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## Civil Administration Advances Huge Road Construction Plans, Pushing Forward the De-Facto Annexation of Greater Jerusalem, Including its Fourth Settlement Bloc

August 13, 2020

**This alert was written before this evening's declaration of a peace agreement between Israel and the United Arab Emirates. As part of the agreement Israel is to postpone its plans for annexation (which are already delayed and face strong opposition). This development serves to underline the information brought in this alert regarding new Israeli moves for de-facto annexation of Greater Jerusalem.**

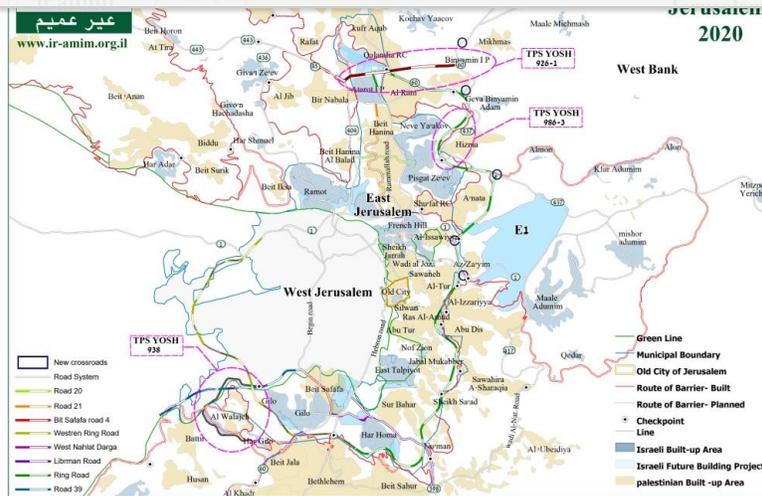
The Civil Administration recently published the minutes of a discussion from June 3rd by the Supreme Planning Council about the advancement of massive outline plans for road infrastructure in the West Bank. Three of these large scale plans signal a dramatic advancement of the de-facto annexation of Greater Jerusalem. As detailed below, the plans comprise a serious investment in the infrastructure and road systems that will enhance the contiguity between Jerusalem and its surrounding settlement blocs and will enable the expansion of settlement construction.

Two out of the three plans described below focus on the construction of the infrastructure and road system that further connect the fourth "settlement bloc", Adam –Kochav Yaakov-Ofra-Beit El, to Jerusalem. Unlike the other so called settlement blocs of Givat Zeev, Maale Adumim and Gush Etzion, the fourth bloc lies outside of the Separation Barrier, northeast of Jerusalem. In recent years, [Netanyahu has declared that Israel considers these areas as part and parcel of Greater Jerusalem](#) and backed his declarations with creating facts on the ground.

The third plan focuses on the connecting of the Gush Etzion settlement bloc to Jerusalem. These plans will further fragment the Palestinian space around Jerusalem and will seriously infringe upon the human rights of the Palestinian communities that live there. Finally, these developments deserve special attention as many signs suggest that Greater Jerusalem- either partially or, more likely, all four settlement blocs - would be promoted as a "minor", thereby presumably less harmful, plan for formal annexation; in fact it will cause serious and irreversible damage to the Two State Solution. Even if formal annexation is blocked these plans create facts on the ground the damage of which is hardly smaller.

This map shows the road system of Greater Jerusalem. The three roads described below are marked in the map by purple circles.

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- TPS YOSH 926-1:** For a new highway leading from Road 60 (northeast of Jerusalem) into Jerusalem and connecting to Road 443 – This will be a huge construction project that also includes a 600 meter long tunnel that will pass under the Qalandia checkpoint, allowing settler traffic to bypass it. The committee approved the plan for deposit.

Today, settler traffic from the settlements northeast of Jerusalem – located in the “fourth settlement bloc” - going into the city runs from Road 60 southwards along Road 437 and enters Jerusalem through the Hizma checkpoint. In recent years, Netanyahu has begun to use the term “fourth settlement bloc” when referring to settlements to the northeast of Jerusalem (such as Adam –Kochav Yaakov-Ofra-Beit El), stating that it, too is part of “Greater Jerusalem”.

The limited capacity of Road 437 results in long traffic jams and prevents planned expansion of settlements in that area. The planned road will create a quick and smooth connection for settler traffic entering Jerusalem from the northeast and connecting it to Highway 443/Begin Highway in Jerusalem. Thus, it will enhance the contiguity between Jerusalem and the so called “fourth settlement bloc” and enable the expansion of settlement construction.

The planned road will also cut through the A-Ram and Qalandia area between A-Ram and Ramallah. Today there are no settlements in this area nor is settler traffic passing through it. It is telling that during the discussion the planners explained that the route of the road was designed to pass a distance away from the Kochav Yaakov settlement and close to the town of A-Ram. As in many other cases, this means that the road leaves a large area next to the settlements enabling its future expansion, while its construction will serve to limit the possibility of A-Ram's future development.

For the construction of the road, private Palestinian land will have to be expropriated. According to rulings of the Israeli courts based on International Law, private Palestinian land cannot be seized for the purpose of settlements and settler traffic, therefore the Civil Administration claims that the road will also serve Palestinian traffic and for that purpose an interchange nearby Qalandia will connect it to the road to Ramallah. But when examining the schedule for construction of the road, it is clear that this interchange is scheduled to be operational only in the year 2040- many years after the road serving settler traffic is scheduled to open. The fact that Israel is advancing large scale plans for 20 years into the future demonstrates Israeli intentions regarding its control of the area for decades to come.

- TPS YOSH 986-3:** For a public transportation lane on Road 437 between Road 60 and the Hizma checkpoint in Jerusalem – The plan expands the existing road, which runs from the Adam settlement along the Palestinian town of Hizma leading to

Like TPS 926-1 (the above plan which will connect Road 60 to Road 443 in Jerusalem) it will serve settler traffic from the “fourth settlement bloc” northeast of Jerusalem.

Here, too, the expansion of the road requires expropriation of private Palestinian land. The committee claims to justify the expropriation by stating that the road serves Palestinian traffic as well, yet it is doubtful if there is any significant Palestinian public transportation on the road.

- **TPS YOSH 938:** For Al-Walaja bypass road connecting the settlements of Gush Etzion (Bethlehem area) to Jerusalem – This third plan is for a road in the south of Jerusalem connecting it to the Gush Etzion settlement in the Bethlehem area. The committee decided to approve the plan for deposit.

The plan for the road is needed in order to approve an outline plan for a significant expansion of the Har Gilo settlement; this new outline plan would allow for the expropriation of privately owned Palestinian land on which the road runs. The road itself was constructed 25 years ago on the basis of a military order seizing private land of Al-Walaja residents and it runs along the western side of the village, connecting the Har Gilo settlement to Jerusalem.

As in the cases above, the Israeli Civil Administration wishes to justify its confiscation of Palestinian private lands needed for the construction of the road by claiming that it will also serve Palestinian traffic. This claim would clearly be false as the road only leads into Jerusalem along a route from which Palestinian traffic is blocked by Israeli checkpoints. Furthermore, as previously reported by Ir Amim, [Israel is planning to relocate the checkpoint on this road farther away from Jerusalem and closer to Walaja.](#)

[The planned expansion of Har Gilo by 560 housing units](#) - an addition which will more than double the current size of Har Gilo - is located adjacent to Al-Walaja from the west and will result in the village's complete isolation. Israel constructed the Separation Barrier in a route that surrounds Al-Walaja on three sides very close to the built-up area of the village; this has left the village only with the possibility to develop westwards where the barrier is not built. These lands on the west side of Al-Walaja are now targeted for the new settlement which, along with the Separation Barrier, will complete the encirclement of Al-Walaja in all directions. [The village has already lost more than a thousand dunams of land which were cut off by the Separation Barrier and declared by Israel as the Nahal Rephaim National Park.](#) The Separation Barrier, National Park, and planned settlement combine to turn Al-Walaja into an isolated enclave cutoff from the Bethlehem area while they serve as a connection between Jerusalem and the settlements to its south.

These plans for road infrastructure are part of the huge investments of the Israeli government into the de-facto annexation of Greater Jerusalem through furthering large-scale, unilateral, facts on the ground. If realized, these projects will dramatically change the landscape around Jerusalem and deep into the West Bank, allowing for rapid settlement expansion and further fragmentation of the Palestinian space. These moves will deal a death blow to the prospect of a two state solution and lay the ground for the formal annexation of Greater Jerusalem whether through a “minor” or “major” scope of annexation.

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