

PASSIA: Jerusalem Chronology

1997

January

Jan. 8: A few dozen yeshiva (religious school) students move into a recently purchased building in the Old City's Christian Quarter.

Jan. 14: The forced removal of 400 Bedouins from lands earmarked for expanding the settlement of Ma'ale Adumim continues.

Jan. 15: Border guards shoot and kill Ahmed Shreihat of Yatta after he refuses to stop his car when ordered to do so.

Jan. 19: Israeli police raid several institutions in East Jerusalem on the pretext that they are related to the PNA (including: Arab Studies Society's Maps Dept.; Palestinian Micro-Project Center; Prisoner's Club).

Jan. 22: The Ministerial Committee on Jerusalem meets to discuss strengthening Israeli sovereignty over the city. Among the recommendations is the creation of a territorial link between East Jerusalem and the settlement of Ma'ale Adumim.

Jan. 29: Israeli Interior Minister Eli Suissa tells the Knesset that the Ministry has seized over 600 Jerusalem ID cards from Palestinians.

Jan. 1997: In several stages throughout the month Israeli forces evicted the Jahalin Bedouins.

- The Israeli Ministerial Committee for Jerusalem Affairs hears proposals to reinforce Israeli dominance in East Jerusalem and approves US\$43 million for infrastructure development in the eastern part of the city. Other proposals include the relocation of various governmental departments to East Jerusalem and the expansion of settlements and roads around the city.

- The Israeli High Court rules on the eviction of the Ghuzlan family from their house in Silwan within one year in order that it be handed over to the Zionist Keren Kayment organization as the "true owner" of the land.

- The Israeli High Court issues a ruling in support of the Interior Ministry's actions to withdraw the ID cards of Jerusalemite Palestinians who live outside the municipal borders or outside the country.

February

Feb. 7: Lebanese fighters wage a war of attrition against Israel in southern Lebanon and mark 'Jerusalem Day' with military parades and calls for a holy war to regain the city.

- The last Friday of Ramadan, some 300,000 worshippers fill the Haram Al-Sharif compound, closely observed by 2,500 Israeli police.

Feb. 18: The Israeli Ministerial Committee on Jerusalem Affairs approves plans to extend three major roads in East Jerusalem, to separate the Arab villages from the rest of the West Bank and to connect the Jewish settlements of Givat Ze'ev, Neve Yacov and Ma'aleh Adumim to Jerusalem: construction of highways #45 and #4 (which connects Jerusalem with Highway #45), construction of the Eastern Ring Road in Jerusalem, including the 'Mt. Scopus' road, and advanced planning for Highway #80.

Feb. 19: Israeli police raid several institutions in East Jerusalem, including the Arab Studies Society's Maps Department, the Micro-Project Center, the Prisoner's Club and Um Imara School on the grounds that they are linked to the PNA.

- The last 17 of 55 families of the Jahalin tribe are forced off their encampment to make room for the expansion of Ma'ale Adumim settlement.

Feb. 26: The Ministerial Committee on Jerusalem Affairs approves construction of some 6,500 housing units, with 2,500 to be built in the first stage, in Har Homa on Jabel Abu Ghneim. It also decides to consider the construction of 3,015 housing units for the Palestinian population in Jerusalem (450 in Beit Safafa, 500 in Suwahreh, 75 in Jabel Mukabber, 70 in Abu Tor, 130 in Silwan, 629 in Ras Al-Amud, 480 in Ash-Sheikh, 70 in Suwaneh, 120 in A-Tur, and 500 in Issawiya).

Feb. 1997: Two Palestinians are shot and injured by Israeli soldiers in Salah Eddin Street and near Damascus Gate.

- Israeli officials from the Interior Ministry and the National Insurance Institute continue to raid Palestinian homes in the Old City, Dahiet Al-Barid, A-Ram, Izzariyeh and Jabbel Mukabber in search of 'illegal' residents in the city of Jerusalem and of Jerusalem ID card holders who live beyond the city limits.

- A WJM court order calls for the halt of construction of 33 Palestinian homes and two mosques in East Jerusalem on the grounds that they are being built without a permit.

March

March 3: Defense Minister Yitzhak Mordechai approves the E-1 Plan for settlement expansion, which includes expropriation orders for thousands of dunums to construct 1,500 units and 3,000 hotel rooms in ten new hotels to be built on 3,000 dunums between the East Jerusalem settlement of Pisgat Ze'ev and the West Bank settlement of Ma'ale Adumim. Execution of the plan is not expected to begin for three years.

- Palestinians stage a general strike to protest the Israeli plans to build the Har Homa settlement on Jabel Abu Ghneim.

March 4: Israeli PM Netanyahu orders four Palestinian offices in Jerusalem shut on the alleged grounds that they are offices of the PNA.

March 7: The US vetoes a UN Security Council resolution critical of Israel's decision to construct a settlement at Jabel Abu Ghneim.

March 10: The Netanyahu government announces its decision to allow Jews to use Al-Aqsa Mosque as a prayer site.

March 12: The UN votes for a resolution condemning Israeli plans to build the Har Homa settlement on Jabel Abu Ghneim with 130 in favor and two - US and Israel - against.

- Israeli Minister for Internal Security, Avigdor Kahalani announces the government decision to refrain from closing down four Palestinian institutions in East Jerusalem (targeted for alleged affiliation with the PLO/PNA).

- A letter issued by the legal advisor to PM Netanyahu that notes that Jewish prayer on the Al-Aqsa compound is not illegal raises concern among Waqf officials and other Palestinians.

March 16: Israel announces plan to confiscate hundreds of dunums of Anata land for the expansion of Talmond settlement.

March 17: Israeli newspaper *Ma'ariv* reports that PA Chairman Yasser Arafat demands cancellation of the E-1 settlement plan. In return for Palestinian consent to the construction of Har Homa, he demands a "quiet" Israeli agreement not to expropriate and build in East Jerusalem until the end of final status talks.

March 18: Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu executes the decision to begin construction on Mt. Abu Ghneim of the Har Homa settlement. Despite international condemnation and huge local protest construction on Jabel Abu Ghneim begins the same day.

March 19: Violent protests erupt in response to the construction at Mt. Abu Ghneim, resulting in tens of wounded.

March 20: Five Jewish extremist families seize and move into a five-apartment building in Wadi Hilweh/ Silwan (adding to the 17 Jewish families and 30 yeshiva students already illegally occupying homes there).

- The Israeli newspaper *Ha'aretz* reports that PM Netanyahu promised King Hussein that Israel would freeze settlements in East Jerusalem after Har Homa. Netanyahu's office denies making such a commitment.

- The first clashes take place between Israeli troops and Palestinian demonstrators mobilized in the

wake of the beginning of construction at Har Homa.

March 21: The Islamic Conference Organization holds an emergency meeting in Islamabad and issues a special declaration stressing that Jerusalem is an indispensable part of the Palestinian occupied territories.

March 22: The US vetoes a second UNSC resolution condemning Israeli settlement plans on Jabel Abu Ghneim.

March 27: The Al-Quds Committee convenes in Rabat.

- Two explosive devices are found in a drainage pipe near Al-Aqsa Mosque.

March 28: Israeli newspapers report that WJM Mayor Ehud Olmert is striving to revive old plans to close the Shu'fat Palestinian refugee camp, which is the only camp falling within the municipal boundaries of the city of Jerusalem.

- Defense Minister Mordechai approves the deposit of a plan for the construction of 1,550 units at the settlement of Givat Ze'ev, north of Jerusalem.

March 1997: Qatar holds a one-week Jerusalem festival.

- The WJM decides not to issue building issues for West Bank residents who own land in Jerusalem.

- Waqf officials report new Israeli diggings under Al-Aqsa Mosque.

April

April 1: The Jerusalem City Council allocates US\$90,000 to plan a new Israeli settlement community of 28 units in the annexed portion of the Palestinian village of Abu Dis.

April 18: Israeli Interior Minister Eli Suissa says, in a statement to Israeli academics (the first of its kind by an Israeli minister), that all effort should be made to increase the Jewish population in East Jerusalem to 80% and to expand the borders of 'Greater Jerusalem'.

April 24: Palestinians urge the UN to consider imposing economic sanctions on Israel ahead of a UN debate over a new Jewish settlement in Jerusalem that has frozen peace moves.

April 25: An emergency special session of the UN General Assembly approves a resolution with 134 in favor and three against (US, Israel, and Micronesia) for a halt in construction at Har Homa and an end to all settlement activities in the Palestinian Territories.

April 30: Israeli soldiers shoot and kill a youth near Hizma village after the car he was travelling in fails to stop when ordered to do so.

April 1997: MBC launches a worldwide fundraising campaign for Arab East Jerusalem.

- As part of its Eastern Gate Plan, Israel begins to expand the settlement of Adam at the expense of Hizma and Anata village land.

May

May 6: The Beit Hanina home of Nabil Fahmi Taha's nine-member family is demolished. The family is not given time to remove their belongings from the house.

May 9: Jerusalem Palestinian land broker Farid Al-Bashiti, known for land deals with Israelis is killed in Ramallah.

May 11: *Ha'aretz* reports that the WJM and the Interior Ministry have been working on secret plans to develop a "mega-Jerusalem municipality." The plan would bring some West Bank settlements into a greater Jerusalem area that Israel would annex after the permanent status of the city is determined.

May 24: LAW, the Palestinian Society for the Protection of Human Rights and the Environment wins an illegal land sale case in the Palestinian village of Silwan against the Jewish settler land acquisition company 'Elad'. The Israeli High Court rules that the documents on which the land sale was based are fraudulent and illegal, and that the property has to revert to the inheritors.

May 27: *Ma'ariv* newspaper quotes WJM mayor Ehud Olmert, who declared in a Jerusalem press conference: "I do not like the growth of the non-Jewish population in Jerusalem".

May 28: WJM bulldozers destroy the house of the Al-Banna family in Silwan.

May 29: The Meretz Party reports that Israel has confiscated 30,000 dunums of Palestinian land in the West Bank since January 1997, including 20,000 dunums located in the Jerusalem area.

May 1997: US Jewish millionaire Irving Moskowitz purchases for US\$5 million the property of former Armenian Bishop Ajamian - who lives abroad after being dismissed from his church for his involvement in an Israeli corruption case - on the Mt. Of Olives in order to turn it into a Yeshiva.

- The Waqf protests Israeli government attempts to change the Islamic character of a 700-year old Mamluk building, known as Al-Kurd Hospice (in Hebrew: Small Wailing Wall), by "renovating" and expanding it. The Israeli Ministry of Religious Affairs has allocated US\$60,000 for the planned works on the complex that is inhabited by over 20 Palestinian families.

- Israeli PM Netanyahu announces that "Jerusalem will remain under Israeli sovereignty and we will resume building in all areas of Jerusalem."

- Sheikh Mohammed Sayyed Tantawi of Cairo's Al-Azhar Mosque says at a conference that Jerusalem must be regained by force if peace talks fail and that anyone who dies in the battle over the city would be considered a martyr.

- The Mufti of Egypt, Sheikh Nasser Farid, calls upon all Muslims to launch an economic war against Israel and to make an effort to protect and build on land in East Jerusalem.

June

June 1: The WJM announces plans to destroy at least 800 homes in Palestinian East Jerusalem neighborhoods that were built without licenses.

June 4: PM Netanyahu sketches a blueprint for a final settlement in which Jerusalem is kept united under Israeli control "for eternity" and announces that more police will be stationed to tighten Israel's security in Arab East Jerusalem.

June 6: WJM major Ehud Olmert declares his intention to implement the Israeli government regulation number 564 (1969), according to which the WJM Department of Education will supervise the *Tawjihi* exams in East Jerusalem. It is also planned to establish a ministerial committee to impose Israeli curricula in the 34 East Jerusalem schools.

- In the wake of local and international protest regarding Israeli construction at Jabel Abu Ghneim, the Netanyahu government proposes to permit the construction of 400 to 500 apartment units for Palestinians on land in the neighborhood of Sur Baher, expropriated from Palestinians in 1968.

June 10: The US House of Representatives votes with 406 to 17 to recognize Jerusalem as the capital of Israel and allocates US\$100 million for transferring the American Embassy from its current location in Tel Aviv to Jerusalem.

June 19: The US Senate Foreign Relations Committee approves bill to allot US\$100 million to build the new US Embassy in Jerusalem.

June 24: As part of their huge tax campaign, Israeli officials continue to raid Palestinian shops in East Jerusalem, breaking inventories and confiscating goods.

June 1997: WJM mayor Olmert announces that Israel will examine the curriculum in the 34 Palestinian schools in Jerusalem that follow the Jordanian curriculum in order to adjust them to the system of Arab-Israeli schools.

July

July 2: At a meeting with architects and planners, WJM Mayor Ehud Olmert announces that Jerusalem, "will expand naturally to the east [into the West Bank]."

July 7: Israeli Interior Ministry data reveals that the number of Palestinian Jerusalemites whose resident status in the city was canceled since 1967 totals 3,874.

July 9: Amendment to the existing Law of Entry Into Israel (1952), submitted by MK Azmi Bishara to stop ID Card confiscation in Jerusalem passes first Knesset reading. Vote passes with 27 MKs in favor and one MK against, and the rest are absent or abstain. The concerned paragraph reads: "The Minister of Interior will not cancel the permanent residency permit of any person born in Jerusalem, his or her spouse, or any other person whom one or more of his/her parents was born in Jerusalem. ...This article will remain valid for the next two years." Bishara explained: "The formal status of a permanent resident is based on the assumption that s/he is a foreigner entering the country ...which obviously is not the case with Jerusalem residents, for whom Jerusalem is their 'homeland' ...In the last year the Minister of Interior has used the Law (of entry to Israel) to cancel the residency permit of many Jerusalem residents ... It seems that prior to the final status negotiations, Israel is conducting a policy of silent deportation, in order to reduce to a minimum the number of Palestinian residents in Jerusalem"...

July 15: Approximately 200 victims of the Israeli ID Card confiscation policy protest in front of the Jerusalem Interior Ministry, supported by Faisal Hussein, Hashem Zughayer, Ziad Abu Zayad, and Azmi Bishara.

- The WJM has launched a campaign to force collection of *armona* property tax from Palestinian shopkeepers in East Jerusalem, claiming that some \$300 million are "owed" by Palestinian Jerusalemites. The campaign includes raids and seizure of property.

July 16: The UN General Assembly recommends that UN members actively discourage activities that contribute to Israeli settlement building and condemns Israel's failure to comply with an earlier resolution adopted in April demanding that it stop construction at Har Homa.

July 18: *Yerushalim* reports that only 79 apartments were sold in the settlement of Ma'ale Adumim during January to April 1997, a dramatic decline from the previous year, when more than 600 units had been sold.

July 28: The Israel's Ministry of Interior announces the suspension of a permit granted for construction of Jewish housing in East Jerusalem's Ras Al-Amud neighborhood.

July 31: Two suicide bombers blow themselves up in the middle of Mahane Yehuda market in the city center of Jerusalem, killing 13 and injuring some 170. Israel reacts with a total sealing of the Palestinian territories and an arrest campaign.

August

Aug. 1: Israeli Minister of Defense Yitzhak Mordechai approves in principle the E-1 plan for expanding the settlement of Ma'ale Adumim and increasing its population from 28,000 to 40,000.

Aug. 3: WJM demolishes three houses in Jerusalem: two in Anata and one in A-Ram.

Aug. 4: WJM demolishes five homes in Jerusalem: two owned by Mufideh Al-Qasam Issawi in Issawiya (where an additional 40 homes received demolition orders), a two-story house - home to 40 people of the Al-Karshan family - in Shu'fat, and two houses in Al-Izzariya, belonging to Nabil and Mohammed Odeh.

Aug. 12: Ultra-Orthodox Yeshiva students kill 74-year old Mahmoud Abu Srah of Silwan when he tries to stop them as they drive off from a petrol station in Sheikh Jarrah without paying for their petrol.

Aug. 13: WJM bulldozers destroy five homes in the Shu'fat Refugee Camp and hand over two more demolition orders. All the involved buildings are adjacent to the Pisgat Ze'ev settlement.

Aug. 14: WJM bulldozers destroy five homes in Nabi Samuel, owned by 30 members of the Eid and Barakat families, and one house in Izzariya.

Aug. 19: The Islamic Waqf donates land near Sawaneh for an encampment where some 50 families take shelter following the demolition of their homes. The families now stand to lose their residency rights if they leave the city. The camp is supported by a coalition of organizations, including Orient House, PLC members, and NGOs.

- Israeli forces forcibly evict 15 members of the Jahalin Bedouin family, Srihat, from their land near Al-Izzariya. The tribe receive 35 additional demolition orders.

Aug. 21: Israeli police from Ma'ale Adumim, protected by the army, crack down on some of the Jahalin Bedouin encampments under the pretext that they are looking for weapons and stolen goods.

Aug. 25: Israeli bulldozers destroy two Palestinian homes in Zayim, owned by Abu Hawa and Shweiki family members.

Aug. 26: WJM bulldozers destroy three unfinished homes belonging to Yassir and Tayseer Jabari and Ali Abu Suweiyeh in Wadi Qaddoum.

Aug. 28: Yasser Arafat calls for a strike in the West Bank and Gaza over Israeli actions in Jerusalem and urges Arabs to flock to the city for prayers Friday despite Israeli travel bans.

Aug. 1997: In the wake of the suicide bombings on 30 July 1997, Israel imposes a siege on the Palestinian Territories.

- Palestinian and Jordanian businessmen set up the Jerusalem Development and Investment Company (JEDICO), headed by Abdul Majid Shuman and with a starting capital of US\$100 million, to buy and develop property in East Jerusalem.

September

Sept. 4: WJM bulldozers demolish a house in Arab East Jerusalem under the pretext that it was built without a permit. Six more Palestinian homes in Al-Silaia, near Jabal Al-Mukkaber are slated for demolition.

- Triple suicide bombing on Jerusalem's Ben Yehuda pedestrian mall kills four Israelis and injures dozens more.

Sept. 11: Israel and the US clash publicly, with Secretary of State Albright urging a freeze on Jewish settlements in occupied land and Israel bluntly rejecting the call.

Sept. 15: Under heavy police protection and approved by the Israeli government in a cabinet meeting (10/9/97), four Jewish settler families from the radical Atarot Cohanim group enter a Palestinian home allegedly bought from Fuad Hadieh in the Ras Al-Amud neighborhood.

- Minister of National Infrastructure Ariel Sharon receives Interior Ministry approval for the construction of 17 new Jewish settlements south of Jerusalem that will provide for a territorial continuity from Jerusalem south, to the Hebron Hills. The largest new community planned, Messuat Guvrin will house 5,000 residents.

Sept. 17: Massive popular rally at Ras Al-Amud in protest of the settler take-over of a Palestinian home.

Sept. 18: Israel says that Jewish settler families will leave two buildings in Arab East Jerusalem under a deal that President Arafat describes as a "trick", as the deal foresees that three Jewish families will trade places with ten yeshiva students whom Israel will allow to stay day and night in the houses as designated guards and maintenance men.

Sept. 19: The US says it accepts Israel's solution to the dispute over Jewish settlers moving into an Arab Jerusalem area, saying it has been assured the status of the neighborhood will not change.

- Palestinians officials announce that they are considering the possibility of reclaiming Palestinian properties in West Jerusalem lost in 1948, in response to the take over of a house in Ras Al-Amud by Israeli settlers.

Sept. 20: After meeting Arab Foreign Ministers in Cairo, President Arafat states that Palestinians will demand the full evacuation of Israeli settlers from Ras Al-Amud.

Sept. 21: Some 30,000 Arabs participate in a Friday demonstration in the Israeli Arab village of Um El-Fahm, calling for the liberation of Jerusalem from Israeli hands. Sheik Raiyid Salah, the Mayor of Um el-Fahm, calls for a unification of all Moslems "for the sake of Jerusalem to prevent Jewish extremists to do as they please in their battle to remove Jerusalem from the Moslems and the Arab nations."

Sept. 24: Settlers set fire to the home of Mohammed Ali Awadallah near Gilo settlement after unsuccessfully trying for several years to convince him to sell his property.

Sept. 28: Israeli authorities demolish a school and 53 tents belonging to the Jahalin Bedouins.

October

Oct. 8: Israeli authorities prevent an academic seminar entitled 'Jerusalem and the Current Situation' from being held in Beit Hanina.

Oct. 9: East Jerusalem merchants observe a one-day strike to protest Israeli actions to drive Palestinians out of the city and the recent settlement activity at Ras Al-Amud.