

## **Police policy reversals on Temple Mount/Haram al Sharif - Developments in Givat Hamatos - Demolitions in Jab al-Baba**

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Visits to the Temple Mount/Haram al-Sharif during the High Holiday period have furthered a pattern of increasing ascents to the holy site observed throughout the year. From Rosh Hashanah through the end of Sukkot, an estimated 3,000 Jewish visitors ascended to the compound, a 30% increase over last year. Sukkot marked the peak volume of roughly 2,300 visitors, a bump of about 40% compared to 2016.

Movement activists emphatically maintain that elevating the number of visitors is one way of exerting pressure to force an inevitable change in the status quo. Their active recruitment of visitors has translated into a major swell in annual numbers. From September 2016-August 2017, 22,000 Jews visited the Temple Mount as compared to roughly 15,000 in the same previous period.

What is most remarkable about the holiday period, and of greatest concern, are the increasingly warm, fraternal relations being observed between Temple Movement activists and police personnel, a change resulting in actual reversals of long respected police policy. According to Ir Amim's monitoring:

- Police are increasing coordination with Temple Movement activists to facilitate access to the holy site, allowing larger groups of visitors and sometimes multiple groups at one time.
- Police authorized erection of a sukkah – with signage promoting the Temple movements – on the Mughrabi Bridge ascent. This development practically signifies official recognition of Temple Movements' authority over Jewish visits to the Temple Mount.
- The police authority responsible for security at the Mughrabi Gate, often seen hugging and kissing activists, performed a blessing in the sukkah.
- By activists' accounts, there is progressively less pushback against prayers in the compound. For example, an activist was able to enter with a lulav (ceremonial palm frond) and conduct a ceremonial waving of the lulav. Security officials did not question the activist until after he exited the compound. In the past, police would have immediately terminated the ceremony and removed violators from the compound.
- Activists received police permission to conduct the ritual Sukkot water drawing ceremony in the Davidson Archeological Park at the foot of the Temple Mount, the closest to the holy site it has been performed.
- On the bridge leading from the police inspection point to the entrance to the Temple Mount/Haram al-Sharif, police have permitted temple activists to conduct a daily study group known as the

Temple Mount Yeshiva.

- Temple activists are invited by the police to attend ceremonies to honor departing police personnel and welcome their successors.

There is a clear correlation between this increasing breach of professional distance – if not complete abdication of propriety in some cases - between security officials and activists, and activists violating the status quo. Moreover, when Temple activists openly promote the strategy of bringing masses of visitors to the Mount as a means of forcing a change of the status quo and security officials actively enable that objective, while at the same time softening tolerance for prohibited activities, it raises serious questions about the state's commitment to maintenance of the status quo. All efforts to ensure preservation of the status quo must emphasize the extreme threat posed by this creeping lapse in police policy.

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## Developments in Givat Hamatos

Ir Amim field researchers have confirmed that land surveying and drilling is being conducted in parcel A of Givat Hamatos – next to E-1, the most closely scrutinized international red line constraining settlement building in East Jerusalem. Construction of Givat Hamatos - prospectively, the first new settlement in East Jerusalem in two decades - would cap off a wave of simultaneous developments along the [southern flank of East Jerusalem](#) to complete consolidation of Israeli control of the southern perimeter and render the two state solution nonviable.

Parcel A, slated for 2,600 new housing units, was approved in 2012, with approval official published in 2014. Tenders for construction on most of the land (roughly 10% is private and can bypass the tender process) must be announced by the Israel Land Authority, and the tenders bid upon and granted, before building permits can be issued. The land surveying activities now being conducted strongly signal the imminent start of infrastructure building, paving the way for construction.

In parallel, a detailed outline plan for 3,000 new housing units known as **Gilo Southeast (TPS 125195)** is anticipated to arrive at the Local Committee in the coming weeks. The plan would expand Gilo southeast, narrowing the gap between Gilo and the still nascent plan for Har Homa West ([see light blue arm extending west from built up area of Har Homa on map](#)), and filling in the space between Gilo and the Tunnel Road to Gush Etzion. Its northeast tip would edge up onto Givat Hamatos.

This plan is yet one more link in a chain of developments designed to seal off the southern perimeter of Jerusalem from the West Bank, nullifying prospects for a two state solution.

## Background

Givat Hamatos [[link here for map](#)] would supplant Har Homa as the newest settlement to be built in East Jerusalem since 1997.

The plan was originally proposed in four parcels, the most serious of which is *Givat Hamatos A* (TPS 14295 for current plan approved in 2012; originally TPS 5834a), consisting of 2,600 new housing units. Parcel A was approved at the end of 2012 but approval was not officially published until September 2014, in the days leading up to Prime Minister Netanyahu's UN address and meeting with former US President Barak Obama. For the 10% of the land that is privately owned, publication of tenders is not required before issuance of building permits. Construction startup is now contingent on completion of infrastructure works.

*Givat Hamatos D* (5834D) - alluded to in a May *Yedioth Ahranot* report on the Ministry of Housing and Construction's intentions to promote 15,00 new units across East Jerusalem - is planned for construction of 1,081 hotel rooms on an area of 171 dunams. This parcel was approved in January 2013, with approval yet to be published.

*Givat Hamatos B* (5834B) is actually designated for Palestinian development – roughly 500 new units in an already built-up area that would add additional stories to existing buildings. The parcel was approved at the end of 2012 but approval was not officially published until July 2016, after landowners petitioned the District Court.

*Givat Hamatos C* (5834C), proposed for 1,452 housing units, was the only parcel to be rejected in December 2012, likely due to objections from private land owners. In mid-June 2016, Ir Amim reported that the upcoming Local Committee agenda included a Municipality promoted plan (TPS 30099) for development of road infrastructure in the area originally designated as Givat Hamatos C. The new infrastructure plan opens the door to revival of building plans.

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## **Demolitions in Jab al-Baba**

Yesterday, authorities delivered demolition orders for 5 structures in the Bedouin community of **Jab al-Baba**, located in the E1 corridor, near Al-Izzariyya. This morning four structures were demolished. According to a community leader, this is the fiftieth instance of demolitions in Jab Al Baba, raising a red flag that Israel could intend to advance plans for E-1, internationally recognized as one of the ultimate geopolitical obstacles to a two state solution.

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