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## UPDATED MAP and New Developments: “Settlement Ring around the Old City, 2019”

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March 25, 2019

Ir Amim’s latest map, “Settlement Ring around the Old City, 2019,” graphically illustrates the accelerated, intensifying chain of new facts on the ground in the most historically contested and politically sensitive part of Jerusalem: the Old City and adjacent ring of Palestinian neighborhoods (*see below map for latest developments*). In addition to a mounting number of state-sponsored settlement campaigns inside Palestinian neighborhoods – settler initiated evictions of Palestinians, takeovers of their homes, and the expansion of settler compounds – touristic settlement sites function as key points along a ring of tightening Israeli control.

The population density in the built-up areas of the Old City limits Israel’s ability to advance plans for residential settlements as a means of altering its demographic character. After more than 50 years of Israeli control over East Jerusalem, nearly 100,000 Palestinians live in the Old City and the surrounding neighborhoods and at most 6,000 Israelis, 3,000 of whom live in the Jewish Quarter of the Old City. In grappling with this demographic reality and with the symbolic value of a space holy to three religions, non-residential projects – especially those targeting tourism and archeology – assume a central role in Israeli settlement policy.

The privatization of project management to nationalist settler organizations enables the Israeli government to exploit tourism as a tool for reinforcing settlement initiatives in the Old City and its environs, erasing the significant Palestinian presence there, promulgating the idea of the entire area as an Israeli environment, and imposing a nationalistic Israeli character that blurs the multi-religious and multi-cultural nature of the space, primarily to the detriment of the Muslim sites and presence. Ultimately, this use of national parks and tourist sites serves the goal of transforming the Palestinian neighborhoods in and around the Old City – including Silwan, A-Tur, Ras al-Amud and Sheikh Jarrah – from a densely populated Palestinian area into one sprawling tourist site that bolsters Israeli control of the area and access to it.

These projects – including promenades, national parks and visitor centers – serve manifold purposes:

- They connect otherwise isolated and relatively small settlement compounds inside Palestinian neighborhoods, creating a contiguous ring of settler controlled areas.
- They fracture the Palestinian space, disrupting freedom of movement and breaking large neighborhoods into smaller, easier to police enclaves.
- While the number of ideologically driven settlers living inside Palestinian neighborhoods may still be relatively small, tens of thousands of nonideological Israeli tourists visiting these sites serves to strengthen the Jewish presence inside Palestinian areas of the city.

Despite their tremendous political and environmental sensitivity, plans are now being fast tracked, some outside of appropriate planning channels and with limited public participation, in service to decidedly political considerations and with the prominent involvement of settler associations.

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FOR A HIGH RESOLUTION MAP, [LINK HERE](#).

[LINK HERE FOR ACCOMPANYING MAP NOTES](#).

Just since [the original release of this map](#) in February, there has been a new burst of activity around the Old City Basin.

- **Today, March 25: Steps taken to legalize an Elad run touristic settlement site in Abu-Tur**

The Elad settler organization is now resurrecting attempts to establish a zip line park in the Peace Forest (Ya'ar Shalom) in Abu-Tur, located south of Silwan. Several years ago, Elad set up a lodging site – to which the zip line would connect – without a permit. The zip line project would also be illegal as the entire space (including the lodging site) is designated as forestland in the national master plan for forests (Plan Number 22).

Today, the District Planning and Building Committee convened to override the master plan for forests with a master plan for the Old City Basin from the 1970s that designates the area as open public space, with the intention of enabling the legal issuance of building permits for Elad's zip line project. The request was submitted by the Jerusalem Municipality, creating the appearance of a legitimate municipal initiative as opposed to a settler promoted plan while signaling municipal backing of Elad.

In the past, Elad has leased several dunams of land from the Israel Land Authority without tender and over the years, has continued to build illegally in the forest without challenge. Currently the land is managed under the authority of the Jewish National Fund (JNF), as are all areas marked as forestland in the national master plan for forests. JNF leadership has not expressed objections to the override.

- **March 19: Discussion of objections against plans for two settler buildings in Um Haroun, Sheikh Jarrah (#6 on map)**

These plans (TPS 14029 and TPS 14151) calling for the construction of two buildings –10 units and 3 units – would require the tear-down of buildings in which 5 Palestinian families (some 60-70 people) currently reside. Objections were submitted by families living in the existing buildings. Those objections were rejected and the plans approved.

The plans are being promoted by private parties, obviating the need for a tender process. It is anticipated that in order to initiate construction, the settlers promoting the plans will first need to initiate court proceedings to evict the families living on the site.

These are two of the plans that were unfrozen in the surge of 2,000+ plans promoted in the summer of 2017, which also saw the Shemasneh family eviction. In Um Haroun, some 45 Palestinian families are living under threat of eviction. There are at least nine families with eviction cases pending in court and an additional five that have received warning letters attached to eviction claims. Two families have already been displaced and their homes taken over by settlers. City Councilor Arie King has promised to put 400 new families on the ground in Sheikh Jarrah in the next 10 years.

- **March 18: Local Planning and Building Committee discusses objections against plans for a promenade in A-Tur (#16 on map)**

Known as the Uziya promenade, this strip of green space overlooking the eastern side of the Temple Mount/Haram al-Sharif would connect the Beit HaChoshen settler compound (#17) at the foot of the Mount of Olives with the Beit Orot Yeshiva in A'Tur (#15), creating a key link in the deepening band of Israeli contiguity around the Old City Basin. Objections to the plans (TPS 247338 and TPS 430231) were submitted by Palestinians with claims of land ownership as well as the Custodia Terra Santa, which asserts that the plans will require expropriation of land owned by the Catholic Church. The Local Committee's decision has yet to be published.

- **March 5: In [Batan al-Hawa, Silwan \(#25 on map\)](#), 15 members of the Marageh family receive eviction demand**

The Marageh family lives in a 5-unit building located directly across from Beit Yonatan, the hub of the growing Ateret Cohanim settlement compound in this densely populated section of Silwan.

In Batan al-Hawa, the Ateret Cohanim settler group – via its management of the Benvenisti Trust – is exploiting the Legal and Administrative Matters Law of 1970 to wage the most comprehensive settler takeover campaign since the annexation of East Jerusalem in 1967. The law, also a primary displacement mechanism in Sheikh Jarrah, enables Jews to reclaim assets lost during the war of 1948 via the Israel General Custodian. Palestinians

have no parallel legal protections; moreover, the 1950 Absentee Property Law enshrines that Palestinians who lost their assets in Israel in 1948 cannot recover them. Based on their cooptation of the Benvenisti Trust, which held title to properties in Batan al-Hawa, Ateret Cohanim has acquired two plots of land from the Israeli General Custodian, from which it is waging a campaign to evict an entire community of some 100 Palestinian families (600 – 700 people). Seventeen families have already been displaced.

To note: thus far, all of the Ateret Cohanim eviction demands have targeted [parcels 95 and 96](#) (see buildings marked in blue and yellow); the Marageh building is partially located in plot 73, which the Israeli General Custodian sold to Ateret Cohanim without a tender.

The private settlement compounds being built in the Old City and around its circumference (where roughly 2,500 settlers are now quartered) cannot be quantitatively compared to settlement building in the ring neighborhoods of East Jerusalem but qualitatively, they have disastrous implications for Palestinians in Jerusalem, the relationship between Palestinians and Israelis in city, the two state solution, and the Old City as home and historic center of the three major monotheistic world religions.

It is vital that the traditional calculus of settlement building be readjusted to 1) treat these coordinated efforts to consolidate control of the Old City and surrounding Palestinian neighborhoods with the same urgency afforded to settlement building throughout the whole of East Jerusalem; 2) ensure a holistic response that regards private settlement inside the Old City Basin and touristic settlement not as individual phenomena but as multiple elements of a unified and politically lethal strategy to unilaterally entrench Israeli control and undermine an agreed political resolution on the city.

This escalation of new facts on the ground in lead-up to the anticipated unveiling of a US peace initiative only further erodes opening conditions for any future plan – the viability of which, among other conditions, will be contingent on the principle that alongside West Jerusalem as the capital of Israel, East Jerusalem must serve as the capital of the future Palestinian state – as an organic territorial, demographic, and communal entity connected to the Old City Basin.

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