



FACTSHEET

THE ISRAELI COERCIVE ENVIRONMENT OF THE OLD CITY, JERUSALEM

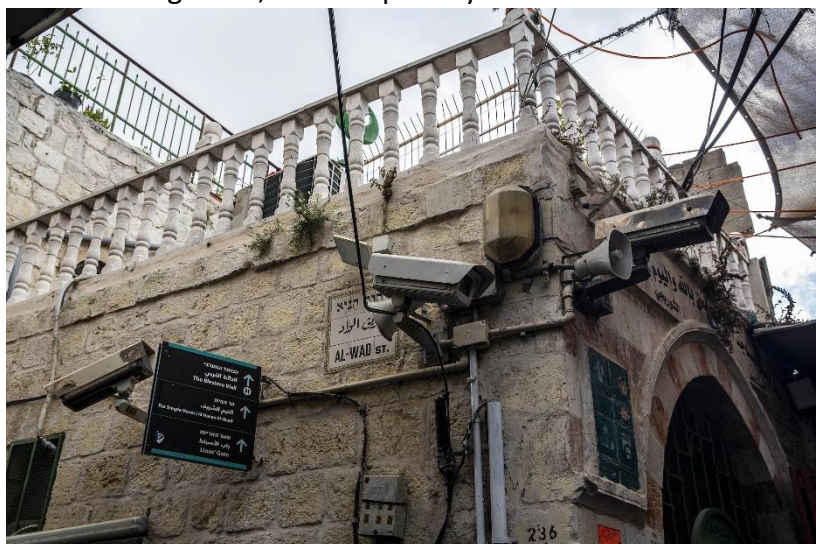
The Old City of Jerusalem, covering a compact area of approximately 1 km², has significant attention from millions of visitors each year, drawn by its religious and historical importance. Beyond its cultural charm, the city occupies an important position in the regional political landscape. This fact sheet will examine the coercive atmosphere of the city and provide insights into the lives of its Palestinian residents living under Israeli military occupation.

Heavy Surveillance: The Absence of Privacy

In the Old City of Jerusalem, a noticeable issue is the abundance of security cameras placed on its walls and streets. There are around 400 Israeli security cameras strategically positioned throughout the city, which translates to roughly **one camera for every 77 residents** among the total population of 31,120 in the four quarters of the Old City. These cameras are highly visible and appear prominent, serving as a constant reminder to Palestinians that they are constantly under surveillance. Some of these cameras even point

directly at Palestinian homes, invading their privacy.

In 2017, the Israeli government announced a substantial investment of 100 million NIS to enhance and upgrade its visual surveillance system in the Old City. This upgrade introduced advanced features that further encroached on the privacy of Palestinians. These enhancements included the installation of sophisticated software enabling facial recognition, the capability to detect if



someone is carrying a weapon, and the compilation of comprehensive profiles and information about individuals passing through the area.

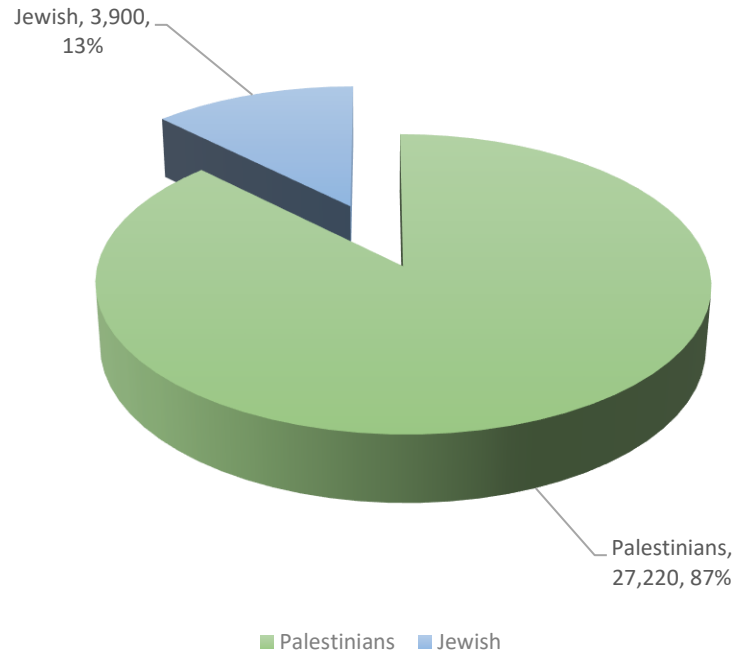
Settlers Expansion

Palestinian residents of the Old City face a systematic and coercive environment orchestrated by the Israeli authorities. These measures closely align with the steady growth of Israeli settlers and their outposts in the city, a trend that has accelerated since Israel's acquisition of Jerusalem in 1967.

Initially, the Israeli occupation demolished the Moroccan neighborhood situated adjacent to the Western Wall, replacing it with a newly built Jewish Quarter. This transformation entailed the demolition of **135 houses**, along with the removal of historical buildings and significant landmarks such as the Al-Afdalieh School, Maqam il Sheikh, Al-Buraq Mosque, and the Bou Medyan Zaouia.

Later, settlers embarked on a pattern of expansion into various quarters of the city, including the Islamic quarter, Armenian quarter, and Christian quarter. These outposts are thoroughly designed to strengthen their security, which is maintained by private guards, and complemented by the presence of Israeli Occupation Forces (IOF). Consequently, the settlers' presence transforms Palestinian areas into militarized zones characterized by unescapable surveillance and the looming threat of violence.

Despite the Palestinian majority in the Old City, they often find themselves treated as a minority. The numerical data underscores their demographic prevalence, yet the power dynamics perpetuate a sense of marginalization and vulnerability among the Palestinian residents:



Heavy Military Presence

Despite the Palestinian majority in the Old City, they continue to face the perception of being outsiders and a persistent security concern. An expressive example of this is the construction of three watchtowers by Israeli authorities at the bustling Damascus Gate, a central gathering place for Jerusalem's Palestinian residents. These towers primarily serve as vantage points for Israeli soldiers to engage in racial profiling of Palestinian youth among the bustling crowds, leading to their detention for physical searches and inspections.

During these inspections, Palestinians are often subjected to mandatory frisking, which leads to extensive physical examinations, where soldiers meticulously search various parts of their bodies for potential threats. Tragically, for many Palestinians, this arbitrary physical search translates into an experience of a sexual harassment, constituting a distressing and recurring aspect of the daily lives of numerous young Palestinian men in the city.

Housing Crisis in the Old City of Jerusalem

Within the Old City of Jerusalem, a pressing housing crisis unfolds. Over 1500 Palestinian residences and structures are in urgent need of restoration. However, the Israeli government places severe restrictions on Palestinians, inhibiting their ability to modify or expand their private properties. Additionally, many Palestinian residents face the constant threat of demolitions.

These restrictions stem from the municipality's measures, which obstruct the entry of essential building materials. The impact is especially pronounced on properties situated within the vicinity of the Al-Aqsa Mosque and its courtyards. Municipal inspectors, often collaborating with Israeli settler organizations, actively hinder any Palestinian attempts at development. Neighborhoods where residents are suspected of initiating restoration and development projects are closely monitored, potentially leading to prosecution, as the Israeli municipality deems such actions as violations. Notably, even minor additions to existing homes result in penalties,



and fines, and forced self-demolitions for property owners.

The pervasive Judaization of Jerusalem threatens every facet of Palestinian life, marginalizing their narrative and obstructing their pursuit of self-determination and dignity.

Conversely, more than 70 Israeli settler outposts enjoy full autonomy to expand and renovate their buildings without concerns of monitoring or legal consequences. These outposts within the Old City receive substantial support from official and semi-official bodies, including the occupation's municipality and the Israeli Ministry of Construction and Housing. Construction carried out by these entities is exempt from oversight and restrictions, resulting in significant damage to the surrounding real estate, particularly in areas like Al-Sa'diyeh, Al-Wad, Al-Qirami, Al-Saraya Accent, Chain Gate, and Al-Khaldieh Accent.

The Israeli Flag March Meets Ramadan

In 2021, events within the Old City sparked a deadly war that resulted in the loss of 232 Palestinian lives in the Gaza Strip, including 65 children and 39 women, beside more than 1,000 Palestinian Jerusalemites were injured. The escalation of tensions in the region has been steadily intensifying due to various incidents.

Locally, the Old City of Jerusalem is the core place to celebrate Ramadan for Palestinians from all over the country. However, on the first day of Ramadan in 2021, the Israeli government disconnected the loudspeakers of the Al-Aqsa Mosque, which are used for call to prayers, citing potential interference with the Israeli president's speech on Israeli Memorial Day at the Western Wall. Shortly afterward, Israeli forces erected fences, sealing off the Damascus Gate area, a well-known gathering place in the Old City and a hub for the Palestinian



community in the Muslim quarter. Simultaneously, tensions were escalating in Sheikh Jarrah, and plans were in place for an Israeli Flag March at Damascus Gate. This march coincides with "Jerusalem Day," an annual Israeli national day celebrating the occupation of Jerusalem in 1967. Thousands of Israeli settlers from across the country converge on the Old City of Jerusalem to initiate aggressive rallies against Palestinians. These rallies often include mass attacks on shops, Palestinian homes, and individuals in the streets. The settlers receive full protection from Israeli Occupation forces during this anti-Arab parade, with thousands of soldiers and security personnel deploying fences to restrict Palestinian movement, ensuring the settlers' safety.

The march has gained notoriety for its use of hateful slogans by the settlers, including calls for violence and even genocide against Palestinians (e.g.: "Death to Arabs", "May their village burn", "A good Arab is a dead Arab"). Meanwhile, Palestinians can face arrest for raising the Palestinian flag, which is considered an act of incitement.

Subsequently, the Jerusalem Day march has grown in popularity among Israelis seeking to assert sovereignty over the occupied city. In the 2023 Jerusalem Day celebration, numerous high-profile Israeli politicians from the Knesset were notably present, leveraging the event for potential political gains in future elections.

Conclusion

The Old City of Jerusalem remains the core of the struggle, and the Israeli authorities keep enforcing punishing measures on its Palestinian population to push them out of the city, aiming to change the demography of the city to ensure a Jewish majority. Israeli government policies continue to reshape the city's makeup, posing significant challenges to its Palestinian residents and their way of life through presenting obstacles for Palestinian inhabitants and their daily existence, leading to an unbearable coercive environment.