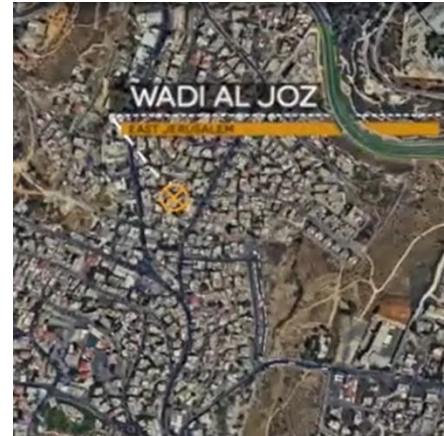


Silicon Valley Project: Preliminary Analysis

The Silicon Valley Project

The occupation municipality, led by its mayor Moshe Leon, led an unprecedented media campaign both on Israeli media and on social media pages, to promote the so-called Silicon Valley project in Wadi al-Joz.¹ **These reports led to deep confusion and contradictions, with many mingling this project with the EJCC plan, which is an entirely different plan,** and does not include the entirety of Wadi al-Joz neighborhood, and does not meet the legal standards and criteria under the planning and construction law, and the phases that it should take within the planning committees.



After research and examination,² it turns out that the Silicon Valley project is yet to develop into anything resembling coherence or conception. It remains an uncertain, stumbling kernel of an idea. The EJCC plan, meanwhile, has at least gone through the preparatory phase and is developing.

The boundaries of the so-called Silicon Valley project, according to the reports circulated in the Israeli press and on the official pages of the mayor, are limited to the area west of Wadi al-Joz main road. The industrial facilities and car repair shops are located 70 meters away to the north, on a triangular intersection of al-Maqdissi street, Wadi al-Joz main street and Khaled bin al-Walid street, stretching to the offices of the Israeli ministry of interior to the north. The estimated width of this area is 150 meters to the west of Wadi al-Joz road. According to the information we received from the deputy-director of the department of planning in the municipality, it appears that the Silicon Valley project remains in its primary preparatory stages and that all documents and plans pertaining to it are not even available for the public. Discussions on this project are still ongoing both at the department and in the local planning committees and it has yet to be presented to the regional planning committee.

Pre-eviction and demolition warrants and the potential imposition of fines

This media jumble has been accompanied by the distribution of leaflets warning residents and owners of garages and companies in Wadi al-Joz neighborhood from demolition or eviction of the structures considered illegal.³ These include the companies and the garages that did not

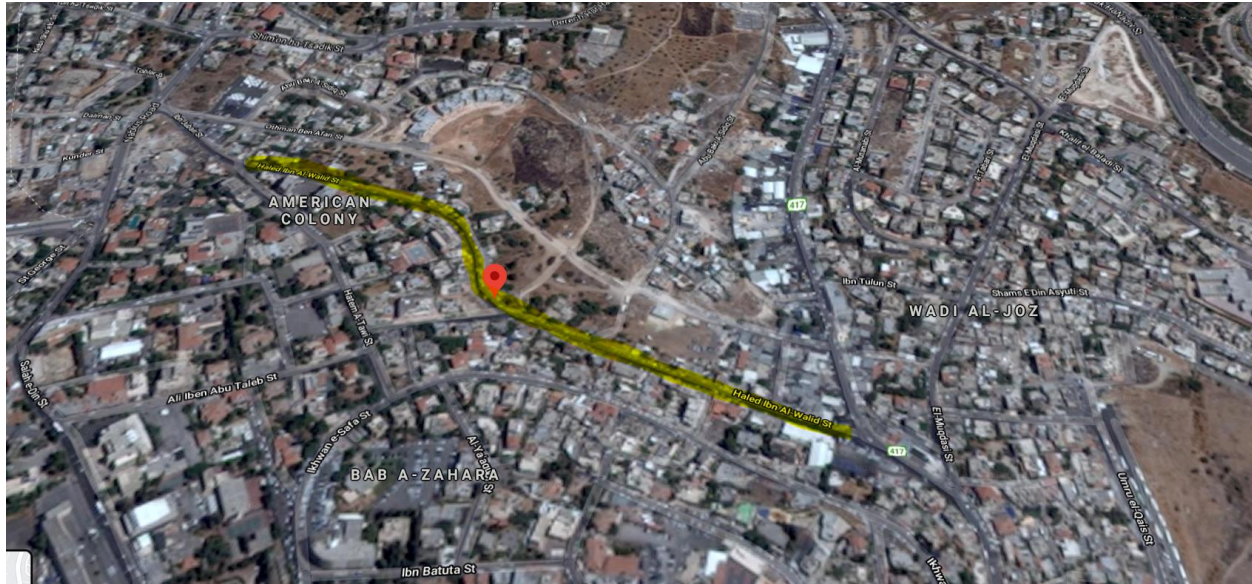
¹ <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=576910386570226>

² It included correspondence with deputy-director of the department of planning in the municipality the advisor of the mayor for the East Jerusalem affairs.

³ Appendix 1.

receive exceptional permits.⁴ The leaflets indicate that the residents and owners have a deadline until 31 December 2020 to evict for the purpose of conducting the EJCC plan, which, as claimed, would assist the thriving and development of the area, and the improvement of the residents' livelihood.

Ironically, though, most of the garages and companies threatened with eviction or demolition are located in areas explicitly excluded from the EJCC plan number 465229-101), contradicting the claims made by the leaflets. This is with the exception of **Khaled bin al-Walid street**, which is included in the original master plan, and the area parallel to it which does not exceed 70 meters (and the criteria of the plan, if approved, and the laws do not apply to most of this area).



Moreover, media reports and promotion campaigns have utterly ignored the eviction and demolition warrants, neither confirming nor denying, even though the mayor himself supported these campaigns. This heightens the fears and concerns of the residents who feel targeted by the campaigns.

The ramifications of the Silicon Valley (SV) project and its horizons

Three particular issues should be highlighted in the SV project promoted by the mayor and circulated on YouTube and Facebook in Arabic, English and Hebrew:

- **The size of the project:** The project seeks to achieve a massive urban jump in an area that has long been ignored by the occupation municipality. No recent planning has been conducted in this area and most of it has been designated as "green land" or as public spaces in obsolete master plans for Wadi al-Joz. The promoted reports reveal the objective to build on an area exceeding 200,000 square meters. Facilities which will be built are rumored to include high-tech-related centers, hotels, restaurants, employment offices, covering 50,000 square meters. The aim is to build high-rise buildings, including

⁴ This means permits for exceptional use.

up to 16-storey buildings. This is a glaring and blatant contradiction with the planning policies of the occupation municipality and the official planning institutions to which the municipality is subservient. This equally contradicts with Plan number 2000 adopted by the local and regional planning committees regarding the density of construction, and the number of floors. The two committees – the local and the regional committees – rely upon plan 2000 to publically impose their planning policies. This plan also constitutes the reference in deciding the destiny of any master plan submitted since 2008. The maximum height that this plan could approve is six-floor buildings and even this happens only in exceptional cases.

- **State investment in East Jerusalem:** this project requires the investment of more than NIS 2.1 billion for the development of East Jerusalem, an investment that will have to flow until 2023. Not only has such huge investment never been allotted to the development in East Jerusalem since 1967, it is highly doubtful that the state has dedicated NIS 2.1billions to the development of East Jerusalem cumulatively over the 53 years of annexation. It is highly unlikely that Israel will invest in three years what it has never been close to investing over more than fifty years.
- Such projects, because of their enormity, are **carried out and led by the state and by government authorities**, and not by private actors, as the reports appear to claim. Such huge projects, when carried out in West Jerusalem or in Israeli cities, are always led and initiated by the state and the government rather than by private actors.
- The reports published in the Israeli press lead to the conclusion that the plan is bigger than the occupation municipality, indicating that we might witness a state-led effort to target this specific area with land confiscation. This is particularly possible given the right-wing composition of the Israeli government, the occupation municipality and the local and regional planning committees. Certainly, Palestinian residents living in Wadi al-Joz do not have the resources to implement such a massive project, which, as we said, requires massive state intervention.



If Palestinian residents fail to file their objections and have these objections accepted within the deadline (the objections to the EJCC plan), and have their demands to add this area to the EJCC master plan approved, **the Silicon Valley plan might turn into a ticking bomb, threatening the lands of Palestinians because of the land confiscations it might entail.**