
Update: Petition Against Plan to Build Luxury Housing on the Ruins of the Palestinian Village of Lifta

1 message

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Update

A coalition of Palestinians and Israelis submitted a petition demanding the cancellation of a plan to construct luxury housing on the abandoned Palestinian village of Lifta:

“Construction of the neighborhood will erase an invaluable history and landscape”

- The village of Lifta is the last remaining pre-1948 Palestinian village in the country that has been preserved almost in its entirety ■ Lifta is on UNESCO's Tentative List of World Heritage Sites ■ The plan to build 259 villas disregards the conclusions of an archaeological survey conducted by the Israel Antiquities Authority ■ The plan disregards the historical rights of the former Palestinian residents of the village and will destroy the landscape, spring, and village ■ The petition was submitted by a coalition of Israelis and Palestinians from Jerusalem. Emek Shaveh is involved in the public campaign and advocacy vis-a-vis policy makers.

Yesterday (Wednesday, August 4th), Adv. Dr. Sami Arshid submitted a petition to the Jerusalem Administrative Court against the **Israel Land Authority**, demanding the withdrawal of a tender for the planning and construction of 259 villas, commercial buildings, and a hotel in the abandoned village of Lifta, and to rescind Construction Plan 6036.

The village, whose Palestinian residents were expelled in 1948, has remained undeveloped, preserving a history of hundreds and even thousands of years, and has been added to UNESCO's Tentative List of World Heritage Sites. For two decades, the Israel Land Authority has been trying to promote the construction of an upscale neighborhood of villas on the site. Following a previous petition to the court against Plan 6036 which was approved in 2006, the court ruled that an archaeological survey was required. The survey by the Israel Antiquities Authority took place between 2014-2017 and concluded that: ***"Due to the rarity of the last complete village in the Land of Israel it is necessary that any use of this complex, and its development, will preserve the elements that create its unique wholeness and minimize the changes resulting from adapting the site for contemporary needs."***

Adv. Dr. Arshid, who represents nonprofits and individuals who support the conservation of Lifta, including residents of Jerusalem and refugees from the village of Lifta, petitioned the court to order the cessation of any marketing or the sale of plots in the village, and oblige the Israel Land Authority to submit a new plan for the conservation of the village which would implement the survey findings and consider the village's potential to be included in UNESCO's Tentative List of World Heritage Sites.



The Palestinian village of Lifta is on UNESCO's Tentative List of World Heritage Sites

The Israel Antiquities Authority's survey also clarifies that the olive presses, wine presses, underground water system, and uniquely wondrous buildings in

Lifta deserve to remain in the public domain. Yet according to the tender, these sites are being marketed, and handed over to a private developer without any guarantees that the site would remain accessible to the public. This disregard for the uniquely important remains of Lifta is indicative of the damage the plan will no doubt cause to the site and the threat of losing this invaluable landscape and historical remains.

In addition, according to the petition, marketing village land while dispossessing historical rights from its original inhabitants, is unacceptable. The plan was drawn up without any consideration for historic property rights which are still relevant.

The petition is also being filed against the **Israel Antiquities Authority and Jerusalem Municipality**, who are required to "stabilize the existing structures in the area of the abandoned village of Lifta in order to prevent the collapse of the structures or any part of them, in a professional manner by conservation architects, engineers, and contractors, in accordance with current internationally accepted standards of conservation."



The petition is accompanied by three professional opinions. **Civil engineer, Amos Shiran**, indicates that some of the roads in Plan 6036 are too close to existing structures and in some cases even pass "through" existing homes, warning that paving them may cause existing structures to collapse. **Ecologist Dr. David Shohami** explains that in his opinion, severing Lifta from the continuum of open areas surrounding the city (which allows for connectivity and

the passage of plants and animals) will harm natural habitats on site and in the surrounding area. An additional opinion signed by **five of Israel's leading architects and conservation planners**, clarifies that the construction plan is inconsistent with the Israel Antiquities Authority's recommendations.

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