

FACTSHEET

# THE INDUSTRIAL ZONE IN WADI AL-JOZ - EAST JERUSALEM

“THE SILICON VALLEY” PROJECT



المركز العربي للتخطيط البديل  
The Arab Center for Alternative Planning  
— المركز العربي لتكنولوجيا البديل —



## The Industrial Zone in Wadi Al-Joz - “The Silicon Valley” Plan

### Introduction

The Israeli government has manipulated urban planning and administrative practices to impose its control over East Jerusalem, even though it has been an occupied territory since 1967. It has pursued policies and practices that seek to impose a Jewish demographic majority in the entire city of Jerusalem through creeping forced displacement and transfer of the Palestinian Jerusalemite population outside the city, and the “Judaization” of East Jerusalem by establishing a series of Jewish settlements in and around it. It also carried out extensive and continuous campaigns to demolish homes, limit residential construction, and manipulate the distinctive identity of Jerusalem by trying to erase its rich Palestinian legacy. There is no doubt that the occupying authority's policies and practices constitute a flagrant violation of international law and norms, including International Humanitarian Law (IHL), especially the illegality of expelling or uprooting portions of the native population or bringing its own citizens into the occupied territories.

The plans, initiated by the occupation municipality of Jerusalem and its various arms, in collaboration with government agencies and settlement organizations, have always included measures and provisions aimed at restricting Jerusalemites, whether by limiting the ability to provide enough opportunities for affordable housing, stealing lands and buildings through various coercive methods, such as the commencement of the most recent “Land Settlement” project, enforcing unfair Israeli laws, or any other means.

### “Wadi Al-Joz Industrial Zone” Plan

The plan for the industrial/employment zone in Wadi al-Joz (No. 0977694-101) is essentially a muck plan that aims to showcase the Jerusalem Municipality taking the initiative to develop East Jerusalem, specifically developing an industrial zone that creates job opportunities for citizens, while, in fact, placing various obstacles and administrative pitfalls to obstruct its implementation and stir confusion among the concerned local Palestinians and prevent them from benefiting from it.

But in reality, this plan ignores the real needs of the Palestinians in East Jerusalem, and first and foremost, it ignores the urgent need for housing construction and the establishment of housing projects to accommodate the population growth in East Jerusalem, as the plan allocates only 10% of the total building rights for housing (412 small housing units after the objections phase).

Thus, the plan is an example of the plans initiated by the occupation municipality of Jerusalem and its various arms, as they neglect providing services to Palestinians in multiple aspects of life fields such as education, infrastructure, environment, etc., and disregard the basic need of the Palestinians in East Jerusalem, which is adequate and appropriate housing solutions.

The plan also represents an “escape forward” in terms of the job opportunities it provides, as it seeks to replace an existing industrial zone that provides actual and necessary services to citizens in East Jerusalem with a virtual industrial zone characterized by vast areas of offices and commercial spaces that are suitable for use by high-tech firms.



It is worth emphasizing that such firms do not exist in East Jerusalem, and there may be a need to attract them from West Jerusalem, thus creating a sort of foreign entity in disharmony with the surroundings in East Jerusalem (i.e., a typical Judaization plan).

Not least upsetting might be the possibility that these built spaces remain empty and completely unused (white elephants), which means a double loss for their owners.

The plan also ignores the reality regarding land ownership and occupancy within the plan's limits and requires that its implementation be preceded by completing land settlement transactions consistent with the ongoing Israeli "Land Settlement" project in East Jerusalem. This entails great risks in terms of confiscating land from its owners or renters and allowing Jewish settlement expansion projects.

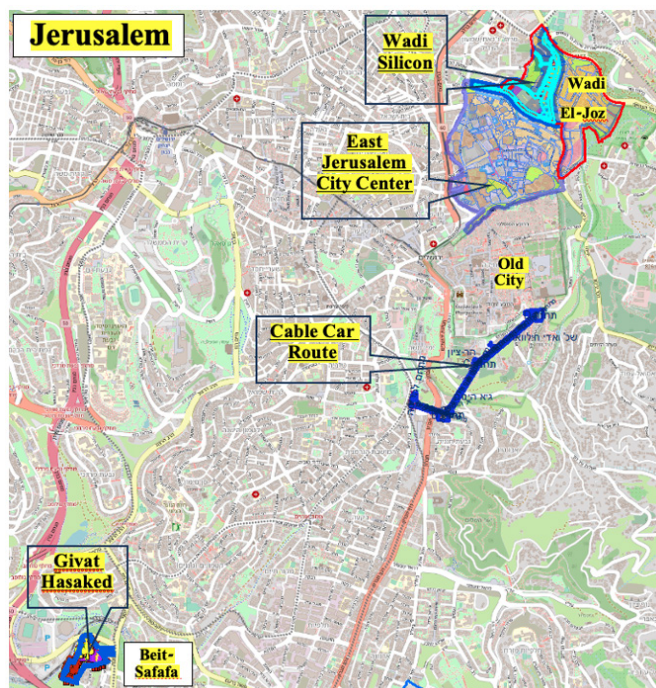
The plan also prescribes the confiscation of about 70% of the land within its boundaries, as well as the confiscation of 10% (reduced to 5% in response to the objections) of the built area after the construction of the building rights. All the confiscated land and building rights should be bestowed and registered for the municipality's ownership.

The plan also specifies that all building rights furnished on each land plot are to be established in one phase, i.e., that construction is not allowed in stages. This means burdening landowners with almost impossible tasks that they are unable to implement due to the large financial investment required in implementing the construction. This would essentially result in granting the construction rights on the land to financier entrepreneurs who are strangers to the region and who will reap profits from the original landowners within the plan.

**The following table introduces a summary of the significant information characterizing the plan:**

Plan area	74 acres
Public-purpose building space	7,500 square meters (5% of the total building rights)
Number of housing units (after adjustment)	412 residential units
Building area for housing	17,800 square meters
Building space for commerce and trade	9,100 square meters
Building space for offices and employment	100,000 square meters

## Sketch of the "Silicon Valley" plan and its surroundings:



### Brief Planning Analysis of the Plan and its Implications

The stated goal of the plan is to develop a high-tech employment zone in Wadi Al-Joz neighborhood on approximately 80 dunams of land, replacing the traditional industrial zone that currently provides various commercial and transportation services to the Palestinian citizens of East Jerusalem and beyond.

Below is a review of significant features, details, and criticism of the plan and its effects on the planning, social, and economic rights of the Palestinian citizens of East Jerusalem:

1. The plan is being promoted without transparency and through alienation of the potentially affected members of the public who are supposed to benefit from it.
2. The plan is proposed without land surveying and subdivision among the various owners in the existing industrial area, which could lead to significant land expropriation by the state and/or municipality, as well as conflicts and ownership disputes among the various owners and tenants that could hamper the implementation of the plan.
3. There is a very limited allocation of building rights for residential use (less than 10% of the total building rights), despite the population's urgent need for housing.
4. There is a lack of accord between the actual demand for office and commercial space and the immense commercial and office spaces offered by the scheme (i.e., an imbalance between supply and demand).
5. The requirement that the building rights on each plot must be implemented in a single construction phase, rather than the option of building in phases based on the landowner's capacity and needs, may jeopardize the opportunity to implement the plan or enable venture capitalists and outside entrepreneurs to benefit from the project rather than the current landowners and present tenants reaping the benefit from it.
6. Solely for the benefit of the municipality, the plan imposes the expropriation of 10% of the total built-up area from landowners for unspecified public purposes. This raises concerns about the actual necessity of these spaces and what type of use the Jerusalem municipality will assign them.



7. The scheme imposes many stringent requirements and does not provide any degree of flexibility needed to obtain building permits within the boundaries of the scheme.
8. The plan does not provide financial compensation or professional solutions to stakeholders during the period between the demolition of their businesses, from which they currently earn a living, and the completion of the work to establish and operate the new businesses envisioned by the plan.
9. The plan does not provide interim solutions to existing stakeholders in the industrial zone and ignores the effects resulting from the closure of their businesses that provide basic services to residents of the neighborhood and all parts of East Jerusalem.

## Objection to the Plan

The Arab Center for Alternative Planning revealed the flaws inherent in the plan and therefore submitted an objection to it to the District Planning and Building Committee in Jerusalem in partnership with the Jerusalem Center for Human Rights and the St. Yves Legal Center. The first item of the objection was the lack of authority for the committee to deal with, decide on, and eventually approve the plan given that Jerusalem has been an occupied territory since 1967.

**Below is a tabular summary of the Regional Planning Committee's decision regarding the objections submitted by ACAP:**

Subject/item of objection	Summary of objection/request	Decision of Regional Planning Committee
The district committee does not have the authority to decide on and approve the plan.	The planned area has been occupied since 1967, and approving the plan is considered a violation of international law.	The committee rejected the objection, claiming that the plan's area falls within the jurisdiction of the Jerusalem municipality, and Israeli law applies to it.
Lack of public participation in preparing the plan.	Protesting that the public is ignored and not involved in determining the main features of the plan.	The committee claimed that the public's opinion was sought and its wishes regarding the plan were reviewed and taken into account. Also, it claimed the filing objections to the plan is a sort of public participation.
Allocation of a minute building rights for housing.	Building rights allocated for housing are low and were limited to the construction of only 197 housing units (%10 of building rights), even though building for housing is the main need in the neighborhood.	The committee decided to double the percentage of building rights for housing from %10 to %20 of the total building rights, thus allowing for up to 412 residential units.

<p>Confiscation of a high percentage of land and buildings for public interest (in favor of the municipality).</p>	<p>Allocating %10 of building rights for public purposes and confiscating them for the benefit of the municipality is exaggerated and arbitrary, especially since it is in addition to confiscating a high percentage of land (est. %70) from its owners for public purposes.</p>	<p>The committee decided to reduce the percentage of construction rights allocated for public purposes to only 5%.</p>
<p>Ambiguity in the distribution of property rights and construction rights among landowners and tenants.</p>	<p>Dividing the area of the plan allocated for construction into plots of relatively large area, jointly owned (communally), without demarcating ownership, possession, and rights of tenants, all of which will create conflicts, disagreements, and lawsuits that may lead to the plan being corrupted as if nothing had happened.</p>	<p>The committee decided and confirmed that dividing the area of the plan into plots is for planning purposes only and not to determine ownership, while deciding on ownership rights is postponed until the land settlement process is completed.</p>
<p>The fate of existing industrial and commercial businesses all the way until the plan is implemented.</p>	<p>The existing businesses within the limits of the plan will, upon approval, be transformed into illegal buildings destined for demolition, and their owners will lose their income until new businesses are built in their place.</p>	<p>The committee decided to cancel the yellow marking of existing buildings within the limits of the plan (i.e. the designation for demolition) and allow them to continue their service until the plan is implemented.</p>
<p>The conditions imposed by the plan for issuing licenses are extremely complicated and may hinder its implementation.</p>	<p>The clause that requires all construction rights granted by the plan in one plot to be implemented in one phase, and not allowing construction in phases, will lead to the owners being unable to start construction or to other ensuing difficulties.</p>	<p>The committee decided to withdraw from the requirement to carry out construction in one phase, but allowed construction in only two phases: Construction up to street level in the first phase, and the rest of the building parts in the second phase.</p>
<p>The absence of a minimum level of flexibility terms in the plan to alleviate issuance of building permits .</p>	<p>The plan instructions impose harsh conditions and do not include any flexibility to facilitate obtaining building permits from the local committee. Every slight change from the instructions is considered a serious violation that requires the preparation and approval of a new city plan.</p>	<p>The committee refused to ease the harsh conditions, especially in the wake of responding to the request to raise the proportion of construction for housing and reduce the proportion of expropriation for public purposes.</p>

<p>Avoid complications and obstacles during the implementation of the plan.</p>	<p>The plan's instructions ignore the familiar obstacles and complications that may arise during the implementation of construction works and do not provide facilities and tools to deal with them, which may hinder the implementation of the entire plan.</p>	<p>The committee refused to delve into this issue and considered that the plan provides a satisfactory answer and contains all the conditions that facilitate its implementation and construction.</p>
<p>Granting an exemption from improvement fees when issuing building permits.</p>	<p>The plan's instructions do not address the issue of imposing improvement fees usually required from applicants for building permits. Therefore, it is crucial to request a waiver of the improvement fees.</p>	<p>The committee refused to grant exemption from the improvement fees and decided that the law would apply, requiring payment of the fees along with issuing building permits according to the plan.</p>

### Summary of Objection

The regional committee approved the plan in its original form, except for amending three items that partially responded to the objections that were submitted:

1. Doubling the percentage of construction rights for housing from 10% to 20% of total building rights (reaching 412 housing units instead of 167 units).
2. Reducing the proportion of confiscation for public purposes from 10% of total building rights to 5%.
3. It was agreed that the buildings would be constructed in two phases instead of one phase only, as originally mandated.

Initially, the planning division of the land will be maintained as presented in the plan, while final land ownership distribution will be handled through the independently ongoing "Land Settlement" project. This means that the plan will remain suspended pending the final settlement of land ownership.

### Continuation of Work and Future Vision

As the primary targets of this plan and its alike, the Palestinian population and civil society organizations in occupied East Jerusalem must continue close collaboration in order to fully evaluate the difficulties and dangers posed by the Israeli government's plans and initiatives, as well as those of the Jerusalem municipality, settler groups, and other parties involved in the "Judaization" of the city and aiming at jeopardizing its Palestinian identity.

The Arab Center for Alternative Planning is constantly involved in monitoring and following up on abusive plans, evaluating their potential effects and harm to the Palestinians, forming partnerships, submitting objections through legal channels, and creating alternative plans that reflect the real needs and priorities of Palestinian society from its point of view. This is done in collaboration with native partners in East Jerusalem.

As part of their efforts to influence local and international public opinion, all involved partners continually organize public protests and participate in media activities to expose the dangers of intrusive planning products in East Jerusalem and explain how they violate international law.



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