



## POLICY PAPER:

## ISSAWIYEH: A PROCESS OF A CONTINUOUS OPPRESSION

**Issawiye****h**, located to the northern east of Jerusalem, stretches across an area of 47 dunams. It is middle-way between the villages of Anata, Shu'fat, al-Tor, al-Khan al-Ahmar and Jerusalem. According to a 1961 census, the population of Issawiye

stood at 1,163; 608 males and 555 females. Today, 19,950 people inhabit Issawiye

that have the status of "permanent residents", and face different violations and challenges. Following the 1948 Nakba, the ethnic cleansing of Palestine, and Israel's annexation of West Jerusalem, most of Issawiye

became a "no-man's land" supervised by the United Nations, while the populated portion of the town came under Jordanian rule. The Israeli army was situated on the west side of the town while the Arab Jordanian Army was on the east. The town, then a small village, fell under Israeli occupation and subsequent annexation following the June 1967 war.

## POLICE BRUTALITY

*It was supposed to be a normal February Day for nine-year-old Malik Issa from the Jerusalemite village of Issawiye***h**. He did what he had done so many times before: he went to the nearby grocery store to buy bread for his family and candy for himself. At the time Israeli soldiers were raiding Issawiye

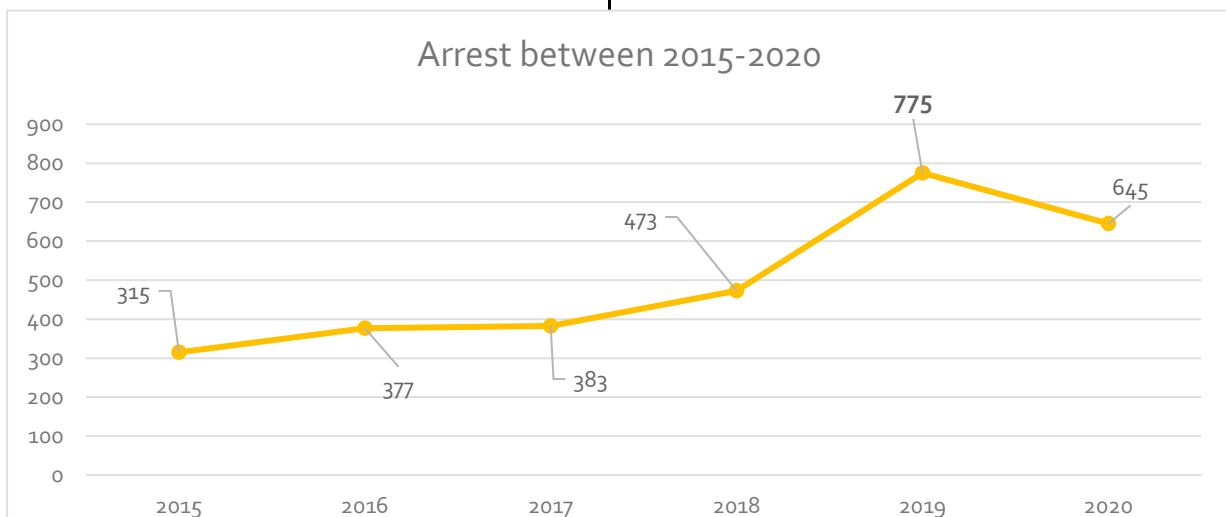
h as they do almost daily, using firearms and live ammunition. Malik Issa was wounded in his left eye and rushed to the hospital, where the doctors had to amputate

*the eye. Little Malik was the 15<sup>th</sup> victim who lost an eye during Israeli police raids. The Israeli Police Investigation Unit (Machash) opened an investigation, but in December 2020, ten months after the shooting, the file was closed and the case against the border police officers implicated in targeting Malik's eyes was dismissed. The justification for closing the case was the lack of evidence, an explanation that is often used when Israeli security personnel are investigated for wounding or killing Palestinians.*

The excessive use of force, including tear gas, stun grenades, the skunk water, rubber-coated steel bullets against protesters, as well as passersby, are features of the regular raids in Issawiyeh, a village known for its indefatigable stance against Israeli colonization projects. To quiten ~~mollify~~ their resistance, Israel punishes the residents of Issawiyeh with high number of arrests. According to different reports, there was an Issawiyeh noticed an increase in the frequency of incursions and arrests in Issawiyeh over the past three years; peeking in 2019 (*with average of 14 arrest and search operations each month, compared to 12 in 2018*),while

citywide upheavals. The closures pose immense restrictions for the residents, for students and workers, particularly those dependent on public transport, and for patients requiring emergency medical treatment. These closures constitute a form of collective punishment, a practice strictly forbidden under international humanitarian law, including Article 34 of the Fourth Geneva Convention and Article 50 of the 1907 Hague Regulations.

**The everyday police brutality is rooted in a decades-long process of colonization and land seizures.**



between 2015-2020, Issawiyeh witnessed 6,968 arrests<sup>1</sup> (*the highest arrests -for the years 2018 and 2019- in the entirety of Jerusalem*). In addition to random detentions and house arrests, and closures. Sealing off all but one entrance to the village with cement blocks has been a regular Israeli measure during the past decade, especially during episodes of

## THE ISOLATION

Issawiyeh is encircled by the Israeli settlement of the French Hill, the Hadassah Hospital, and the Hebrew University, in addition to the road leading to the Ma'ale Adumim settlement. Hundreds of dunams of the village's land were confiscated under several pretexts, including the construction

<sup>1</sup> 315 arrests in 2015, 377 arrests in 2016, 383 arrests in 2017, 473 arrests in 2018, and 775 arrests in 2019; while it was 645 arrests in 2020

of a military outpost, and the expansion of the Hebrew University dorms and the French Hill. The Israel Nature and Parks Authority, a governmental institution that works under the auspices of the Ministry of Environment, threatens to permanently confiscate more than 700 dunams of the lands of Issawiyeh and the Mount of Olives to establish a national park and nature reserve. Declaring large swaths of Palestinian land as green areas and national parks is one of the tools Israel uses to confiscate Palestinian land and to increase the pressure on Palestinians in occupied Jerusalem.

As these different colonial projects have all but swallowed the open spaces that Issawiyeh's Palestinians have once had, housing shortages are perhaps the most acute crisis that Palestinians in Issawiyeh face.

## THE DEMOLITIONS

Due to Israel's discriminatory and exclusionary planning policies, thousands of Issawiyeh's rapidly growing population, which nears 20,000, have had to build without permit and thus face the constant risk of home demolitions. Over the past decade, the Israeli occupation municipality has demolished or forced the demolition of 124 structures, resulting in the displacement of 66 Palestinians. So far in 2021, Israel has demolished 19 structures in Issawiyeh, including seven residential homes. While all of these demolitions are conducted under the pretext of acting against "illegal construction," one of them also had a punitive undertone. On 22 February 2021, Israeli bulldozers, backed by special police units, raided Issawiyeh to demolish a building containing four residential apartments owned by the



*A house that was partially demolished in Issawiyeh, JLAC® (2020)*

Between 2014- 9/2021

## 124 DEMOLITIONS AT ISSAWIYEH

39 HOUSES

41 AGRICULTURAL  
STRUCTRES

22 LIVELIHOOD

6 INFRASTRUCTRE

15 OTHERS

66 DISPLACED PEOPLE

696 PEOPLE AFFECTED

Alayan family. Fadi Alayan, the houseowner, works as a guard at Al-Aqsa Mosque compound. He had previously received numerous threats from undercover Israeli intelligence officers due to his work as a guard in the mosque.

## A "GROUNDBREAKING" MASTER PLAN

In October last year, the Jerusalem municipality approved, for the first time in thirty years, a master plan for Issawiyeh. The master plan was hailed as "groundbreaking" because it would pave the way for the retroactive legalization of many houses built without permit, would freeze demolitions, and would include the construction of public buildings which the village lacks. Yet, this ostensibly

groundbreaking plan fails to expand the boundaries of the village or to reduce the boundaries of the planned national park. This plan disregards the root cause of the housing crisis in Issawiyeh, which is the desperate scarcity of land allocated for Palestinian construction. Palestinians whose lands are located within areas classified by Israel as "open" or "green" zones are excluded from the plan. They will still be barred from receiving building permits or from taking advantage of their land. What Israel labels as a "plan for development" is confined to the existing narrow boundaries of a village which is already one of the most densely populated areas in Jerusalem.

Issawiyeh is but few minutes' walk away from the Mount Scopus branch of the Hebrew University, but the two are worlds apart. While the Hebrew University stands as an intellectual and academic bastion, Issawiyeh is threatened in its existence by Israeli violence, oppression, and land grabs. While the Israeli settlements that border Issawiyeh thrive and expand, the residents of Issawiyeh live in poverty and perpetual fear, suffocated by Israeli restrictions and encroachment. And every parent knows deep down that his son or daughter could very well be the next Malik Issa. **In Issawiyeh, safety is a luxury and Israel denies it.**

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