

YA QUDS!

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Centre for Jerusalem Studies
Al-Quds University

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Editors' Note

Welcome to our readers of the fifth issue of Ya Quds!

Jerusalem is full of stories. When preparing for each issue of Ya Quds!, we receive a good number of literary and social articles as well as poems. We are happy to read them all and learn from them. When reading these writings, we realize that this city is full of treasures and surprises, full of creative abilities and hidden talents. Despite the difficult political, economic, and social conditions, and perhaps because of them, these treasures and talents stem from the strong feelings of Jerusalemites for their city reflecting their hopes for a better future. We thank all those who sent their writings and apologize to those whose articles were not published in this issue.

In the last few months, the news of the loss of some real estate in the Old City has come as a sharp blow to the hearts of all the honourable people who wish to preserve the sanctity of every inch of the Old City. This is one of the most difficult and complex issues facing Jerusalem today because of its impact on both the present and the future.

Yet, there are bright aspects to the city. The Jerusalem institutions and the young volunteers' hands are active in the city. The Centre for Jerusalem Studies, for example, conducted several activities, events, and public lectures at various sites of Al-Quds University. Many institutions operating in Jerusalem and Palestine joined to convene the Palestinian Literature Festival *Kalimāt*, during which many personalities spoke about their stories and their writings. The city also celebrated "The Arabic Music" festival. The festival was attended by several local and foreign institutions, led by the Edward Said National Conservatory of Music. These activities have a direct impact on the daily lives of Jerusalem residents and impart the spirit of hope to Jerusalemites.

In this issue of Ya Quds!, we offer academic, literary, and cultural articles by some of those who deeply love the city. We begin with a poem by Dr. Hussein al-Sayyad, followed by an article about a success story in the field

of sport with social implications. The political aspect is dealt with in an interesting manner in an article by Engineer Azzam al-Dakkak, in which he raises the importance of the popular movement in the city. History also has a share in this issue; the article by Dr. Izdihar Rabi speaks about land issues during the British Mandate period.

As for the articles in English in this issue, we offer a distinguished collection of articles focused on the planning, educational, and literary aspects, as well as the memoirs of the residents of this city.

We are pleased to invite you to contribute to the sixth issue of Ya Quds! Articles may be in Arabic or English and should not exceed 1,200 words. The deadline for submission is July 1, 2019. We look forward to your contributions.

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World Karate Expert- “Usama al-Sharif”

Despite the political and social difficulties Jerusalem is facing, the city still achieves successes on a global level in numerous fields. Many residents exert their energies to serve the city and nurture its new generations.



Here we would like to talk about one example of these successes: the world karate expert, Osama al-Sharif, who considers sport in general and karate in particular a key factor in the healthy upbringing of children and young people. This is the story of a Jerusalemite who represents a model of how a person can overcome great difficulties to reach the highest levels when the goal is clear and the person is determined to achieve it.

Osama al-Sharif, who ranks 16th in the world ranking of karate, and has won the Black Belt, Dan 8, the highest degree in the Arab World and the Middle East more generally. Osama has contributed and continues to contribute to improving the lives of Jerusalemites through providing training in karate and through his ongoing efforts to influence positively thousands of trainees, whether in Jerusalem where he currently works at the YMCA or elsewhere in Palestine, such as Hebron. He has exerted a major influence over sports and social life in Jerusalem and the surrounding areas since the 1970s. Osama believes that karate is a lifestyle that affects physical and mental well-being and leads to better life at both the individual and the community levels. Throughout his coaching career, he has endeavoured to love and support his students.

The beginning of Osama’s life was very difficult. He was born in 1959 to a poor Jerusalem family that lived in a 200-year-old house in the Old City of Jerusalem. He had eight brothers, who all died in childhood, and remained the only son, living with his parents and five sisters. His father worked as a cook; his mother knit at night and sold her wool products to shops in Jerusalem in



order to provide her family with what they needed to live in dignity. Osama believed that his mother was “a positive image that provides motivation to others,” but he also felt her pain and therefore said: “My goal was to comfort this woman; I must save this woman.” The difficulties Osama faced from childhood included even finding enough food for the day.

Osama began his training in karate in 1973 when he was about 13 years old. His father was against the idea, but his mother gave him the money in secret to pay the coach for the training he was receiving. This made him very happy, and he realized that karate was his message and mission in life. After three years, Osama attained the Black Belt and became a coach himself. He practiced six to seven hours a day. In addition, Osama was fond of karate films and was very much influenced by them, at that time.

In 1976 Osama, aged 17, became the youngest karate coach in the Middle East. In 1979, he was asked to train youth in Hebron at the Hebron Youth Club. At that time, the club was famous for being first in Palestine in soccer. Although karate was not well known at the time, he managed to bring the number of trainees to 1,200.

Osama trained youth seven days a week and improved his own financial situation. In 1982, he had his first travel experience outside the country. It was planned as a one-year training trip to Spain, France, Britain, and the US. The first country Osama visited was Spain, where he met the then world champion Karate Anton Olivia, who held the Black Belt, Dan 7. Osama was in possession of a Black Belt from Palestine, but he realized during his stay in Spain that there are differences between the levels of training in Spain and in Palestine. The method of training and exercise in Spain differed from the way he had learned back home. Therefore, he asked to start from the White Belt again in Spain and after 3 months was awarded the Black Belt, Dan 2.

Osama’s days were not easy there. Since he had no place to live in Spain, he spent his days and nights at the club and slept on the ground until he had attained the Black Belt. Osama then travelled to France for a month and met Japanese coaches with international experience in karate, after which he completed his trip in the US, where he spent another month in New Jersey and

New York. Osama returned to Jerusalem after spending only five months abroad, unable to complete the full year because of his difficult financial situation.



After returning home in 1982, Osama resumed training in Hebron and also in Jerusalem at the YMCA, but this time he followed the more advanced methods he had learned during his trip abroad. He participated in many championships and became famous in Palestine, including Gaza. The number of those trained under his supervision exceeded 5,000.

In light of his improved financial condition, Osama got married in 1984, at the age of 25, and later increased his trips abroad. He visited Britain every year for training and was authorized as the first Arab Palestinian to qualify trainees for the Black Belt. He also gradually acquired higher level karate belts himself, taking several years for each Dan level. In 2000, Osama became the first Arab to receive Dan 7; he was and remains the first in the Arab World and number 16 in the world as a whole to carry this title.

During the first intifada (1987–1990) Karate training was halted in Palestine because of the security situation and the arrests that had been made in the ranks of the players. However, Osama returned to practice, despite the difficult security conditions.

Osama's life's dream was to visit Japan and to study karate there. He began by visiting Singapore to join the Asian Confederation for Karate. In 2006 he received an invitation to the World Championship in Karate in Tokyo, capital of Japan. Japan, according to him, is very different from the world in which we live. The focus there is on the sport of karate according to the "old" style, so Osama returned to the "old" Japanese style. The difference between the old and the modern method is great. In the old method, the blows are small but very strong. The ferocity of this method was not a deterrent for Osama to try to achieve his dreams.

Osama's stay in Japan and in Tokyo in particular, where most of the karate centres are located, had a major impact on his lifestyle. In Japan, karate is a philosophy and way of life, which involves wisdom, attention, and knowledge.

Osama's experience in Japan showed him the extent of the chaos in our cities and in Arab society in general. Japanese society, in Osama's opinion, enjoys beautiful qualities such as honesty, adherence to principles, order, and respect for other human beings.



Despite this comparison, Jerusalem has a special place in Osama's life: "Jerusalem is the closest point to paradise. When I talk about Jerusalem, it is the heart of the world to me, I would die without Jerusalem, as it is the oxygen for me. It is my life and my being; after so many opportunities abroad I can only live in Jerusalem." But it hurts Osama to see the city of Jerusalem, the young people, and the new generation in so much trouble. So he tries hard to influence his students. He expresses his love and support for them to the fullest because he knows we all live in one trench, and we have to support each other.

Coach Osama Al-Sharif, has impacted and continues to affect the sports and social life since the seventies of the last century. He has contributed greatly to improving the lives of Jerusalemites through the training of karate and through his continuous efforts to positively influence thousands of trainees. According to Osama, sports in general and karate in particular are essential to the healthy upbringing of children and young people. He explains that Karate is a lifestyle that leads to physical and mental health and leads those who practice it to a better life at the individual and community level.

The experience of Osama is a model that shows that addressing the difficult conditions experienced by the Palestinian people in general and Jerusalemites in particular requires rebellion against despair and with the will and determination we must move towards achieving dreams.

The Politics of Higher Education in East Jerusalem

Adel Ruished



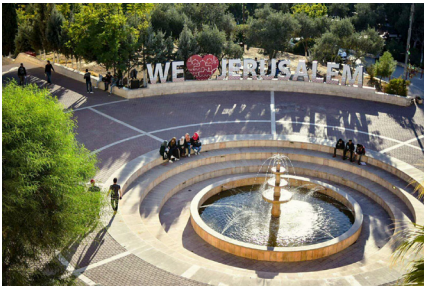
Al-Quds University

In an unprecedented move, the Hebrew University in Jerusalem recently permitted Palestinian Jerusalemite students who hold the general Palestinian High School Certificate *Al-Tawjihi* (recently called *Al-Injaz*) admission to its various academic programs. In addition, the university launched several academic programs and announced the availability of financial grants for these students. This university decision also comes years after various Israeli authorities facilitated the opening of many Israeli educational and vocational institutes within the city and pushed Palestinian Jerusalemite students and graduates to enrol in them (Hasson, 2017). While such decisions were positively received by some Palestinian Jerusalemites, others alluded to the existence of political agendas hidden behind them, aimed at weakening Palestinian Jerusalemites' ability to establish their own university in the city. Critics of these decisions also pointed out that such decisions attempt to hinder the launch of their own higher education programs in East Jerusalem, mainly those programs related to politics, history, economy, and law. Accordingly, such decisions have resulted in the suspension of Palestinian Jerusalemites' individual right to specific higher education programs and have also led to the infringement of the collective right to establish a Palestinian university in the city.

Such conclusions were not arbitrary. Beginning almost a century ago, and to this day, the attempts to establish an Arab Palestinian University in Jerusalem have been thwarted due to unusual political decisions (Odwan, 2008:87–88). Between 1918 and 1967, both of the sovereign powers that ruled in Palestine (Jordan and Israel) undermined the implementation of such an idea and pursued their own political agendas that ignored Palestinian Jerusalemites' right to higher education in East Jerusalem (Odwan, 2002:17). While the British Mandate authorities facilitated the establishment of the Israeli Hebrew University in Jerusalem as complementary to its commitment to establishing a national home for Jewish people in Palestine (Palestine Royal Commission Report, 1937:49–50), the Jordanian government justified its disinterest in establishing a university in East Jerusalem as due to its geographical closeness to Israel. However, Mustafa Abbasi explains that the real reason behind the decision was the Jordanian intention to establish a university in Amman (Abbasi, 2013:10). In addition, when individual initiatives of Palestinian Jerusalemites managed, between the mid-1970s and the early 1980s, to establish four academic faculties inside and around the city, albeit financially and administratively separated, the Israeli occupation authorities circumvented these initiatives. Under the pretext that the Faculty of Nursing in El-Bireh and the Faculty of Science and Technology in Abu Dis were located outside the drawn Israeli borders of East Jerusalem, the Israeli government appended these two faculties to the Education Officer at the Civil Administration in the West Bank (Sullivan, 1994:157).

As for the Faculty of Religion and Jurisprudence and the Faculty of Arts (Hind Al-Husseini College for Girls) located inside the Jerusalem neighbourhoods of Beit-Hanina and Wad el-Jozz, respectively, the Israeli government imposed on them an exceptional and anomalous situation. Unlike the faculties outside the boundaries of East Jerusalem, the Israeli government did not append them to its Education Officer in the West Bank (Sullivan, 1994:182). In addition, the Israeli government did not consider these two faculties as higher education institutions. This enabled Israeli-related authorities to deprive them of commercial and property tax exemptions and to prevent their infrastructural development, in contrast to support granted to Israeli universities (Sullivan, 1994:182,169). Moreover, the introduction of the Israeli permit system in 1993 and the Separation Wall in 2001 restricted the movements of academic staff and students between the city and the West Bank. Accordingly, all of these measures tended to impede development of these faculties within the city (Dumper, 2014:81; Cohen, 2011:99). This was partly achieved when

the Faculty of Religion and Jurisprudence moved outside the city to the university campus in Abu Dis (Zakarneh, 2004). Furthermore, five years after many graduates of the Social Work Program at the Faculty of Arts had been working for Welfare Departments in East Jerusalem; the Israeli Social Worker Registrar cancelled their registration as official social workers in late 1993. Under the pretext that the Israeli Minister of Labour and Welfare had mistakenly recognized them in 1988 as graduates of a foreign diploma institute and that such recognition is the prerogative of the Israeli Council for Higher Education (ICHE). Consequently, these social workers have been deprived of proper salary and ranking rights. More importantly, when some of these social workers filed a legal case against this discrimination in 1995, the Israeli court reinstated their rights. Yet this court also suspended recognition of future graduates from the Faculty of Arts under the pretext that it is part of Al-Quds University, which is not recognized by the ICHE.



Al-Quds University

It is worth mentioning here that all of these Israeli decisions came in the wake of the unification of the four academic faculties to form the kernel of Al-Quds University and also with the opening of the first Palestinian Medical School on its campus in Abu Dis in 1994 (Al-Quds University website). More importantly, these decisions concomitantly came

with the Oslo peace agreement between the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) and the state of Israel in 1993, wherein the Israeli Foreign Minister pledged to the Norwegian Foreign Minister not only to refrain from hindering the functioning of Palestinian Jerusalemite institutions in East Jerusalem but also to permit them to progress and develop post-Oslo (Dumper and Larkin, 2012:35).

However, the Israeli government continued pursuing policies aimed at denying the recognition of Al-Quds University as a legitimate institution in East Jerusalem. Unlike the rest of the Palestinian universities in the cities of the West Bank and Gaza Strip, which are recognized in the State of Israel, the Israeli government perpetually refused to recognize the Palestinian Al-Quds University and its academic degrees (Dumper, 2014:81). This was manifested in 1996 when an Israeli right-wing organization called Betzedek filed a legal case to outlaw Al-Quds University's presence in the city. Building



on the court decision in 1995, which considered Al-Quds University as unrecognized, the Israeli organization claimed that the university violated the ICHE law by offering academic programs and degrees in the city without obtaining the required license. It also demanded that the court orders the Israeli Prime Minister to

implement the Israeli law and shut down the university (Cohen, 2011:105). Even after Al-Quds University informed the court of its readiness to submit the required recognition application to the (ICHE), the Israeli government sought to retain its exclusion. Accordingly, the university was rendered unrecognized as a higher education institution in East Jerusalem, and the Israeli government kept it in a “state of exception,” suspended its legal status, and created chaotic conditions for it. In doing so, the Israeli government was betting on the inability of the university to sustain its existence in the city and hoped that it would decay on its own.

Through the ICHE, the Israeli government suspended the legal status of Al-Quds University in East Jerusalem and thwarted its attempts to obtain the required license and academic recognition. This was demonstrated in the procrastination strategy that the ICHE adopted for assessing the university’s academic programs and the variety of arguments raised to avoid recognizing the university. For example, after 13 years of submitting and resubmitting most of the university’s academic programs for recognition, the (ICHE) informed the university in 2009 that it is not within its jurisdiction to monitor its academic programs located outside the Israeli municipal borders. The (ICHE) also requested the university to submit recognition application only for those academic programs located inside the Israeli municipal borders (Heruti-Sover, 2013). On their part, various Israeli ministries refrained from accrediting graduates and academic programs located outside the Israeli municipal borders of East Jerusalem. This was demonstrated when the Israeli Ministry of Health rejected recognizing graduates of Al-Quds University Medical School located in Abu Dis. This rejection was justified under the pretext that the university lacked required recognition by the (ICHE). Ironically, when these graduates proved in a legal case filed against the ministry in 2011 that their academic studies and clinical training took place outside the city, the Israeli Cabinet

Secretary jumped into the case in 2012. The Secretary claimed that the Israeli government would not recognize Al-Quds University as a foreign one when part of its campus and main administration functioned within the city (Heruti-Sover, 2013).

Although the university split itself academically, financially, and administratively into two parts and established Al-Quds College in the city in 2010 as a legally separate academic institution, the (ICHE) has yet to permit the opening of this new college. Moreover, despite professional committees of the (ICHE) having positively evaluated the college's submitted academic programs (namely, its Education and Social Work Programs), the (ICHE) has refused to this day to provide a written evaluation to permit offering academic degrees in these programs (Al-Quds University website). Furthermore, despite the fact that the university informed the court in 2014 that the main administrative office and the office of the new president of the university existed outside the city, the Israeli Attorney General rejected approving the recognition of its graduates except those from the Medical School. Even after a lengthy process of negotiations with the university regarding accreditation of all of its academic programs located outside the city, the Israeli Attorney General refused to provide accreditation for any of the university's graduates except those from Dentistry, Pharmacy, and the Medical Professions programs. According to the Attorney General, the case was filed against the Ministry of Health only and not against the state or another ministry. Therefore, the rest of the academic programs located outside the city and its graduates remained unrecognized to this day (Hasson, 2018).

Consequently, the Israeli government has perpetually rejected the presence of Al-Quds University in East Jerusalem. This has infringed on Palestinian Jerusalemites' collective right to establish and develop their own university and has deprived Palestinian Jerusalemite individuals of the right to higher education in the city. It remains to be seen how the Hebrew University initiative will develop.

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Dynamics of Spatial Segregation in East Jerusalem

Amaal Abu Ghoush



Separation wall approaching Qalandia check point

Since the occupation of the West-Bank and the annexation of “East Jerusalem” 50 years ago, Israel has been using architecture and planning as a tool against the development of Palestinian-populated neighbourhoods in Jerusalem. Neglect and lack of services have left an impact on Palestinian communities to a degree that has made it unbearable to live in many of these neighbourhoods. Palestinian residents of Jerusalem receive few of the services for which they ostensibly pay taxes; in many areas, roads are poorly paved, sidewalks hardly exist, and solid waste is stacked.¹ Yet, Palestinians are obliged to pay their taxes regularly in order to prove their residence in Jerusalem - as part of the imposed “centre of life” policy- or risk losing their legal status in the city.²

Jerusalem is the largest Palestinian city in terms of population, but this holy city for the three Abrahamic religions is also a place of conflict. How does it feel to the residents of Jerusalem both East and West -Palestinians and Israelis- living under conditions of uncertainty, with every moment subject to the possibility of an unexpected event? This state of chronic uncertainty imposes pressure on the Palestinians living there to the degree that it becomes more and more difficult to remember how beautiful and holy this city is. Influenced by the spatial dynamics of the city, this uncertainty is actually shaping the Palestinian perception of life in Jerusalem.

The planning of a city influences the behaviour of its inhabitants. To paraphrase

Winston Churchill, “We shape our spaces and these spaces shape us too”³ that is, the configuration of a space dictates how the inhabitants of that space will behave. The more a given space accommodates the needs of those living within it, the more comfortable those people will feel. If there is a decent sidewalk, allowing adults and children to walk safely, people will not walk in the streets and among the cars; if there is a park where children can play, they will not play in the middle of the road.

In contrast, planning can also be used to control residents; the more aggressive this type of planning is, the more the inhabitants lose their right to their own city. Whereas well-planned spaces may influence how inhabitants move within those spaces, aggressively planned spaces dictate where people are allowed or not allowed to go. Aggressive planning measures may also segregate contiguous areas and divide their residents. An example of this is the major road system that has been constructed in order to disrupt the continuity of Palestinian Jerusalemite neighbourhoods, while facilitating connections among Israeli neighbourhoods and transportation systems. The Separation Wall and its myriad checkpoints further control and disrupt Palestinian life.

Since the occupation of East Jerusalem in 1967, the illegal annexation of 70.5 square kilometres to West Jerusalem, and Jurisdiction over 300,000 (in 2015) Palestinian residents, Israeli authorities and planners set a clear goal: to create a Jewish majority, reduce Palestinian presence, and isolate East Jerusalem from the rest of the West Bank. The shape of the annexed land in 1967 did not occur arbitrarily but rather is based on spatial segregation of Palestinians; every inch was selected specifically to serve a purpose—for example, to include the Qalandia airport in the north and the vacant land of the villages surrounding Jerusalem and at the same time to exclude spaces heavily populated with Palestinians with the eventual goal of using the vacant lands for Israeli settlement building.

Soon after the 1967 war, Israel immediately began building settlements on illegally annexed lands. The locations of the settlements and the road networks connecting them served two purposes. On the one hand, the spatial segregation of Palestinian neighbourhoods within Jerusalem limits their development and natural growth, segregating Palestinian neighbourhoods within Jerusalem as well as segregating Jerusalem from the rest of the West Bank. On the other hand, Israeli planning policies focus on the spatial integration of Israeli settlers/settlements within Jerusalem and Israel.

The settlements built on Palestinian land in East Jerusalem subsume about 34 percent of the annexed land, while the Palestinians are allowed to build on only 13 percent of the land with very minimal building rights.⁴ Permits are controlled by the Israeli authorities and are issued with



Hizma checkpoint

little regard for the Palestinian residents and their projected natural growth. Thus, most Palestinians in East Jerusalem, who now exceed 350,000 (about 60,000 families), are indirectly forced to build without building permits due to the extreme complexity and high expense of obtaining building permits. The Palestinians may be shaping their spaces and architecture, but the political and administrative contexts controlling their spaces and architecture are in fact shaping their daily lives since they are under constant threat of demolition. However, Palestinians in East Jerusalem have chosen this route as the only way to survive within these spaces. Thus, as Bernard Tschumi said: “Architecture is not so much knowledge of form but a form of knowledge.” These buildings are indeed forming a new knowledge of the dynamics of resistance.

In 2001, when Israel began building the Separation Wall, new boundaries were created on the ground thus reshaping the spatial dynamics in Jerusalem. The spatial dynamics of the Separation Wall were intended to exclude Palestinians in densely populated areas, segregating Palestinians and connecting Israeli settlements with the Israeli occupied lands. Thus, Israeli settlers can easily access Jerusalem, while Palestinians from the West Bank are physically detached from the city, in addition to needing to apply for a permit to enter Jerusalem.

The Separation Wall also annexed more-currently empty-land of the West Bank, such as the land of Beit Hanina, Nabi Samuel, and other Jerusalem area villages, and E1 Land⁵ in East Jerusalem. Densely populated Palestinian areas such as Kufr °Aqab and Shu°fat Refugee Camp were left behind the wall and separated from East Jerusalem, whereby its East Jerusalemite residents have to endure checkpoints to reach their schools, work, medical facilities, and families.

While the Separation Wall is marketed by Israel as a “Protection” Wall, it is



Shufat Refugee Camp

a clear example of how architectural elements are used to control the daily lives of the Palestinians and to influence the dynamics of demography in the city. According to OCHA (United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs), about 100,000 Palestinian Jerusalemites are separated by the wall in Shu^ofat Refugee Camp and Kufur ^oAqab alone. In some areas the wall is just a fence, which is neither watched nor protected. How, then, can it provide protection? Palestinians and Israeli settlers who want to access Jerusalem from the West Bank must go through checkpoints by vehicles. Whereas soldiers at the checkpoints used only by Palestinians (like Qalandia checkpoint) stop and check every vehicle, soldiers at other checkpoints, where also settlers pass, may allow the passage of some cars without stopping or checking them, potentially allowing the passage of people and materials that might threaten “Israeli security”. So in fact, the wall is indeed not a protection wall; it is a racial colonial separation wall. In Jerusalem alone, it leaves 25 surrounding villages and neighbourhoods completely isolated; these separated areas, which are part of Jerusalem and under its administration, lack proper services and infrastructure. At the same time, the Separation Wall encircles the Holy City and the ring of Israeli settlements around it, thereby increasing Jerusalem’s isolation from the West Bank.

Israel seeks to make the Palestinian residents of Jerusalem feel insecure, through its discriminating policies and its Apartheid Wall and checkpoints, calculating that this will force Palestinians to leave the city. Israel also inflicts fear even upon the Israeli citizens in Jerusalem, thus allowing the Israeli government to pass its discriminatory policies without opposition. Through

its architectural and planning tools, the Israeli government disseminates to the Israelis living in Jerusalem the message of their need to be protected from the “others”, their Palestinian “enemies”. For example, when a Palestinian ran over an Israeli at a bus stop, cement blocks were placed in front of all bus stops as a reminder of the incident and a reminder that the Israeli people need protection; the cement blocks were later changed to yellow metal poles. The same cement blocks are used to close off entire Palestinian neighbourhoods during times of conflict, as a collective punishment against all Palestinian residents of those neighbourhoods.

Other measures are also used to strengthen the spatial segregation of the city. For example, designation of “green” areas and the natural valleys in Jerusalem is a ploy used around Palestinian neighbourhoods to halt their growth. While these neighbourhoods are constrained in size and lack even a park for children to play in, the Israeli settlements are growing and filled with parks for Israeli children. Continued abuse of planning and architecture in Jerusalem to accentuate fear in Israeli citizens and to amplify segregation, discrimination, and prejudice against Palestinians will only lead to further conflict.

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Endnotes

¹ <https://www.btselem.org/jerusalem>.

² Read more about the “center of life” policy for Palestinian Jerusalemites. <http://www.palestine-studies.org/jq/fulltext/78495>.

³ This saying is based on the words of Winston Churchill’s, who said: “We shape our buildings, thereafter they shape us!” in a speech in the House of Commons on October 28, 1943.

⁴ <https://www.ochaopt.org/content/high-numbers-demolitions-ongoing-threats-demolition-palestinian-residents-east-jerusalem>.

⁵ E1 (derived from “East 1”) is a term applied by the Ministry of Housing to what is currently part of the municipal plans for Ma’aleh Adummim -in the area to the north of the Jerusalem- Ma’aleh Adummim Road. E1 touches the edge of the municipal boundary of Jerusalem, as well as the neighborhoods/towns of °Anata, Abu Dis, °Azariya, and Az°ayim that lie on the eastern border of the city. When the Ministry of Housing commenced the planning of E1, the intention was to establish a new settlement city between Ma’aleh Adummim and Jerusalem. It was only later that E1 was included in the municipal plans of the greater Ma’aleh Adummim. (°Ir °Amim position paper).

Hotspots and Bright Spots: Why Jerusalem Loves Me Back?

Ghada Aruri

For those of you who don't know me, I grew up in Jerusalem's Old City. It's called "city" for a reason. Everything you need lies within the old walls: cafes, restaurants, and all sorts of shops, even with specific markets for butchers or for rugs. Until the mid-1980s, the Old City had its own hospital and still houses numerous churches and mosques, including the path Jesus took for his crucifixion (the Via Dolorosa) and the spot from which Mohammad (PBUH) ascended to heaven (the Dome of the Rock). Jerusalem's Old City is a small place, but rich in history, culture, and heritage. It contains a reservoir of memories for generations and generations of Palestinians who have



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lived there or live there still and proudly bequeath their houses, shops, and businesses, along with remarkable stories, to their children to this very day.

There is an aura surrounding Jerusalem's Old City, so much so that it may be hard for outsiders to believe there are actual houses in the city with ordinary people living in them. In fact, as I grew older and began travelling abroad, people I met looked at me with admiration for being "from there." Being from Jerusalem bestowed on me an almost instant - and I'm not certain in what way deserved - exceptionality among my peers. I suddenly felt special, thanks to being not only a Jerusalemite, but someone who grew up in and came from the Old City. I think this is something major that Jerusalemites still must come to terms with and explore more fully, as it is the view seen from the outside and not necessarily how Jerusalemites see themselves, but probably should.

My father, who was a taxi-driver, used to make appointments for his clients from all over the world to come wait for him at our home. We used to get calls



Alwad Ally-Old City of Jerusalem

of this sort from random tourists, who were surprised to enter an old Jerusalemite house for the first time in their lives, and then be treated to tea, coffee, or even a delicious lunch or dinner, depending on the length of their stay. We once hosted an American family who arrived unexpectedly; there was nothing significant to offer them, so my father washed some cucumbers, which was the only meaningful thing we could present them after they declined tea and coffee.

Among other fond memories I have in this magnificent city is the possibility to walk freely, by myself as a child, going to the early morning prayers in Haram al-Sharif, rain or shine. Every visit to the mosque felt like a unique visit. There was always something new to notice or feel or find. Speaking of finding, I did find a gold chain once, with an oval pendant which looked and hand-picked by its previous owner. My mother made a discreet announcement to people she trusted about my find, asking them to help us locate the owner. The tight-knit, honest Jerusalemite community was set in motion, and this indeed worked. The owner turned up, came and gave us an accurate description of the necklace. We handed it back, to her great joy. I remember her exclaiming that “in Jerusalem nothing gets lost because it’s holy.” I was too young to understand this, and I still believe people lose things and never find them; she was just lucky.

My own surprise at discovering that there are families who live within Haram al-Sharif was equal to that of overseas visitors discovering for the first time that it’s possible for mere terrestrial beings to take up residence in Jerusalem. I thought it must be fascinating to live so close to the mosque. I still wonder what it’s like, and my wonder is growing now as a new century has dawned on us, bringing with it a huge revolution in information and technology. Is it still possible to access all these advances, yet at the same time be living within such old stones? The answer is an obvious “yes”, but one must see it in order to absorb it. Internet cafés may now be found everywhere in the Old City, helping to prove this point.

In Edward Said’s book *After the Last Sky* (p.147), the writer describes a picture of the city roofs peppered with TV antennas. Hundreds of them...



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regional and international channels. Change is happening, maybe at a pace too fast for many, yet the city still maintains its slow-footed rhythm, dictated by history and spirituality.

Nowadays, I cannot help but wonder what shape of memories future Palestinian children in the Old City will have. Is it belligerent police and so-called “border-police” harassing them and their parents? Or is it the Israeli settlers shamelessly taking over one house after the other? Or the entitled ones that want to storm Haram al-Sharif and make the Palestinians understand that they don’t belong there anymore? Or is it the arrogant, American-accented, young people in their “gap year” who come to the place as masters, as they solemnly believe God gave it to them? How to put all these pieces together and how to keep alive memories of times past and gone? A once quintessentially Palestinian, Arab, Islamic, Christian, global city, now being transformed and transferred to new undeserving masters, in an odd and unfitting shape, and under the noses of its lawful owners?

A recent struggle of mine has been describing some of this to my young daughter. At nine years old she comes up with natural but nagging questions. She recently asked what was my favourite game and where did I used to play it when I was her age? My favourite game happens to be rolling in the green grass, from the top to the foot of a hill, racing my friends to the bottom in this way, then running back up and repeating the feat, between 10 and 15 times. Needless to say, my daughter found the description of this game to be stunning. “And where could you find such a place?” The answer is Jaffa Gate, in the 80s, before a motor road and an out-of-place mall were built in the area. Talk about changing geography and demography. It was not clear to me back then how and why someone decided upon these abrupt and rapidly implemented changes, causing such a Kafkaesque and far-reaching impact on Palestine. My rolling hill was suddenly gone; I couldn’t go play there anymore

or race my friends to the bottom. We had to pay the price for the opening of a new road and the construction of a mall that are not for us. They target the new “owners,” the richer ones that come from Europe and North America to vacation in “Israel”. Palestinian children who need to play can go somewhere else, preferably somewhere in the West Bank. They can even cut back on their games and their play entirely, and just watch Jewish kids laugh and play in the places that used to be theirs.

Nowadays, when I walk by Jaffa Gate of the Old City, I venture like a stranger, through whitewashed passages and pathways, hardly hearing Arabic spoken and sometimes not daring to speak Arabic myself. In some seasons, projectors display images of Jewish stories and songs about a civilization that possibly existed 2,000 years ago, but nothing about a civilization that was undermined only half a century ago, and whose owners still exist. I try not to be a stranger, try to keep my chin up, look confident, and even carry myself with some cheer and positivity. Palestine in Jerusalem is vanishing. It’s been done in the wrong way and for the wrong reasons.

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