

## Policy Brief:

# The Atarot Settlement Plan in East Jerusalem – implications for Urban Equality and Political Stability.

## Executive Summary

The proposed “Atarot” Settlement in East Jerusalem (EJ), which outlines the construction of 9,000 residential units on 1,243 dunams of lands, exemplifies a broader strategy by Israeli authorities to entrench demographic and territorial control over the city. This plan systematically excludes Palestinian residents from housing, infrastructure and economic development opportunities, while prioritizing Israeli settler interests. The implementation of the plan threatens the viability of a two-states solution, undermines international law, and exacerbates socio-political tensions in the region.

## Key Issues and Finding

### 1. Discriminatory Urban Planning

- The plan makes no provision for addressing the severe housing crisis among Palestinians in EJ.
- Israeli zoning laws continues to restrict Palestinian development while enabling the expansion of Israeli settlements.

### 2. Socio-Economic Segregation

- Infrastructure and commercial zones within “Atarot” will exclusively serve Israeli settlers.
- Palestinian businesses and communities will be economically marginalized and spatially bypassed by the proposed transport network.

### 3. Land Expropriation and Legal Violations

- Registered Palestinian landowners face forced expropriation without meaningful consultation.
- Violates international legal instruments including the Fourth Geneva Convention and UNSC Resolution 2334.

### 4. Demographic Engineering

- The plan is designed to house Haredi Jewish population, reinforcing demographic imbalance.
- Palestinian neighborhoods continue to face building restrictions and municipal neglect.



## 5. Strategic Obstruction of Palestinian Sovereignty

- Located at a key junction, “Atarot” will dispute continuity between northern EJ and the West Bank.
- Conversion of the historic Qalandia Airport site erases any potential for a Palestinian transport hub.

## 6. Environmental and Social Disruption

- The settlement plan threatens ecologically significant land and vital community resources.
- Increased physical barriers will isolate Palestinian communities, impacting social cohesion.

## Policy Recommendations

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For the International Community:

- **Enforce international legal norms:** Pressure Israel to comply with international law concerning settlement activity in occupied territories.
- **Demand Israel as an occupying power to guarantee Palestinian planning rights according to its obligations under international law:** Advocate for urban planning processes that include Palestinian needs and voices.

## For the Palestinian Authority and Civil Society

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- **Document and litigate:** Systematically record expropriations and planning discrimination for legal recourse in international forums.
- **Mobilize community planning:** Develop parallel urban plans that articulate Palestinian housing and infrastructure needs.
- **Strengthen advocacy:** Coordinate with international human rights and planning organizations to amplify the issue globally.



## **Call for Unified Action Against Settlement Plan and Environmental Neglect in East Jerusalem**

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ACAP is calling on civil society organizations and community leaders for increased mobilization of the Palestinian population in East Jerusalem against the proposed settlement plan, particularly in areas bordering the planned site, such as Beit Hanina.

Community leadership in EJ, is urged to coordinate efforts in opposing the plan and to rally local and international civil society organizations to stand in solidarity with affected communities.

During recent discussions of the plan by the District Planning Committee, serious concerns were raised regarding the high levels of air pollution in the area – largely attribute to the existing “Atarot” industrial zone. These concerns must serve as a wake-up call not only in the context of the settlement plan, but also regarding the longstanding environmental harm inflicted on Palestinian neighborhoods adjacent to the zone.

For years, residents have endured significant health and environmental risks due to unchecked pollution. This situation demands urgent attention. ACAP calls for an immediate monitoring and reduction of emissions from the “Atarot” industrial zone.

A broad coalition of community members, professionals, and civil society organizations must come together to demand environmental justice and to ensure that the health and quality of life of East Jerusalem’s Palestinian residents are no longer ignored.

## **Conclusion**

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The “Atarot” Settlement Plan marks a critical escalation in the Israeli policy of settlement expansion in East Jerusalem. By reinforcing systemic inequality, fragmenting Palestinian communities, and violating international law, the plan threatens both urban equity and regional stability. Immediate action is needed to prevent irreversible changes to the city’s landscape and political future.



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