
Update: Civil Administration to hear Emek Shaveh's petition against proposed lift at Tomb of the Patriarchs in Hebron and other developments

1 message

Yonathan Mizrachi , Emek Shaveh CEO <yonathan@alt-arch.org>
Reply-To: "Yonathan Mizrachi , Emek Shaveh CEO" <yonathan@alt-arch.org>
To: Kristin McCarthy <kmccarthy@fmep.org>

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Update:

The Civil Administration's Higher Planning Council Appeals Committee to discuss Emek Shaveh's petition against decision to green light lift at the Tomb of the Patriarchs. This will be the last instance for voicing objection to the plan prior to petitioning the High Court of Justice.

[A month ago](#), the planning and licensing committee of the Civil Administration, responsible for the approval of construction plans in the West Bank, approved the construction of a lift at the Tomb of the Patriarchs in Hebron to render the site accessible to people with disabilities. The approval was granted despite objections by the Hebron Municipality and Emek Shaveh. Next week, on November 10th, the appeals committee will discuss Emek Shaveh's petition.

Yesterday, Minister of Defence Benny Gantz [submitted a letter](#) in response to a query from Likud MK Michal Shir who asked why the construction of the lift is being delayed. In his letter Gantz replied that the plan is being held up by Emek Shaveh's petition against the construction permit.

Soon after assuming his position as Defence Minister, Gantz had instructed the Civil Administration and COGAT to advance the plan. In our objection we argue that the

proposed plan will detract from the character of the historic site and damage the ancient structure. The Tomb of the Patriarchs is the most ancient intact structure in the West Bank, and includes remains from the 1stc BCE, the reign of King Herod, the Byzantine and Crusader periods, the Mamluk period, and others.

During the committee's discussions, it emerged that the Staff Officer for Archaeology in the Civil Administration who is responsible for protecting the antiquities in the West Bank was not involved in the details of the plan, but only outlined general requirements so as to cause minimum damage to the site. We argue that the construction of such a massive lift at an antiquities site, without examining the conservation needs and without the ongoing oversight of the Civil Administration's archaeology unit, especially at a site as important as the Tomb of the Patriarchs, flies in the face of every professional standard.



Planned Lift for Tomb of the Patriarchs

In another development in the West Bank, last week we discovered that the Civil Administration has begun building a fence around the lower section of the ancient site of Herodium. In contrast to the upper section of the site which was gradually fenced off and free access was prevented already in 2010, the lower section was always open and accessible to the residents of the adjacent village of Beit Ta'mir, Fureidis and the other neighbouring villages. The site is part of the fabric of their local heritage and residents of the villages used to tour the site freely and hold private and public events around the ruins. Last week we sent a letter to the Civil Administration requesting they stop the construction of the fence and dismantle the section that has already been built.



The new fence around lower Herodium with the village of Ta'mir in the background

The fencing of lower Herodium follows closely after the [expropriation of land](#) at the sites of Deir Sam'an and Deir Kala' northwest of Ramallah in September. These were the first expropriation orders for antiquity sites in the West Bank in 35 years. All of these developments attest to the increasing pressure by the settlers to clear Palestinians from antiquity sites in Area C of the West Bank.

For additional information:

Yonathan Mizrachi, +972-54-5667299, yonathan@alt-arch.org

Our mailing address is:

Emek Shaveh, P.O.Box 8580, Jerusalem 9108402

www.alt-arch.org

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Emek Shaveh

[Elazar HaModa'i 13, Jerusalem, Israel](#)

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