

Roads that Cut Off Jerusalem

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Abstract

The construction of roads in Jerusalem serves a dual purpose: to connect Israeli colonial settlements and to isolate Arab Palestinian neighborhoods, transforming them into open enclaves encircled by Israeli thoroughfares. The Israeli roads that traverse these Palestinian communities further marginalize them, linking them to the Israeli road network through narrow openings.

To pave these colonial routes, Israeli authorities confiscate Palestinian lands, justifying their actions by claiming that these roads serve the “public interest.” Meanwhile, Palestinians submit petitions to the colonial judicial authority challenging this road policy, which cloaks land confiscation in the guise of public benefit; however, their efforts yield little success.

Recently, Israel has overtly embraced racial profiling to delineate which roads are accessible to Palestinians and which are reserved solely for Israelis. The era of explicit apartheid roads commenced with the opening of Route 4370, which allocates one lane for Palestinian use and another exclusively for Israelis. Furthermore, new roads designed specifically for Palestinian access are pending construction. These roads aim to prevent Palestinians from using the routes favored by the colonial settlers surrounding Jerusalem.

By constructing these Israeli roads, Israel accentuates its status as a complete apartheid state. The separation of roads relies on racial justifications that resist geopolitical rationalizations, thereby reinforcing the grim reality of settler colonialism that permeates Jerusalem and the broader region of Palestine.

Keywords: roads, apartheid roads, settler colonialism, colonial settlements, Israelization.

Introduction

Every action Israel takes in Jerusalem carries deep political consequences, directly affecting the city’s Palestinian inhabitants. Israel’s aims in Jerusalem are unmistakable: it seeks either to cleanse the city of its Arab residents by forcing them into exile or to erode their national identity through a process of



Israelization, turning them into extensions of the colonial social fabric. Among the tools of this oppression are the roads, which, though seemingly meant to serve all of Jerusalem’s residents, were primarily constructed to benefit the colonial neighborhoods. Many of these roads are built on land owned by Palestinian citizens in the parts of Jerusalem where Israel failed to displace them, unlike in 1948. This Arab-inhabited section of the city, largely colonized since 1967, spans no more than 6 square kilometers.¹

This study examines Israel’s road policy in Jerusalem and how the infrastructure has been shaped to serve its colonial ambitions by the end of 2023.

Historical Overview

Since the Roman era, Jerusalem has been linked to the wider world through four primary roads, all of which remained pivotal until the Nakba of Palestine². These roads include: Hebron Road, leading south to the city of Hebron with a branch to Ashkelon; Nablus Road, which stretches north through Palestine; Jaffa Road, connecting the city to the coast and its ancient port; and Jericho Road, which links Jerusalem to the cities east of the Jordan River and Jericho. These roads were constructed during the Roman era, when southern Syria was known as Syria Palaestina, to serve as vital military and trade routes connecting the empire’s Syrian territories to Egypt. Built along the edges of valleys, like Wadi al-Biar between Hebron and Jerusalem, the roads followed waterways, offering travelers access to vital resources. Nearby urban communities not only benefited from the travelers but also helped protect the routes. While the routes evolved slightly over the centuries, the last major reconstruction occurred during the late Ottoman period, just before the outbreak of World War I in 1914.

One of the outcomes of the Nakba was the severing of the Jerusalem-Jaffa and Jerusalem-Hebron roads, as Israel gained control over the western and southwestern neighborhoods of Jerusalem. The Jaffa Road remained closed until 1967.

1 - The reference here pertains to the area of Jerusalem that fell under Jordanian rule.

2 - These roads are mentioned in both the Old and New Testaments as the «Path of the Fathers.» They were likely traveled by Canaanites of various faiths during their pilgrimages and for trade.



Meanwhile, parts of the Jerusalem-Hebron Road, which had once connected the city from Jaffa Gate (Bab al-Khaleel) to Bethlehem, were rerouted. The new route passed through towns in East Jerusalem, such as Sur Baher and Jabal Mukaber. However, this section of the road was narrow and wound through densely populated areas.

In the mid-1960s, the Jordanian government, which ruled the West Bank between 1948 and 1967, decided to build a new road between Jerusalem and Bethlehem as an alternative to the narrow, winding path. This new road, called the «American Road» after the construction company building it, was intended to ease travel. By the time Israel occupied the rest of Jerusalem, the southern part of the American Road was already paved, while the northern section was still under construction. The Israeli municipality completed the southern section but left the northern part unfinished, as it was deemed less essential. The reopening of the Jerusalem-Hebron Road allowed traffic to flow again through the southern neighborhoods of Jerusalem—Al-Baqaa and Talbiyeh (Talpiot)—and onward to Bethlehem.

Road Policy under Israeli Colonialism

Israel, established in part through a policy of ethnic cleansing, emptied many Palestinian towns and neighborhoods throughout Mandatory Palestine, granting it control over reshaping these areas and connecting them. In East Jerusalem, where many Palestinian neighborhoods remain, Israel has employed various strategies to restrict and marginalize their residents. One such tactic is the paving and expansion of roads. Roads that connect colonial settlements often dismember historical Arab neighborhoods, transforming them into isolated ghettos surrounded by streets designed to serve the settlements. These roads also confiscate vital land from Arab communities, further entrenching their displacement.

This research highlights several colonial roads, many of which are relatively new and were planned and implemented during peace negotiations between the Israeli government and the Palestine Liberation Organization in the 1990s. The Israeli Roads Authority classifies streets into four categories: national roads (assigned one number), inter-city roads (two numbers), regional roads (three numbers), and

local or segment roads (four numbers). For this study, colonial roads fall into two categories: those facilitating the connection and expansion of settlements and those enforcing apartheid practices.

Colonial Settlement Expansion and Connection Routes

Highway 1

Highway 1 traces portions of the historic route that once linked Jerusalem to the Palestinian coast at Jaffa. Since 1967, the road’s path has been modified several times. After its modernization, Highway 1 begins at the coast in Jaffa and Tel Aviv, ascends towards Jerusalem, then descends to the Jordan Valley. Spanning 94 km (58 miles), this west-to-east road carries multiple names along its route, though the longest section is known as Yigal Yadin Avenue.

In Jerusalem, the road begins at the Latrun Junction in the Latrun Valley and stretches toward the Jewish cemetery of Givat Shaul on Mount Mustarih. From there, it passes through several Arab towns, beginning with Abu Ghosh in western Jerusalem. As it continues, the road cuts through various Arab neighborhoods in East Jerusalem, including Shuafat and the French Hill, and skirts near Issawiya and the Shuafat Palestinian refugee camp. The road’s total length within Jerusalem is 11.2 km, with 7.9 km lying in the eastern part of the city and 3.3 km in the west. The road is a complex network of tunnels and bridges, with several recent updates to its course. Upon leaving Jerusalem, it reaches the Jordan Valley through the security checkpoint at Zeitim, built on the land of Al-Zaim, and descends toward the Adumim Junction, where it becomes known as Ma’ale Adumim Street. At the Khan Al-Ahmar intersection, Highway 1 merges with the historic Jericho Street, connecting it to the towns of Al-Eizariya and Abu Dis. Along its route, the highway intersects with major roads like Highway 60 and Road 436.

Road 16

Opened in 2022, Road 16—also known as Sharon Street—runs primarily through western Jerusalem. It connects the city’s western parts to its southern and central

areas, spanning 4.7 km. Most of this road is built within a series of continuous tunnels. The western end of Road 16 connects with Highway 1 at the Motza Junction, while its southeastern end meets Highway 50 at the Givat Mordechai Junction.

Though Road 16 was planned as early as the 1990s, its construction was delayed until the 2010s due to opposition from the Jewish National Fund (JNF). The JNF, having seized western Jerusalem's lands—including displaced villages like Ein Karem—created what became known as the Jerusalem Forest on part of this territory. The Fund opposed the road's construction, fearing it would seize large areas of land and disrupt natural habitats. As a compromise, the road was designed to tunnel through the mountains and pass beneath several Israeli settlements, significantly increasing construction costs. This tunnel solution is notable, as the Israeli authorities rarely employ such measures when considering the needs of Arab neighborhoods. For instance, the proposal to build tunnels on Highway 50 in the section passing through the Palestinian Arab village of Beit Safafa was outright rejected.

Route 20 in Jerusalem

Built in 2013, Route 20 was designed to connect Highway 50 (Begin) with Pisgat Ze'ev, a colonial neighborhood established on land confiscated from the village of Hizma. The road cuts through the Palestinian town of Beit Hanina, following part of the old main road, Abdul Hameed Shoman Street, which once linked Beit Hanina and Hizma. Most of the old road became a secondary route (Road 4197), while the new section, 2.5 km (1.6 miles) long, includes a bridge and a multi-lane highway. It starts at the intersection of Highways 50 and 20 and ends where it meets Highway 60.

Route 20 exemplifies the dual impact of Israel's apartheid wall and its strategy of connecting colonial settlements to major Israeli urban centers. The apartheid wall severed Hizma from its historical ties to Jerusalem, while Route 20 ensured Pisgat Ze'ev—built on Hizma's confiscated land—was seamlessly integrated into Israel's road network. Officially, the road was intended to reduce congestion at



the Mizrah Street intersection, a critical junction connecting Highways 60 and 1. This intersection is notoriously busy, as it serves as the eastern gateway to Jerusalem through Shuafat and the French Hill neighborhood.

Route 20 provides an alternative path for the colonial neighborhoods of Pisgat Ze'ev and Neve Yaakov, linking them to Highway 50, which runs south and central through Jerusalem, and to Route 443, which leads to Tel Aviv. Despite opposition from the Israeli Peace Now movement, which petitioned³ the Planning Committee of the Civil Administration in the West Bank (a branch of the Israeli army), the road's construction was upheld. The committee defended its decision by claiming the road would also benefit Palestinians holding Israeli identity cards. However, beneath this justification lies a broader agenda: to tighten Israeli control over northern Palestinian neighborhoods and towns within the municipal boundaries of Jerusalem, while facilitating the expansion of colonial settlements both within and beyond the city's borders into the West Bank.



Route 21 in Jerusalem

Constructed between 2013 and 2022, Route 21 was designed to serve the northern colonial settlements in East Jerusalem, such as Nof Shmuel, and future expansions.⁴ The road begins at a newly built intersection with Highway 1, located between the colonial neighborhood of Ramat Shlomo and the Palestinian town of Shuafat. It then cuts through Beit Hanina, extending to the Atarot industrial zone. Upon completion, the road will span 7.35 km (4.57 miles) with two lanes in each direction. Since Route 21 is built on the lands of Shuafat and Beit Hanina, the Jerusalem Municipality confiscated 77 dunams of Palestinian land for its construction. Despite a petition from the residents of these towns, the Jerusalem

3 - Israeli journalist Akiva Eldar highlighted this in one of his articles for Haaretz. He discussed Israel's strategy of paving roads to link East Jerusalem neighborhoods to the city center, reinforcing control over the area. For further details, see: Akiva Eldar, "Israel Paving Road to Link East Jerusalem Neighborhoods to City Center," Haaretz, December 2011, 2. (<https://www.haaretz.com/02-12-2011/ty-article/israel-paving-road-to-link-east-jerusalem-neighborhoods-to-city-center/0000017f-dec-2d3ff-a7ff-ffe2218d0000>).

4 - This information is based on the Jerusalem Municipality's announcement in Section 3 of the «Main Roads System Planned for 2012.» For further details, you can access the archived document. Archived on January, 11 2013, and retrieved on October 2022, 20, from: (https://archive.today/20130111162742/http://www.jerusalem.muni.il/jer_sys/publish/showPublish.asp?pub_id=27681).



District Planning Committee rejected their appeal, claiming the land seizure was in the public interest.⁵

Highway 45

Highway 45 links Highway 50 in Jerusalem with Route 443 to Ma'ale Adumim, covering 4.7 km (2.9 miles). The constructed portion runs east-southeast for 3.3 km, beginning at the Givat Ze'ev intersection with Route 443 and extending to the Atarot Junction, where it connects to Highway 50. From there, it turns sharply east-northeast for another 1.4 km, ending at Qalandia Airport (Atarot), within the Atarot colonial industrial zone, built on land belonging to the Palestinian town of Qalandia. The final eastern section extends for 0.6 km near the Israeli Qalandia security checkpoint.

Once completed, this road will connect to Highway 60, which skirts the Arab towns of al-Ram and Jaba. Building this section requires constructing tunnels and bridges that will separate the colonial barrier at Qalandia, where Palestinians cross, from the path of Highway 45. This road will allow Israelis to travel through Palestinian areas without interacting with the local population, facilitating movement eastward to the Jordan Valley and northward to the Ben Yamin settlement complex. While this alleviates traffic for Israeli settlers, it leaves Palestinians on the heavily congested section of Highway 60 between Hizma, al-Ram, and Jaba, with no alternative route.

The remaining section has been under construction since mid-2021. It connects Route 45 to Highway 60, providing a link for the scattered colonial settlements in northeastern Ramallah to reach central Jerusalem and the roads leading to Tel Aviv, such as Route 443, via a relatively short route. This strategic construction will transform these small colonial settlements into a cohesive bloc, akin to the Etzion and Ma'ale Adumim blocs, thereby reinforcing Israeli colonial

5 - The Civil Coalition for the Defense of Palestinian Rights in Jerusalem represented Palestinian citizens in their petition, which was ultimately rejected. This decision was based on Articles 189 and 190 of the Building and Planning Law of 1965. For further details, please refer to the report titled «Israeli Violations in Occupied East Jerusalem,» published in December 2011, p. 6. Archived on August 2016 .6, and retrieved on September 2022 .11, from (https://web.archive.org/web/20160806185344/http://civiccoalition-jerusalem.org/system/files/december_2011_violations_report_final.pdf).



development in the region.⁶ The road’s existence further consolidates the colonial settlement project in the Palestinian West Bank, particularly in the area between Jericho and Ramallah.

Highway 50

Officially known as Begin Avenue, this road begins at the Tantur Ecumenical Institute, near the Rosmarin Junction in the Gilo settlement, which was constructed on land from the town of Beit Jala. Stretching south to north, the road is set to extend 16.2 kilometers (10 miles) upon completion. It weaves through several Palestinian towns, which the Israeli Jerusalem Municipality refers to as neighborhoods—such as Beit Safafa and Sharafat, both located about five kilometers southwest of Jerusalem’s Old City. On its northern end, the road passes through Beit Hanina and Bir Nabala, two Palestinian towns situated eight kilometers north of the Old City. The road’s terminus lies at the Atarot Junction, where it meets Highway 45. Highway 50 connects key Israeli neighborhoods, such as Givat Ram and Romema—both built on the land of the depopulated town of Lifta—to commercial hubs on Jerusalem’s western side. It also links to several major roads, including Highway 1 (which runs between Tel Aviv, Jerusalem, and the Jordan Valley) and Route 436 (which connects Jerusalem and Givat Ze’ev). Additionally, it connects the Etzion Bloc settlements to central Jerusalem via the Tunnel Road (part of Highway 60) at the Deir al-Tantur Junction.

Constructed on land confiscated in the 1990s, this road cuts through areas once lined with Roman-era olive trees. It is a multi-lane thoroughfare, expanding to six lanes in some sections,⁷ and has dramatically altered the landscape of adjacent towns like Beit Safafa and Sharafat, splitting them into four parts with limited connections. While tunnels could have mitigated the harm to the local Arab population, the Jerusalem Municipality opted for a route that caused significant

6 - The construction company “Moreh” has announced a tender for the road’s construction, and work is already underway. Meanwhile, the Peace Now movement has raised concerns about the potential consequences of building this section. For further details, visit the following link: (<https://peacenow.org.il/en/tender-for-paving-qalandia-underpass-and-other-developments-on-settlement-roads>).

7 - The following report provides further insights into the street damage: (<https://bimkom.org/eng/the-jewish-settler-highway-split-in-two-palestinian-neighborhood-of-jerusalem>).



damage to the Palestinian communities.⁸

Highway 60

Highway 60 spans 20.9 kilometers within Jerusalem, with 14.2 kilometers in East Jerusalem and 6.7 kilometers in West Jerusalem. It begins at the intersection of the towns of Al-Khader and Beit Jala in the south, following the Tunnels Road section, and extends north to Qalandia, where the northern security crossing of Jerusalem is located. The road traverses Palestine from Beersheba in the south to Nazareth in the north. Much of its path follows two ancient routes: the Jerusalem-Hebron Road and the Jerusalem-Nablus Road. Significant upgrades and reconstructions are currently underway on many sections to better serve the settlements surrounding Jerusalem, particularly those in the southern and northern parts of the Palestinian West Bank, ensuring a more direct connection to the city center.

The Etzion settlement bloc (south Jerusalem), which Israel considers part of Greater Jerusalem, and the Beitar settlement are among the main beneficiaries of these updates. These changes have shortened travel times for Israeli settlers, making commuting more convenient.⁹ Since the early 1990s, Israel has restructured the road to bypass the centers of Arab cities in the West Bank. Numerous bridges and tunnels have altered the road's historical course. Entirely under Israeli control, Palestinians from the West Bank are largely prohibited from driving on most sections of the road unless they secure special permits from the occupying authorities. Even in West Bank sections, the road remains under Israeli jurisdiction, and access is frequently restricted or blocked for Palestinians under the guise of security concerns.

Road 417

8 - The municipality's construction company, "Moreh", initially proposed building the road as a tunnel. However, they abandoned this plan and opted for an above-ground route instead. For more details, visit the following link: (<https://www.haaretz.com/28-08-2013/ty-article/.premium/israel-could-have-wouldnt-save-village/0000017f-f-632dde-abff-fe779e3b0000>).

9 - The link contains an explanation from the implementing company, along with a video detailing the updates and objectives of the street: (<http://www.danbenamram.com/eng/Projects-Management/436/Highway60->).

Road 417 is part of the historic route connecting Jerusalem to the Jordan Valley and the city of Jericho, traversing through al-Eizariya. This road once served as a vital artery linking various parts of Jerusalem and its suburbs from west to east, including the Wadi al-Joz and At-Tur neighborhoods. However, since the construction of the Israeli separation barrier in Abu Dis in 2006, the road has been severed. Israel has established a new road network that has diminished the significance of this route, which once served the Palestinian communities, including Old Jerusalem. Highways 1 and 60, particularly through the Adumim area, now act as alternatives to this historic road, which has even lost its original name.

Road 436

Road 436 is a major regional thoroughfare. Its southern segment begins at an intersection with Road 417 in the colonial neighborhood of Shmuel Hanawi, directly across from the Palestinian neighborhood of Sheikh Jarrah. The northern section concludes at the Beitunia crossing, an Israeli security checkpoint adjacent to Ramallah. This road connects several Israeli settlements, such as Ramot and Givat Ze'ev, to Highways 1, 45, 50, and Route 443. Stretching 13.2 kilometers (8.2 miles), with 10.5 kilometers running through the West Bank, it features multiple lanes (four to eight lanes). Portions of Route 436 run alongside the Israeli separation barrier constructed on the lands of the Jerusalemite town of al-Jib.

Apartheid Roads

Kedar Road

Kedar Road is the last «unopened» apartheid road. Since 2003, it has been exclusively used by the settlers of Kedar, whose population does not exceed 2,000. This 4-kilometer road primarily occupies land confiscated from Palestinian citizens. It was built to alleviate traffic congestion on Route 417 in al-Eizariya, connecting traffic from the Kedar settlement, located near the Container military checkpoint, to Route 417 at the Ma'ale Adumim/Eizariya Junction without entering

the Arab town. In early 2022, when Israeli colonial authorities decided to allow Palestinians access through the Container military checkpoint, settlers in Kedar protested, leading to the route's closure with concrete barriers. This decision benefited the settlers while obstructing the daily lives of thousands of Palestinians traveling to and from Ramallah. According to their lawyer, the settlers claimed they «feel unsafe driving with Palestinians on this road,» conveniently ignoring that they share the road with the same Palestinians beyond the Kedar section. This behavior exemplifies the exclusive rights enjoyed by the fewer than 2,000 settlers, negatively impacting the lives of Palestinian travelers from Hebron and Bethlehem, who face daily traffic jams in al-Eizariya.

The Fabric of Life Road

The term «Fabric of Life» refers to three planned roads intended to divert Palestinian traffic away from the Adumim colonial bloc. The Supreme Planning Committee of the Israeli Civil Administration has approved the construction of the Fabric of Life Road, which is set to be implemented in the coming years.¹⁰

The roads include:

The first road comprises two sections. The initial section connects the Palestinian towns of Az-Zaim, Anata, Hizma, and Ar-Ram. This will lead to a second section that links to the northern part of the Eastern Ring Road at Route 4370, known as the apartheid road.

The second road establishes a connection between Az-Zaim and al-Eizariya. This route will effectively block Palestinian traffic from accessing the E1 area and the Adumim bloc. It features a tunnel running beneath the separation wall surrounding Jerusalem and will extend alongside the wall planned for the Adumim colonial bloc, constructed in tandem with this road section.

The third road is intended for Palestinian traffic traveling between Jericho and the southern West Bank, including those coming from Jordan, Bethlehem, and Hebron. It begins at the intersection of the Mizpe Jericho settlement with Highway

10 - The approval of the road network project, along with a political analysis, is available on the Peace Now page. You can access it through the following link: (<https://peacenow.org.il/en/road-allow-e-1construction-is-being-promoted>).

1, located 10 kilometers east of the Ma'ale Adumim settlement, and ends near the Kedar colonial settlement at the military container checkpoint. This route aims to prevent Palestinians from entering the Adumim bloc and seeks to keep them away from the E1 area.

At first glance, it may appear that Israel is constructing this «fabric of life» road network to facilitate Palestinian mobility. However, since the occupation of the West Bank in 1967, Israel has built no roads serving Palestinians; any roads that have been constructed primarily benefit Israeli settlements. While Palestinians may use these roads, the underlying objective is to further isolate them from areas designated for expansion of the Ma'ale Adumim settlement in E1. This network strategically aims to separate Palestinians from the routes utilized by colonial settlers within and around the Adumim bloc, reinforcing apartheid policies.

Israel has labeled this network the “fabric of life” to ostensibly connect Palestinian population centers in the south and north of the West Bank. This initiative seeks to replace geographical continuity with mere traffic flow. The implications of this policy are significant: they aim to eliminate the possibility of establishing a geographically contiguous Palestinian state in the West Bank while excluding Jerusalem and its surrounding settlements from this envisioned state through annexation. This context explains why Israeli Defense Minister Naftali Bennett referred to this road network as the “sovereignty road” in 2020.¹¹ Its construction effectively renders any political resolution between Israel and the Palestinian leadership, based on a two-state solution, nearly unfeasible. In truth, the “fabric of life” road network is promoted by Israeli politicians as a facade—a grand tapestry of lies designed to obscure separation, control, and racism. It is presented as a means to facilitate movement, reduce friction between Palestinians and Israeli settlers, and allow Palestinians to travel easily between the northern and southern regions of the West Bank.

11 - Bennett's statements were reported in Israeli newspapers, which featured clips of politicians advocating for the construction of this road network. One such publication that covered this development is The Times of Israel, available at the following link: (<https://www.timesofisrael.com/bennett-orders-paving-of-sovereignty-road-allowing-uninhibited-e-1construction/>).

The Eastern Ring Road

The Eastern Ring Road is designed to skirt Jerusalem from the east, linking colonial settlements in the southern West Bank with those in the central and northern regions. Most parts of this road will be inaccessible to Palestinians, as they lie within the area annexed to Jerusalem and are enclosed by the separation wall. Access for Palestinians will require an Israeli travel permit. One segment of this road is referred to as the «Apartheid Road,» while another is known as the «American Road.» The latter received funding through a five-year development plan for East Jerusalem, which the Israeli government allocated to Palestinian residents under Resolution 3790. This plan was part of the tax recycling efforts for Palestinians in Jerusalem. However, Israel imposed strict conditions that severely limited the ability of Palestinians to develop their lands on both sides of the road.

A. Road 4370

Road 4370 is a 4.5-kilometer segment of the Eastern Ring Road. It begins at the Anata junction with Route 437 in northeastern Jerusalem. This route connects the colonial industrial zone of Mishor Adumim with the colonial settlement of Givat Binyamin, where it intersects with Routes 60 and 45 through an under-construction tunnel beneath the Qalandia crossing. Its ultimate destination is Route 1 in French Hill (for Israelis) and the Israeli security checkpoint at the entrance to Jerusalem (for Palestinian residents of the West Bank) at the edge of Az-Za'im.

The road serves the settlements in the Binyamin colonial area, situated between east Ramallah and the southwest of the Khan al-Ahmar area. It consists of two adjacent sections: one for Israelis and another for Palestinians. The Palestinian segment leads to the Az-Za'im junction (the Zeitim security checkpoint), connecting to Highway 1. However, this access for Palestinians is temporary, as this section will eventually link to the «Fabric of Life» road, which connects the towns of Az-Za'im and al-Eizariya without traversing the Ma'ale Adumim settlement.

The side designated for Israeli settlers facilitates their connection to downtown



Jerusalem. This separated roadway provides Israeli settlers in the East Ramallah area with another access point to Jerusalem and Highway 1. The lanes allotted to West Bank Palestinians consist of two closed routes that allow them to drive around Jerusalem, with no possibility of entering the city itself. Consequently, this street has earned the moniker «Apartheid Street,» owing to the division created by an eight-meter-high concrete wall topped with a metal fence.¹²

B - American Street ¹³

American Street is divided into three distinct sections, each requiring the demolition of numerous Palestinian homes and the confiscation and destruction of hundreds of dunams of land.

1. American Street - Southern Section:

This 2.4 km segment begins near the historic Jerusalem-Hebron Street, close to the Mar Elias Monastery, west of the Old City of Jerusalem. It extends towards the town of Umm Tuba and the Har Homa settlement on Mount Abu Ghneim in the southeast, eventually reaching the towns of Sur Baher and Jabal Mukaber to the east. Opened to traffic in mid-2021, this section connects to Lieberman Road at the ruins of the ancient town of Mazmoria, linking the colonial settlements southeast of Bethlehem with the center of Jerusalem.

2. American Street - Middle Section:

This portion comprises two phases: the temporary section and the permanent section. The temporary section, spanning 3.3 km, runs through Jabal Mukaber along an old, narrow road that has been expanded and modernized to facilitate access to nearby Israeli colonial settlements.

12 - Even European newspapers, typically reluctant to label Israeli actions as racist, have dubbed this street “Apartheid Road.” For further insights, you can explore a Guardian article discussing this matter: (<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/jan/23/israel-west-bank-route-4370-apartheid-road-protest>).

13 - International media outlets have reported extensively on the plan, detailing the events surrounding the road’s implementation and its political implications. For instance, you can find insights in this article from Reuters: (<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-israel-palestinians-road-exclusive-idUSKBN23M1LM>). Additionally, Peace Now offers a collection of general maps outlining the road sections, accessible through this link: (<https://peacenow.org.il/en/confiscation-order-for-the-eastern-ring-road-was-issued>).



The planned permanent road will circumvent the towns of Jabal Mukaber and Sur Baher, hence its designation as the “Sur Baher Bypass.” This section is set to measure 3.4 km, with construction already underway in certain areas, featuring bridges, tunnels, and intersections. To accommodate the road, substantial portions of the controversial separation wall surrounding Jerusalem will need to be relocated, resulting in further land seizures from Palestinians—some for the street itself, others for the wall, along with additional security setbacks.

3. American Street - Northern Section:

Spanning 3 km, this section includes 1.6 km of bridges and a tunnel beneath the Palestinian villages of al-Sawahra and Silwan, reaching the town of At-Tur. The project has progressed to the bidding phase, coinciding with an Israeli army order to confiscate Palestinian lands outside the Jerusalem Municipality’s borders. Notably, 55 dunams from the At-Tur neighborhood in East Jerusalem have been seized for this segment of American Street. This part of the ring road aims to link the settlements of Adumim with the rest of Jerusalem and beyond.

French Hill Tunnels¹⁴ - Issawiya:

To alleviate congestion in northern Jerusalem and connect to the eastern settlements, four tunnels are under construction, slated for completion by 2024. These tunnels stretch over 3.5 km. Two of them run east to west, linking the settlement of Ma’ale Adumim with central Jerusalem. The other two connect the Ramot settlement, established on the land of the Arab village of Nabi Samwil, with Pisgat Ze’ev and Nabi Ya’akov, which encroach upon several Palestinian villages, including Shuafat, Beit Hanina, Al-Ram, and Hizma. These settlements are part of a strategic effort to secure a Jewish majority in East Jerusalem.

Together, these tunnels and the connecting roads effectively isolate the village of Issawiya, rendering it an unexpandable residential enclave. Upon completion, Tunnels 1 and 2 will connect with Highway 1, which links Jerusalem to Tel Aviv,

14 - Hebrew newspapers depict this as an initiative to enhance transportation in Jerusalem. For further details, you can read the article from Yedioth Ahronoth here: (<https://www.ynet.co.il/article/hjehwtwq>).

allowing settlers from the Dead Sea and Ma'ale Adumim to travel directly to the Mediterranean coast without delays. Tunnels 3 and 4 will serve as part of the internal transportation network in Jerusalem, facilitating access between northern belt settlements and the city center via the light rail reaching French Hill.

Nabi Samwil¹⁵: The Case of a Palestinian Jerusalemite Town

While the colonial Israeli neighborhoods in Jerusalem are interconnected and linked to major urban centers, the town of Nabi Samwil exemplifies a Palestinian community besieged and isolated. It has only one entrance, controlled by an Israeli military checkpoint leading to the colonial settlement of Ramot. Residents must navigate a tunnel beneath Highway 443 to access the outside world.

For those with an Israeli permit, the journey to Jerusalem or Ramallah takes approximately two hours—a stark contrast to the 15-minute trip that existed before the town was severed from its urban surroundings by streets and separation walls. In contrast, the Givat Ze'ev settlement, built on parts of Nabi Samwil's land and adjacent towns, enjoys multiple access routes, including Highway 443, which connects it seamlessly to Jerusalem and Tel Aviv.

15 - Various media outlets depict the town of Nabi Samwil as trapped in an invisible cage. A poignant illustration of this can be found in the following article: (<https://www.972mag.com/living-inside-an-invisible-cage-welcome-to-nabi-samuel>).

Streets of Jerusalem Table

Street number	Street Name	Beginning of the Street (Jerusalem)	End of the street (Jerusalem)	Street length in Jerusalem (kilometers)		
				Total	West Bank	Green Line
1	Yigal Yadin Avenue	Latrun Junction	Khan al-Ahmar Junction	11.2	7.9	3.3
16	Ariel Sharon Avenue	Motza Junction	Givat Mordechai Junction	4.7		4.7
20	Shimon Street	Beit Hanina	Pisgat Ze'ev	2.5	2.5	
21		Shuafat/Ramat Shlomo	Qalandia/Atarot	7.35	7.35	
45		Givat Ze'ev/ Beitunia Prison	Qalandia/Atarot	4.7	4.7	
50	Begin Avenue	Deir al-Tantur Junction	Atarot	16.2	8.1	8.1
60		Al-Khader Junction/Beit Jala	Qalandia/Atarot	20.9	14.2	6.7
417		Lifta	Eizariya	16	13.3	2.8
436		Sanhedria Cemetery	Beitunia	13.2	10.4	2.8
4370	Apartheid Street	Anata Junction	Mount of the Scene (Scopus)	4.5	4.5	
	Kedar	Eizariya Junction/Ma'ale Adumim	Kedar Settlement	4	4	