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## PLANNING IN SERVICE OF CONSOLIDATING OCCUPATION & CONTROL IN EAST JERUSALEM:

SURVEY OF RECENT ISRAELI INVASIVE PLANS IN THE OLD CITY'S BASIN

المركز العربي للتخطيط البديل  
The Arab Center for Alternative Planning  
— המרכז הערבי לתכנון אלטרנטיבי —



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## Introduction

In 1967, Israel occupied the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip, and in 1980, annexed East Jerusalem, including 28 villages, creating what it claimed to be the “complete and united Jerusalem” as the capital of Israel.<sup>1</sup> Since then, Israeli policies have been geared toward maintaining dominance in this area, limiting Palestinian expansion, preserving the Jewish demographic majority created with the annexation, and blurring the boundaries between East and West Jerusalem. These measures aim to harshly impose Israeli sovereignty over East Jerusalem, displace Palestinians, and restrict the Palestinian population’s access to housing, employment, and other economic, cultural, and social rights.

Israel has pursued a wide array of policies to effectively “Judaize” East Jerusalem. These include extensive land confiscation, such as the takeover of Palestinian lands under guise of the “Absentee Property” law.<sup>2</sup> This transfer of Palestinian property rights has enabled the Israeli authorities to limit the possibilities of Palestinian development and to promote the construction of Jewish settlements at the heart of the Palestinian neighborhoods. This strategy has been further reinforced by the change of policy regarding land registration in 2018. Initiated in “Government Plan 3790”, the Israeli government (particularly the Ministry of Justice) in cooperation with the Jerusalem Municipality, have advanced a comprehensive land surveying and registering in East Jerusalem. The real goal of this project is to impose full Israeli sovereignty in East Jerusalem and to take over additional lands for settlements’ benefit.<sup>3</sup> In addition, Israeli policies have hindered the development of urban plans to expand housing in East Jerusalem. Even when zoning plans are advanced in the Palestinian neighborhoods, they are done without regard to the needs of the city’s Palestinian community, particularly their acute housing crisis, and with minimal consultation with the affected population.<sup>4</sup>

These efforts have been accelerated in recent years, and Israeli bodies have increasingly targeted the area between East and West Jerusalem, seeking to consolidate annexation. The Jerusalem Municipality and many governmental and Jewish settlement institutions have been advancing initiatives specifically surrounding the Old City, in what is called the “Holy Basin”. It is evident from the intensification of these invasive plans that they are intended to obliterate the features that distinguish the Palestinian neighborhoods, undercut their national and cultural identity, and impose non-authentic characteristics and landmarks that obscure the real and historical identity of this region. These objectives are part of the comprehensive project to “Judaize” East Jerusalem, blur the lines with West Jerusalem, and impose forced unity between the two parts of Jerusalem under Israeli sovereignty. All this is done with utter disregard to the Palestinians’ needs and aspirations in the city.

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1. Basic Law: Jerusalem, Capital of Israel, 1980.

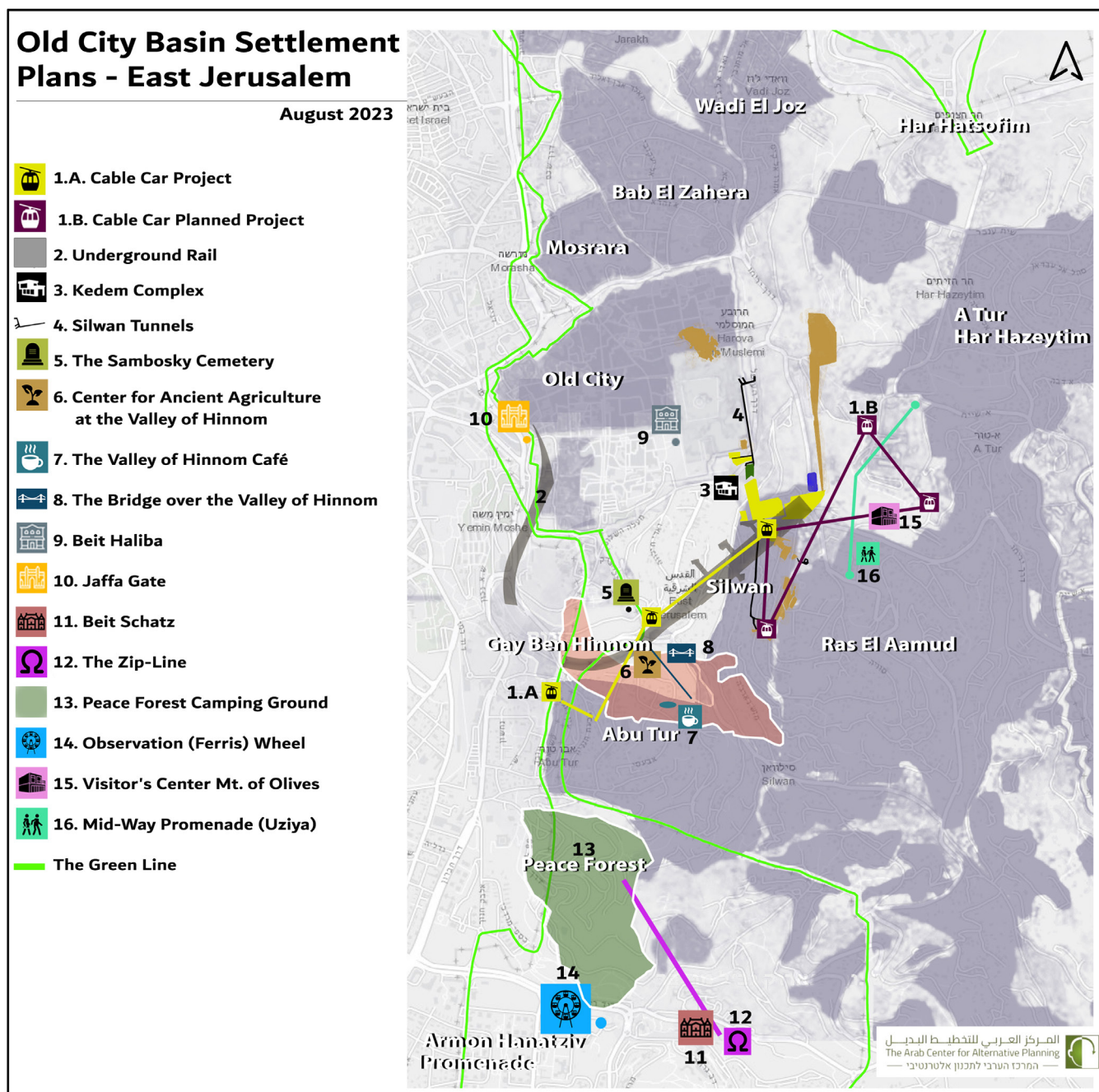
2. The Norwegian Refugee Council, “The Absentee Property Law and its Application to East Jerusalem” February 2017.

3. Ir Amim, “Settlement of Land Title in East Jerusalem: A Means of Dispossessing Palestinians from their Lands and Homes” March 2022.

4. See, for example, ACAP, “City Center Plan – East Jerusalem” December 2021.



With these policies, the Israeli government is in clear violation of international law, particularly Article 49 of the Fourth Geneva Convention.<sup>5</sup> That is, according to the Geneva Convention, the occupying power is prohibited from: transferring its own civilian population into the occupied territory, destroying or appropriating private property, and enacting laws or regulations that would change the planning regimes in the occupied territory in a way that would favor its own civilian population.<sup>6</sup> Israeli policies effectively displace Palestinian East Jerusalemites while creating and expanding Jewish settlements in Occupied East Jerusalem.



5. On international law regarding East Jerusalem, see Yotam Ben-Hillel, "The Legal Status of East Jerusalem" The Norwegian Refugee Council, December 2013

6. Israeli actions also violate Palestinian rights that are protected under "The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR)" of 1966, "The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR)" of 1966, and "The Convention on the Rights of the Child" of 1989.

This report will focus and elaborate on a series of invasive projects in the “Holy Basin” area, promoted by the Israeli government, the Jerusalem municipality, and settler organizations, investing huge budgets on these projects. These projects cultivate overall Israeli goals in Jerusalem and implicitly blur the border between East and West Jerusalem, thus falsely creating the impression of continuity between the two parts of the city.

As we shall show, these projects emphasize tourism of Jewish sites with the intent of promoting a claim for Jewish exclusivity in East Jerusalem. To further the goal, authorities, often in partnership with the “Ir David (Elad)” Settlers’ Association (one of the main settler organizations operating in East Jerusalem), have advanced several infrastructural projects to develop and connect Jewish historical narratives and heritage myths. However, in order to do so, Palestinians’ rights, mobility, and daily life are consistently undermined, and these projects serve to justify the takeover of Palestinian space, generate links between the East and West sides of the city, and support exclusive Jewish claims to all of Jerusalem. Furthermore, in promoting these projects, the municipality and other officials fully disregard the needs and desires of East Jerusalem’s Palestinian residents.

Over the past years, it has become increasingly apparent that these plans work to accelerate and consolidate processes that settler organizations have been undertaking to take over important historical sites to “Judaize” the city and undermine its Palestinian residents. The colonial projects of the settler association Elad Settlers’ Association is an important example, and today its impact is clear in strengthening Jewish settlement in the Palestinian neighborhood of Silwan, its devastating influence on the Palestinian residents, and its role in intensifying claims of exclusive Jewish history and heritage in occupied East Jerusalem.<sup>7</sup>

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7. Peace Now, “Settlement Under the Guise of Tourism: The Elad Settler Organization in Silwan”. 12.10.2020.

## Shalem Plan: “The Plan to Reveal Ancient Jerusalem”

On 28.5.2017, the Israeli government announced a decision to pursue a plan “for the development of the Old City basin in Jerusalem”.<sup>8</sup> Based on this decision, the Shalem Plan “to reveal ancient Jerusalem” was prepared and approved by the government on 13.5.2018.<sup>9</sup>

The plan allocates significant government funding for extensive archeological excavations in the Old City and Silwan, and for developing archaeological sites in what the Israeli bodies call the “Holy Basin”, for tourism. This plan was a continuation of the processes that had been taking place in the “Holy Basin”, which allowed the increasing encroachment of settler organizations in East Jerusalem and their control over a number of archeological sites. It is also another step towards deepening the cooperation between government offices, state authorities (including the Nature and Parks Authority and the Antiquities Authority), and municipal authorities with the settler organizations. As these tighten, a steep increase can be seen in the number of archaeological sites under settler control.

Revealing the political stakes in this project, the Shalem Plan stated: “The uncovering of ancient Jerusalem is of first-rate importance on the diplomatic level”, and that its goals include “branding ancient Jerusalem as an area that has national and international importance.” It also mentioned the Antiquities Authority’s agreement with the Elad Settlers’ Association, which has been aggressively seeking to “Judaize” occupied East Jerusalem.<sup>10</sup> In addition, nearly half of the plan’s budget was to be funded by Elad. This was further highlighted in a statement by Miri Regev, then Minister of Culture and Sport, who declared, after a walk in the archeological sites in the “Holy Basin”: “These excavations bring the Bible to life and strengthen the best kushan (an Ottoman-era document attesting to property rights) we possess.”<sup>11</sup>

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8. Government Decision 2768, issued on 28.5.2017.

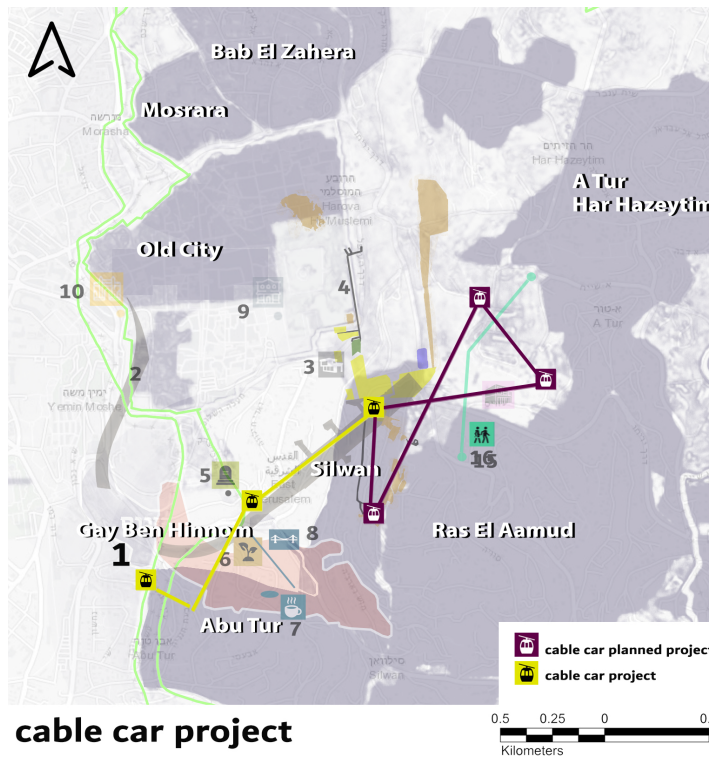
9. Government Decision 3789, issued on 13.5.2018, along with Government Decision 3788 for “Strengthening and bolstering of the basin area of the Old City in Jerusalem.”

10. “The National Plan to Reveal Ancient Jerusalem: Proposed Decision”, 9.5.2018.

11. Emek Shaveh, “Shalem Plan Overview.” 28.4.2020.

## Silwan – The Hinnom Valley

### 1) Project: Cable Car



**cable car project**

The route of the Cable Project starts on the sign next to figure 1 on the map above in yellow and purple.

BUDGET	INITIATOR	IMPLEMENTER	LOCATION
NIS 220 million.	Jerusalem Municipality and the Ministry of Tourism.	Jerusalem Development Authority.	The Hinnom Valley and Silwan.



## Project Description

Contributing to the overall policies detailed above, the Cable Car to the Old City in East Jerusalem proposes a large installation that distorts the skyline of this historic area. The project exploits the problem of traffic congestion and limited transportation near Dung Gate in the Old City as a tool to achieve Israeli political goals.

The length of the Cable Car's route will be 1,397 meters, and it will include four stations. According to the latest plans, the Cable Car will have 41 trolleys, hanging about 73 meters apart. The Cable Car is intended to carry tourists from the old train station complex in the Baka neighborhood (West Jerusalem) to the planned Kedem complex of the Elad Settlers' Association in occupied East Jerusalem. It will include stations next to the Old City Wall, over the Hinnom Valley area and the houses of Silwan village.

Previously, a second phase of the project was planned, according to which the Cable Car was supposed to pass above the Kidron Valley to the top of the Mount of Olives and the Seven Arches Hotel, to another station near a panoramic view of East Jerusalem, and from there to connect to another light rail line to the Mount of Olives. However, in 2017, the government decided to approve only the Cable Car section up to the Dung Gate and to cancel the additional sections to the Mount of Olives to prevent international opposition to the project in the sensitive complex.

Major negative effects of the cable car project on Silwan and East Jerusalem include the significant harm to the urban heritage and skyline of the Old City. The expropriation of private land, including courtyards in Silwan, along with the uprooting of ancient olive trees, has raised serious concerns. Additionally, the cable cars are planned to pass directly over the heads of Silwan's residents, disrupting their daily lives and imposing a constant visual and physical intrusion<sup>12</sup>.

## Status

Initial implementation steps are underway.

## Approving Entity

On May 28, 2017, the government approved the venture.

In June 2019, the Israeli National Infrastructure Committee (NIC) approved the plan (NIC Plan #86).

## Objections

- In 2019, a few architects, Emek Shaveh (An Israeli foundation fighting against the use of heritage sites and archaeological remains as a political tool in the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians<sup>13</sup>), Peace Now, and citizens of Silwan filed a petition against the project.<sup>14</sup>
- In May 2022, the Supreme Court of Justice rejected the petition, thus giving the green light for the implementation of the project.<sup>15</sup>

12. Nir Hasson, "Five Years and 30 Million Shekels Later, East Jerusalem Cable Car Project Remains Stuck Midair" Ha'aretz 14 February 2024.

13. According to the New Israeli Fund. <https://nif.org.il/>

14. See ACAP, "Position Paper: The Cable Car Project to the Old City of Jerusalem". October 2020.

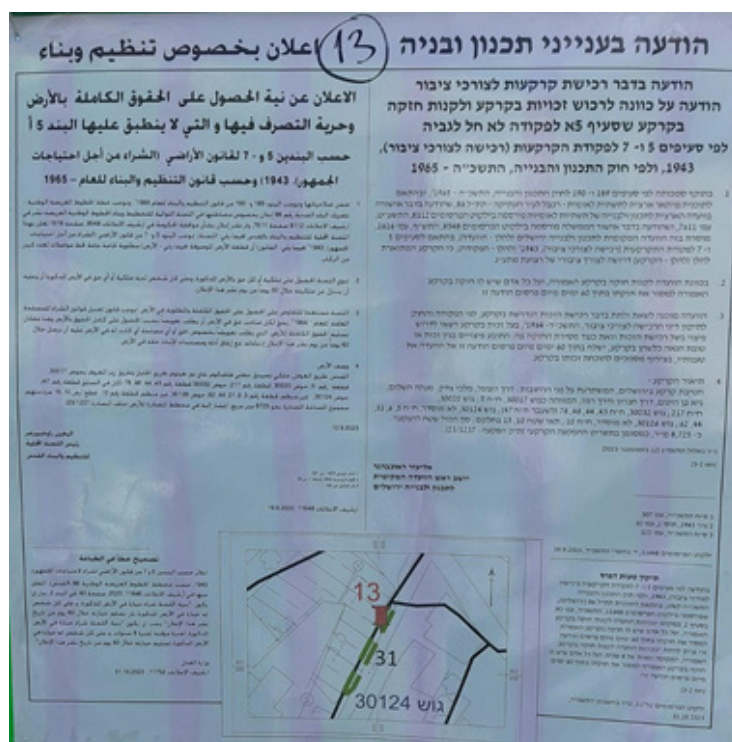
15. HCJ 7841/19 Emek Shaveh et al. V. The State of Israel et al. Issued on 15.5.2022.

- In September 2024, following a petition to the Jerusalem District Court <sup>16</sup>, the Franciscan Custodian secured a verdict stating that the land confiscations do not include its lands. However, the ruling did not address aerial confiscation.

## Implementation Stage

Now that there has been a decisive approval for the project, the Jerusalem Development Authority (JDA) has taken steps towards implementing it, focusing mainly on contracting providers for surveying, infrastructure, and development work in preparation for its execution. Even before the actual work began, though, the problematic nature of this project became evident again. In March 2023, the Nature and Parks Authority announced that it would not allow the construction of one of the stations unless the Cable Car was the exclusive means of transportation to the "Western Wall." However, the Ministry of Transportation did not plan for this, and the JDA has made no such arrangement. Most severely, if the main road in the area was to be closed as demanded, Silwan's residents would be most harmed as it would impede their access to the neighborhood<sup>17</sup>.

As part of the implementation process, 17 notices have been issued for the expropriation of approximately 8.7 dunams of land along the planned cable car line. These areas will be used to construct the pillars supporting the cable cars<sup>18</sup>.



A picture of one of the notices that have been issued for the expropriation. This was hung by the Israeli authorities in Wadi-Hilweh/Silwan on December 2023.

16. Sue Surkes, "Franciscans petition court over Jerusalem Old City cable car project" The Times of Israel 18 April 2024.
17. Merav Shlomo Melamed, "Is it serious now? The new threat to the Cable Car to the Wall" Ynet, 21.3.23.
18. Nir Hasson, "Five Years and 30 Million Shekels Later, East Jerusalem Cable Car Project Remains Stuck Midair" Ha'aretz 14 February 2024

Several international companies specializing in cable car projects have pulled out of participating in the East Jerusalem cable car project due to its political sensitivity. Four companies, including three from France and one from Switzerland, initially expressed interest but later withdrew. For instance, in 2015, the French government advised one company not to participate, and more recently, CNA from France and Histec Engineering from Switzerland pulled out<sup>19</sup>. The inability to secure an international partner may be a key reason why the JDA has yet to publish a tender for the project.

Here are the tenders and contracts that the JDA has publicized until September 2023:<sup>20</sup>

BUDGET	TENDERS AND CONTRACTS
	Intention to contract a company, Ikan Mass – Creative Branding, to consult on the signage of the project
2 May 2023	Approved contracting with: Sh. Losting Engineers as consultants for elevators for the project. Yadid Biran and Co. as appraisers. Ayah Sh.B. Ltd. as timelines consultant.
17 April 2023	Approved contracting Histec Engineering from Switzerland as cable cars consultants.
27 March 2023	Approved contracting with Life Cyber Ltd. as a radiation consultant.
28 February 2023	Approved contracting with Lavi Natif Algabish as a hydrology consultant.
25 January 2023	Approved contracting with Bitelmann Architects Ltd. as proofing consultants.

19. Nir Hasson, "Five Years and 30 Million Shekels Later, East Jerusalem Cable Car Project Remains Stuck Midair" Ha'aretz 14 February 2024.

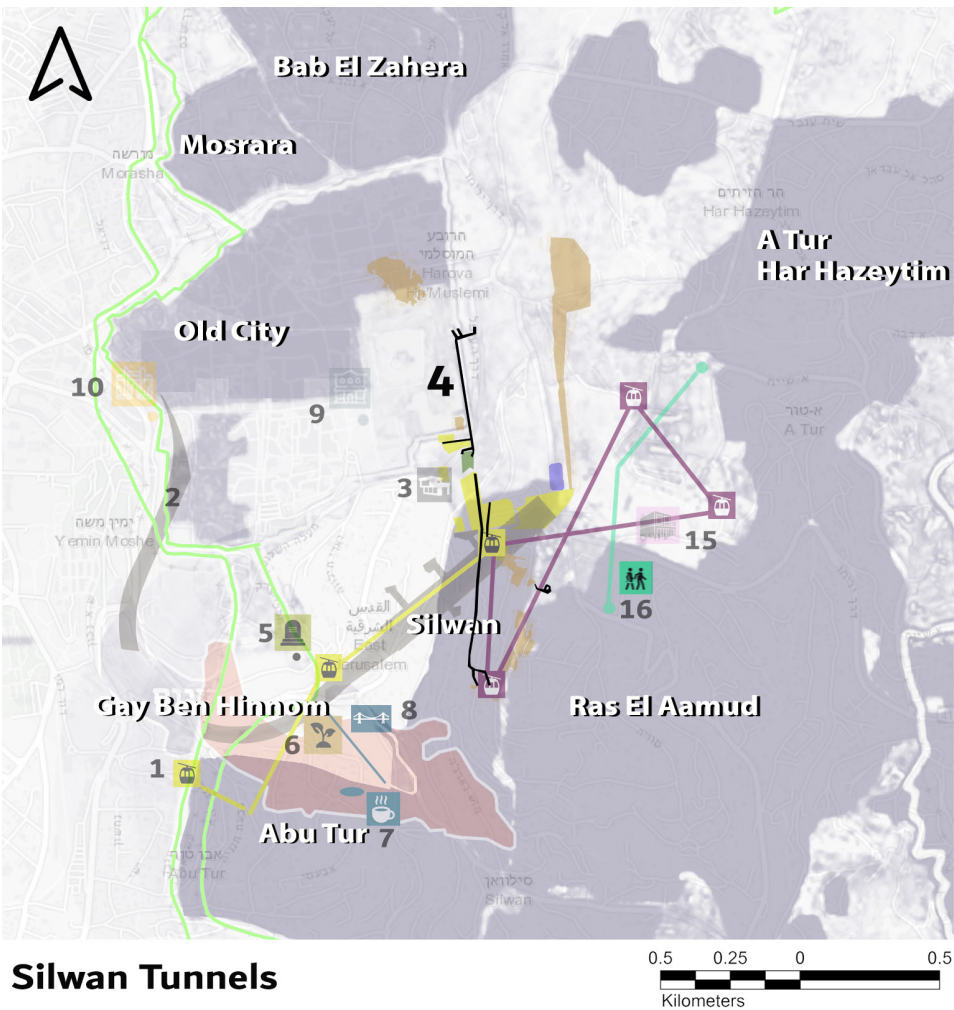
20. All tenders were published in the JDA's tender committee decisions, as posted on their website.

BUDGET	TENDERS AND CONTRACTS
9 February 2023	Approved contracting with Rosenfield Arnice Ltd. as a project architect.
12 January 2023	Approved contracting with: Ziv Systems for managing a data program for the project's planners. Ayah Sh.B. Ltd. as consultant for quantities. Exact Transportation Solutions as consultants for transportation technology.
29 December 2022	Approved to contract with Adir Landscape Consulting and Supervision as an agronomy consultant.
15 December 2022	Approved contracting with: Yadid Biran and Co. as appraisers. Dr. Adi Ziltsman as geology consultant. Eco Environmental Engineering Ltd. as environmental and acoustic. Sh. Losting Engineers, as consultants for elevators. Irina Rubin as an accessibility consultant. S.E.D. Engineers as Infrastructure coordination consultant. Rosinkov Brothers as Air conditioning consultants. Rosinkov Brothers as Drainage and plumbing consultants. Haddad Engineers as network consultants. Groshku Civil Engineers as construction consultants. Eliyah Ben Shabat as Simulation and motion consultant. Michal Nakman as Traffic and transportation consultant. Seitter Consultants as Security consultants. Doron Ashel as a soil and geotesting consultant. East Jerusalem Development Ltd for the transfer of existing infrastructure.
22 September 2022	approved to increase the contract with Peled Klein (that was approved in 2019) as Engineering controller.
7 September 2022	Approved contracting with Dana Engineering as Project managers.
29 June 2022	Approved contracting with Kav Medidah Ltd. for surveying/mapping services.



2) Project: Silwan Tunnel

(The Pilgrims' Way Tunnel, the Stepped Street)



Silwan Tunnels

The project is the black line located next to figure 4.

BUDGET	INITIATOR	IMPLEMENTER	LOCATION
NIS 22 million in government funding, and NIS 28 million by Elad Settlers' Association.	Elad Settlers' Association.	Israel Antiquities Authority.	Silwan

## Project Description

This massive tunnel is planned from the “Shiloah Pool” (Birkat Silwan – Silwan Pool in Arabic) towards the “Temple Mount”. It passes under homes in the Wadi Hilweh neighborhood in Silwan and crosses under the Old City Walls until the southern edge of the “Western Wall” Square.

The tunnel is a controversial archeological excavation, carried out at the initiative of the Elad Settlers’ Association. Officials at the Israel Antiquities Authority criticized the excavation, calling it “poor archeology” that failed to meet safety requirements and conditions.<sup>21</sup>

Part of the tunnel’s route delves shallowly beneath Silwan. This Palestinian neighborhood sits along the East-West frontier of the city and is one of the key sites targeted by Jewish settler associations. The excavation of the tunnel takes place about 3 to 4 meters below the houses of Silwan, and it has already caused extensive damage. Since the excavation of the tunnel began, cracks have developed in many houses, collapses have occurred, and pits have opened above the excavation route. Five Palestinian families have been forced to leave their homes because of the damage.

## Approving Entity

A permit is not required as this is an archeological excavation.

## Objections

Silwan residents, Emek Shaveh, Peace Now.

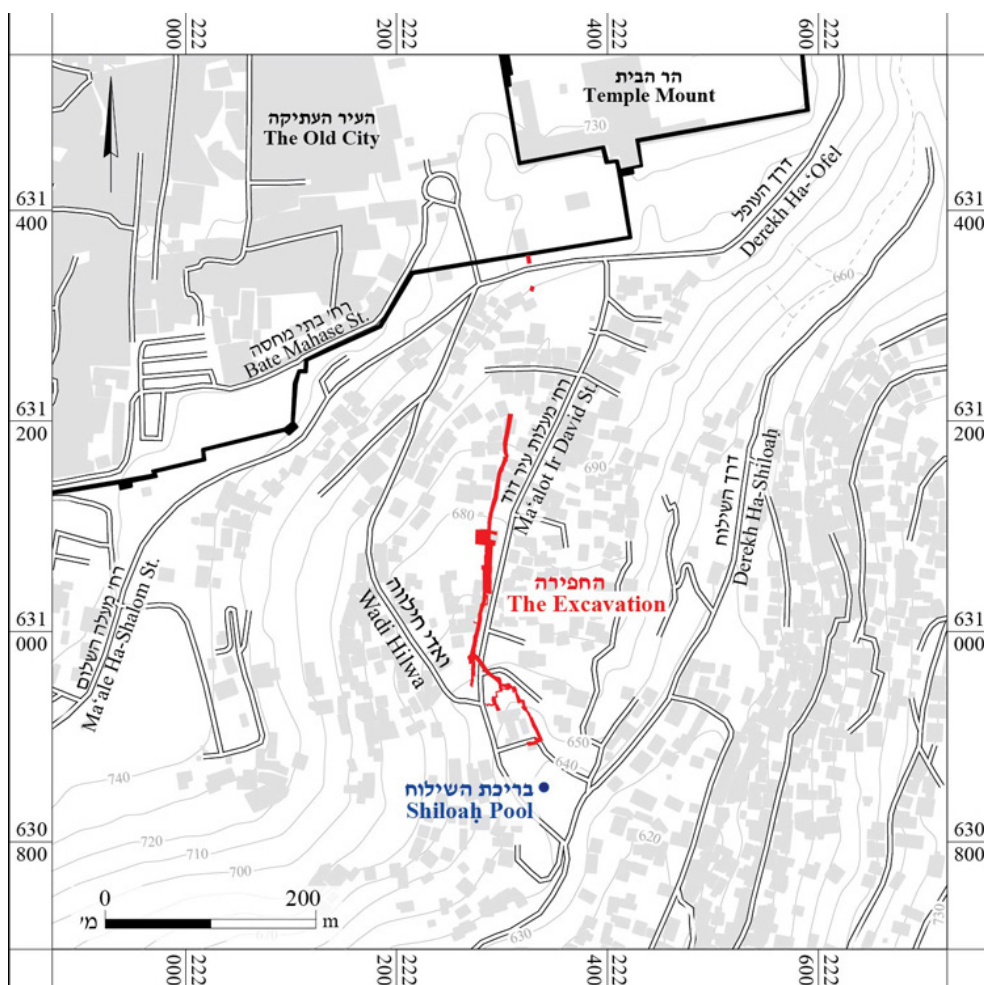
## Implementation Stage

- Since 2013, the Antiquities Authority has been conducting excavations along the route.
- In June 2019, an inauguration ceremony was held for a 200-meter section of the tunnel, attended by government ministers, elected officials, and then US Ambassador to Israel, David Friedman and President Donald Trump’s Middle East envoy, Jason Greenblatt, amidst Palestinian protest.<sup>22</sup>
- Following a tour guided by Elad Settlers’ Association, an article from September 2023 exposes the wide disregard and destruction of non-Jewish archeological findings along the excavation.<sup>23</sup>

21. Nir Hasson, “Senior officials of the Antiquities Authority: The excavation of the Elad association in the city of David - bad archaeology” Ha’aretz, 17.2.2012.

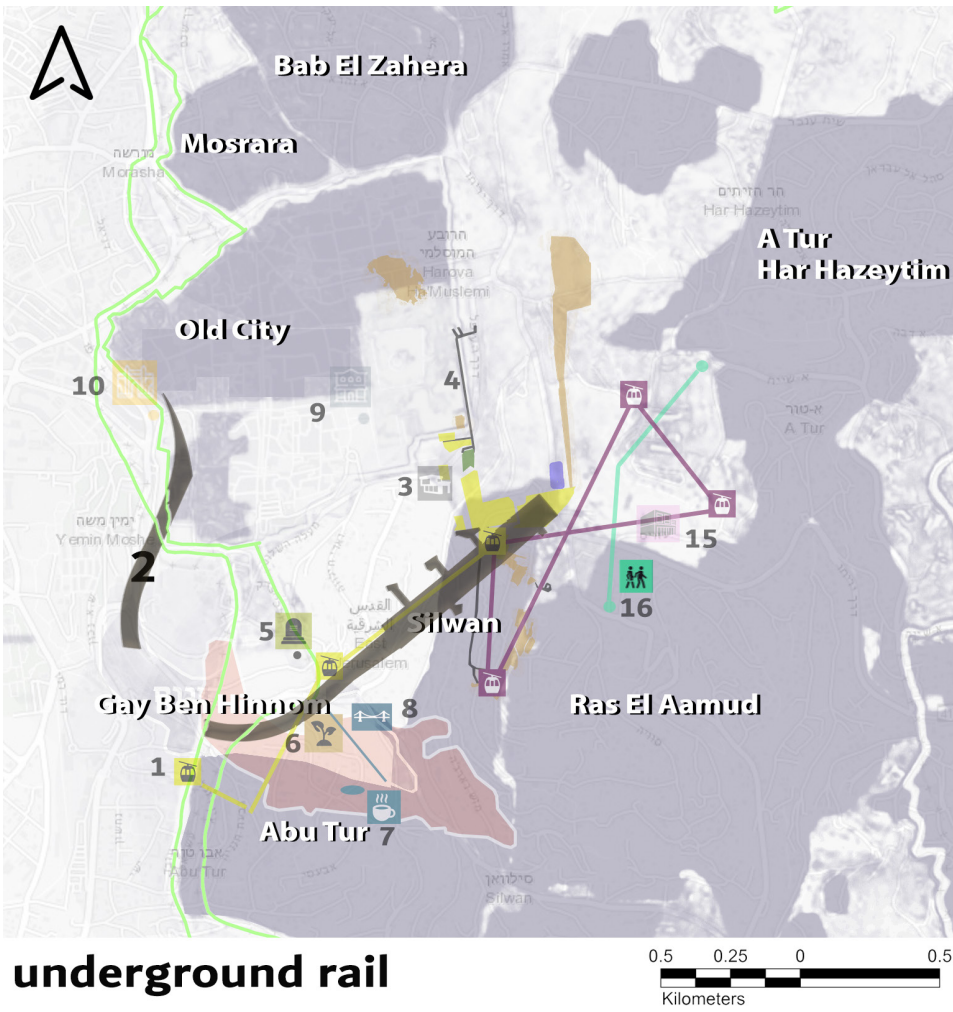
22. Wadi Hilweh Information Center, “Silwan- Opening a “pilgrims tunnel” in Wadi Hilweh...and the neighborhood’s facilities are at risk of collapsing”, 30.6.2019; Joshua Leifer, tweet including video of activists’ arrest, 30.6.2019.

23. Chemi Shiff, “The bitter fate of the finds that do not serve the Jewish narrative in the City of David”, Sicha Mekomit, 7.9.2023.



Map from [https://www.hadashot-esi.org.il/report\\_detail.aspx?id=26274](https://www.hadashot-esi.org.il/report_detail.aspx?id=26274)

3) Project: Underground Rail



The project is located at figure 2 - which is colored in shaded grey

INITIATOR	Ministry of Transportation.
LOCATION	Wadi Rababe (Valley of Hinnom); the Old City; Silwan

Project Description

In February 2020, the National Infrastructure Committee approved a plan for a railway route to the “Western Wall”. The plan was promoted by Yisrael Katz, and later Bezalel Smotrich, when they were Ministers of Transportation, despite objections from professionals at the ministry, and was initially rejected by the committee.<sup>24</sup> The plan’s later approval came after pressure from the Ministry of Transportation and settler organizations.

24. Nir Hasson, “Planned Western Wall Train Will Threaten Historic Jerusalem Spring, Report Says” Ha’aretz, 27.2.2020.



The railway route includes a strip under the Silwan neighborhood, parallel to the Old City wall. Dozens of Palestinian homes are located above this route. These houses will be trapped between the underground train and the Cable Car, planned to be built above them. The infrastructure required for these projects will undoubtedly have an impact on them.

In addition, implementing the plan will further damage scores of Palestinian houses in Silwan, as it intends to enable extensive connections to the “City of David” and the Elad Settlers’ Association’s sporadic settlements. The project will also destroy the archeology in the area of the station at the “Western Wall” and damage “Ein Umm Al-Daraj” (Gihon Spring) near the route.

### Status

Initial planning phase.

### Approving Entity

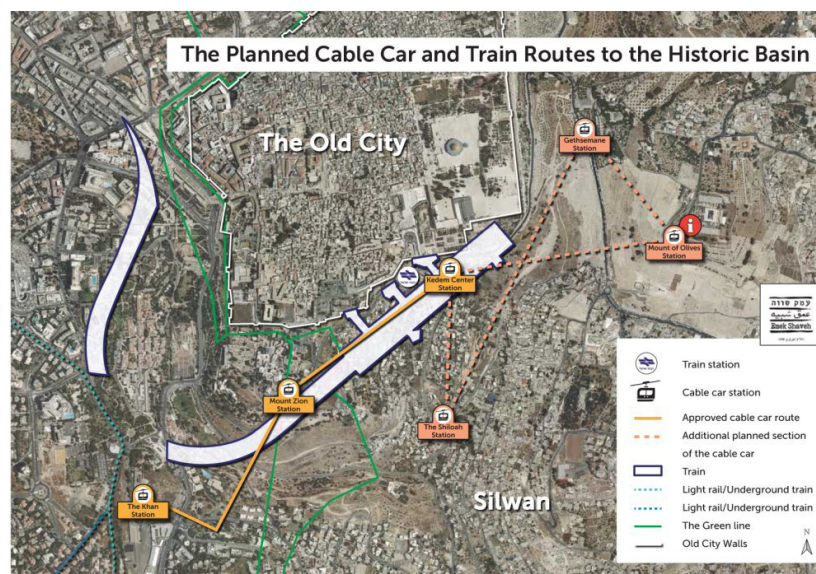
The National Infrastructure Committee approved the plan in February 2020.

### Objections

Israel Nature and Parks Authority; Emek Shaveh; ACAP.

### Implementation Stage

An internal document of the Ministry from 2020 suggested the plans for such a train will remain on paper.<sup>25</sup> However, in May 2023, Miri Regev, the current Minister of Transportation, announced that she had commissioned a feasibility study for implementing the plan.<sup>26</sup>

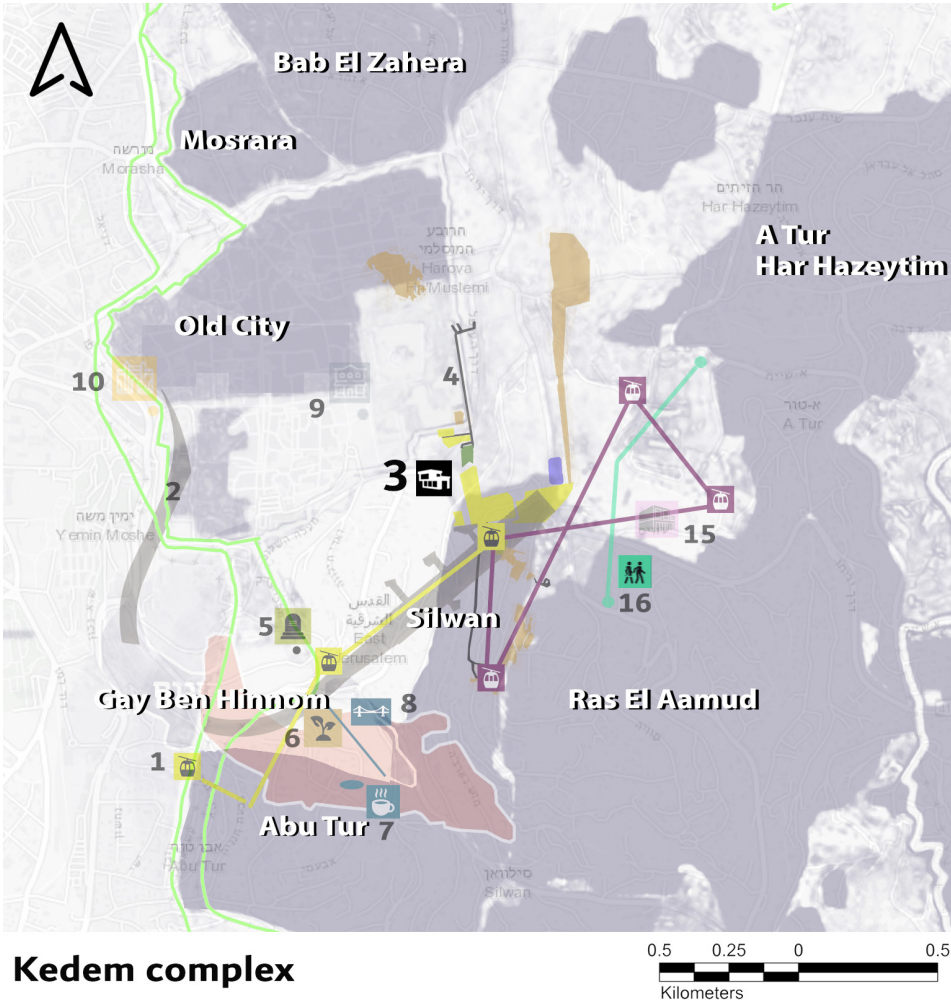


Map: <https://emekshaveh.org/en/the-planned-cable-car-and-train/>

25. Asaf Zagrizak, Yael Fridson, “The Ministry of Transportation admits for the first time: a delay in the railway project to the Western Wall” Ynet, 28.6.2020.

26. Yoav Sadeh, “In honor of Jerusalem Day: the Minister of Transportation recycled the train’s spin to the Wall” Calcalist, 18.5.23.

4) Project: Kedem Complex



Kedem complex

The project is located at figure 3.

BUDGET	INITIATOR	IMPLEMENTER	LOCATION
NIS 4M governmental funding and NIS 6M Elad Settlers' Association.	Elad Settlers' Association and Israel Nature and Parks Authority.	Israel Nature and Parks Authority.	Silwan

## Project Description

This is the most ambitious project built in the vicinity of the Old City walls. The complex is planned only about 20 meters from the Old City walls, at the northern entrance to the settler project of the "City of David", which is also the northern entrance to Silwan neighborhood. It will be part of the "Jerusalem Walls" National Park, and is designed to rise 7 floors, reaching almost to the height of the Old City walls. It would also be built atop important archaeological findings, which would be exhibited in the basement, while other findings that have not been excavated will be destroyed. The complex will include more than 16,000 Square meters of commercial, tourist and parking areas, as well as a "Bible Hall" and the Cable Car station, which are considered as two national projects.

The Kedem complex is a joint initiative of the Elad Settlers' Association and the National Nature and Parks Authority. The government's decisions indicate government involvement from the planning stage, through the approval of the plan to its financing.

## Status

At this stage, only the approval of the Antiquities Authority is missing, to be granted after the completion of the archeological excavations that are currently underway. The final approval of the plan will be granted after the completion of these archeological excavations.

## Approving Entity

The government of Israel; The National Planning Committee.<sup>27</sup>

## Objections

Silwan residents, Emek Shaveh, Ir Amim (An Israeli non-profit organization that deals with the complexity of life in Jerusalem in the context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and the political future of the city<sup>28</sup>), and prominent public figures.

## Implementation

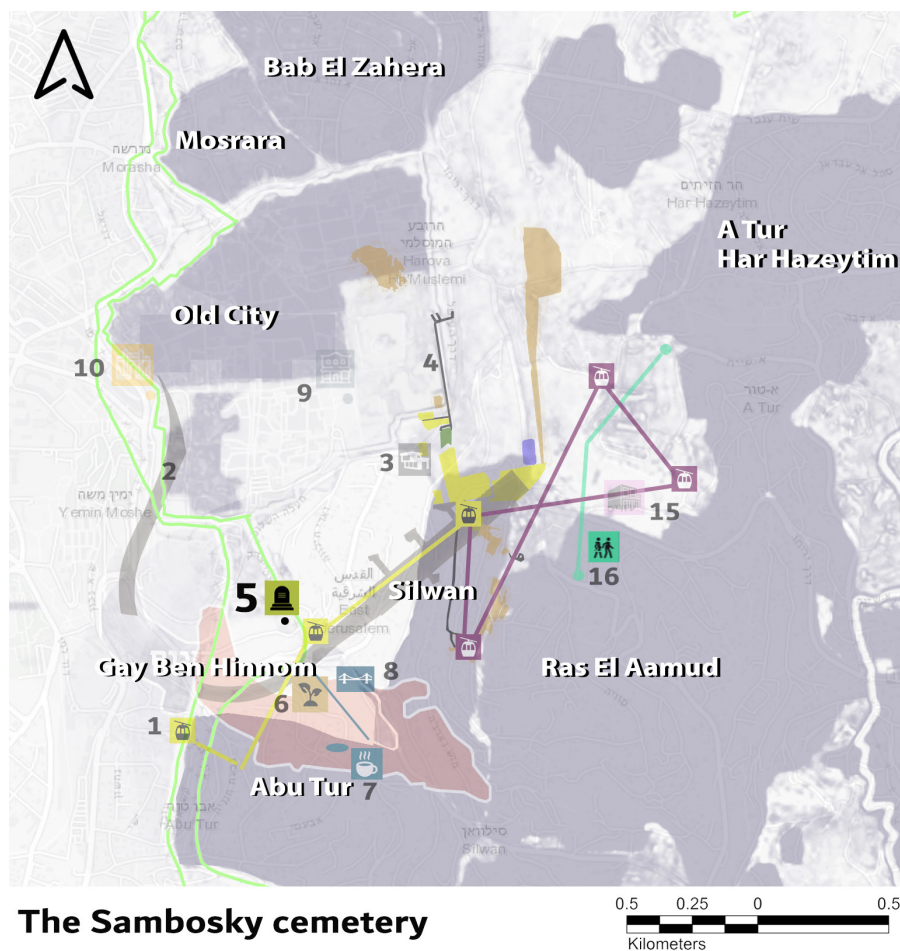
Archeological excavations are underway at the planned site.

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27. Yair Ettinger, "Israeli Agency OKs Right-wing NGO's Plans to Build Large Visitors' Center in East Jerusalem," Ha'aretz, 26.3.2016.

28. According to the New Israeli Fund. <https://nif.org.il/>

## 5) Project: The Samboski Cemetery



**The Sambosky cemetery**

The project is located at figure 5.

BUDGET	INITIATOR	IMPLEMENTER	LOCATION
Unknown	Ela'd	Ela'd	Silwan - Wadi Rababe (the Hinnom Valley)

### Project Description

In June 2022, Elad Settlers' Association began working at the Samboski cemetery in Silwan, including erecting a gateway at the entrance. In July 2022, Elad tried to close the gate and prevent the neighborhood's residents from passing through with their cars or parking there. Eventually, the police informed the residents that these works would be stopped until a solution was found and only cleaning would be done. However, Elad continues extensive work on site.



All this is done even though the area is part of the national park, and the Elad Settlers' Association did not receive an official authorization from the Nature and Parks Authority.<sup>29</sup> This project endangers the access of the neighborhood's 1,000 Palestinian residents.

### Status

Elad Settlers' Association authorized to perform works in the cemetery by the Sephardi community's Chevra Kadisha (a religious burial society), which manages the place on behalf of the General Custodian.

Even though Elad Settlers' Association holds no permits for the works, the Jerusalem municipality, the Nature and Parks Authority, and the police have refused to intervene, claiming that the works are legal.

### Approving Entity

None.

### Objections

Silwan residents, Emek Shaveh.



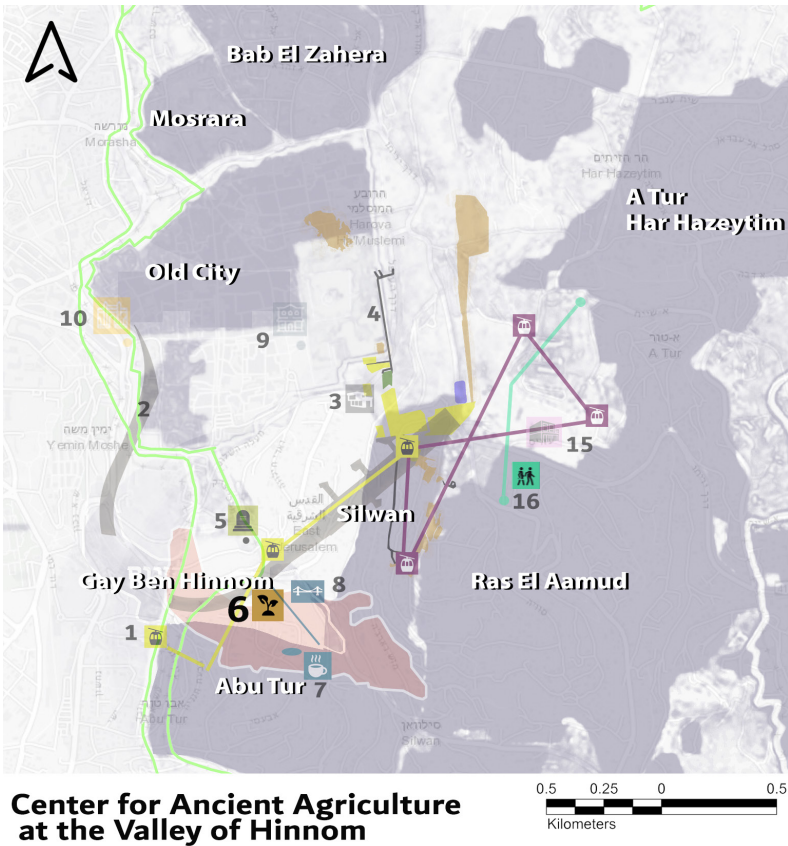
Image from <https://www.zman.co.il/328136/popup/>

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29. Omer Sharvit, "Elad builds and digs in the cemetery of the poor of Jerusalem" Zman, 22.7.2022.



6) Project: Center for Ancient Agriculture at the Valley of Hinnom



Center for Ancient Agriculture at the Valley of Hinnom

The project is located at figure 6.

BUDGET	INITIATOR	IMPLEMENTER	LOCATION
NIS 5.1 million	Elad Settlers' Association	Jerusalem Development Authority, Elad Settlers' Association.	The Hinnom Valley

Project Description

On roughly 60 dunams of privately owned Palestinian land, owned by residents of Silwan and Abu Tor (some of which have been declared as “absentee property”), the Center is meant to create a tourism attraction by replacing Palestinian agricultural landscape with an artificial, supposedly biblical landscape, created by the Elad Settlers’ Association.

Even though this project is run by the Elad Settlers' Association, it has enjoyed full institutional support through funding, land allocation, or by turning a blind eye, including from the Jerusalem Development Authority, Jerusalem Municipality, Nature and Parks Authority, Custodian for Absentee Properties, Antiquities Authority, the Ministry of Jerusalem and Kadishah Company.<sup>30</sup>

The Center was created through landscaping orders issued by the Jerusalem Municipality. Such orders are issued by the municipality to expropriate unused private green spaces, since they are allegedly located in the heart of a national park, where construction is prohibited. In this case, it was done even though Palestinians have been cultivating the land, and in fact still have olive groves they are now barred from. Additional landscaping orders have been issued in the areas adjacent to the "Bayit Ba'Gai" settler project.

The development works in the Center are a real blow to the historic character of the valley. The works that simulate an agricultural landscape, while pushing traditional Palestinian agriculture out of the area, reveal the absurdity and political use made by the state, the municipality, and the settlers' associations in the national park. In this process, the authorities use the law to prevent the Palestinians from using their land, while circumventing the law through various manipulations to destroy the ancient (Palestinian) landscapes in the area.

### Status

Opened in the summer of 2022, the "farm" is active; the Elad Settlers' Association has begun operating the farm and allowing tours (for Israeli soldiers, pupils, and the general Israeli public). The farm is promoted as a tourist attraction that offers visitors a "Biblical" experience in the form of agricultural work.

### Approving Entity

The Custodian of Absentee Properties took over the land in 2021, after Elad Settlers' Association had begun its work in the area. However, it was discovered that two years prior, the Custodian had authorized the Nature and Parks Authority to use it, even though it officially had no authority over it.

Landscaping orders were issued by Jerusalem Municipality.

### Objections

Emek Shaveh, Peace Now, Palestinian families from Silwan.

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30. Nir Hasson and Yael Freidson, "The Elad association takes over another target, and the authorities go out of their way to help it" Ha'aretz. 28 August 2022. According to Peace Now, Elad was supposed to invest NIS 5 million, but the JDA allocated NIS 62.5 million, which would cover Elad's commitment. Peace Now, "A significant expansion of the tourist settlement project: a tender for the construction of a footbridge over the Ben Hinnom Valley", 8.6.22.





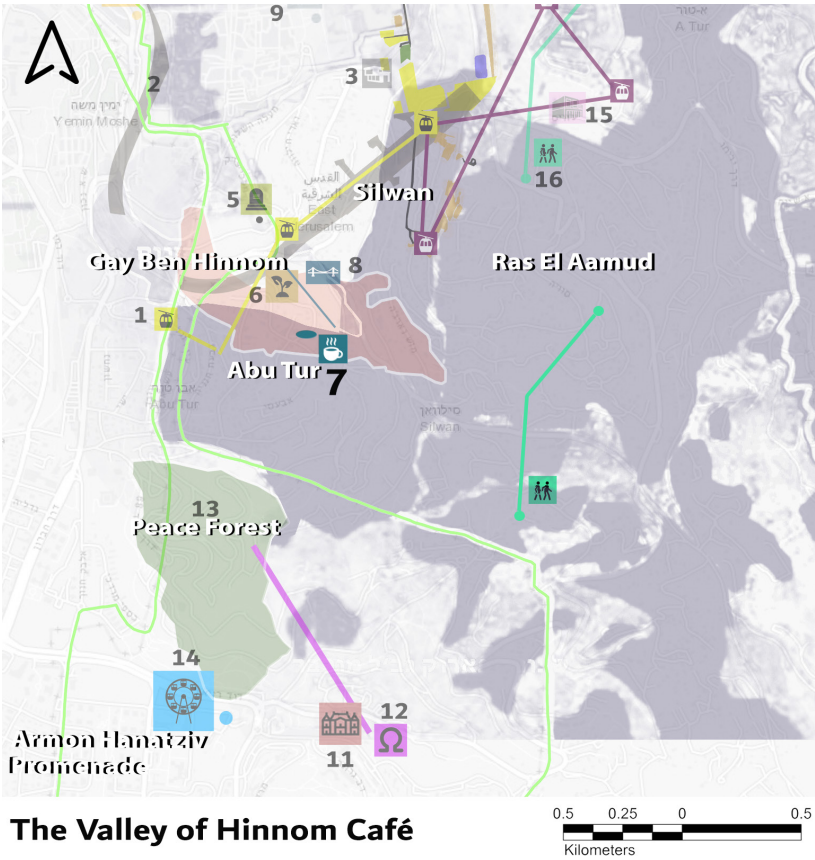
Photo above by Uri Ulrich



Photo above by ACAP



7) Project: The Hinnom Valley Café (Bayit Ba’Gai)



The Valley of Hinnom Café

The project is located at figure 7.

BUDGET	INITIATOR	IMPLEMENTER	LOCATION
Unknown	Elad Settlers' Association.	Elad Settlers' Association.	Wadi Rababe: The Hinnom Valley

Project Description

The Elad Settlers’ Association started operating a “coffeehouse” in the Hinnom Valley, on the outskirts of the Palestinian neighborhood of Abu Tur. The cafe is operated in a small building (about 50m2), on a lot of about three dunams. The building is located about half a kilometer east of the Jerusalem Cinematheque, only dozens of meters from the houses of the Palestinian neighborhood of Abu Tur.

The settler organization gained access to the property in questionable ways, as it has done in other instances. Elad Settlers' Association claimed that it had purchased the property from a Palestinian prisoner, who told them he had lived in the area for several years but never owned the land. Since the land is not registered, as are most of the lands in East Jerusalem, the landowners have been forced to undergo a lengthy legal procedure that began in 2011, even though they have documentation from the Ottoman era and in the property tax books. It is also not clear how Elad Settlers' Association was able to expand the structure that existed while the area was declared a national park.

### Status

Operational.

### Objections

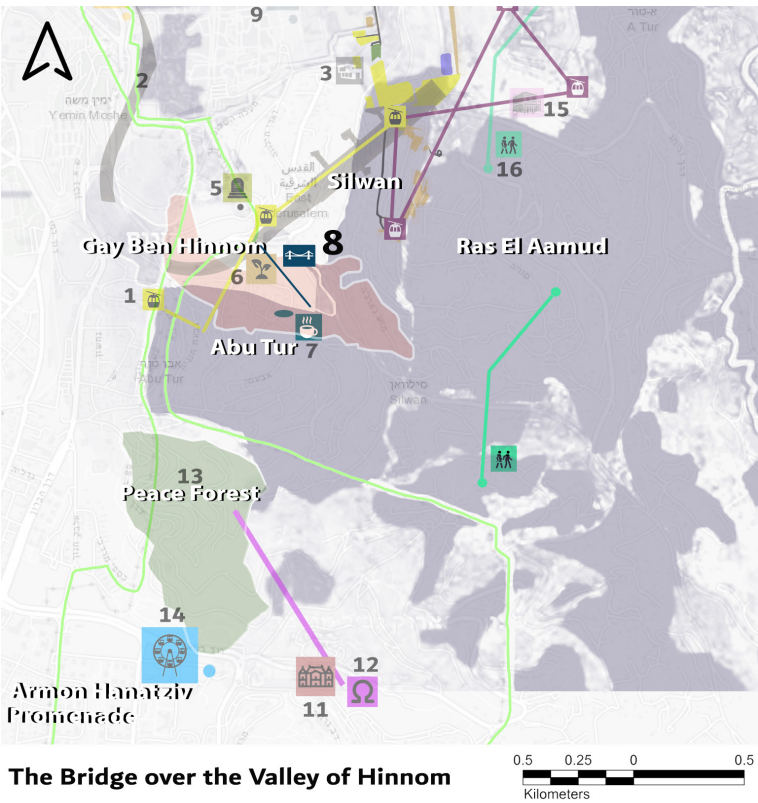
Emek Shaveh, Peace Now, A Palestinian Family.



Photo above by ACAP



8) Project: The Bridge over the Hinnom Valley



BUDGET	INITIATOR	IMPLEMENTER	LOCATION
NIS 20 million. <sup>31</sup>	Elad Settlers' Association, Moriah Jerusalem Development Corporation.	JDA	Wadi Rababe (The Hinnom Valley Park).

Project Description

This project is a hanging cable bridge that is 206m long and rises 35m above the Valley of Hinnom. The bridge is designed for pedestrians crossing from the Abu Tor area towards the Christian cemetery. It starts from an area controlled by the Elad Settlers' Association on the slopes of the Palestinian Abu Tor neighborhood (South), heading towards a public road on the southern slopes of Mount Zion (North).

31. Moshe Gilaad, "How Hell became a popular Jerusalem attraction". Ha'aretz 24/8/2023.

The project was approved despite the permit application not being made public. It was also not in line with Jerusalem's current outline plan, which does not allow for issuing building permits, and therefore should have received the approval of a detailed outline plan.

### Status

Inaugurated on July 30, 2023.

### Approving Entity

The Jerusalem Local Council; The District Planning and Building Appeals Committee.

### Objections

- An appeal was filed to the appeals committee of the Jerusalem Planning Committee against
- the permit's approval in 2018 by Peace Now and Emek Shaveh.

The appeal was rejected, and the building permit application ultimately received final approval.

### Implementations

After its inauguration, the bridge has become an attraction and has had thousands of visitors. However, its political significance as another tool for settler control in East Jerusalem has already become clear. The bridge has no functional use, it does not lead anywhere, and is merely an attraction, meant to promote Jewish tourism to East Jerusalem as part of an overall policy of "Judaization". At the same time, very little consideration was put to the infrastructure surrounding the project, and no parking was planned. As a result, visitors park on the access road to the Palestinian neighborhood of Silwan, blocking its residents' access.

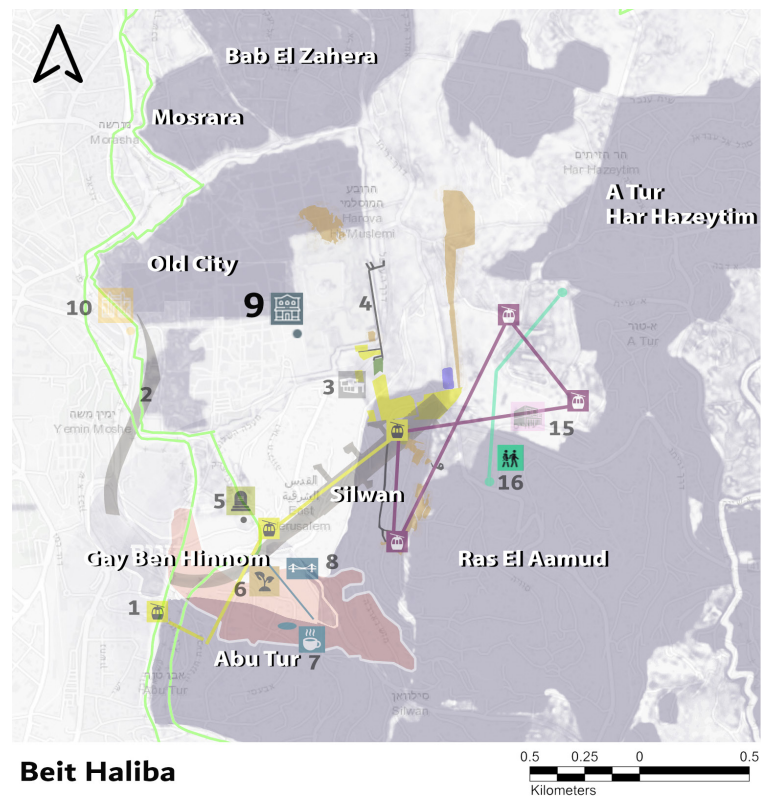


(Taken from: Walla News)

The Western Wall Area

9) Project: The Western Wall Area

Projects by the Western Wall Heritage Foundation.  
Ground-Level Excavations in the “Western Wall” Area “Beit Haliba”.



Beit Haliba

The project is located at figure 9.

BUDGET	INITIATOR	IMPLEMENTER	LOCATION
NIS 20-22 Million annually	The Western Wall Heritage Foundation (in coordination the Prime Minister’s office and the Ministry of Religious Affairs).	The Western Wall Heritage Foundation. The foundation is a governmental body established by the Ministry of Religion in 1988. It is charged with developing the “Western Wall” area. It funds, among other things, the digs in the “Western Wall” tunnels and under the Muslim Quarter.	The “Western Wall” Square and adjacent area.

## Project Description

**Ground-Level excavations:** Archaeological excavation under the Muslim Quarter and the “Western Wall” Square.

**“Beit Haliba”** (Western Wall Heritage Foundation House): A monumental building right in front of the “Western Wall” for the use of the Foundation. The building is three stories and is almost 3,000 m2. The planning process took years, but was eventually approved despite many objections.

## Status

Approved.

## Approving Entity

Jerusalem Local and District Planning and Building Committees.

## Objections

ACAP, Emek Shaveh, prominent archaeologists, and local residents.

## Implementation

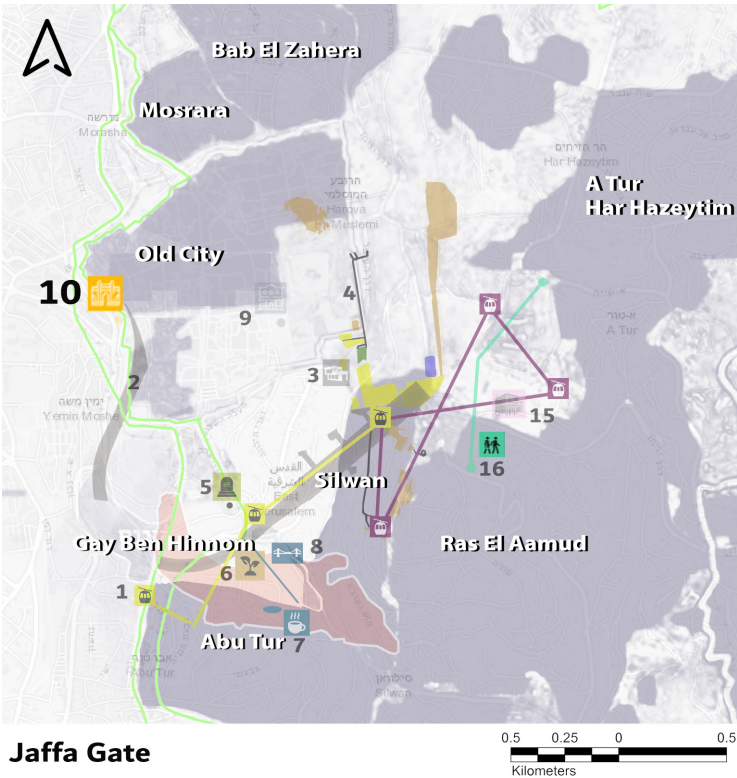
Ground level excavations are underway.

Construction of “Beit Haliba” began in 2019, and it now (2023) been completed.



Photo above by Uri Urlich

10) Project: Jaffa Gate



The project is located at figure 10.

BUDGET	INITIATOR	IMPLEMENTER	LOCATION
Jointly funded by the Ministry of Jerusalem and Heritage, the Tower of David Museum, and the Municipality through the Jerusalem Development Authority.	Jerusalem Development Authority.	Jerusalem Development Authority and the Tower of David Museum.	The Old City; Jaffa Gate



### **Project Description**

A plan to assemble a new and accessible entrance to the Old City - by an elevator and a tunnel that will connect "Teddy Garden" to the outdoor square in front of the Jaffa Gate, and to the "Tower of David Museum". The plan also proposes a passage along the antiquities unearthed on site, including from the Ayyubid, Byzantine and Roman-Byzantine eras. It also proposes the development of all the open areas in the complex, for educational and cultural activities.

### **Status**

The plan was approved in the planning institutions without the approval of the Council for National Parks and Nature Reserves, contrary to procedures.<sup>32</sup>

### **Approving Entity**

Approved by Local and District Planning Committees.

### **Objections**

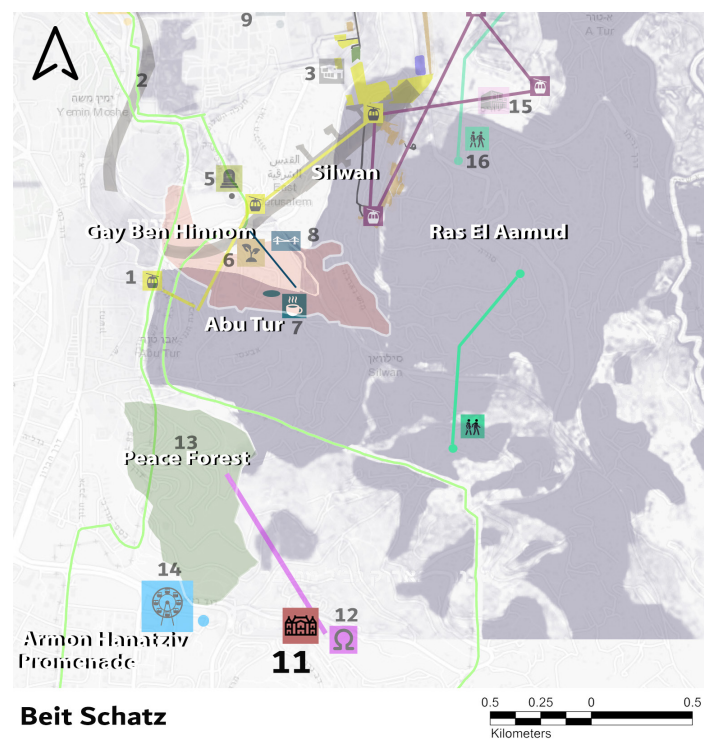
Emek Shavehh; Peace Now.

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32. Minutes of the Council for National Parks and Nature Reserves, 31.6.2022.

Armon Ha-Natsiv – The Peace Forest

11) Project: Beit Schatz



The project is located at figure 11.

BUDGET	INITIATOR	IMPLEMENTER	LOCATION
NIS 46M	Elad Settlers' Association.	Israel Government Tourist Corporation.	Armon Ha-Natsiv promenade.

Funded by Elad Settlers’ Association, The Ministry of Tourism, the Jerusalem municipality and the Jerusalem Development Authority.

Project Description

“Beit Schatz” was a debilitated building located on the outskirts of Al-Farouk neighborhood in Jabal al-Mukaber, below the UN headquarters in the Government House. The house belonged to the Palestinian family al-Qaq, and was deserted in the aftermath of the Nakba in 1948.

The project turned the building into a visitor center, located at the end of the “Scherover Public Walk”, near the entrance to Jabal al-Mukaber. The building is four stories high and 2,000 m<sup>2</sup> in size. The complex is planned to accommodate about 150 visitors per hour.

In order to avoid due planning process, i.e., prepare and deposit a master plan, hear and discuss objections, etc., the municipality allowed the construction of the visitor center as merely “stone cladding” for an existing structure. As it is considered a part of sanitary improvements, which are allowed in the area according to Plan EM/9, the building permit did not require publication, objections, or any public hearing. This was done even though the municipality’s legal advisor opined that it could not be considered “sanitary improvements.”

### Status

Approved.

### Approving Entity

Jerusalem Municipality.

### Implementation

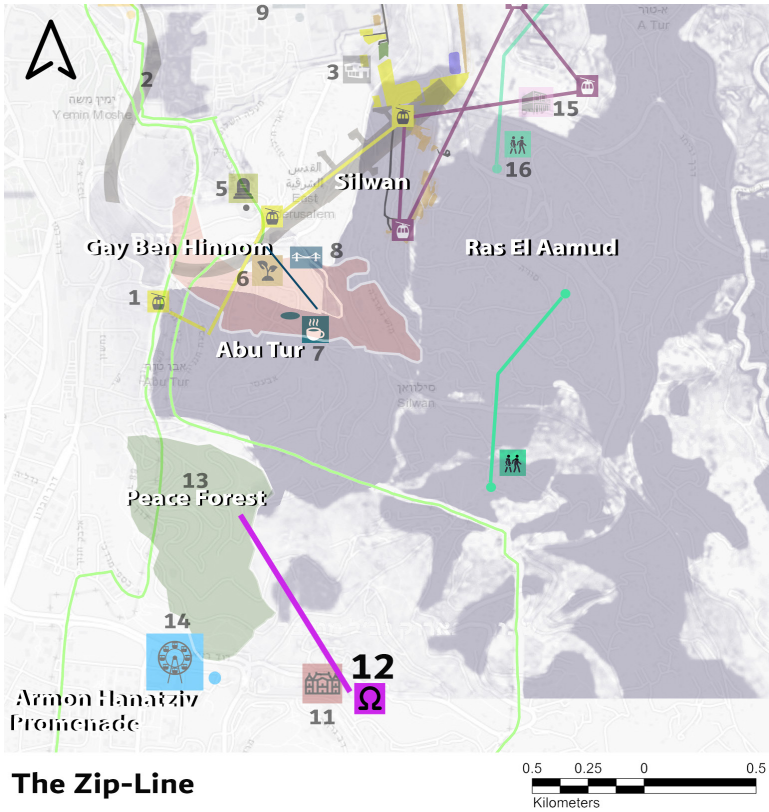
The construction has been completed.

The visitor center is expected to be open soon.



Photo above by ACAP

12) Project: The Zip-Line – Peace Forest



The Zip-Line

The project is located at figure 12 - the purple line.

BUDGET	INITIATOR	IMPLEMENTER	LOCATION
Unknown	Elad Settlers' Association.	Elad Settlers' Association.	Peace Forest near Abu Tor.

Project Description

The Zip-Line (Omega Route) stretches for 731 meters<sup>33</sup>- from Armon Ha-Natsiv to the “Peace Forest” near Abu Tor. It is the longest such facility in Israel. It includes two concrete pillars covered with wood, four meters high, between which a cable will be stretched. Stretch between Beit Schatz and the “Peace Forest Camping Ground”, two sites controlled by Elad Settlers’ Association, it is no wonder that some critics have called it “Touristic settlement”<sup>34</sup>. The project will harm the historic basin landscape of Jerusalem because it does not suit the character of the city.

33. Sue Surkes, “New zip line over East Jerusalem offers end-of-summer adrenaline rush” The Times of Israel 30 August 2024.  
34. Isabel Kershner. "Holy City or Theme Park? Israel Plans Zip Line for Ancient Jerusalem" NYT, May 3, 2022.



Even according to Israeli law, the authorization process for this project is problematic, since the area in question is a recognized forest according to the National Outline Plan for Forests (TMA22). As such, for Elad Settlers' Association to receive a permit, an amendment to the status of the forest was required. The District Planning and Construction Committee and later the National Planning and Building Council approved the change of forest status for this purpose.

### Status

- In 2018, permit was granted under Plan EM/9, which was approved 40 years ago.
- On 10.12.2019, the District Planning Committee approved a change in the forest status of the area in order to legalize the permit<sup>35</sup>.
- The Zip-Line began to operate and was open to the public on 14 August 2024 <sup>36</sup>.

### Approving Entity

Jerusalem Local and District Planning Committee.

### Objections

Emek Shaveh, Peace Now, JNF, and local residents.

### Implementations

As of 2023, the structure already exists the Zip-Line began to operate and was open to the public on 14 August 2024



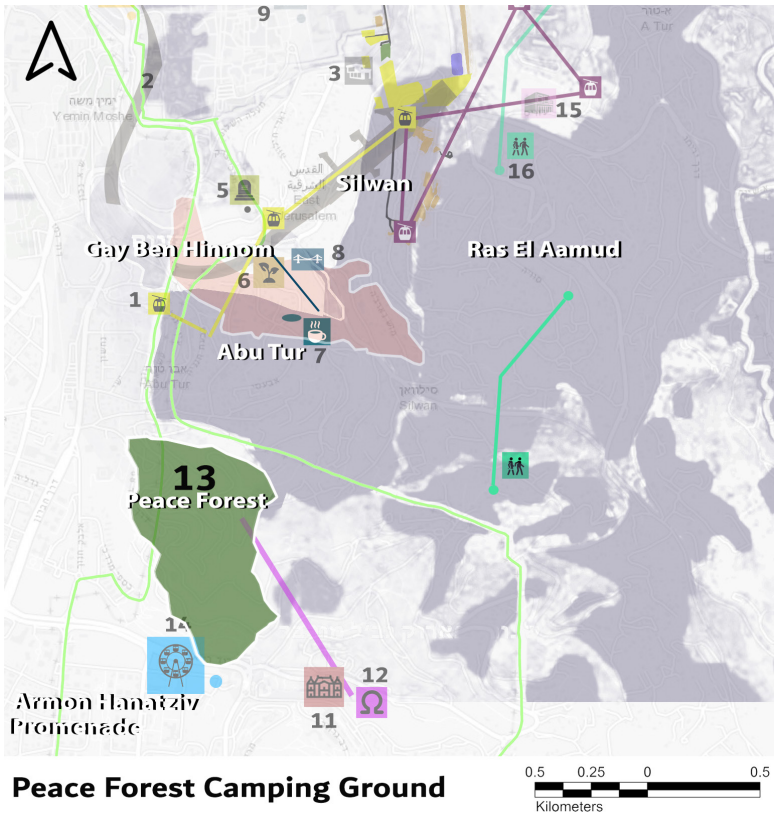
Photo above by ACAP

35. Nir Hasson, "With the aid of the state, the Elad association takes over the peace forest." Ha'aretz, 1.4.2019.

36. Nir Hasson, "With the aid of the state, the Elad association takes over the peace forest." Ha'aretz, 1.4.2019.



13) Project: Peace Forest Camping Ground



Peace Forest Camping Ground

The project is located at figure 13.

BUDGET	INITIATOR	IMPLEMENTER	LOCATION
NIS 3 million.	Elad Settlers' Association.	The Israeli Tourism Company.	Peace Forest near Abu Tor.

Project Description

The Elad Settlers' Association is developing a camping ground in the "Peace Forest", between the Palestinian neighborhoods of Abu Tor and Jabal Al-Mukaber. Elad received this land, without tender or the legal process, from the Israel Land Authority, and has been holding tours and sporting activities there.<sup>37</sup>

The above-mentioned Omega route will connect Beit Schatz to the campground.

37. Peace Now, "The kingdom of the Elad association in the Peace Forest: power and combinations in the service of the settlement", 2.4.2019.

### Status

A plan for this compound was submitted to the District Planning Committee (Plan 101-0590380) in 2018, but has not been advanced. Thus, construction is advancing without a permit.

### Approving Entity

None.

### Objections

Peace Now.

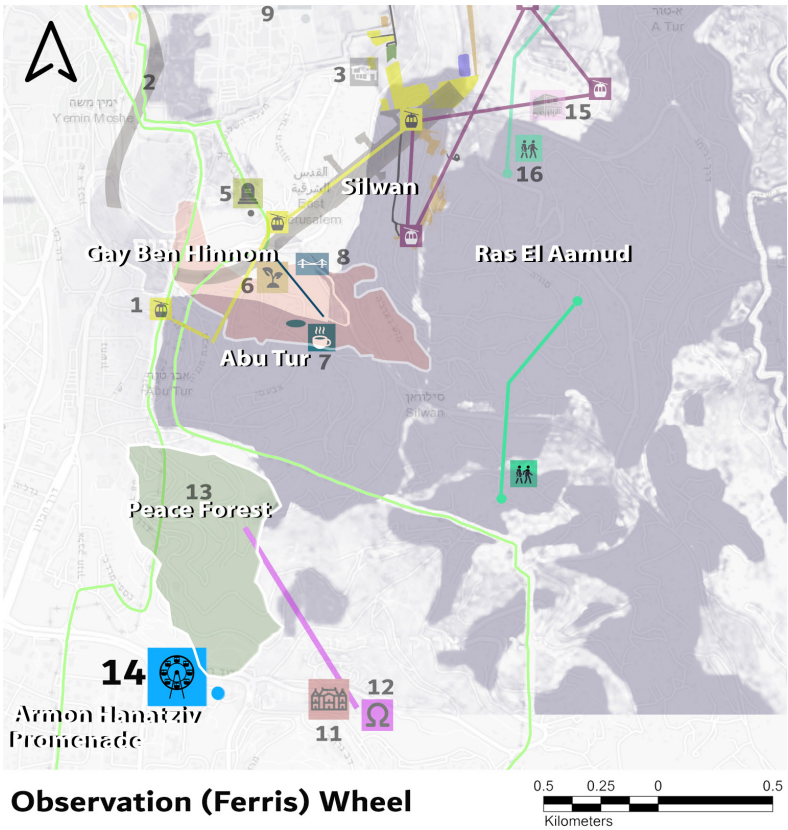
### Implementation

The project is under construction and has been functioning.



Photo above by ACAP

14) Project: Observation (Ferris) Wheel



**Observation (Ferris) Wheel**  
The project is located at figure 14.

BUDGET	INITIATOR	IMPLEMENTER	LOCATION
Unknow	The Jerusalem Municipality and Jerusalem Development Authority.	Jerusalem Development Authority.	Armon Hanatziv Promenade

Project Description

The wheel will be placed in the western part of the public walk, designed to be 40 to 60 meters high. It joins the series of attractions planned to be built in the city's historic basin. The construction of the wheel is being promoted by the Jerusalem Municipality and the Jerusalem Development Authority, despite objections by the donors of the promenade.<sup>38</sup>

38. Nir Hasson, "Jerusalem Officials Plan Ferris Wheel on Promenade Overlooking Old City, Despite Objections of Walkway Donors" Ha'aretz, 19.7.2020.

**Status**

Planning phase - The feasibility study of the project was completed, and a planning firm was hired to prepare a detailed construction plan.

**Approving Entity**

No plans were submitted to any planning entity.

**Objections**

Families/funders of the public walk, and Israeli archaeologist groups.

**Implementation**

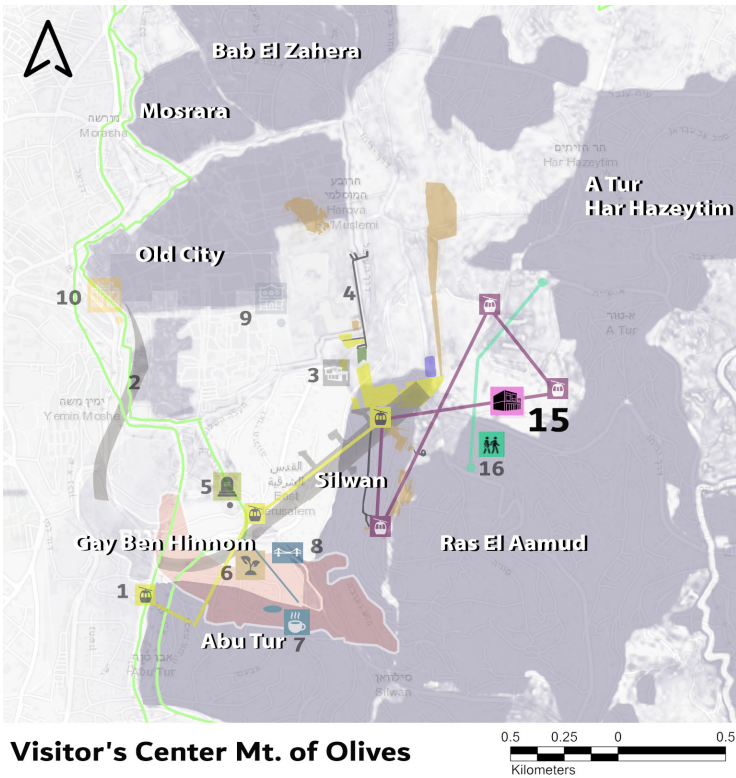
In July 2021, the Jerusalem municipality announced that it had canceled the planned Ferris Wheel.<sup>39</sup> In light of past experience, there is a need to monitor in case the plan is revived.

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39. Sue Surkes, "Jerusalem scraps plan for promenade Ferris wheel and slides" The Times of Israel, 11.7.2021.

Mount of Olives

15) Project: Visitors’ Center Mt. of Olives



Visitor's Center Mt. of Olives  
The project is located at figure 15.

BUDGET	INITIATOR	IMPLEMENTER	LOCATION
NIS 150 million + \$10 Million	Jerusalem Development Authority.	Jerusalem Development Authority.	Southern end of Mount of Olives; near Ras Al-'Amud Mosque.

Project Description

This plan, initiated by the Jerusalem Development Authority, was submitted in April 2017. The plan was filed in an unusual manner (as a plan for confiscation), in order to bypass the lengthy and complicated normal process for issuing a permit.

The plan aims to expropriate an area of approximately 1,300 m2 within the Jewish cemetery on the Mount of Olives, adjacent to the Ras Al-'Amud Mosque (Master Plan No. 470484).



It also intends to allocate the expropriated area for public purposes, with the goal of building a center for visitors to the adjacent cemetery. The planned center will include a Synagogue, training center, libraries, souvenir shops, exhibition hall, auditorium, research institute for mapping and cemetery research, and an observation post.

This is a particularly sensitive area, in the historic basin of occupied East Jerusalem on the Mount of Olives, opposite the Old City and the Haram Al-Sharif, and adjacent to an active mosque.

### Status

A detailed city building plan was approved in August 2019 and received a permit. In March 2022, an agreement for establishing the Center was signed between the “International Committee for the Protection of the Mount of Olives”, the Jerusalem Municipality, The Ministry of Jerusalem Affairs, the Jerusalem Development Authority, and the Jerusalem Fund.<sup>40</sup>

Even before the approval of the plan, works were done in the area, though the Jerusalem municipality claimed that they were works by the Antiquities Authority and “not related to the construction plan” of the Center.<sup>41</sup> The center itself has not yet been built.

### Approving Entity

District Planning Committee.

### Objections

Emek Shaveh, Peace Now.

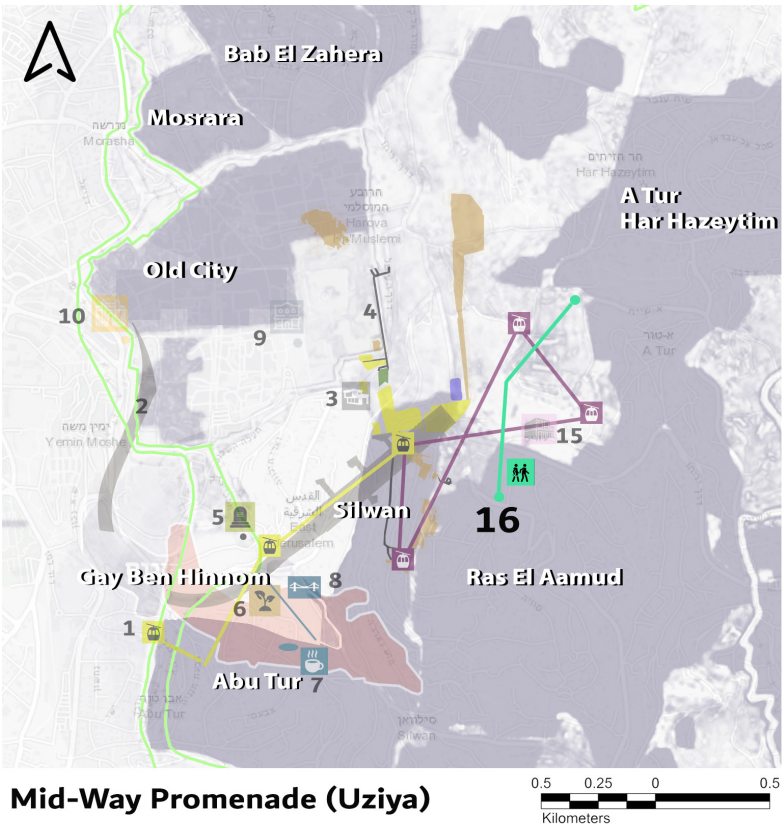


<https://harhazeisim.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/Visitor-Center-Presentation-Hebrew-revised.pdf>

40. Israel Hever, “It’s happening: Visitor Center and Information Center at the Mount of Olives”, Kol Hazman, 7.3.2022.

41. Nir Hasson, “The Jerusalem municipality is building a visitor center for the Mount of Olives cemetery in a Palestinian neighborhood” Ha’aretz, 25.4.2017.

16) Project: ‘Mid-way’ Promenade (Uziya)



The project is located at figure 16 - the blue-green line.

BUDGET	INITIATOR	IMPLEMENTER	LOCATION
NIS 34M.	The Jerusalem Development Authority.	Jerusalem Development Authority.	Mount of Olives – A-Tur.

Project Description

The new walkway, which will be called “Uziya” or “Mid-Way Promenade”, is planned to be built over a route of 3.6 km along the western slope of the Mount of Olives, in an area that extends over about six dunams. The walkway will connect the Jewish settlements “Beit Orot” and “Beit Hachoshen”. To develop the walkway, privately owned Palestinian land will be expropriated.



### Status

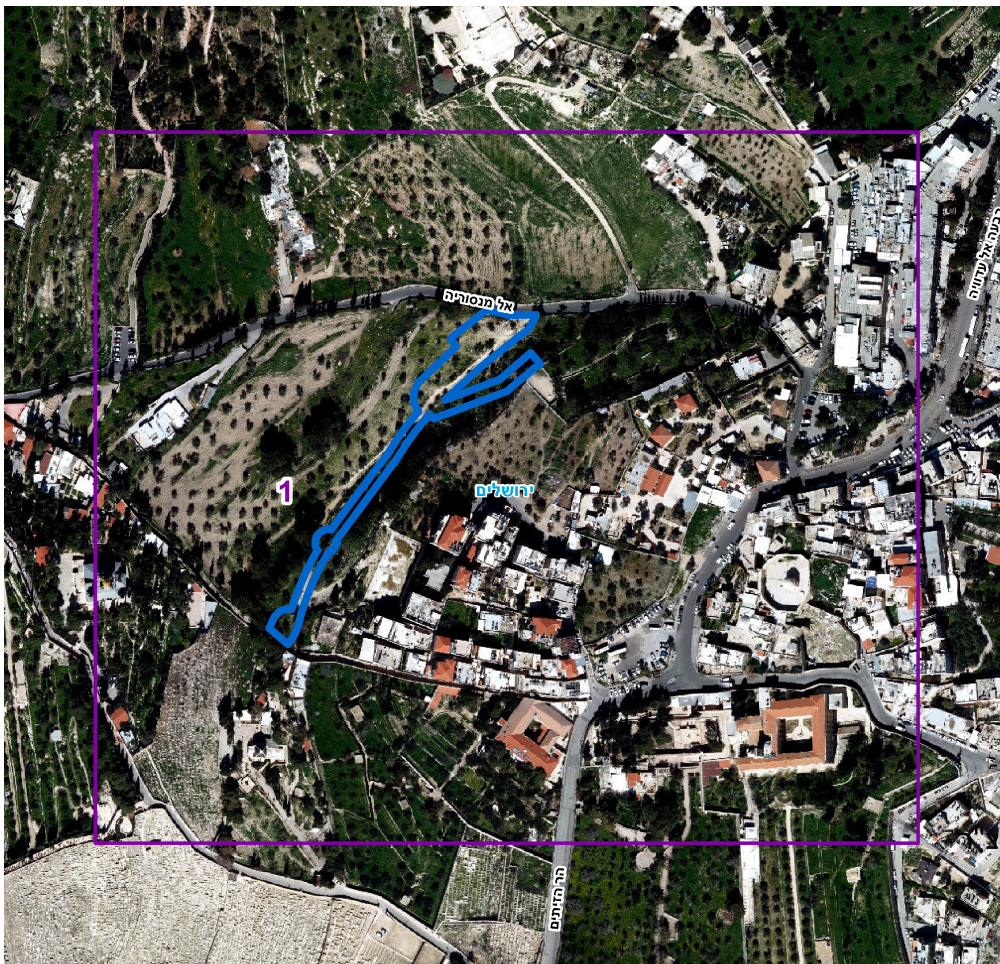
Approved, 2018.

### Approving Entity

Jerusalem District Planning and Building Committees.

### Objections

Emek Shaveh, Peace Now.



Map Approved by the District Planning Committee for the promenade.

## 17) Project: Beit AlHanan

### Plan for Establishing the “Security Complex – Beit AlHanan” – Old City

Plan No. (100-5422438)



Map showing the location of the plan

IMPLEMENTER	INITIATOR	LOCATION
Implementing Body The project is managed through the Security Facilities Committee (ולמ"ב) under Israeli governmental authority.	The Israeli Government Ministry of Finance/ Housing, via the Police Representative of Housing – Itzik Levy.	4 Bab al-Hadid Street, Old City – Jerusalem.

### Project Description

Construction of a new police building on a plot of land measuring 440 m<sup>2</sup>.

- Proposed construction volume: 230% of the land area.
- Number of floors: three.
- The site is zoned under Master Plan No. "Am/9" (9/עמ) as a private residential area. It was privately owned by the Al-Mu'aqqat, Al-Tarhri, and Abu Mayyala families, who had built a small one-room structure on part of the land.
- The land constitutes the only remaining open space in the neighborhood and is considered a vital green lung in a heavily built-up area.



## Location

4 Bab al-Hadid Street, Old City – Jerusalem.

The site adjoins what is known as “Beit AlHanan,” confiscated by the Israeli authorities and currently used as an “Israeli community police center”.

It lies between Bab al-Hadid Street and al-Wad Street, in the heart of a densely populated residential area. It is surrounded above by Palestinian homes and below by commercial shops, including a bakery threatened with demolition.

## Status

- In the 1960s, a military order was issued to demolish the then-existing building, leaving the land subject to successive legal proceedings.
- In subsequent court rulings (including on 15/06/2008), the Jerusalem Magistrate’s Court affirmed that confiscation orders do not annul ownership rights, and the state may not alter the land’s status or transfer it for lease or ownership to any party.
- On 8 October 2024, an application for a permit to build the “security” complex was submitted, with a public notice posted near the site allowing only 15 days for objections.
- In March 2025, responses to the objections were issued, and a hearing was scheduled for 17 July 2025.
- On 17 July 2025, the hearing took place, with objectors and police representatives presenting their arguments. As of August 2025, no response to the objections has been issued.

## Approving Entity

The Security Facilities Committee (ולמ"ב), chaired by Shira Talmi – Head of the Jerusalem District Planning and Building Committee.

## Objections

In November 2024, six objections were submitted:

- Five objections by attorneys Wasim Ghnaim and Muhannad Jabara on behalf of the landowners and local residents.
- The sixth objection by the Arab Center for Alternative Planning (ACAP), in cooperation with the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), which later presented its objection before the competent planning committee.

## Key Grounds of ACAP’s Objection

- Violation of due process: Use of a shortened permit pathway, inadequate objection period (only 15 days), with no genuine justification for the project’s “security” or “confidential” character.
- Negative environmental and urban impacts: Destruction of the neighborhood’s only open space, reduced ventilation and natural light, and increased local heat.
- Structural risks to neighboring buildings: Direct threats to historic structures due to excavation, vibrations, and changes to groundwater levels, with no preventive engineering studies.
- Social and community impacts: Undermining community safety, lowering property values, and causing population outmigration due to direct, discriminatory friction against residents.

- Infrastructure strain: Added pressure on already overburdened networks—electricity, water, sewage, and narrow congested roads.
- Lack of alternatives and resident participation: No alternative sites were examined, and residents were not included in decision-making, in clear violation of participatory planning principles.



The planned site is located where the tree in the photo above and the surrounding open space stand.



The entrance to the planned site is at the end of this passageway on the right-hand side. The current community police center (shown in the photo with a blue sign on the right wall) forms the street frontage, while the planned site is located directly behind this building.



## CONCLUSION

This report has surveyed a series of invasive plans that focus on the area of the 'Holy Basin' in occupied East Jerusalem. These plans have been pursued by the Jerusalem municipality, through its various arms, in collaboration with settler organizations, particularly Elad Settlers' Association. The plans described above join existing municipal and settlers' initiatives that have sought to "Judaize" East Jerusalem, increase Israeli control over the city, and blur the lines between East and West Jerusalem. They strive to create geographic contiguity that connects settlers' initiatives while also impeding Palestinian development and movement in East Jerusalem. These are ongoing plans, but based on existing patterns and policies, it is likely that they could further develop, expand, and be joined with additional plans that would be promoted and approved swiftly.

In promoting these policies, Israeli authorities, through and with the Elad Settlers' Association, a key settler organization in East Jerusalem, have advanced not only the tourist locations but also several infrastructure projects founded to develop and connect these sites and advance exclusive Jewish historical narratives and heritage myths. One such recent project was the development of Dung Gate, which was inaugurated in September 2023. The extensive work, which cost NIS 40 million, seeks to connect the Old City in Jerusalem with the sites run by Elad Settlers' Association and interface with the planned Cable Car.<sup>42</sup> The overall impact of these projects is dissecting Palestinian neighborhoods and preventing their continuity and natural developments, while intensifying claims of exclusive Jewish history and heritage in East Jerusalem.

The current Israeli government and the Jerusalem municipality have been even more outspoken than previous ones about their goals to increase settler presence in East Jerusalem and entrench Israeli control there. In service of these goals, these bodies have advanced additional settler projects in East Jerusalem, including the construction of several new settlements. These include a new settlement in the old Atarot airport field, fully which will further sever Jerusalem from the Ramallah Area;<sup>43</sup> and Kidmat Zion Settlement, located in Abu Dis, near the Separation Wall, which will further the geographical separation between East Jerusalem and the West Bank.<sup>44</sup> In parallel, Israeli authorities have continued their policy of limiting Palestinians' spaces in their own city. The scheme for land settlement and registration, initiated in 2018, has been used predominantly to facilitate the settlement project, while subjugating the planning process to it has effectively made building in East Jerusalem almost impossible for Palestinians.<sup>45</sup> Even when officials promote planning in East Jerusalem, it tends to be restrictive, and disregard one of the most crucial needs of the Palestinian community who suffer from an extreme housing crisis, which stems from Israeli restrictions and neglect, spanning decades.<sup>46</sup>

42. The Jerusalem Post Staff, "Jerusalem Old City gate gets NIS 40 million renovation", The Jerusalem Post, 14.9.2023.

43. Plan no. 101-0764936 "Atarot Residential Neighborhood - Jerusalem".

44. Plan no. 101-0120709 "Residential Neighborhood "Kidmat Zion".

45. Ir Amim and Bimkom, "The Grand Land Theft." June 2023

46. See for example, The Arab Center for Alternative Planning, "East Jerusalem City Centre Plan: Study and analysis 2021", 8.12.2021.

In clear violation of international law, The Israeli projects described here contribute to the continuing displacement of Palestinian East Jerusalemites while creating and expanding Jewish settlements in Occupied East Jerusalem. In this, Palestinians' rights, mobility, and daily lives are consistently undermined, and these projects serve to justify the takeover of Palestinian space, generate links between the East and West sides of the city.

Furthermore, in promoting these projects, the municipality and other officials fully disregard the needs and desires of East Jerusalem's Palestinian residents. These Israeli aggressions not only undermine Palestinian physical and cultural presence in their city, but also hinder future peace as they forestall the possibility of East Jerusalem as the capital of the Palestinian state in accordance with the "Two-State Solution".





المركز العربي للتخطيط البديل  
The Arab Center for Alternative Planning  
— המרכז הערבי לתכנון אלטרנטיבי —

