

Wither the Palestinian Capital?

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Since the beginning of the Israeli occupation of East Jerusalem until today, the demographic balance served as the main consideration in Israeli decision making on both the government and the local municipal level. The Israeli policies were limited and directed to mainly serve spatial/demographic domination of "Jewish Jerusalem." No minimal effort was invested to "integrate" the Palestinian neighborhoods' functions with West Jerusalem or the settlements built in Palestinian areas. On the contrary, the policy was to separate and isolate them.

Until the Oslo agreement in September 1993, the Israeli government "allowed" certain autonomy of Palestinian Jerusalemites especially in educational, sport, health, cultural, religious institutions and community based organizations. East Jerusalem continued to serve as a metropolitan center of the entire West Bank, and this enhanced the "autonomy" of Jerusalemites and created an alternative separate system.

From "United Jerusalem" to "Jewish Jerusalem"

Until the Camp David negotiations in 2000, Israeli government policies revolved around the "unity of Jerusalem." Then demographic considerations, or the Palestinian demographic threat, became the reason for "getting rid" of Palestinian Jerusalemites after Israel had accomplished its spacio-political goals for a "Jewish Jerusalem." Israel of today is in the process of replacing the slogan of "United Jerusalem" with great "Jewish Jerusalem" with the Old City as its core.

As a result of the Israeli policy, Palestinian neighborhoods (including the available land for future development) consist of only 17 percent of the entire East Jerusalem area and 7 percent of total municipal Jerusalem. Israel restricted the Palestinian construction and economic development, which led to the emigration of the Palestinians from the city to new areas developed as suburbs of the city. This territorial/demographic domination and restriction on Palestinian development affected East Jerusalem by deteriorating its functionality in disconnecting it from its hinterland and West Bank areas.

The Wall as a Political Border

In addition to the policies inside the annexed areas of East Jerusalem, the construction of the Wall, which Israel began building in 2004, will annex 160 km² of the Occupied Palestinian Territory in addition to 70 km² annexed immediately after Israel's occupation of East Jerusalem. This area includes Ma'ale Adumim and Giv'at Ze'ev settlements, the Gosh Etzion settlement bloc and Bitar Elite settlement that is inhabited by Haredi Jews.

The Wall enforces Israel's political borders in Jerusalem and transforms it geographically into the largest city in Israel (an area of almost 300 km² with a population of more than half a million Jews). On the other hand, the geographic contiguity and the functional integration of the Palestinian neighborhoods shall be inward and they will be completely isolated from their hinterland. In fact, because the Wall sets the borders of sovereignty and annexation of the settlements inside and around Jerusalem to form the metropolitan "Jewish Jerusalem," it sets obstacles and hindrances to any possibility for the evolution of integrated urban unity of a Palestinian Jerusalem in the center of the West Bank that is capable of serving as the capital of the future Palestinian state.

The geopolitical and geo-demographic reality imposed by Israel through construction of the Wall forces a new reality on the future of Jerusalem, which is redefining Jerusalem. The conventional division of West Jerusalem (occupied by Israel in 1948) and East Jerusalem (occupied by Israel in 1967) no longer exists in reality. Moreover, the annexation border imposed by Israel after its occupation of East Jerusalem is changing and the Wall is forming another border. It is now possible to say that the future solution for Jerusalem has been imposed before the start of any negotiations over it between the two sides.

After the failure of the Camp David talks in 2000, Jerusalem became the fuel for a larger struggle that is morphing into new forms. The national struggle for a state and sovereignty has intensified and deepened and has enthralled the holy sites in a way that denies human existence, dignity and belonging to the city and more sadly, the city's belonging to humanity. Israel views control of al-Haram al-Sharif Compound (the Noble Sanctuary) as something they can never give up. Palestinians consider this an attempt at displacement and replacing the religious reality, which has prevailed for more than 1,400 years. Turning the conflict into a religious struggle threatens a wider and more far-reaching confrontation. Henceforth, theories which many people have considered mere hypotheses about the clash of civilizations will materialize into reality centered around Jerusalem, a city that carries all the factors and elements of this clash. Unfortunately, we are already on this path.

A Jerusalem for All

To avoid the clash and another failure, the following should be the guiding principles during negotiations that represent a proposed paradigm for a solution between the conflict parties:

- ◆ The geopolitical solution for the future of Jerusalem should be based on the principle of territory-a sovereign political separation-and not based on the current Israeli demographic and settlements "facts on the ground."
- ◆ The political division should be clear-cut between East Jerusalem (Palestinian city/capital) and West Jerusalem (Israeli city/capital) and not on the Israeli re-definition of Palestinian Jerusalem, which has fragmented the city's urban fabric and turned Palestinian Jerusalem from the core of a metropolitan center to a frontier cut-off by settlements, walls, roads, etc.
- ◆ Borders between the two capitals should be open (or at least permeable) with no physical separation. The open city will permit the free flow of people, goods and values between the two capitals. Control points may be established to deal with security issues in a manner that does not affect the open borders principle.
- ◆ The open city shall comprise of the territories of both the Palestinian and the Israeli sectors. Entry into and exit from the city can be controlled through security and custom control points at the outer borders of the open city (i.e. between the capital of each state and the rest of its sovereign territories). The open city is an essential element in enhancing and strengthening the universal status of Jerusalem. Religious, cultural, economic and social functions related to this status shall provide leverage for Jerusalem to be a global capital for all humanity in addition to being a political capital for two states.
- ◆ The Old City represents a living museum. The highest level of cooperation must be achieved between the two sides to enhance its status and pluralistic universal role and reduce religious clashes as well as the struggle over control, identity and perspective of the city. The universal perspective is the joint "trademark" for the two sides.
- ◆ The territorial contiguity, the urban functions and the expansion of Palestinian East Jerusalem (to perform as a Palestinian center and capital) must be prioritized and highly considered in the geopolitical negotiations over the future of Jerusalem. This principle should overcome 40 years of ultimate Israeli territorial and functional domination in Jerusalem and its surrounding areas.
- ◆ Determining the city's international functions and the nature of international parties and actors involved in the city and how their interests relate to the city's future is important, especially in regards to how this interest could support the vibrant city and a sustainable solution.

Israel's attempt to redraw the borders and define what Jerusalem is and what it wants to keep or to get rid of will not lay the foundations for peace and stability in the city of peace. A city where walls of apartheid and segregation extend hundreds of kilometers will not be a place which the world aspires and desires to visit. The other side of the separation process is an apartheid regime that will be imposed as a result of the Palestinian neighborhoods that lie between a network of settlements and

roads leading to them. Today, it is impossible to move from any Palestinian neighborhood to the Old City and the center of East Jerusalem without passing through an Israeli checkpoint. Under such conditions, separation cannot be anything but racist, and the city's citizens shall lose the chance of building peace that can truly be a model for conflict resolution in the region and other conflict areas in the world.