

Update: Jerusalem under Coronavirus Shutdown

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**While we were in Lockdown:
Developments in the Historic Jerusalem under the Coronavirus**

The Coronavirus pandemic has certainly stopped the tourists from arriving at Historic Jerusalem, but development works at sites run by the settlers have continued even through the present crisis. The fact that the construction workers have been defined as essential for the economy has enabled the Elad Foundation to continue development works on places like Beit Shats in the Peace Forest. Works have also continued on the Roman Stepped Street nicknamed “the Pilgrims’ Road” in Silwan, albeit at a reduced capacity.

The Stepped Street

The ambitious excavation of the Roman ‘Stepped Street’ in Silwan (nicknamed the “Pilgrim’s Road”) has been ongoing throughout March and April, albeit less intensely than usual. The 600-meter-long Roman era street is being heavily promoted by the Elad Foundation as the ancient road taken by pilgrims to the Temple prior to its destruction in the year 70AD. The street links the Pool of Shiloah Pool/Birket al-Hamra/Pool of Siloam, with the Herodian Road at the foot of the Temple Mount/Haram al Sharif compound inside the Old City walls. The horizontal method of excavation used in Silwan is highly controversial in Israel and internationally.

Last June, the road was inaugurated in the presence of American Ambassador David Friedman. Only a small section of the road has been opened to the public so far, but a series of virtual tours released by the Elad Foundation in cooperation with the Israeli free tabloid *Israel Hayom*, suggests that a further section of the tunnel leading up from pool of Siloam will soon be opened to the public. The virtual tours in Hebrew and English (for children and adults) released over the Passover holiday were seen by tens of thousands of viewers.

Above the ground, a less glamorous reality has evolved over the years with almost forty housing units suffering cracks and subsidence while the excavations underground have continued. Our report [Fissures and Cracks](#), released last month documents the massive damage to the homes and their impact on the lives of its Palestinian inhabitants. Some of the homes have been deemed unsafe for living in and the residents were forced to leave. The damage to the homes has occurred in addition to the incessant noise of tunneling underground which has been ongoing for years. In their response, the IAA claimed it has taken strict precautions ensuring the safety of the excavations and the Nature and Parks

Authority have said they have not received complaints of the nature described in the report.



Entrance to shaft leading to the stepped street excavation in Silwan. March 19, 2020.

Beit Shatz

Beit Shatz was a privately-owned house purchased by Elad at the edge of the Al Farouk neighborhood in Jabel Mukaber. The house is also at the edge of the Peace Forest which is situated between Jabel Mukaber and the neighborhood of Abu Tor. It is being developed as a tourism center and the base for a zipline planned for the Peace Forest. Work on the compound proceeded during the Coronavirus shut-down. The Shatz house is part of larger scheme by the Elad Foundation and the authorities for the development of the Peace Forest. [In 2019 the Ministry of Housing allocated](#) 43 million NIS for renovating the structure.



Works on Beit Shatz. April 16, 2020.

The Old City.

The Old City was shut down to tourists in the third week of May. The market in the Muslim Quarter has been shut down and only the residents have been allowed in and out of the city walls.



Jaffa Gate, March 19, 2020

Cable Car

The Jerusalem cable car is probably one of the hardest affected projects by the Coronavirus pandemic. Following its approval by the National Infrastructure Committee in June 2019, and the 200 million NIS government allocation, the project was to enter the tender phase. However the bidding process for an international company specializing in the construction of cable cars has been hampered by the pandemic. Our appeal to the High Court against the project is scheduled for June.

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