalem, 1 August 2012.

⁹⁴ A Jerusalem police official said, “once we drove into Shoafat to protect a Magen David Adom ambulance that went to save a life, to help the residents. We got stones thrown at us. Four patrol cars were smashed to bits”. “Refugee camp near Jerusalem becomes a haven for drug dealers”, *Haaretz*, 21 November 2011.

⁹⁵ A camp organiser cited an alleged example of two children burning to death as a firetruck sat at Shuafat’s entrance, waiting for a police escort. *Ibid.*

such as a perceived insult, a contested parking space or a house built too close to another.⁹⁶ As a result, their experience of the city is changing. East Jerusalemites increasingly are reluctant to venture out in their neighbourhoods after dark,⁹⁷ owing to fear as well as the lack of nightlife. More of the city's Arab residents are making their way for leisure either to Ramallah or, increasingly, the Israeli side of the city – a trip encouraged by the light rail; better lit and safer streets; work opportunities; and the shopping and nightlife.⁹⁸

⁹⁶ Adnan Hussein, governor of Jerusalem, cited an instance of all three. Crisis Group interview, Jerusalem, March 2012. A PA official added: "Last year a huge fight started between two neighbourhoods in Silwan. Before, Orient House officials would have dealt with it long before it got to that stage. Instead, it spiralled out of control and turned very violent. The [Israeli] police only got involved when some of the participants started using guns". Crisis Group interview, Jerusalem, March 2012.

⁹⁷ According to Musa Budeiri, a politics professor who lives in Sheikh Jarrah, "there is now a vast underclass in East Jerusalem. Even the once-respectable neighbourhoods have become little more than slums – not just in the sense of a lack of services, but also in terms of the internal relationships. The absence of the police – and the resulting drugs, crimes and fighting – touches everyone's life. There is a palpable sense that no one and nowhere is safe". Crisis Group interview, Jerusalem, March 2012. A civil society activist observed: "Just look at the streets. Even a busy shopping and cultural area like Saladdin Street is empty by 6 or 7 pm. Normal people are too frightened to go out. The gangs are in charge of the streets". Crisis Group interview, Jerusalem, March 2012.

⁹⁸ Crisis Group interview, Arab shop owner, West Jerusalem, July 2012. This has provoked a backlash. The shop owner noted that Arabs circulating around his shop faced occasional harassment by police and by groups of young Jews "who aggressively talk trash to them – like asking them why they are free and walk here while Jews cannot walk around Nablus or Gaza". In an especially egregious instance, tens of young Jews, chanting anti-Arab slogans, launched an assault on three Palestinians in the centre of West Jerusalem, sending one to the hospital. One of the (Jewish) responders later reported that as he treated the wounded Palestinian, a Jewish bystander said to him, "he's an Arab, and they shouldn't be roaming around our downtown, and they deserve it because maybe that way they'll finally be afraid". *Maariv*, 19 August 2012.

III. DIMINISHED HORIZONS

East Jerusalemites, disempowered, by necessity have changed their focus. Unable to forge a citywide leadership and facing myriad problems in their daily lives, their struggles in the city no longer concentrate on a set of unified concerns. Instead, they are consumed with far more basic and quotidian issues, doing what they can to simply tread water.

A. STAND YOUR GROUND

Surviving and persevering, in Palestinian parlance, go under the name of *sumud* (steadfastness).⁹⁹ In East Jerusalem, various *sumud* initiatives have been introduced over the past few years that revolve around developing communities' social, economic and cultural capacities, with a particular emphasis on children.¹⁰⁰ This, local organisers hope, will serve as a way to fortify the Arab community and prevent the loss of identity, social breakdown and emigration from the city. The academic and business communities try to play a role,¹⁰¹ as do civil society groups seeking to revive cultural activities in East Jerusalem after years of somnolence.¹⁰²

⁹⁹ A Palestinian analyst explained the idea of *sumud*: "Israel wants this city more than anywhere else and is determined to push us out any way it can. To stop that process, we have to entrench ourselves in the city. We must ensure our roots are so deep that we cannot be pulled from the earth". Crisis Group interview, Jerusalem, March 2012.

¹⁰⁰ "We can't look to most of the schools to help in this regard. They are controlled by the municipality and their role is precisely the opposite – to erode our Palestinian identity, to make us weak and dependent". Crisis Group interview, civil society leader, Jerusalem, March 2012. A PA official in Jerusalem added: "Education is the key to maintaining Palestinian identity. We need control over the curriculum – not only the technical administration of the *tawjihi* [matriculation] exams". Crisis Group interview, Jerusalem, March 2012.

¹⁰¹ Al-Quds University's Old City campus, which opened next to the Holy Esplanade at the end of the 1990s, has in recent years held cultural events for children and students as well as tours of a recently restored Mamluk bathhouse on its grounds. The staff takes evident pride in highlighting their role as guardians of parts of the Old City's heritage in the face of Israeli opposition. "We are a thorn in their side. Israel claims that we are part of the Palestinian Authority so it can stop our activities. But we hold on. We refuse to be intimidated or silenced". Crisis Group interview, Huda Imam, head of the Center for Jerusalem Studies, Al-Quds University, Jerusalem, March 2012.

¹⁰² All three of East Jerusalem's cinemas closed during the first intifada and never reopened. In early 2012, the Yarbous Cultural Centre opened in a long-unused cinema. The director, Rania Elias, described her goals: "The idea was to support people to stay in the city. Critics said culture was not a priority, but we believe dancing, singing, reading, laughing are all forms of resistance, a non-violent resistance. Also, it's important we don't allow Israel to

1. Popular committees

Social disorder in the city has not gone entirely unchallenged. As crime has risen, individual neighbourhoods have tried to assert communal authority through the establishment of local popular committees. These are active in the roughest of communities, where the disruption from Israeli settlement activity is most acute. An activist from Silwan – the location of the strongest committees – explained the rationale: “In Jerusalem we have started to understand that no one is going to help us apart from ourselves. We can’t rely on the PA, the municipality or the political parties to make sure we have homes, food or security”.¹⁰³ But as even the most committed of activists realise, these committees will not be a panacea.

Popular committees came to prominence, including in Jerusalem, during the first intifada, as grassroots vehicles for organising and mobilising individual communities in the struggle against the occupation, chiefly through such civil disobedience as strikes, non-payment of taxes and boycotts of Israeli products, as well as protest marches that often led to stone-throwing clashes with the army.¹⁰⁴ As of 2003, they reappeared in some West Bank villages close to the Green Line in reaction to the loss of agricultural lands due to the Separation Barrier.¹⁰⁵ In recent years, they have spread to Jerusalem, though activists admit many “barely function” or are only in the process of establishing themselves.¹⁰⁶ Some essentially are groupings of prominent neighbourhood figures who come together to reconcile feuding parties “over a cup of coffee and a kiss on the moustache”.¹⁰⁷ Other times they coalesce around a specific cause – such as fighting drugs, protecting Al-Aqsa or maintaining the Islamic cemeteries – and vanish as quickly as they are

turn us into a cultural ghetto; we need to connect to the outside world. That’s why we concentrate on organising festivals and concerts, and especially promoting Palestinian artists”. Crisis Group interview, Jerusalem, March 2012.

¹⁰³ Crisis Group interview, Silwan activist, Jerusalem, March 2012.

¹⁰⁴ The committees organised local resistance under the direction of the United National Leadership of the Uprising, an underground movement that coordinated activity throughout the occupied territories.

¹⁰⁵ Some of the most effective popular committees in the West Bank have been based in the villages of Budrus, Biddu, Maasara, Bilin, Nilin and Nabi Saleh.

¹⁰⁶ Jawad Siyam, widely credited as the driving force behind Silwan’s committee, said many areas had weak committees because the organisers had failed to maintain a connection to the residents. Crisis Group interview, Jerusalem, April 2012.

¹⁰⁷ The “kiss on the moustache” is an Arabic expression for a gentleman’s agreement. Crisis Group interview, Al-Tur, July 2012.

formed.¹⁰⁸ Silwan committee, dating to 2008,¹⁰⁹ is the model that other neighbourhoods seek to emulate,¹¹⁰ with Issawiya close behind.¹¹¹

Although clearly inspired by the relative success of their West Bank counterparts,¹¹² Jerusalem’s popular committees display a marked difference. Despite a perception that the committees, especially Silwan’s, primarily are struggling against Israeli occupation and settlers, activists say their chief goal, at this stage at least, is to reverse the process of social disintegration and, more specifically, counter the rise of criminal gangs. An activist remarked: “Of course, we want to end the occupation, but we can’t achieve anything until we are united as a community. We need discipline to organise resistance, and that is the first task we have set ourselves”.¹¹³ Another added: “The need to stop the settlers is pressing. But how can you think of taking them on unless the community first roots out the drug dealers and collaborators who work with them? The problem is not only that Israel is so strong. It is that we are so weak”.¹¹⁴

¹⁰⁸ “Most of these are just tools to bring in money. They sometimes get funds from the PA, since they know that Fayyad can’t say ‘no’, because he wants to appear that he is supporting the people in Jerusalem. The really deep pockets are in the Gulf. But while there are a lot of committees promoting themselves and raising money, you never see any projects that they promised. The money vanishes into thin air”. Crisis Group interview, Al-Tur community organiser, Jerusalem, July 2012.

¹⁰⁹ According to Jawad Siyam, the Silwan committee was established in 2005 but only became active in 2008 after the Jerusalem municipality publicly justified its neglect of Silwan by claiming that it had no one to talk to. Crisis Group interview, Jerusalem, April 2012. The Silwan committee received a licence from the municipality for its community centre in 2009, but members said the authorities had been trying to shut it down ever since, on the grounds that it was supported by the PA. A demolition order against the building has been issued and is currently being challenged by the committee. Crisis Group interview, Mahmoud Siyam, Jerusalem, March 2012. In Silwan as in other large communities, a central popular committee incorporates smaller neighbourhood committees.

¹¹⁰ Mahmoud Siyam of Silwan said other committees, especially in the Old City and Mount of Olives, had been asking for help to organise more effectively. Assistance also has been solicited by individuals, including a woman in Shufat whose house was wanted by a gang and a businessman from Beit Hanina who was being threatened by land sellers. Crisis Group interviews, Jerusalem, March 2012.

¹¹¹ Issawiya’s committee is known for its focus on urban planning.

¹¹² “Some activists criticise us too, saying that Israel and the international community don’t understand non-violent struggle. We try to persuade them, using the comparison to the first intifada and the success of actions in places like Bilin”. Crisis Group interview, Palestinian activist, Jerusalem, March 2012.

¹¹³ Crisis Group interview, Jerusalem, March 2012.

¹¹⁴ Crisis Group interview, Irene Nasser, Jerusalem, March 2012. She added: “The popular committees in Jerusalem are different

As a result, their activities focus on awareness-building, both locally and internationally; patrols to stop drug dealers and other criminals from entering the neighbourhood;¹¹⁵ educating residents about the threats posed by settlers;¹¹⁶ and organising protests against settler activity and police repression.¹¹⁷ But with organisation primarily voluntary and informal, the committees depend heavily on the contribution of young, committed and charismatic leaders,¹¹⁸ one of whom called their activities “a band-aid”:

You can't compare us to the committees in the first intifada. We don't have the money, the power or the connections to the wider Palestinian struggle that they had. Their struggle was for a Palestinian state and dignity. Ours is to stop the worst excesses of the

from those in the West Bank. Nabil Saleh, for example, consists of 500 people from the same family who share the same political affiliation. The community is cohesive, making it much easier to organise the struggle. But in an urban settling like Jerusalem, where there are many families forced together into neighbourhoods and who have different political agendas, there is a much weaker sense of community and allegiance. It's much harder to establish a consensus. It's not like a West Bank village where you can sit all the boys down. Navigating the internal complications of a Jerusalem community can be perilous. It's often difficult to know who to trust and who is a collaborator”.

¹¹⁵ “We used to have a problem with extortion, but we put a stop to that. Today, the biggest problem is from the drug gangs, but their power is waning. They keep returning because they are supported by the police. But the families have joined the fight against the dealers; now we are no longer afraid of them”.

¹¹⁶ A Silwan community organiser said, “years ago, when we were not aware of the danger, we shared valuable information with settlers like [City of David founder and leader] David Be'eri. We just signed documents they showed us, believing that they were mere formalities. The settlers acquired houses that way. No more. Today we fight them by being alert and suspicious. This way we slow them down”.

¹¹⁷ Crisis Group interview, Israeli solidarity leader, Jerusalem, October 2010; Crisis Group interview, Adnan Ghaith, Fatah secretary general in Silwan, Jerusalem, October 2010.

¹¹⁸ “We are not politically affiliated. We organise informally to help each other, and it is not important which political party you belong to. Our aims are chiefly humanitarian and about fostering solidarity”.

Crisis Group interview, Mahmoud Siyam, Jerusalem, March 2012. Silwan's committee depends primarily on local donations and limited funds from European, mainly German, donors. “Foreign donations cause a problem. The donors want peace projects and find our notions of struggle difficult to accommodate. It sometimes feels like they would prefer it if we devised a coexistence project with the settlers!”

Crisis Group interview, Silwan activist, Jerusalem, March 2012.

occupation, to try to restore a little bit of normality to our situation.¹¹⁹

As the only visible local leadership in East Jerusalem,¹²⁰ the popular committees often are blamed by Israel for the violence that breaks out in areas of confrontation. In this regard all popular committees are not the same. In Silwan, community leaders deny any responsibility and in fact seem to have limited control.¹²¹ They insist that they are committed to non-violent strategies for defeating the occupation,¹²² blame clashes on Israeli provocations that typically result in local youths throwing stones at settlers or soldiers,¹²³ and claim harassment by the security services.¹²⁴ In Issawiya, by contrast, popular committee members are less disciplined.¹²⁵ The security services, recalling the first intifada, see matters differently. They admit that on the whole the popular committees today are not violent, even if some members are, but they are concerned about future developments and fault the committees for stirring up trouble by engaging in what com-

¹¹⁹ Crisis Group interview, Mahmoud Siyam, Jerusalem, March 2012.

¹²⁰ As such, they are the natural address for cooperation with Israeli solidarity and Islamist activists, as described below. Crisis Group interviews, Israeli solidarity leader and Silwan activist Fakhri Abu Diab, Jerusalem, October and December 2010.

¹²¹ A community leader explained: “Parents do what they can to prevent their kids from getting involved in violence but there is a limit given the reality they are living. Take the example of the Gaza war [in late 2008]. We made the decision that in fact it was better to get the kids out of the house, since watching what was happening on TV would have been even worse for them”.

¹²² “The popular committees are a clever way to struggle. We are operating within Israeli law and so we lose fewer people to jails”.

Crisis Group interview, Silwan activist, Jerusalem, March 2012. Silwan's Jawad Siyam was trained in non-violent mobilisation by, and worked with, the German Civil Peace Service. Crisis Group interview, Israeli peace activist, Jerusalem, August 2011.

¹²³ “Israel finds our non-violent demonstrations difficult to deal with, so they seek to provoke clashes with the young people, who are still not properly organised. It's easy for the police to do: they can make arrests or threaten to destroy our community centre. We sound naïve when we urge the youth in Silwan not to engage in violence – they face violence from Israel and the settlers every day of their lives”.

Crisis Group interview, Jawad Siyam, Jerusalem, April 2012.

¹²⁴ Crisis Group interview, Jawad Siyam, Jerusalem, March 2012. Israel invoked emergency regulations from the British Mandate period to bar access to Jerusalem for Adnan Ghaith, secretary general of Fatah in Silwan and a popular committee organiser, for a period of nine months, through much of 2011. He was accused of incitement and stone-throwing. See silwanic.net/?p=21173. Likewise, Israel placed Jawad Siyam under house arrest for four months in early 2011, pending a trial for assault. See silwanic.net/?p=14385.

¹²⁵ Crisis Group interview, Israeli analyst, Jerusalem, December 2012.

munity organisers describe as awareness-promotion and Israeli security forces as incitement to violence.¹²⁶

2. Haram al-Sharif (“Noble Sanctuary”)

Since the onset of the second intifada, Muslim access to the Holy Esplanade has ebbed and flowed, although there is no doubt that it is more difficult today than it was in September 2000. Israel hardened limitations on access to Jerusalem for Palestinians from the West Bank and Gaza, making it nearly impossible for most to reach the Old City’s mosques;¹²⁷ in parallel, the government intermittently imposes age restrictions preventing Jerusalemites from entering the Holy Esplanade.¹²⁸ (Those restrictions were relaxed markedly in 2012 during Ramadan, when hundreds of thousands of West Bank Palestinians were permitted to enter Jerusalem, though it is not yet clear if this was an exceptional occurrence or the beginning of a trend.)¹²⁹ Conversely, as of 2003 Israeli

authorities reopened the site to tourists and Israeli Jews, over both PA and Waqf opposition.¹³⁰ Israel, meanwhile, has quietly encouraged a shift towards greater Jordanian influence in the Waqf and a concomitant diminishment of the PA’s role.¹³¹

While the Holy Esplanade has long been the centre of Islamic and Arabs concerns, its centrality to Jerusalem’s politics has increased over the past decade for a number of reasons. First, with Palestinian collective activity in the city all but forbidden, it has become one of the few venues where Arabs can gather en masse and where they still exert some measure of control. The site’s religious sanctity means that Israel refrained from complete domination, leaving Palestinians some margin of manoeuvre. Secondly, with the Israeli-Palestinian conflict having turned toward the religious and Tem-

¹²⁶ Crisis Group interviews, former defence official, Jerusalem, February 2010; Palestinian activists, Jerusalem, May-October 2010.

¹²⁷ A Waqf official argued: “Israel has built an effective iron wall around Al-Aqsa. Four million Palestinians cannot pray in their mosque or visit the city”. Crisis Group interview, Waqf official, Jerusalem, May 2012. Another official observed: “When Abu Mazen calls on the Arab and Muslim worlds to visit Jerusalem, it is all for show. He himself can’t visit Jerusalem without permission from the Israelis!” Crisis Group interview, Jerusalem, May 2012.

¹²⁸ On days when Israel fears clashes at the site, it typically prevents Muslim men under the age of 45 or 50 from entering. More recently, women under 45 also have faced restrictions. A Waqf employee pointed out that Israeli soldiers and policemen control the access to all of the Esplanade’s gates (even though the key that Israel holds is to the Mughrabi Gate), “which means they decide who can come in and out based on orders from their commanders”. Crisis Group interview, Jerusalem, April 2012. Another Waqf official claimed that 200 Arab Jerusalemites were banned from ascending to the plateau. Crisis Group interview, official in the Al-Aqsa archive department, Jerusalem, May 2012.

¹²⁹ Israel permitted all married women, men with children, and males under the age of eighteen and over the age of 40 to enter Jerusalem without a permit. In total 980,000 Palestinians entered Jerusalem during Ramadan – twice as many as in 2011. Menachem Adoni, “Summary of Ramadan Month: Approximately One Million Palestinians Entered Israel, Co-ordination of Government Activities in the Territories”, 20 August 2012, www.cogat.idf.il/901-10387-en/Cogat.aspx. PA security personnel were present at the Qalandiya checkpoint (within the municipal Jerusalem boundaries and therefore usually off-limits), where they jointly directed traffic with Israeli troops. There were no clashes, and many Palestinians expressed satisfaction at the number allowed to enter Jerusalem. On the east side of the Old City, large thoroughfares were cordoned off to make room for buses and heavy

foot traffic. Crisis Group observations, Jerusalem, 27 July and 3 and 10 August 2012.

¹³⁰ “Police start to reopen Temple Mount to Jews”, *Jerusalem Post*, 1 July 2003. The report noted that the decision to open the Esplanade to non-Muslims was “made possible after [Israeli] security officials deemed that the influence of the Palestinian Authority in Jerusalem was on the wane, after a two-year-long ongoing police crackdown on Palestinian political activity in the city”.

¹³¹ After the outbreak of the second intifada, Israel permitted Jordan to oversee and carry out repairs to the compound and take a stronger lead in administrative matters, sidelining the PA’s religious affairs ministry. The PA’s influence in the Waqf was further weakened in 2006, when Mahmoud Abbas fired Ikrima Sabri, a popular Sheikh and Arafat’s appointee as Grand Mufti, who himself had replaced a Jordanian-appointed rival in the late 1990s. Both Israel and Jordan had objected to Sabri’s fiery political statements and feared his growing alliance in Jerusalem with Israel’s Islamic Movement. Crisis Group interviews, Palestinian analyst and Jerusalem journalist, Jerusalem, March 2012; “Jordan allocates \$1.5m to rebuild Temple Mount”, *Haaretz*, 24 September 2007. Abbas appointed a much less charismatic sheikh, Mohammad Hussein, in place of Sabri, who remains Al-Aqsa’s chief orator. Jordan cemented its role the following year with its appointment of Sheikh Azzam Khatib, who, as head of the Jerusalem Waqf, has become the Haram al-Sharif’s pre-eminent authority. An Israeli security official observed that, for some time, the surrounding Arab states have been ready to cooperate with Israel’s policies. They “feared that Arafat’s exploitation of [Al-Aqsa] for his own ‘revolutionary’ designs was intended not only to destroy Israel but also to ignite the Arab and Islamic masses throughout the region to overthrow other dictatorships and monarchies”. Dan Diker, “The Expulsion of the Palestinian Authority from Jerusalem and the Temple Mount”, 5 August 2004. jcpa.org/brief/brief3-31.htm. The Waqf, under Jordanian control, also reportedly has been readier to cooperate with Israeli police and give them greater access to the Haram. “The police nowadays have a much greater presence inside the Haram – there are more cameras and more supervision – on the logic that otherwise Jewish extremists will try to blow the site up”. Crisis Group interview, Palestinian analyst, June 2011.

ple Mount activism among Jews increasing,¹³² Arab and Islamic reactions to perceived aggression have sharpened. Thirdly, individual politicians – such as Sheikh Raed Salah, the leader of the northern branch of the Islamic Movement in Israel¹³³ – have exploited the Holy Esplanade for political gain. And fourthly, controversial archaeological and restoration works conducted by Israel around the Esplanade, and by the Jordanian Waqf on it, have fuelled tensions.

The Haram al-Sharif is used for many purposes, not only religious ritual; it is a unique social outlet, a place that virtually all Palestinians – Christians included¹³⁴ – view as their national patrimony. While only a tiny (albeit growing) minority of religious Jews ascend the plateau, Muslims face no comparable religious restrictions; to the contrary, Arab Jerusalemites of all stripes frequent what in practice is East Jerusalem's biggest park. In 2012, with Israel easing entrance requirements during Ramadan, hundreds of thousands from around the West Bank made the trek each Friday – some staying behind and sleeping on the Esplanade for nights on end – with upwards of 200,000 present for Laylat al-Qadr (Night of Destiny), the final night of the holy month.¹³⁵ The atmosphere was so festive that some clerics expressed

discomfort about what they saw as insufficient religiosity.¹³⁶

Still, religious and national fervour is never far from the surface. Palestinians and Arabs widely credit the assertion that the Jewish claim to the site is historically false, as well as the accusation that Israel is trying to destroy the Al-Aqsa Mosque and replace it with the Third Temple.¹³⁷ Neither stands up to scrutiny¹³⁸ and are offensive to Israeli Jews, but on the ground in the Old City, in the politically charged atmosphere of occupation, that hardly matters. It is, for example, an article of faith among the vast majority of Palestinians that Israel is digging under the mosques¹³⁹ and that the city's sacred grounds require defence. An Islamist educator conveyed the intensity of this sentiment: "Al-Aqsa is

¹³² See Crisis Group Middle East Report N°134, *Extreme Makeover? (I): Israel's Politics of Land and Faith in East Jerusalem*, pp. 19-23.

¹³³ "Jerusalem is the gateway for the Islamic Movement to connect to the wider Arab and Muslim world". Crisis Group interview, Palestinian analyst, Jerusalem, March 2012. Knesset member Ibrahim Sarsour, former leader of the southern branch of the Islamic Movement, said Salah had focused on Jerusalem and Al-Aqsa because they are "taken very seriously by the wider Arab and Muslim public. This is why Sheikh Salah became more famous than me or Sheikh [Hamad] Abu Daabis [Sarsour's successor as leader]". Crisis Group interview, Kafr Qassim, September 2011. Salah's activism in Jerusalem is detailed below and in Crisis Group Middle East Report N°119, *Back to Basics: Israel's Arab Minority and the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict*, 14 March 2012.

¹³⁴ "Just like for Muslims, the Haram is important to Christians as a national symbol. Churches and mosques in Palestine are Palestinian holy places". Crisis Group interview, Hanna Issa, head of the Islamic-Christian Commission in Support of Jerusalem and the Holy Sites, Jerusalem, October 2012.

¹³⁵ Analyst Mahdi Abdul-Hadi described that night: "The Old City felt liberated for a night as crowds swarmed through the Damascus Gate, surging down the Old City's [packed] alleyways to reach the deeply symbolic site of Haram al-Sharif. The sheer number of people totally overwhelmed the city's infrastructure". "Laylat al-Qadr brings hope of an open city of Jerusalem", *Maan*, 16 August 2012.

¹³⁶ "Visits to the Haram should give the place its due respect". Crisis Group interview, Waqf employee, Jerusalem, September 2012.

¹³⁷ For an exemplar of accusations against Israel, see Muhammad Abu Ata, "The Ferocious Attack on the Al-Aqsa Mosque" [Arabic], *Muwassat al-aqsa liwaqf wa al-turath* [The Al-Aqsa Foundation for Waqf and Heritage], 31 July 2012. See their website at www.iaqsa.com For a rebuttal of such claims, see Nadav Shragai, "The 'Al-Aqsa is in Danger' Libel: The History of a Lie", Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs, 2012.

¹³⁸ A prominent Palestinian expert on Jerusalem and its archaeology said he is confident no work is taking place under the Haram al-Sharif. Crisis Group interview, Jerusalem, September 2010. Two expert delegations (UNESCO and Turkey), after visiting the site in 2010, concluded that Al-Aqsa was not at risk. Crisis Group interview, former Israeli diplomat, Jerusalem, January 2011; "Report of the Technical Mission to the Old City of Jerusalem (27 February-2 March 2007)", 12 March 2007, at whc.unesco.org/uploads/news/documents/news-315-1.pdf. Palestinian fears are not entirely groundless. The same Palestinian expert testified that in the 1980s, he was part of a Palestinian group that uncovered Israeli digging under the Haram al-Sharif; the team publicised the dig and blocked it with cement. Other excavations, such as the Western Wall tunnels, brushed right up against the Holy Esplanade, and state funds have been dedicated to associations preparing objects necessary for worship at the Third Temple. Hillel Cohen, op. cit., p. 3. More broadly, Israel has conducted excavations under the Muslim Quarter that have caused structural damage and even the collapse of properties, including those belonging to the Waqf. Michael Dumper, op. cit., p. 179.

¹³⁹ "I do not know whether to cry or to laugh when I hear these accusations", said Western Wall Rabbi Shmuel Rabinowitz, "How can they make up such lies?" Crisis Group interview, Jerusalem, October 2011. He added: "All the excavations are open, not to the public, but to journalists, archaeologists, political leaders and the Waqf. The sites cannot be opened to the public during the excavations for safety reasons. We have repeatedly asked Arab archaeological experts to come to observe, but they never have. Once President Peres went to visit President Mubarak at a time when there were reports in the media about our digging under the [two] mosques [on the Holy Esplanade]. Peres called me on his way to Cairo to find out what the brouhaha was all about. I assured him that we were not digging there. He asked me what he should tell Mubarak. I told him to tell Mubarak to send an expert who would have free access to all parts of all our sites. No one ever came".

at the centre of Muslim identity, and for that reason we will be ferocious in its defence. Defending Al-Aqsa is self-defence. It is defending your identity, your creed. You defend it like you defend your basic sustenance. A threat to Aqsa is a threat not just to your dignity but to your existence".¹⁴⁰ Such feeling is not limited to the ostensibly religious. A professional in Jerusalem, whose dress and lifestyle many would take for secular, echoed the personal sense of obligation:

We are raised to think it's our duty to protect Al-Aqsa. It's an individual duty, tantamount to the protection of Islam itself. Jerusalemites have a special responsibility in this regard. We are the Ahl al-Ribat [Guardians] in the Ard al-Ribat [Palestine, literally, the land over which guard is stood]. This responsibility is not assigned by Abbas or Arafat, by Fatah or Hamas. It's a sacred mission that all Jerusalemites adhere to.¹⁴¹

The intensity of sentiment is such that even small or imagined provocations can set off a response, with thousands of Palestinians taking up the call.¹⁴² This is happening with increased frequency as more Jews ascend the Temple Mount, leading to jangled nerves among Israeli security services.¹⁴³ Palestinian mobilisation occurs locally and informally – via word of mouth, social network websites and calls at individual mosques – and is not limited to religious fringe groups. In the words of the Jerusalemite professional, "if I were there when the Israelis broke in, I'd probably throw stones myself. Nobody from Hamas, Fatah or anyone else has to tell you to. It is an individual responsibility".¹⁴⁴ In much of the city, where the Arab presence is so broken and local leadership so lacking, people wonder, as a Palestinian analyst did, "why would anyone put their body on the

line? What would you be fighting for?"¹⁴⁵ The Haram al-Sharif is perhaps the only place in the city where that question has a clear answer.

B. EAST JERUSALEM'S NEW ISRAELI HINTERLAND?

East Jerusalem, long an integral part of the West Bank, has been torn away from its natural hinterland. Politically and administratively isolated from the Palestinian centre of gravity in Ramallah, some in the city are looking for new sources of support. Some have to make common cause with Israeli citizens, either in the form of Jewish solidarity activists or, more commonly, with Palestinian citizens of Israel in the Israeli Islamic Movement.¹⁴⁶ A small but increasing number of Jerusalemites, after more than four decades of boycotting the State of Israel, are searching for ways to engage it.

1. Solidarity movement

The solidarity movement in Jerusalem¹⁴⁷ – dominated by Israeli Jews,¹⁴⁸ mostly students in their twenties, though also with participation of small numbers from Israel's Palestinian minority – emerged in 2009 with demonstrations against the eviction of Palestinian families in Sheikh Jarrah, a small East Jerusalem neighbourhood close to the Old City.¹⁴⁹ The organisers successfully staged weekly protests there that, at their height in 2010, attracted more than 1,000 activists, as well as high-profile supporters such as David Grossman, a leading Israeli author, and former U.S. President Jimmy

¹⁴⁰ Crisis Group interview, Jerusalem, August 2012.

¹⁴¹ Crisis Group interview, Jerusalem, August 2012. A civil society leader commented: "Israel's attacks on Al-Aqsa are the one thing that galvanises people to act to defend Jerusalem. Al-Aqsa is a symbol that makes us feel we still have some dignity". Crisis Group interview, Rami Nasreddin, director of PalVision, Jerusalem, March 2012.

¹⁴² Hillel Cohen reports that in 2006, a mistake by an Israeli sound engineer led to the erroneous broadcasting of the call to prayer at 12:45 am, in response to which thousands of Palestinians, assuming that it was a call to defend the Haram, flocked to the site. Hillel Cohen, op. cit., p. 71.

¹⁴³ Crisis Group interview, former Israeli Security Agency officer, Jerusalem, January 2011.

¹⁴⁴ Crisis Group interview, Jerusalem, August 2012. A Palestinian peace activist was similarly unequivocal: "If we see anyone harming Al-Aqsa, I will take my son and we will go to protect it with our bodies. All Palestinians will come. Nothing will stop us". Crisis Group interview, Jerusalem, January 2011.

¹⁴⁵ Crisis Group interview, Jerusalem, August 2012.

¹⁴⁶ For more on the Arab minority in Israel, see Crisis Group Report, *Back to Basics*, op. cit.

¹⁴⁷ The group traces its roots to several organisations active during the second intifada, including Taayush [Co-Existence], Anarchists against the Wall and the Bilin Campaign. In 2010, protest leaders formed a non-profit organisation under the name Solidarity Sheikh Jarrah. Crisis Group interview, Israeli solidarity leader, Jerusalem, October 2010. Though increasingly institutionalised, the group still exhibits some anarchist tendencies; thus, the movement has no specific formal leader or spokesperson, opting instead for a model of collective leadership.

¹⁴⁸ There have been small-scale examples of cooperation between Israeli Jews and Palestinian residents dating back to the mid-1980s. Faysal Hussein began cultivating contacts with Israeli left-wing groups at about the same time, which continued during the first intifada and intensified during the heyday of the Oslo period in the 1990s. With a few notable exceptions, joint activity mostly ended after the outbreak of the second intifada. Hillel Cohen, op. cit., pp. 92-99.

¹⁴⁹ Both Palestinians and Israeli Jews argue they have a superior historical claim to the area. For Palestinians, Sheikh Jarrah is named after the tomb of Salah al-Din's (Saladin's) physician, dating to 1201. For Israelis, the area includes the tomb of Simeon the Just, a Jewish High Priest during the Second Temple era.

Carter.¹⁵⁰ The police responded by repeatedly arresting leaders, making national news in Israel.¹⁵¹ Attendance fell significantly before protests were officially ended in autumn 2011.¹⁵² Even before the local activities faltered, solidarity leaders tried to take their movement to the national level, launching protests against evictions of families in Israel – be they Palestinian in the Arab town of Taybeh or poor Jews in Beit Shean – and sought to assist popular committees from other neighbourhoods in Jerusalem troubled by planned evictions such as Silwan, Issawiya and Al-Tur.¹⁵³

The future of the solidarity movement in Jerusalem and its ability to forge a credible alliance with Palestinian activists, including within the popular committees, is much in doubt. The Palestinian turnout for the Sheikh Jarrah demonstrations was low, typically fewer than a dozen even at their height; while other popular committees around Jerusalem initially sought the solidarity movement's assistance, joint activities rapidly decreased. Several reasons were put forward. Some activists were averse to working with Israelis, often on the grounds joint activity implied acceptance of Israel's stance on a "united Jerusalem".¹⁵⁴ Others believed Palestinians should prioritise creating their own grassroots political movement, sensing that, as the weaker party, their voice otherwise would be lost. Still others argued the Sheikh Jarrah approach risked turning the conflict over East Jerusalem into an internal Jewish matter, between the left and settlers. Scepticism about solidarity activities in Jerusalem was apparently confirmed, when Sheikh Jarrah elected a new popular committee that invested in

legal strategies rather than demonstrations beside Jewish Israelis.¹⁵⁵

2. Northern branch of the Islamic Movement

Of more significance has been the emergence of Sheikh Raed Salah, a charismatic political and religious leader from the Palestinian minority inside Israel. Salah, who heads the northern branch of the Islamic Movement,¹⁵⁶ is one of the most respected politicians among Israel's Arab citizens. With Palestinian political activity mostly paralysed in East Jerusalem over the past decade, his influence has rapidly spread there too.¹⁵⁷ He cemented his popularity with East Jerusalemites – as well as with his own Muslim constituency inside Israel – by focusing much of his movement's attention on the city, especially, albeit not exclusively, its Islamic holy sites.

The Islamic Movement's involvement in Jerusalem dates to 1996, when it began a series of annual rallies under the banner "Al-Aqsa is in Danger".¹⁵⁸ The campaign was prompted by Prime Minister Netanyahu's decision to open the northern end of the Western Wall tunnels, located near the Western Wall. Sheikh Kamal Khatib, Salah's deputy, depicted the move as "a plan to Judaize the area surrounding Al-Aqsa".¹⁵⁹ In later years, using the same slogan, the Islamic Movement has regularly mobilised its supporters in Israel and Jerusalem to protest against what Salah characterises as infringements on Islamic sovereignty over the Holy Esplanade.¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁰ "Former U.S. President Carter joins Sheikh Jarrah protests", *Haaretz*, 24 October 2010.

¹⁵¹ Most notoriously, during a protest in January 2010, the police arrested Hagai El-Ad, director of the Association of Civil Rights in Israel, the country's best-known human rights organisation. His arrest and that of sixteen others was deemed illegal at a Jerusalem court hearing. "Court frees 17 Sheikh Jarrah protesters, says arrest was illegal", *Haaretz*, 18 January 2010.

¹⁵² The movement's official reason for ending the protests was that it had achieved its primary goal of delaying the takeover of more homes in Sheikh Jarrah, www.en.justjlm.org/584.

¹⁵³ "Veteran activist tells the story of Sheikh Jarrah protests", +972 blog, 23 March 2012. According to a solidarity leader, "the Sheikh Jarrah Friday demonstrations serve as an entry point for many to more significant activism – not only in Sheikh Jarrah or in East Jerusalem". Crisis Group interview, Jerusalem, October 2010.

¹⁵⁴ A former Orient House employee observed: "Unlike Faysal [Husseini], who made it a point to cooperate with Israelis who sought national Palestinian liberation, whatever Palestinian leadership exists today in East Jerusalem considers cooperation with Israelis – any Israelis – to be illegitimate". Crisis Group interview, Jerusalem, June 2011.

¹⁵⁵ Crisis Group interviews, Jerusalem, March-April 2012.

¹⁵⁶ The Islamic Movement was founded in 1971. In the 1990s, divisions emerged over the movement's response to the Oslo Accords, with Salah's northern branch opposing the agreement, and a southern branch, led by Sheikh Abdullah Nimr Darwish, supporting it. The movement formally split in 1996 after the southern branch decided to participate in that year's Knesset elections.

¹⁵⁷ For more details on Salah and the northern Islamic Movement, see Crisis Group Report, *Back to Basics*, op. cit.

¹⁵⁸ The centrepiece of the campaign is an annual rally held in Salah's hometown of Umm al-Fahm at which tens of thousands gather. The rally is intended to raise funds for the Islamic Movement's activities in Jerusalem. The Islamic movement is one of the chief purveyors of the notion that Israel is seeking to destroy the Al-Aqsa Mosque.

¹⁵⁹ Crisis Group telephone interview, October 2010.

¹⁶⁰ Salah reportedly called for an intifada to save the Al-Aqsa mosque. "Salah calls for 'intifada' against Temple Mount excavation", *Haaretz*, 16 February 2007. Purported infringements include, according to Salah, efforts to erode Islamic sovereignty over the Haram al-Sharif by preventing Muslims from praying there; secretly allowing extremist Jews to pray there; covertly promoting excavations under the Esplanade that threaten its foundations; and using changes at Mughrabi Gate, an access ramp to the Esplanade, as an opportunity to extend the Jewish prayer plaza in front of the Western Wall and damage Islamic holy sites. See "Israel defiled Al-Aqsa Mosque", *Ynet*, 22 August 2008; also Crisis Group interview, Zahi Nujaidat, Islamic Movement spokesman, May 2012.

Salah's breakthrough in Jerusalem occurred in the late 1990s, when the Islamic Movement took a key role in the construction and rehabilitation of two large underground mosques, the Marwani and the Ancient Al-Aqsa, on the Holy Esplanade.¹⁶¹ A former PA adviser called the opening of the mosques "Salah's gateway to Jerusalem".¹⁶² His image as the defender of Al-Aqsa has been strengthened further since the eruption of the second intifada, as a result of which the Waqf's role weakened. Salah also impressed Jerusalemites by his willingness to "lead from the front" during demonstrations.¹⁶³ He has been arrested on numerous occasions¹⁶⁴ and has been at the forefront of protests and a legal campaign to stop construction of a "Museum of Tolerance" located in part

over the Mamilla cemetery, a historic Muslim graveyard close to the Old City but in West Jerusalem.¹⁶⁵

While the Islamic Movement's activism in Jerusalem originally was tied to Al-Aqsa and has retained an Islamic sensibility, its activities have not been confined to the religious sphere.¹⁶⁶ Arguably even more important for Salah's popularity among East Jerusalemites has been the economic help he has provided to the city. The Movement regularly arranges free buses to transport Israeli Palestinians to Jerusalem to pray at Al-Aqsa and shop in the Old City.¹⁶⁷ The influx of worshippers partly has helped offset the drying up of West Bank

¹⁶¹ The renovations created space for several thousand extra worshippers. Salah and his movement took much of the credit for realising the project, carried out without Israeli approval and to which state authorities vehemently objected because of its unilateral nature and because the works disposed of soil from the ancient site without properly sifting for artefacts. The shoddy work led Israeli critics to claim that the Islamic Movement was seeking to erase evidence of historical Jewish presence on the site. Amir Drori, director of the Israel Antiquities Authority, called it "an archeological crime", while the attorney general, Elyakim Rubinstein, described it a "kick [at] the history of the Jewish people". "First Temple artifacts found in dirt removed from Temple Mount", *Haaretz*, 19 October 2006. See also the website of the Temple Mount Antiquities Rescue Committee (templemountdestruction.com). Knesset member Ibrahim Sarsour, former leader of the southern branch of the Islamic Movement, which was also heavily involved in the Marwani project, criticised Salah for his provocative statements over the restoration work that upset Israel. Since then, he said, the Islamic Movement has not been permitted to do any work in Al-Aqsa. "The only work Israel permits is by the Jordanian Waqf". Crisis Group interview, Kafr Qassim, September 2011. ¹⁶² Mick Dumper, "Jerusalem's troublesome sheikh", *The Guardian*, 7 October 2009.

¹⁶³ "He leads from the front when there are clashes, and that earns him a great deal of respect from people in the city. The city's other leaders are usually nowhere to be seen when there is trouble". Crisis Group interview, Palestinian social activist, Jerusalem, March 2012.

¹⁶⁴ Salah was jailed in 2010 for five months for spitting at a policeman during a protest three years earlier at the entrance to the Holy Esplanade. "Israeli Arab Raed Salah jailed over spitting incident", BBC, 25 July 2010. The sentence was reduced on appeal from nine months. In early 2007, a court barred Salah from coming within 150 metres of the Old City's walls. "Salah calls for 'intifada' against Temple Mount excavation", *Haaretz*, 16 February 2007. In October 2009, he was banned from Jerusalem for 30 days. "Islamic Movement head Salah banned from J'lem for 30 days", *Jerusalem Post*, 6 October 2009.

¹⁶⁵ The Los Angeles-based Simon Wiesenthal Center won a permit in 2004 to build a Museum of Tolerance at a site outside Jerusalem's Old City walls. The project became mired in controversy after the Islamic Movement sought an injunction to stop the work, arguing that the site was part of an ancient cemetery, Mamilla, which supposedly includes the resting places of many of the Prophet Muhammad's companions and thousands of Saladin's warriors. The Israeli Supreme Court rejected the Islamic Movement's application in late 2008, accepting the Wiesenthal Center's claim that most of the cemetery's land has been used for several decades as a parking lot and that during this time the Islamic movement in Israel voiced no objection, arguably because it accepted an Islamic ruling stating the land of a cemetery loses its holiness after 40 years. For details see Yitzak Reiter, "Allah's Safe Haven? The Controversy surrounding the Mamilla Cemetery and the Museum of Tolerance", Jerusalem Institute for Israel Studies, 2011. In recent years, in an apparent attempt to strengthen the case against the museum, Salah has organised outings to rehabilitate the cemetery. Crisis Group interview, Zahi Nujeidat, Islamic Movement spokesman, May 2012.

¹⁶⁶ The relationship between the religious and political aspects of the movement's ideology is often unclear, in no small part because the movement's leaders articulate it differently. For Kemal Khatib, Salah's deputy, "Jerusalem is for the Islamic nation, not only for Palestinians. The battle between the Arabs and Israel is religious, not national". Salah frames the issue differently: "Jerusalem is a Palestinian issue, though it has an Islamic religious dimension as well as an Arab-Islamic civilisational dimension". Crisis Group telephone interview, Kamal Khatib, October 2010; Crisis Group interview, Sheikh Raed Salah, Umm al-Fahm, January 2011.

¹⁶⁷ The Islamic Movement was forced to relinquish an archaeological role on the Esplanade following the opening of the Marwani and ancient Al-Aqsa mosques. It then changed tack. Kamal Khatib, Salah's deputy, said, "we figured that, if Israel prevents us from reconstructing Al-Aqsa with stones, we would do so with people. So we created the Journey of the Banners [Masirat al Bayraeq]" – a term used in the Middle Ages to refer to caravans of Muslim pilgrims on their way to Jerusalem. Khatib said that twenty to 30 buses transport worshippers from Palestinian villages to Jerusalem every day. Crisis Group interview, Kamal Khatib, telephone interview, October 2010. According to Jerusalem expert Dr Mick Dumper, the Journey of the Banners arranged more than two million visits by Israeli-Palestinians to Jerusalem between 2001 and 2009. Mick Dumper, "Jerusalem's troublesome sheikh", *The Guardian*, 7 October 2009. A northern Islamic movement spokesman claimed that 7,600 buses still arrive yearly, but a PLO official living in Jerusalem estimated that the numbers had dropped off in recent years. Crisis Group interviews, Jerusalem, September 2012.

Palestinian visitors; unsurprisingly, local merchants effusively praise Salah for aiding the Old City's depressed markets.¹⁶⁸ Other projects by the Islamic Movement, done in cooperation with local Islamist non-governmental organisations, include house renovations in the Old City; the funding of alternative plans to the municipality's official ones (notably for the Abbasiya neighbourhood in the Old City and for the Bustan area in Silwan); activities for children in Silwan; and legal support and representation for residents of the Old City, Silwan and Sheikh Jarrah.¹⁶⁹

Among a wide swathe of the city's population, the leaders of the Islamic Movement are known for their effectiveness and are not tainted by accusations of corruption.¹⁷⁰ In the absence of an authentic local leadership, Salah and his movement have come to be widely seen within the Palestinian community as Arab Jerusalem's most ardent defenders. As a result, for many Salah has become a, if not the, leading Palestinian voice in the city. He has been dubbed "the mayor of Jerusalem" and "the Sheikh of Al-Aqsa",¹⁷¹ largely because, as many Palestinians say, he "is the only leader who really understands what is happening".¹⁷² He has strengthened his movement's claim to represent all Palestinians, not just Muslims, by actively forging alliances with Christian leaders such as Bishop Atallah Hanna. In 2007 Salah initiated a joint Muslim-Christian Front for the Defense of Jerusalem, which won support both from church leaders and Fatah.¹⁷³ The more mundane issue of his Israeli citizenship also figures in his prominence, as it affords him and his followers from the north greater freedom and protection¹⁷⁴ than East Jerusalemites, whose residency can be revoked.¹⁷⁵

¹⁶⁸ Crisis Group interviews, Old City shop owners, Jerusalem, June 2008, July 2009 and December 2010.

¹⁶⁹ Crisis Group interview, Jerusalemite Islamist civil society leader, November 2010.

¹⁷⁰ Crisis Group interview, Silwan community organiser Fakhri Abu Diab, Jerusalem, December 2010.

¹⁷¹ Mick Dumper, "No Change in Jerusalem, Yet", *The Guardian*, 1 July 2009.

¹⁷² Crisis Group interview, Palestinian Jerusalemite civil society activist, Jerusalem, September 2010. An Israeli analyst attributed Salah's appeal to the fact that – unlike the Palestinian movements and factions whose area of focus is the Occupied Palestinian Territories – "Salah's discourse is one of ethnic-racial discrimination, which is more relevant to the lives of Jerusalemites. He speaks their language when he focuses on issues like service provision and equality". Crisis Group interview, Shir Hever, Israeli political-economist, Alternative Information Center, Jerusalem, September 2010.

¹⁷³ Hillel Cohen, op. cit., p. 78.

¹⁷⁴ For instance, age restrictions regularly imposed by Israel on East Jerusalemites with residency permits that prevent

Salah has his detractors, of course – and not only among Israeli Jews, who by and large regard him as an anti-Semite and inciter of violence.¹⁷⁶ An Israeli analyst said, "he is a dangerous provocateur who is trying to incite a religious war".¹⁷⁷ The government has shut down the Islamic Movement's charities inside Israel on several occasions¹⁷⁸ and considered banning the movement,¹⁷⁹ although analysts are reported to have warned that it would be more difficult to track its activities were it underground.¹⁸⁰ Israel attempts to contain him as well as those considered close to him.¹⁸¹

But there are Palestinian critics too: they object to the Islamist bent of his politics and worry that he is transforming the conflict from a national to a religious one,¹⁸² fault his confrontational style and bristle at his tendency to hyperbole.¹⁸³ In general, such criticisms tend to be voiced by the city's elites, partly because he has usurped their role, partly because he is seen as an outsider and partly because of class differences.¹⁸⁴ Many locals also are concerned he relies too much

them from entering the Holy Esplanade do not apply to Israel's Arab citizens.

¹⁷⁵ Crisis Group interviews, East Jerusalemites, Jerusalem, August 2010-April 2011. A Palestinian analyst commented on an incident in which several activists from Jerusalem were arrested for distributing leaflets on behalf of Salah's group: "We should let Salah's people do these things". Crisis Group interview, Jerusalem, June 2011.

¹⁷⁶ Israeli Jews have objected to reports of speeches by Salah that include denials of a Jewish connection to the Holy Esplanade as well as to the Western Wall and calls on Muslims to defend the site against Israeli attempts to destroy it. See, for example, "Sheikh Salah: Western Wall belongs to Muslims", Ynet, 18 February 2007; "Raed Salah reaffirms former statements", Ynet, 17 February 2007.

¹⁷⁷ Crisis Group interview, Tel Aviv, 15 December 2012.

¹⁷⁸ The Movement's central welfare charity was shut down by the Israeli Security Agency in 1995, 1997, 2002 and 2008. See, eg, *Haaretz*, 1 August 2003; *Jerusalem Post*, 29 June 2010; Ynet, 24 August 2008.

¹⁷⁹ "Cabinet to mull banning Islamic Movement", *Jerusalem Post*, 7 October 2009.

¹⁸⁰ "Can and should Israel outlaw the Islamic Movement?", *Jerusalem Post*, 7 October 2009.

¹⁸¹ Leaders of the Islamist movement in Israel, including Salah, are barred at times for months from entering the city, when Israel's security services consider their actions risky. "Sheikh Raed Salah banned from Jerusalem", *Ma'an*, 22 December 2009.

¹⁸² Crisis Group interviews, Palestinian civil society leader and Jerusalemite PA official, Jerusalem, January 2011.

¹⁸³ "Of course we need to protect Al-Aqsa, and the Northern Islamic Movement has done a lot in this regard. But building his profile through exaggeration and propaganda crosses a red line. This should not be about personal gain". Crisis Group interview, Jerusalemite Fatah leader, Jerusalem, January 2011.

¹⁸⁴ "Salah is disliked by many of the city's leaders, including Adnan Husseini [Jerusalem's governor] and the heads of the Waqf. They see him as a usurper and as someone who has no roots in Jerusalem". Crisis Group interview, Palestinian journalist, Jerusalem, March 2012. A civil society leader echoed that view: "The official lead-

on his own people from northern Israel.¹⁸⁵ Indeed, the influx of activists from the Galilee has led some to feel their city has become a field on which the Islamic Movement is playing its own game for its own interests.

An Islamist leader in Jerusalem suggested that regardless of Salah's merits and demerits, his potential to emerge as a leader in the city was quite limited:

Sheikh Raed can't be a source of authority [*marjaiyya*] for the city. We have others here, some local, some representing the PA. They are paralysed, but just because they are paralysed doesn't mean that you can import one from the outside. He's not doing what he is doing to become Jerusalem's political leader. He's doing what any Muslim would do. He has a sense of duty to Al-Aqsa.¹⁸⁶

This perception of Salah – as first and foremost a religious figure – explains why the respect he is accorded exceeds his ability to mobilise.¹⁸⁷

Yet, in a city where the traditional leadership is perceived as paralysed and helpless to stop – much less

ers feel threatened by him because he is active on the ground. He makes them look bad". Crisis Group interview, Jerusalem, March 2012. According to a senior Israeli official in the public security ministry, leaders of the Jordanian Waqf privately expressed objections to Salah's high visibility on the Holy Esplanade. The official claimed that Waqf representatives had pronounced themselves "very pleased" that Salah, like Fatah leader Hatem Abdel Qader, had been banned from the area following serious clashes between Muslims and the Israeli security services: "Some of the people at the Waqf even advised us to take certain measures to keep the followers of the two men away from the holy site". The official added: "The problem is that there are certain things the Waqf managers can't say in public; that's why they tell us what they really feel only behind closed doors. And the truth is that the Waqf doesn't want troublemakers like Salah ... on the Temple Mount [Haram al-Sharif]". "Official: Waqf quietly pleased at Salah's arrest", *Jerusalem Post*, 29 October 2009.

¹⁸⁵ "Some of us are unhappy that Salah brings in experts from Umm al-Fahm rather than relying on local experts in Jerusalem. But it is hard to criticise the activities themselves". Crisis Group interview, Palestinian Jerusalemite civil society activist, Jerusalem, September 2010.

¹⁸⁶ Crisis Group interview, Jerusalem, August 2012.

¹⁸⁷ According to several Palestinian Jerusalemites, the demonstrators who clash with the Israeli police in protests organised by the Islamic movement are mainly from Israel's north. Crisis Group interviews, Jerusalem, March-April 2012. The influx of activists from the Galilee has led some to feel that their city has become a field on which the Islamic Movement is playing its own game for its own interests. A former PA official said, "Salah is popular, but at the end of the day he comes here as an Israeli not a Palestinian". Crisis Group interview, Jerusalem, March 2012.

reverse – the losses the Palestinian community has endured, the very qualities that some elites disdain work to his advantage with the wider population. Thus far, however, Salah has proven much more successful in northern Israel, where his rallies draw as many as 50,000 supporters,¹⁸⁸ than in Jerusalem, where participants in his protests typically number in the hundreds. But his inspiration – which Israeli Jews would be more likely to characterise as provocation – is felt throughout the Holy City.

3. Engaging official Israel

Faced with Israel's tightening hold on East Jerusalem, the absence of Palestinian institutions in the city and the breakdown of social order, many Arab Jerusalemites are coming to the conclusion that the "wait-and-see" approach of the past decade may no longer be tenable. Collective action has been severely hampered by the loss of communal spirit, which began in the mid-1990s. A Palestinian NGO leader commented:

Jerusalemites once took a fierce pride in their city. We were effective during the first intifada because people shouldered responsibility for the situation here, organised themselves and showed discipline in resisting Israel. That disappeared after the Oslo Accords. People sat back and expected the PA both to resolve their individual difficulties with the Israeli authorities and, more generally, to liberate the city from the occupation. We wanted hand-outs. With the PA gone, most of us are still waiting for salvation from outside. But salvation is not coming. Now we have to start making some painful decisions.¹⁸⁹

Others point out that the community's intensified fragmentation has led to a rapid erosion of Palestinian identity. In the words of a Palestinian analyst:

Our identity has become progressively narrower. During Oslo, when we had Orient House and the West Bank had the PA, we started to see ourselves primarily as Jerusalemites rather than as Palestinians. Then, after Faysal died, we identified increasingly with our *hamula* or neighbourhood because that was all there was to rely on. Now Israel is picking off the neighbourhoods one at a time. The question is what we can do to stop this process.¹⁹⁰

For a relatively small but increasing number of Arab Jerusalemites, this has meant engaging the Israeli establishment

¹⁸⁸ An annual "Al-Aqsa in Danger" rally in Umm al-Fahm brings together some 50,000 people. Mick Dumper and Craig Larkin, "Political Islam in Contested Jerusalem: The Emerging Role of Islamists from within Israel", *Divided Cities/Contested States*, Working Paper no. 12, 2009.

¹⁸⁹ Crisis Group interview, Jerusalem, March 2012.

¹⁹⁰ Crisis Group interview, Palestinian analyst, Jerusalem, March 2012.

to protect their interests. Exactly whether and how to do so has become a frequent and highly controversial topic.

Naturalisation as Israeli citizens. For 45 years, taking Israeli citizenship has been considered shameful, even a form of collaboration, and fiercely opposed.¹⁹¹ The social opprobrium flows from the perception that Palestinians who become Israelis indirectly confirm the legitimacy of Israel's control of East Jerusalem and undermine Palestinian claims in future peace negotiations.¹⁹² But there are indications that this attitude may be beginning to change. Not least, Palestinian residents sense that Israel's occupation of East Jerusalem is no longer temporary; with the Palestinian leadership in disarray and largely ineffectual, some believe a meaningful Palestinian state, with Jerusalem as its capital, has become little more than a fantasy.

For those at risk, Israeli citizenship can be something of an insurance policy. A bump in applications occurred in 2009, the year after Israel intensified its policy of revoking residency permits in what its own civil society groups have described as a "quiet deportation",¹⁹³ since then, this revocation trend has slowed.¹⁹⁴ More than 7,000 Palestinians (out of 293,000) lost their Jerusalem residency rights between 2006 and 2011 – as many as in the previous four decades combined – as Israel

claimed that they were living outside the city's borders, and Jerusalem was no longer their "centre of life".¹⁹⁵ The revocations have induced anxiety among many East Jerusalemites about their ability to remain in the city they call home.¹⁹⁶ For those who need to travel or study abroad,¹⁹⁷ or who no longer can afford to live in Jerusalem, Israeli citizenship offers a way to overcome the threat of residency revocation.¹⁹⁸ Among those whose livelihood depends on Israel, be they teachers or employees of the Jerusalem municipality, the choice to naturalise is more frequent.¹⁹⁹

In addition, more general fears about Israeli intentions are on the rise. The city's mayor, Nir Barkat, expressed support for redrawing the city's borders, triggering trepidation among the approximately 50,000 Palestinians living on the West Bank side of the Separation Barrier that their residency might

¹⁹¹ A Jerusalem academic noted that in the early 1980s, Sari Nusseibeh – who at the time was a professor at Bir Zeit University in the West Bank and now heads Al-Quds University in Jerusalem – was beaten up by students who broke his arm for suggesting that Jerusalemites should take Israeli citizenship in order to influence the country from within to end the occupation. Crisis Group interview, Jerusalem, March 2012.
¹⁹² "If enough Palestinians take Israeli citizenship in East Jerusalem or even a particular neighbourhood, then it becomes Israeli de facto. The danger is we will become divided into residents and citizens of the city, and solidarity will be further weakened". Crisis Group interview, PA official, Jerusalem, March 2012. The shame associated with the act also emanates from the fact that Israel often grants citizenship to collaborators who take it to ensure the state will furnish them with legal (and physical) protection should they need it. Crisis Group interview, Dr Menachem Klein, Jerusalem expert, Jerusalem, June 2012. "For years only collaborators became Israeli citizens. This is why it has such a negative image". Crisis Group interview, Palestinian taxi driver who took Israeli citizenship, July 2012.

¹⁹³ "Jerusalem bookseller a 'foreigner' in homeland", *The National*, 13 April 2011; "NGO: Israel forcing Arabs out of East Jerusalem", *Haaretz*, 1 November 2011.

¹⁹⁴ According to the Association for Civil Rights in Israel, the increase in 2008 resulted from the computerisation of interior ministry records, which facilitated their rapid processing. Once the backlog was cleared, the numbers decreased once again. Crisis Group interview, Jerusalem, October 2012.

¹⁹⁵ The so-called "centre of life" doctrine was introduced in 1996. According to Rimam Barakat, co-director of the Israel-Palestine Center for Research and Information, "documentation such as landline phone bills, electricity bills, and proof of payment of municipal property tax bills are frequently requested by the Israeli Ministry of Interior upon renewal of identity cards or request for travel documents. Failure to produce those documents may ultimately result in the revocation of the Jerusalem ID". "Quietly, East Jerusalem Palestinians acquiring Israeli citizenship", +972 blog, 20 May 2012.

¹⁹⁶ "We're only too aware of how temporary our residency rights are. They're at Israel's discretion, and Israel is constantly seeking ways to get rid of us. Every year the interior ministry comes up with a new regulation on ID cards to reduce the number of Palestinians in Jerusalem". Crisis Group interview, civil society leader, Jerusalem, November 2010. "Israeli citizenship is an 'immunity card'". Crisis Group interview, Palestinian taxi driver who took Israeli citizenship, July 2012.

¹⁹⁷ Israeli citizenship eases visa restrictions for Palestinian residents of the city, who otherwise typically have to travel on an Israeli *laissez passer*. Crisis Group interviews, Palestinian residents of East Jerusalem who applied for citizenship, Jerusalem, October 2010.

¹⁹⁸ According to Israeli law, Palestinians in Jerusalem can be stripped of their residency if they spent at least seven years away – defined to include the West Bank and Gaza – or acquired a foreign passport. An additional ground for insecurity among a small number of Jerusalemites is the status of their children. If a child was born in the West Bank or was ever registered there, they are not entitled to acquire the permanent residency status of their parents and can remain in the city only with a military permit. "Law leaves thousands of divided families in limbo", *Haaretz*, 13 January 2012. "Life feels very insecure here. People worry that their right to live in Jerusalem could be taken from them and think about Israeli citizenship. It's not that they want to vote for the Knesset or become Israeli. They just want to be sure of staying in Jerusalem". Crisis Group interview, civil society leader, March 2012.

¹⁹⁹ Crisis Group interviews, East Jerusalemites who naturalised, May 2010-July 2012. In addition, those working for Magen David Adom (the Israeli Red Cross) or the Israeli police are obliged to become Israeli citizens.

be revoked.²⁰⁰ Suspicions that such a move is imminent have been heightened by reports of the municipality's decision to suspend tax collection²⁰¹ and its plans to stop investing in roads and infrastructure outside the Barrier.²⁰²

Assessing the extent to which applications for Israeli citizenship among East Jerusalemites have trended upward during the last decade is difficult because the government has released contradictory figures. About 13,000 Palestinians in Jerusalem (roughly 5 per cent of the Arab population) are reported to have citizenship,²⁰³ though it seems likely a significant proportion are members of Israel's Palestinian minority who have moved to Jerusalem for work or family reasons.²⁰⁴ In terms of applications, the interior ministry said that almost 7,000 individuals applied for citizenship between 2001 and 2010²⁰⁵ – a relatively small number – yet two thirds of

these applications were made from 2008-2010.²⁰⁶ Other researchers, based on different government data, have concluded that the increase is considerably more substantial.²⁰⁷ Anecdotal evidence²⁰⁸ suggests a trend as well.²⁰⁹

Most Palestinian residents of Jerusalem, regardless of whether they approve or disapprove of the trend, believe that the numbers applying for citizenship are likely to grow.²¹⁰ Equally discernible is a dramatic lessening in the stigma attached to seeking Israeli citizenship.²¹¹ Those who secure it are less coy about it than they once were,²¹² while others are

²⁰⁰ In late 2011 Nir Barkat, the Jerusalem mayor, declared that it was time to separate Jerusalem from neighbourhoods outside the Separation Barrier. He said, "the municipal boundary of Jerusalem and the route of the separation fence must be identical to allow for proper administration of the city". Earlier, his office had announced a plan "for the municipality and the Civil Administration to trade responsibility for providing services to residents in the area between the security barrier and the municipal boundary". Currently the Civil Administration has authority only in the West Bank. See "Israel gearing for effective separation of East Jerusalem Palestinians", *Haaretz*, 23 December 2011.

²⁰¹ "Report: City exempts East Jerusalem residents from municipal taxes", *Haaretz*, 17 March 2011.

²⁰² "E. J'lem roads get half-billion shekel boost", *Jerusalem Post*, 23 February 2012. Danny Seidemann, a Jerusalem attorney, reported that he is often asked by Jerusalem residents outside the Barrier about obtaining citizenship, "but they lose interest when I tell them they are highly unlikely to be stripped of their residency by virtue of living where they do". Their interest, he said, is purely tactical. "Jews and Arabs do not want to share a political community in Jerusalem. Some Palestinians talk about moving in that direction, but in the end of the day, they are not acting on it". Crisis Group interview, Jerusalem, August 2012.

²⁰³ Laurent Zecchini, "Le passeport qui brule les doigts", *Le Monde*, 12 January 2012.

²⁰⁴ While no precise figure is available, a study estimates some 6,000 to 10,000 Israeli-Palestinians immigrated to Jerusalem from other localities in Israel. Asmahan Masry-Herzalla et al, "Jerusalem as an Internal Migration Destination for Israeli-Palestinian families", Jerusalem Institute for Israel Studies, July 2011.

²⁰⁵ Roughly one third were approved, one third were denied and one third were deferred. Central Bureau of Statistics response to Crisis Group question. Denials were based on the Israeli Security Agency's assessment that the applicant constituted a security risk. Crisis Group interview, Israeli analyst, Jerusalem, March 2012.

²⁰⁶ Central Bureau of Statistics response to Crisis Group question.

²⁰⁷ Other Jerusalem researchers have reported that the Israeli interior ministry provided them with substantially larger numbers. For instance, journalist Danny Rubinstein was told in 2010 that 12,000 Jerusalemites had applied for citizenship in 2008-2009 alone. Crisis Group interview, Jerusalem, January 2012. An Arab Jerusalemite election worker (in an Israeli national vote) saw the list of Palestinians eligible to vote – and thus holding Israeli citizenship – in East Jerusalem; the list, he claimed, included 16,000 names. He noted that since only adults are eligible to vote, the number of East Jerusalemites who hold Israeli citizenship must be substantially larger, since the voters' children automatically would hold Israeli citizenship as well. Crisis Group interview, Jerusalem, September 2010.

²⁰⁸ According to Rimam Barakat, co-director of the Israel-Palestine Center for Research and Information, "many of my friends and acquaintances who hold Jerusalem identification cards – documents of permanent residency rather than Israeli citizenship – are quietly applying for and obtaining Israeli passports". "Quietly, East Jerusalem Palestinians acquiring Israeli citizenship", +972 blog, 20 May 2012. A civil society leader agreed: "It seems clear that lots of people are applying for citizenship. As civil society groups, we're doing what we can to stop it". Crisis Group interview, Rami Nasreddin, head of PalVision, a youth empowerment NGO, Jerusalem, March 2012.

²⁰⁹ Recent surveys show a significant segment of East Jerusalemites – as many as a third – declaring a preference for Israeli citizenship, though veteran observers have warned that polling results of Palestinians in Jerusalem should be treated with extreme caution. Daniel Seidemann warned that "the anomalous status of the Palestinians of East Jerusalem – where the 'wrong' answer to a given question can have devastating effects – like detention, loss of entitlements, or revocation of the right to live in the city, makes it difficult to ask questions at all, and makes it especially difficult to conduct polling. When a pollster turns up in East Jerusalem, the unspoken – and generally well-justified – response is invariably: 'I know that nobody actually cares what I think, so if you are here and asking questions, it is in the service of your own agenda'". "The perils of polling in East Jerusalem", *Foreign Policy* (online), 23 February 2012.

²¹⁰ Crisis Group interviews, Palestinian residents of East Jerusalem, Jerusalem, August 2010-April 2012.

²¹¹ Crisis Group interviews, Jerusalem, March 2010, May 2012. A former PA official said, "I noticed a change after Faisal Husseini's death. After that, it just seemed much less shameful, at least to consider it". Crisis Group interview, Jerusalem, March 2012.

²¹² "I applied for citizenship and am now Israeli. I don't make it a secret. Hizb ut-Tahrir asked me to join. I told them: 'No, thank

much readier to contemplate it. A professor from Al-Quds University said that among the city's intellectuals and elites, "it's hard to find a dinner party nowadays where people don't discuss it".²¹³ The PA is reported to be so concerned that it is taking action to stop a rise in applications by, for example, sending its representatives to discourage applicants.²¹⁴

Participation in municipal affairs. All but a tiny fraction of East Jerusalemites boycott the city's municipal elections.²¹⁵ This aligns with the PLO's view that participation would run counter to the Palestinian national interest, because it would legitimise Israeli rule.²¹⁶ Many also refuse certain municipal services²¹⁷ or to apply for housing permits.²¹⁸ Opposition to dealing with Israel is

you, I am with Israel". Crisis Group interview, a recently naturalised Palestinian resident of East Jerusalem, Jerusalem, January 2011.

²¹³ Crisis Group interview, Huda Imam, Jerusalem, March 2012.

²¹⁴ Danny Rubinstein, "One State/Two States: Rethinking Israel and Palestine", *Dissent*, Summer 2010.

²¹⁵ In 2008 only 2 per cent of Jerusalem's Arab population participated; most were probably municipal employees and Beit Safafa's Israeli inhabitants. Crisis Group interview, Ir Amim staff, Jerusalem, April 2010. From 1967 to 1983, Arab participation ranged from 15 to 20 per cent. Since 1983, it has not exceeded 7 per cent. Walid Salem, "Internalization and Externalization: Palestinian Jerusalemites Adaptations to Internal Occupation", p. 10. www.cccb.org/gcs_gene/walid_salem.pdf.

²¹⁶ During the 2008 municipal elections, Hatem Abdel Qader, adviser on Jerusalem affairs to Palestinian Prime Minister Salam Fayyad, argued: "We cannot pay a long-term political price in return for short-term municipal services". "Palestinians boycott 'useless' Jerusalem mayoral election", *Haaretz*, 6 November 2008. A PLO official mused that this could change if the PLO wanted to launch a firm "shot across the bow" to show Israel why a two-state solution is in its interest. Crisis Group interview, PLO official, Ramallah, April 2011. A Palestinian civil society leader said, were the PLO to license participation in elections, "it will find Palestinian civil society in East Jerusalem more ready to mobilise for elections than many assume". Crisis Group interview, Jerusalem, September 2011. Facebook groups of East Jerusalemites suggest the younger generation might have fewer qualms about such participation. Crisis Group interview, Palestinian analyst, Jerusalem, April 2011.

²¹⁷ East Jerusalemites have an ambiguous relationship with the municipality and the state. While many criticise discrimination in municipal services in favour of Jewish as opposed to Arab neighbourhoods, some Arab neighbourhoods have refused, for instance, the building of municipal community centres on the ground that this would grant legitimacy to Israel's rule over East Jerusalem. Crisis Group interview, civil society leader, Jerusalem, December 2011.

²¹⁸ "The decision not to apply for, say, a construction permit is not only because of the low likelihood of actually being grant-

so great that some East Jerusalemites even frowned upon a demonstration arranged in front of the Jerusalem mayor's office in 2011 to protest the denial of Palestinian residents' rights.²¹⁹

In the view of some, it is time for the Palestinian community to change course. Advocates of participating in municipal affairs, particularly elections, argue that in the absence of a diplomatic horizon and given accelerating Palestinian dispossession, East Jerusalemites need to use all means possible to fight for services and protect their place in the city.²²⁰ The boycott, this camp holds, is counterproductive.²²¹ A civil society leader said:

We are losing Jerusalem day by day. Settlers are penetrating our neighbourhoods. The city is surrounded by settlements and the Wall. Every day Jerusalem slips further away from us, and we cannot do anything to stop that. In order to confront the challenges on the ground, we need to consider a radical change in our strategy.²²²

By participating in elections, East Jerusalemites might be able to secure a larger share of the municipal budget and thereby improve services to their neighbourhoods; legalise unlicensed building, thus preventing demolitions and evictions; and promote planning processes for public and pri-

ed one. It is also an act of defiance". Crisis Group interview, Fatah member, Jerusalem, January 2011.

²¹⁹ Hatem Abdel Qader was accused of "capitulation" by East Jerusalemites when he led such a demonstration. Crisis Group interview, Palestinian analyst, Jerusalem, June 2011.

²²⁰ A civil society activist proposed maximising the weight of the Palestinian vote by compiling a single Palestinian electoral list, either by including members from all East Jerusalem neighbourhoods or by conducting preliminary elections among East Jerusalemites. He also suggested that the political fallout could be minimised by voting only for Palestinians carrying Israeli citizenship, so as to reduce the perception of normalisation. Crisis Group interview, Jerusalem, September 2011. In the 2008 election, a Palestinian launched his candidacy for mayor, though he pulled out shortly before voting, citing "technical reasons". Zuheir Hamdan, from Sur Baher, said, "there are 260,000 Arab residents in Jerusalem, and they have rights which they can get through active participation in the election. The Palestinian Authority, with all due respect, should let Jerusalem's Arabs run their own affairs". "Palestinians boycott 'useless' Jerusalem mayoral election", *Haaretz*, 6 November 2008. A Palestinian journalist, Hanna Siniora, also tried to set up an Arab list for the 1989 election, over the objection of the PLO leadership then located in Tunis. Activists from the Popular Front reportedly dissuaded him by setting fire to two of his cars. Hillel Cohen, op. cit., p. 17.

²²¹ A Palestinian civil society leader pointed out that Islamic Movement leader Raed Salah, who advocates a boycott of national elections, nonetheless had served as mayor of the Arab town of Umm al-Fahm in northern Israel. "Salah knows how to work effectively within the Israeli system without compromising his principles". Crisis Group interview, Jerusalem, January 2011.

²²² Crisis Group interview, Jerusalem, October 2010.

vate uses.²²³ A Palestinian planner noted that, were they present in the municipal council, they would get access to data useful for making their case to the international media and in international courts. It would also make shady dealings between the settlers and the municipality more challenging to hide.²²⁴

Others support lobbying the municipality without formally participating in elections or activities – a kind of compromise course that aims to engage with the municipality or government institutions on specific issues without accepting those bodies' legitimacy.²²⁵ Their hope, advocates of this position say, is to lobby better for their interests as well as cooperate with sympathetic Israeli organisations. Explaining this position, a resident of the Sur Baher neighbourhood said boycotting all contact with the municipality "gives the occupiers a pretext for dodging its responsibilities".²²⁶ Initiatives by individual neighbourhoods have included campaigning for improved trash collection and increasing the number of mothering centres, the translation of municipal forms into Arabic and road safety classes for children.²²⁷ A successful Palestinian businessman and trustee of the Jerusalem Chamber of Commerce said, "I have no problem working under Israeli rules until you find me a new set of rules to work under. How long am I supposed

to wait? We've waited twenty years since [the] Madrid [Conference]".²²⁸

The most significant efforts in this realm address schools, since the dire state of the education system in East Jerusalem is a cause of particular concern.²²⁹ Many thousands of East Jerusalem children are denied a place in a municipal school each year, in violation of Israel's Compulsory Education Law.²³⁰ 40 per cent drop out of school by twelfth grade.²³¹ In response to these and other problems, various parents' committees in East Jerusalem neighbourhoods backed the establishment of a unified, elected Parents' Union in 2005. It was formed in the belief that a single organisation would be better placed to make the community's case to the Israeli authorities,²³² though the Union cannot yet point to

²²³ Crisis Group interviews, Jerusalem, March-April 2012.

²²⁴ Crisis Group interview, Jerusalem, April 2011.

²²⁵ The strategy echoes the elected neighbourhood committees that emerged from the mid-1980s and worked with the municipality until the end of the first intifada. The committees initially became a vehicle for the municipality to address specific infrastructural problems, such as building sewerage systems or upgrading roads, with local residents; later they took on social, educational and cultural matters. The committees received covert PLO support and became the conduit for PLO finance for a number of large infrastructure projects. Ehud Olmert refused to work with the committees when he became mayor in 1993, and they dismantled themselves. Crisis Group interview, Amir Cheshin, Arab affairs adviser to Jerusalem Mayor Teddy Kollek, Jerusalem, March 2012.

²²⁶ Crisis Group interview, Jerusalem, October 2010.

²²⁷ Two activists noted that engagement with Israel can be dangerous: "Any mistake could put the activists in harm's way". Fuad Abu Hamed and Hagai Agmon Snir, "A new model for resident participation in East Jerusalem", Common Ground News Service, 3 September 2009. A Palestinian analyst noted that community organisers also advocate more confrontational kinds of engagement, such as bringing the municipality to court over its failure to provide services; the establishment of a shadow municipality to promote alternatives to municipal policies; and organising a municipal tax strike to protest discriminatory budget allocations. Crisis Group interview, Jerusalem, April 2011.

²²⁸ Crisis Group interview, Ramallah, August 2012. The head of a major Jerusalem NGO expressed a similar idea: "I am not interested in illegal activity. Every move my organisation makes is legal. Taxes are paid, engineers get permits. If you do your homework, you don't leave the Israelis any reason to deny you". A Palestinian analyst expressed scepticism about this logic: "Israel often invokes the Emergency Regulations [promulgated by the British in 1945 and later incorporated into Israeli law] against us. Our following regular Israeli law doesn't do us very much good if the state doesn't have to". Crisis Group interview, Jerusalem, August 2012. Even the NGO director, however, drew the line at voting: "Our youth need to realise there is a difference between municipal services and national identity. Just because the PA can't operate here doesn't mean that Palestinians should go with the occupation. Voting in elections would give indirect recognition to the Israeli municipality and would kill the vision of Jerusalem as part of the Palestinian state. Some consider voting realistic, and I consider myself a realist. But our national imperatives trump our residential imperatives". Crisis Group interview, Jerusalem, July 2012.

²²⁹ According to most estimates, there is a shortage of at least 1,000 classrooms for Jerusalem's Palestinian children, and hundreds more classes are held in unsuitable buildings. "Arab kids prepare to study in shelters", Ynet, 18 August 2010. The municipal legal adviser calculated that the city spends half as much on each Palestinian pupil in East Jerusalem as it does in West Jerusalem; the municipality denied financial discrimination, arguing that education in Arab East Jerusalem requires high rental, transportation and printing expenses. "Pupils in east Jerusalem get half funding of those in west", Ynet, 16 April 2010. Around 40 per cent of Arab children fail to complete their basic schooling. "The lies of Jerusalem", *Haaretz*, 21 May 2012.

²³⁰ Rulings from the Israeli courts to build more classrooms were addressed in a partial and slow manner. Association for Civil Rights in Israel (ACRI) and Ir Amim, "Failed Grade: The Education System in East Jerusalem 2010", August 2010, at www.acri.org.il/pdf/EJEducation2010en.pdf.

²³¹ The annual dropout rate among Arabs in East Jerusalem is four times higher than among Jews in Israel. *Ibid.*, p. 16.

²³² The Union lobbies the Jerusalem municipality and the Israeli education ministry, as well as organising protests and strikes. In 2006 its leader, Lafi Abdel Karim, was given a hearing before the Israeli parliament's education committee. It also works closely

any notable successes.²³³ The same can be said of a similar initiative, on a more limited scale, launched jointly by East Jerusalem activists and an Israeli NGO in the Arab neighbourhood of Issawiya.²³⁴ Still, as experiments in elected – or at least in broadly representative bodies that embrace all Palestinian political factions and cooperate with Israeli institutions – they offer a new potential organising model.

Sceptics unfavourably compare the likely results of municipal participation with the “minimal achievements” of the representatives of Israel’s Palestinian minority in the Knesset, foreseeing only minor concessions that, they say, would come at the cost of reinforcing Israel’s “façade of democracy”.²³⁵ Many Jerusalemites doubt that they would attain a significant number of seats on the city council,²³⁶ and argue that the municipality’s power

with Israeli NGOs in Jerusalem, especially Ir Amim, and has developed ties with the Parents’ Association in West Jerusalem. “A basic right”, *Jerusalem Post*, 14 September 2006.

²³³ Promises from the municipality to build hundreds more classrooms in East Jerusalem are more attributable to pressure from the Israeli courts and petitions from Israeli NGOs than to the work of the Parents Union. In 2011 the Supreme Court gave the government five years to find the land to build enough classrooms in East Jerusalem or it would have to pay the fees of private schools. “Court orders government to accommodate East Jerusalem school children”, *Haaretz*, 8 February 2011.

²³⁴ The project is designed to address planning problems in one neighbourhood and provide a template for the Jerusalem municipality to apply to other Arab areas of the city. Bimkom, the Israeli planning NGO, began working in 2004 with Issawiya’s residents on a masterplan to be submitted to the municipality and local planning authorities for approval. Such a plan would allow for future legal house construction and legalise hundreds of homes currently under threat of demolition in Issawiya (eng.bimkom.org/Index.asp?ArticleID=88&CategoryID=131). The plan, finally submitted to the municipality in 2007 (“Land and Housing Rights in al-Issawiya, Israeli Occupied East Jerusalem”, *Alternatives Journal*, 2 November 2008), was opposed by nearby Jewish settlements, as well as the Israel National Parks Authority, which had earmarked most of the land next to Issawiya for a national park. Despite making major modifications, Bimkom and the residents have so far made no progress with the plan.

²³⁵ “What have they achieved? They end up rubber stamping Israel’s democracy without securing any assets in return”. Crisis Group interview, PA official, Jerusalem, August 2010. PLC member Ahmed Atoun of the Change and Reform Bloc (Hamas) supported the contention: “We don’t want to represent our case as a problem of services. Our battle is with occupation. We don’t want to do anything that would allow the occupation to present itself as having a tolerant face. We want to end our suffering, not to prettify the occupation”. Crisis Group interview, Ramallah, 8 August 2012.

²³⁶ An observer feared that, with some Palestinian residents continuing the boycott, at least initially, “we will be able to get

is limited (in comparison with that of the national government) in precisely those areas where Palestinians are most disadvantaged, such as planning,²³⁷ and that donors might cut funding to Palestinian civil society should it have access – in theory even if not in practice – to municipal resources.²³⁸

There is also apprehension about the ability of East Jerusalemites to organise collectively: there is no reason to expect, they argue, that the deep fragmentation of the Palestinian political scene would not be manifest here as well; there is no guarantee that Palestinians would not vote for Jewish parties;²³⁹ clan loyalties remain a challenge,²⁴⁰ and the public, which has boycotted municipal elections for the past 45 years, is unused to voting and thus hard to mobilise.²⁴¹ A veteran former PLO leader from Jerusalem argued that it probably would take a tectonic political shift for the city’s Arab residents to change course: “If the PLO declares the two-state solution impossible, East Jerusalemites will be free to organise and take care of themselves by participating in municipal elections. We are preparing for such an eventuality”.²⁴²

C. THE SCHIZOPHRENIA OF ARAB JERUSALEM

After some 45 years of occupation, Arab Jerusalemites suffer from political and cultural schizophrenia, simultaneously connected with and isolated from their two hinterlands: Ramallah and the West Bank to their east, West Jerusalem and Israel to the west. “We live in limbo”, said an older Jerusalemite attorney. “East Jerusalem used to be our capital; now we’re just an exit on the way between Israel and Ramallah”.²⁴³

no more than three or four [out of 31] council seats. We will have no power to change decisions and so will end up rubber-stamping decisions aimed at the further dispossession of Palestinians”. Crisis Group interview, Khalil Tofakji, Palestinian geographer, director of the Maps Department of the Arab Studies Society, Jerusalem, June 2010.

²³⁷ “Participation will not help regarding planning policy since the interior minister has to greenlight all plans. In other words, even if our participation secures municipal support, we will still face obstacles at the national level”. Crisis Group interview, Palestinian civil society leader, Jerusalem, January 2011.

²³⁸ Crisis Group interview, Palestinian civil society leader, Jerusalem, January 2011.

²³⁹ Crisis Group interview, Palestinian civil society leader, Jerusalem, September 2011.

²⁴⁰ Crisis Group interview, Palestinian Fatah Member, Jerusalem, January 2011.

²⁴¹ Polling of East Jerusalemites found that only 22 per cent voted in the 2006 PLC elections. Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research Poll, 16–30 July 2010, www.pcpsr.org/survey/polls/2010/ejerusalem2010.html.

²⁴² Crisis Group interview, Jerusalem, September 2010.

²⁴³ Crisis Group interview, Jerusalem, July 2012.

According to the Oslo Accords,²⁴⁴ as well as by every political measure, their national address is in Ramallah. They vote in Palestinian national elections, even though neither their executive nor legislative representatives have jurisdiction over them. They also find themselves increasingly turning to Ramallah²⁴⁵ for commercial, economic, and cultural succour. Some 30,000 Jerusalemites work there, braving traffic delays at checkpoints each day;²⁴⁶ older Jerusalemites remember that as recently as the 1990s, the balance was reversed. Others head out of town at night in search of cafés and restaurants; with East Jerusalem's street-life comatose after dark, Ramallah and Bethlehem have become destinations of choice.²⁴⁷

Yet, Jerusalemites have mixed feeling about their West Bank neighbours. They resent the PA's failures and do not want to be under its thumb, even though they resent Ramallah for abandoning them.²⁴⁸ With their city historically and religiously rich – and traditionally the most cosmopolitan in Palestine – they see themselves as a special group, chafing at what they consider a subtle form of PA discrimination.²⁴⁹ A prominent Jerusalem-

ite, who formerly had a senior role in the PLO, commented:

They [the Palestinian leadership] say things like, “You Jerusalemites don't understand” when we try to talk about the city. They are dismissive and condescending to us. Jerusalem is not on their agenda. They are playing a different kind of politics. Jerusalem was in Arafat's heart, but our current leadership nurtures no such affection. They have no sense of the city and no commitment to it.²⁵⁰

Moreover, Jerusalemites have developed ties to their west. Most, especially the young, aspire to a greater or lesser degree to integrate into the city as a whole. They pepper their conversation with Hebrew, listen to Israeli music, shop in Israeli malls and supermarkets and visit West Jerusalem's parks, museums and zoo.²⁵¹ Some also study at Israeli academic, vocational and cultural institutions;²⁵² escape the saturated market of run-down housing in Arab East Jerusalem by renting apartments in the Jewish settlements of the city;²⁵³ and work in West Jerusalem or the Jewish settlements in East Jerusalem.²⁵⁴

²⁴⁴ The 1995 Interim Oslo Agreement spoke of the “holding of direct, free and general political elections for the Council and the Ra'ees [Chairman/President] of the Executive Authority in order that the Palestinian people in the West Bank, Jerusalem and the Gaza Strip may democratically elect accountable representatives”.

²⁴⁵ “Many of us feel uncomfortable in Tel Aviv or Haifa. We feel exposed in the malls, amid the Israeli culture. Instead, we look to the West Bank for solutions”. Crisis Group interview, Jerusalem, March 2012.

²⁴⁶ Crisis Group interview, Jerusalem Chamber of Commerce Board Member, Ramallah, July 2012.

²⁴⁷ In reaction to this phenomenon, a group of East Jerusalemites is working to revive Arab Jerusalem. An informal group called Aisheh (Life) has put together festivals that draw thousands and encourage the city's residents to patronise local restaurants. Crisis Group interviews, Aisheh group members, Jerusalem, January-July 2012.

²⁴⁸ “The PA has failed. It needs a new mechanism for working here”. Crisis Group interview, Jerusalemite businessman, Ramallah, August 2012.

²⁴⁹ A Jerusalem educator claimed that Jerusalemites teaching in the West Bank are subject to stricter PA security scrutiny than West Bankers. Crisis Group interview, Jerusalem, July 2012. Any Jerusalemite wishing to buy land in the West Bank must receive approval from the PA security forces; Israeli passport holders must receive permission from the PA prime minister's office. Crisis Group interview, Jerusalemite businessman, Ramallah, July 2012. A PA official explained that since the PA does not have jurisdiction over Israeli citizens, and its legal options are limited even regarding Jerusalem residents, it attempts in advance to guarantee the integrity of land sales – and particularly to ensure that the buyer is not acting as a front for Jewish settlers. Crisis Group interview, Ramallah, August 2012.

²⁵⁰ Crisis Group interview, Ramallah, July 2012. No small number in Ramallah are equally resentful of those they see as haughty Jerusalemites. Ramallah residents frequently complain that Jerusalemites drive recklessly and speed through traffic lights since the PA police have no jurisdiction over them. The cars of East Jerusalemites (and Israel's Arab citizens) can be distinguished by their yellow licence plates, as compared with the green or white ones in the West Bank.

²⁵¹ Crisis Group observations, Jerusalem, August 2010-December 2011. A Jerusalemite NGO director said, “listening to Hebrew music is a perfect example of our identify crisis. When you ask a youth listening to Hebrew music what it means, most of the time he has no idea”. Crisis Group interview, Jerusalem, July 2012.

²⁵² “Whether I like it or not, a degree from an Israeli university is likely to be taken more seriously than one from a university in East Jerusalem or the West Bank. For sure, it improves my chances of getting a job in an Israeli company or of working overseas”. Crisis Group interview, student from East Jerusalem at Hebrew University, Jerusalem, April 2012. “More East Jerusalem Palestinians seek Israeli degrees”, *Haaretz*, 28 August 2012.

²⁵³ “It's now almost impossible to find a decent, affordable place to live in East Jerusalem. So some migration has begun to settlements like Neve Yaacov and Pisgat Zeev, which are close to Arab neighbourhoods. The more who do it, the more acceptable it becomes”. Crisis Group interview, PA official, Jerusalem, March 2012.

²⁵⁴ “With high unemployment in East Jerusalem, the young often hope to find work in West Jerusalem. But the reality is they are unlikely to find anything more than waiting tables or sweeping floors”. Crisis Group interview, civil society activist, Jerusalem, March 2012. Social security benefits and employee rights often are mentioned as reasons for seeking work in West Jerusalem. Crisis Group interview, East Jerusalemite working in restaurant in West Jerusalem, Jerusalem, October 2010. A hotel owner in East Jerusalem said the rise in the number of Arab youngsters working in West Jerusalem had led to revenge attacks by unemployed or disgruntled Jewish

Among some young men, there also is a desire to join Israel's civil guard and the Magen David Adom [Israel's Red Cross];²⁵⁵ some hope to date a Jewish girl.²⁵⁶ Among many who work or shop in West Jerusalem,²⁵⁷ there is often a keen awareness of Israeli accomplishments and a desire to interact with their counterparts.²⁵⁸ This has been facilitated by the city's new light rail system that passes through Jewish settlements and Arab neighbourhoods in East Jerusalem on its way to West

youth. "I hear about these youngsters getting beaten up all time". Crisis Group interview, Jerusalem, March 2012.

²⁵⁵ Crisis Group interview, naturalised East Jerusalemite, Jerusalem, January 2011.

²⁵⁶ A Jerusalemite shopkeeper who lives and works in West Jerusalem – and who had dated a Jewish woman for many years – said "Arabs think everything Jewish is better – including the girls!" Crisis Group interview, Jerusalem, March 2011. Dating between young Palestinian men and Jewish women is a marginal phenomenon, but it nevertheless has provoked patrols by Jewish residents who seek to combat the phenomenon. "Israeli vigilantes target young Arab-Jewish couples", *The Times* (London), 27 September 2009. In 2012 Lehava, a Jewish organisation against intermarriage and assimilation, distributed leaflets in Jerusalem with a mock invitation to a wedding of Arab "Muhammad" to Jewish "Michal", warning Jewish parents this would be their fate if they permitted their daughters to work with Arabs. Ynet, 8 May 2012. In the wake of the August 2012 would-be lynching of a Palestinian in Jerusalem, the group adopted a more sinister tone. A flyer read in part: "Dear Arab Boy: We don't want you to get hurt! Our daughters are dear to us. Just as you don't want a Jew to date your sister, we are not ready for an Arab to date a daughter of our people. If you are thinking of coming to [downtown Jerusalem] or [the Jerusalem mall] to find Jewish girls, it's not the place. You can stroll in your village – not among us – to find a girlfriend. Last week, an Arab trying to find Jewish girls was hurt – we don't want you to be". Crisis Group observation, Jerusalem, August 2012. A similar incident happened the following month, with five Jews beating an Arab Jerusalemite they suspected "was exploiting a Jewish girl". *Haaretz*, 8 September 2012.

²⁵⁷ East Jerusalemites are the largest source of cheap labour for West Jerusalem and make up the majority of workers in manual labour jobs like construction, cleaning and cooking. Some of these, like moving and maintenance, bring many of them into close contact with West Jerusalem's Jewish population. Crisis Group observations, June 2010-September 2012.

²⁵⁸ "We need to be in a community with Israelis. I'm a young leader. If I don't know their young leaders, how will I sit at the table with them one day? We need to learn from our mistakes. We need to know our opponent. Notice I say 'opponent' not 'enemy'. We need to be able to work with them. Having access to Israel means better results from my organisation. That is my standard. Why should I measure myself against the Arab world when I have the region's best economy right here?" Crisis Group interview, Jerusalem, July 2012.

Jerusalem.²⁵⁹ Since beginning operation in 2011, it has made travelling between the eastern and western parts of Jerusalem easier, cheaper and faster than ever before for its Palestinian population.²⁶⁰

Living under occupation is, for most young East Jerusalemites, the only reality they know. Musa Budeiri, a politics professor from East Jerusalem, said, "many of my students cannot imagine the city any other way. A residency permit, going to Israeli malls, the travails of travelling [through Jordan] via the [Allenby] bridge: for me these were changes, for them they are normality. And these young people are now the majority".²⁶¹ The most significant institutions in his students' lives have always been the Israeli National Insurance Institute, which controls the welfare system; the Israeli interior ministry, which oversees personal status matters and residency rights; and the municipality, which has the power to enforce house demolitions and levy fines. As a result, many Palestinians no longer see the city as theirs.²⁶² "We have lost our national identity", a prominent Jerusalemite lawyer said, "and with it, we have lost our sense of entitlement in the city, our sense of ownership over it".²⁶³

²⁵⁹ Many Palestinians use the train, which became operational in September 2011. Others argue that "no matter how useful it is, it is a tool of occupation and control. I am increasingly in the minority with this view, together with some of the Palestinian Jerusalemite intelligentsia, but this does not change the fact that running the light rail through East Jerusalem is a political statement of control". Crisis Group interview, Palestinian resident of the Old City, Jerusalem, January 2011.

²⁶⁰ "Given how dark and deserted East Jerusalem is in the evenings, the ease of travelling to West Jerusalem makes the idea of eating or shopping there more attractive". Crisis Group interview, resident of Beit Hanina, Jerusalem, April 2012. This despite reports of friction and one terror attack by a Palestinian Jerusalemite. "Jerusalem light-rail security guards use pepper spray on Palestinian passengers", *Haaretz*, 6 October 2011; "Jerusalem light railway a new source of Jewish-Arab tension", *Haaretz*, 7 October 2011; "Two arrested following attack on Muslim on Jerusalem light rail", *Times of Israel*, 30 March 2012; "Jerusalem Arabs Attack the Light Rail", *Israel National News*, 24 May 2012; "Palestinian stabs soldier on Jerusalem light railway", *Haaretz*, 16 March 2012.

²⁶¹ Crisis Group interview, Jerusalem, March 2012.

²⁶² "Israel is always changing the names of the streets or the layout of the road system. It changes the shape and contours of the city by building the Wall and the settlements. It regularly rewrites the residency rules. On one level, this is about taking away our land and our rights. But on another, it is about disorientating us, alienating us from our own city. We feel like strangers in the city of our birth". Crisis Group interview, civil society leader, Jerusalem, April 2012.

²⁶³ Crisis Group interview, Ramallah, July 2012.

IV. CONCLUSION

Like East Jerusalem's map, the city's political and social life is a far cry from what it was in 1967. Its leadership dismantled, its political scene moribund, its infrastructure in disrepair, its social fabric asunder, its streets unsafe, its nightlife a memory: East Jerusalem could fairly be called a failed city. Israel, as the occupier and government, bears most of the responsibility for the dismal state of affairs, but there is plenty of blame to go around. Palestinian Jerusalem has been abandoned not only by the municipality that rules it but also by its national leadership. As the city and its politics have evolved, Palestinian strategy has not kept pace. Its sclerotic nature has done a disservice not only to East Jerusalem itself but also to hopes of resolving the conflict.

The current situation is not in anyone's interest. Certainly not that of Jerusalemites themselves, whose lives are getting more and more difficult. Certainly not that of the Palestinian national movement: if the city someday is divided between Israel and Palestine, it will need a coherent leadership. As a Palestinian analyst in Jerusalem said, "We can't just wake up one day in ten years and say, 'we dub this desolate city our capital'"²⁶⁴ Palestinians, in Jerusalem like elsewhere, no longer have faith that if they show forbearance, in the end they will get their due. The atmosphere of desperation among Jerusalemites is producing resentment that ultimately could provoke violence and stand in the way of an agreement. In response to a clash on the Holy Esplanade or elsewhere, there would be an absence of leadership with the credibility to manage the Palestinian response and head off a major escalation. Moreover, looking further into the city's future, even were it to be divided into two capitals, the populations likely would still have significant cross-border interaction; the ability of Jews and Arabs to live together would be crucial to the sustainability of a putative peace treaty.

Nor does the current situation benefit Israel. In any Arab part of Jerusalem that remains under its control – either with or without an agreement – it will confront an angry, impoverished community. Drugs and crime do not stop at neighbourhood boundaries. Mayor Nir Barkat seems intent on improving life in the east, an important goal in which he has had some success and that could succeed further if the government allocates sufficient resources. But it is difficult to imagine how much will change when services are being provided by the same authorities who, from the Palestinian perspective, are denying them freedom. There is a ceiling on the progress that can be expected when Arab Jerusalemites

continue to boycott the municipality and when there is no real Palestinian address with which town hall can cooperate. The notion that services can be neatly walled off from politics is a fallacy. Improving the former, rather, is a result of effectively practicing the latter.

More broadly, East Jerusalem cannot be managed from Ramallah – nor from West Jerusalem. It has its own history even if its leadership today is demoralised, enfeebled and paralysed. Today there is no body (and nobody) who can represent Arab Jerusalemites effectively. This is dangerous and not only for Palestinian political aspirations. Regardless of the future of Israeli-Palestinian relations generally, regardless of the ultimate endgame, Palestinian political life in the city needs to be strengthened. There is no positive future for Jerusalem for which a strong and capable Palestinian community is not a prerequisite.

The national movement's options are limited, though it certainly could do more. As described above, PA and PLO efforts in the city are fragmented; one answer would be to create a single address – headed by someone familiar with and able to enter Jerusalem – to manage city affairs in cooperation with donors who have a freer hand working there. The international community should work with local Arab organisations – and push back against Israel when they encounter resistance – keeping East Jerusalem on its diplomatic agenda, as called for by the EU Heads of Mission's report.²⁶⁵ But even should this agenda be aggressively pursued, its impact likely will remain limited. The PLO and PA cannot work by remote control; NGOs and piece-meal donor funding cannot take the place of a government; and the international community historically has been unable to mount effective diplomatic pressure on Israel.

A more significant, albeit also more controversial issue concerns the attitude of Palestinian East Jerusalemites themselves. Their default position, strongly urged on by the national leadership, is to boycott all voluntary contact with the Jerusalem municipality. Palestinians and their leadership understandably have been reluctant to engage with Israeli institutions, which they fear would give the impression of endorsing Israel's claim to the city. In the initial years after 1967, the boycott was an active strategy that aimed at and achieved concrete if limited gains, primarily in the form of limited Arab autonomy – such as in the educational system – thereby preventing the eastern part of the city from being absorbed into the west.

Today, however, that calculus is no longer self-evident. The national movement is broken, clinging to a 45-year-old strategy that was adopted at a time when Jerusalem, the Palestinians living there and the national struggle as a whole

²⁶⁴ Crisis Group interview, Jerusalem, July 2012.

²⁶⁵ Text at www.scribd.com/doc/78665443/EU-Heads-of-Mission-East-Jerusalem-Report-2012.

were very different. In its current form, the boycott largely is an artefact of a bygone era, the product of inertia more than conscious decision, a reflection less of considered strategy than of reflexive habit. It has come to be a symbolic form of politics that covers for what in fact is an absence of politics. From a Palestinian perspective, it arguably carries advantages – reinforcing separateness and identity while refusing to legitimise occupation – but also unmistakable costs. The material and distributive dimensions of politics have been left to the side; the question of how the community can capture resources to strengthen itself is not only unanswered but unasked. Ultimately, the absent national debate about how to maximise Palestinians power in the city has facilitated both Israel's and the Palestinian leadership's evasion of responsibility.

Long overdue is a Palestinian discussion about whether the boycott in its current form remains the best strategy. Such self-examination could yield any of a number of potential responses: that it still is; that it needs revision and adjustment; or that it ought to be abandoned wholesale.

Among possible options are many that Palestinians in East Jerusalem themselves have been floating over the past several years, with an eye to achieving more disciplined, strategic participation in municipal affairs:²⁶⁶

- Palestinian Jerusalemites could contest the Jerusalem municipal elections. Assuming the Arab community votes in a united and strategic way – an assumption some consider fanciful²⁶⁷ – they could win perhaps a third of the council seats and double or triple their share of the budget, which would improve physical infrastructure, generate jobs, develop health and other services, decrease crime and strengthen education.
- A variation would be for Palestinian citizens of Israel living in Jerusalem to form an electoral list for which Arab Jerusalemites would vote and that would represent the interests of Arab Jerusalemites in the municipality.²⁶⁸ It would allow Jerusalemites to achieve many of the same benefits as in the first option while reducing the whiff of normalisation by

not taking office themselves. Whether Palestinians would judge this to be a meaningful distinction remains open to question.

Israel arguably would welcome both options. Israeli-Jewish politicians already have been trying to woo Arab voters by promising to change paths and pursue policies that would favour East Jerusalem. Were Arabs to stand, Jewish lists conceivably would have to increase their own outreach efforts.²⁶⁹

- Some Jerusalemites insist that Palestinians should create a parallel, Arab Jerusalem municipality. They might be able to vote for its members – electronically if necessary²⁷⁰ – when local elections take place in the West Bank. A PLO policy adviser suggested that such a “shadow municipality” – whether elected or appointed – would enable Palestinians to accumulate expertise in preparation for an eventual division of the city. Given its apparent desire to excise Arab areas outside the Separation Barrier and the difficulty it has providing services there, Israel, he hoped, might avert its eyes or even permit such a body to work there.²⁷¹ As it stands today, the Israeli municipality already by and large has ceased to operate beyond the Barrier – but the IDF remains in control. Any Palestinian body operating there would have to coordinate with the Civil Administration.
- Arab Jerusalemites could vote for an Arab representative body in Jerusalem that would operate in conjunction with the Israeli municipality. This vehicle for collective Arab representation might take a number of forms: neighbourhood councils, a citywide committee or a series of committees.²⁷² Whatever the body, the idea would

²⁶⁶ PASSIA (Palestinian Academic Society for the Study of International Affairs) and its director, Mahdi Abdel Hadi, have been instrumental in advancing local discussion of these options. Crisis Group interview, Jerusalem, August 2012.

²⁶⁷ See pp. 25-26 above.

²⁶⁸ This option has been rejected in the past, though in light of changing circumstances, it might be reconsidered. Ussama Halabi, *The Arab Jerusalem Municipality* (Jerusalem, 1993) (in Arabic).

²⁶⁹ Crisis Group interviews, Jerusalem municipal councillors, Jerusalem, June 2010-September 2012.

²⁷⁰ Asked whether Jerusalemites should participate in “municipal elections”, a Palestinian businessman asked, “Which elections? Barakat’s or Fayyad’s? We are Palestinians; we should vote in Palestinian elections, not Israeli”. Crisis Group interview, Ramallah, July 2012.

²⁷¹ “When we eventually take over East Jerusalem, we will need a body that is ready. So create that body now. We need a single urban planning unit instead of the million addresses we have now. It would start by working outside the Wall, where Palestinians need more help anyway. We don’t want those areas to become any more of a ghetto than they already are. We should use the time to establish the technical skills – garbage collection, electricity, road design, sewerage, zoning etc. We have to start outside for both the donors and Israel to accept. But expertise doesn’t stop at the Wall, so we can consult on projects inside as well”. Crisis Group interview, PLO policy adviser, Jerusalem, August 2012.

²⁷² The idea of a shadow municipality has been attempted before. Faysal Hussein tried and failed in the early 1990s. For an account see Ussama Halabi, *op. cit.* There were several obstacles. First, he faced opposition from Israel, which did not want a Palestinian national organisation functioning in the city. Secondly, he faced opposition from Arafat, who could not abide the emergence of a ri-

be for it to coordinate in some manner with both the Israeli municipality and the PLO, although overcoming Israeli objections would be challenging.²⁷³

A variation on this option would be for Arab Jerusalemites to participate in district or neighbourhood elections in East Jerusalem in the same way that Jews do in their neighbourhoods and settlements. Currently there are approximately fifteen *minhalim kehalatiim* – something akin to neighbourhood councils – mainly for Jews in the east.²⁷⁴ Several were formerly operational in East Jerusalem but are now defunct.²⁷⁵ A municipal councillor explained

val power centre. Crisis Group interview, Jerusalem, August 2012. A Palestinian policy adviser on Jerusalem argued that the city's fraught politics would nullify the utility of the option should it be tried now: "You can't do it because of the politics. You can't have elections in East Jerusalem, so the committee has to be appointed, which means appointing it from Fatah. Then what do you do about Hamas and the others? Then you're in a pickle, it's not about service provision anymore, which was the point to begin with". Crisis Group interview, Jerusalem, July 2012.

²⁷³ Mehdi Abdel Hadi commented that it was too early to say exactly how such cooperation would take place: "Israelis and Palestinians first need to have their own, separate conversations about forms of collective representation for Jerusalemites, and only after that talk to each other". Crisis Group interview, Jerusalem, August 2012. A Palestinian intellectual long involved in Jerusalem politics echoed this view: "Palestinians, especially among the youth, are now completely against any kind of dialogue with Israelis. To the contrary, it's all about boycott. The two communities need to talk to themselves first and figure out what they might bring to the table". Crisis Group interview, Jerusalem, August 2012. A survey of some 30 Arab Jerusalemites confirmed this impression: any coordination with the Israeli municipality was nearly universally rejected. Crisis Group interview, Jerusalem, October 2012.

²⁷⁴ According to the municipality's website, "The Minhal Kehilati is a social organization that enables different population groups to take an active part in the decision-making process in the community. By virtue of its very definition, the Minhal Kehilati is entrusted with service provision to all the inhabitants of the neighborhood. As part of its activity, the Minhal Kehilati implements programs of culture, enrichment, sport and leisure; it also seeks to establish a neighborhood consensus, self-management, a high quality of life and the involvement of inhabitants in volunteer activity for the neighborhood. The Minhal Kehilati is the authorised body which represents all the affairs of the neighborhood vis-a-vis the municipality. As part of the relationship between them the municipality sets the budgetary limitations for the activity of the Minhal together with the Minhal itself". Legally each Minhal Kehilati is an independent non-profit organisation; it is not formally part of the municipality. www.jerusalem.muni.il/jer_sys/publish/showPublish.asp?pub_id=42167.

²⁷⁵ They were in Wadi Joz and Al-Tur. See Hillel Cohen, op. cit., and footnote 225 above. An Israeli official promoted the councils as a "half-way house" for Palestinian cooperation

that some on the council are planning to revamp them in Arab areas; transform neighbourhood community centres (known as *matnasim*) into *minhalim kehalatiim*; give them more powers; and agree to democratic elections for their leaderships. Others in the Jerusalem town hall promote a broader devolution of power to create three autonomous, borough-like entities within East Jerusalem – secular Jewish, Haredi (ultra-orthodox) and Arab – to address not Jewish-Arab relations but also secular-Haredi relations.²⁷⁶

Any of these options potentially would enable Jerusalemites to command better services and therefore improve their living conditions – thereby augmenting their staying power in the city and not submitting to difficult conditions and fleeing – in addition to reestablishing some sense of political community.

But no such development is likely or desirable without the national movement's endorsement. While individuals or small blocs of Palestinians might decide on their own to vote, take Israeli citizenship or otherwise engage with official Israeli institutions, the community as a whole probably would not. Most Palestinians agree that making decisions on an ad hoc basis would be counterproductive; Jerusalemites may be desperate for solutions, but they do not want to compromise national principles. Acting without its backing would further fragment the national movement and set it against itself,²⁷⁷ which could produce an even more precarious social and political dynamic than exists today. Hani Masri, a Ramallah-based analyst and columnist summed up:

We need to be honest with ourselves. Things are different now than they used to be, and the various Palestinian groupings [*tajamuat*] need to deal with the specificities of their predicaments. We can and should be quite flexible

with a municipality they do not consider their own. Crisis Group interview, senior Israeli security official, Jerusalem, August 2012.

²⁷⁶ Crisis Group interview, municipal councillor, Jerusalem, October 2012. These efforts will have to wait, since they collided with the mayor's desire to hobble his potential competitors. Fearing that Haredi groups would take over more councils (as they already had done in Har Homa), the mayor limited voting privileges in the neighbourhood elections to those with a history of volunteer work in their neighbourhood. The changes also applied to the Arab councils in al-Tor and Wadi Joz, even though they were largely defunct, for fear that Hamas could have taken them over. *Haaretz*, 16 October 2012.

²⁷⁷ A Jerusalemite attorney protested that the boycott strategy was outdated and that the Talmudic distinctions between voluntary and involuntary engagement with the municipality no longer had relevance: "What [the distinction] means is that it's okay for me to legitimate the municipality by paying taxes but not by demanding to get something back. All I'm asking for is consistency. If you want me to boycott and not pay taxes, fine – but then find a way to protect me. If you are not going to do that, and I have to pay my taxes, that's fine too – but then find a way to ensure that I'm not living in a ghetto". Crisis Group interview, Jerusalem, August 2012.

about how they do so – so long as they act within a framework set out by a national leadership. If there is no overarching leadership, we will find Jerusalem making one arrangement, Nablus another, Gaza a third, etc. Each will end up formalising its own isolation and the national movement's dissolution.²⁷⁸

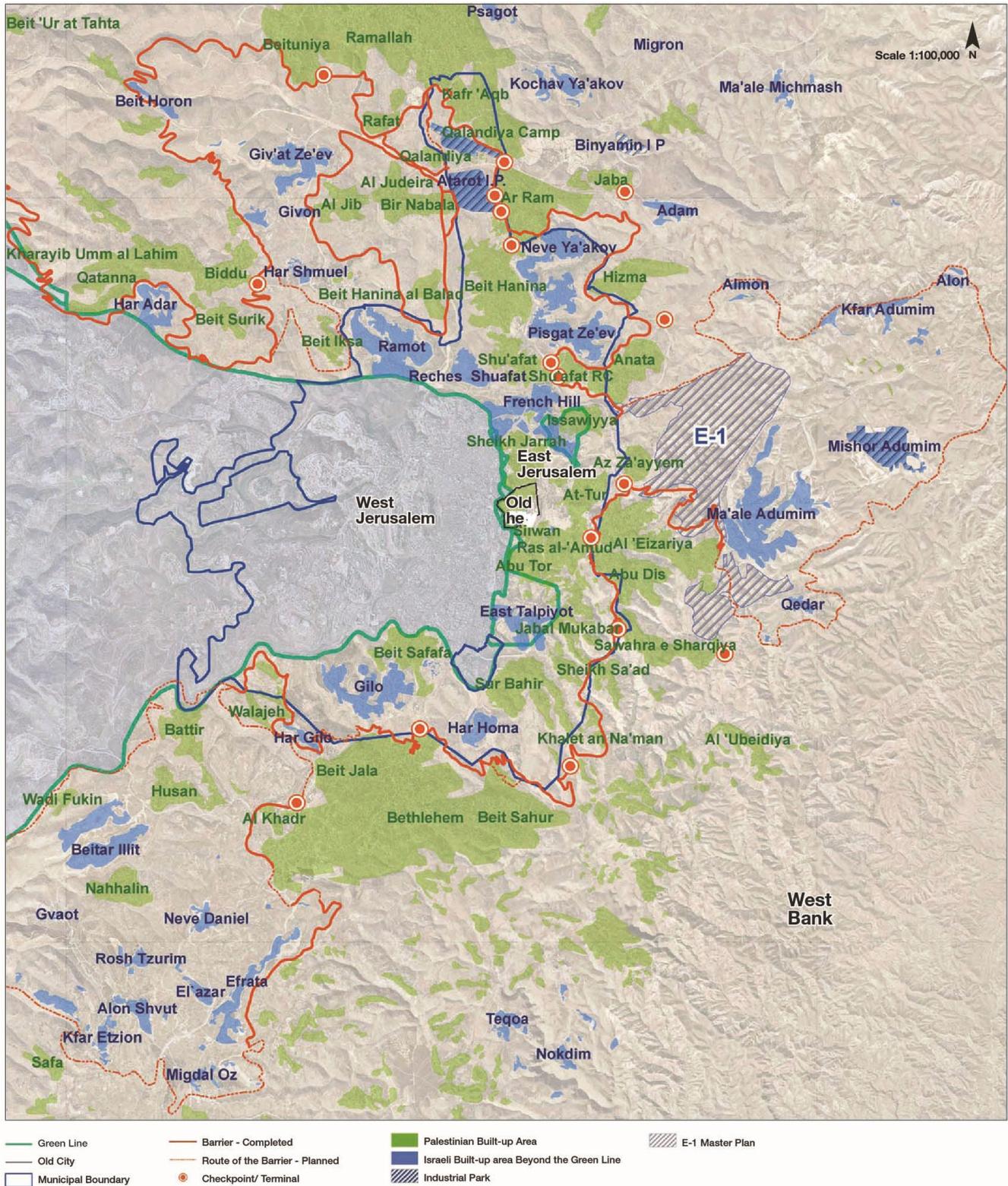
Individual initiatives and small-scale changes will not produce what is needed: a representative voice speaking on behalf of the Arab city in the hope of avoiding further social dissolution, political drift, dissent into criminality and possible violence. With Israelis and Palestinians playing the long game, achieving such a voice is a necessary way-station on the road to the overarching goal of a Palestinian capital in East Jerusalem.

Jerusalem/Brussels, 20 December 2012

²⁷⁸ Crisis Group interview, Ramallah, August 2012.

APPENDIX A

MAP OF JERUSALEM AND ITS ENVIRONS



Source: Terrestrial Jerusalem.

This map's nomenclature is that of its designers and does not necessarily reflect Crisis Group's nomenclature.

APPENDIX B

ABOUT THE INTERNATIONAL CRISIS GROUP

The International Crisis Group (Crisis Group) is an independent, non-profit, non-governmental organisation, with some 130 staff members on five continents, working through field-based analysis and high-level advocacy to prevent and resolve deadly conflict.

Crisis Group's approach is grounded in field research. Teams of political analysts are located within or close by countries at risk of outbreak, escalation or recurrence of violent conflict. Based on information and assessments from the field, it produces analytical reports containing practical recommendations targeted at key international decision-takers. Crisis Group also publishes *CrisisWatch*, a twelve-page monthly bulletin, providing a succinct regular update on the state of play in all the most significant situations of conflict or potential conflict around the world.

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APPENDIX C

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