

# Bedouin Communities: Steadfastness and Struggle in Defiance of Displacement and Ethnic Cleansing

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5/11/2016

## SETTLEMENT ENTERPRISE “E1”

Since 1967, successive Israeli governments have imposed full hegemony on the Palestinian territory and continually and ambiguously redrawn borders on the ground through a set of strategic colonial projects. To this end, Israeli governments have carried out ethnic cleansing operations and forcibly displaced tens of thousands of indigenous Palestinians, replacing them with Jewish settlers.

The foundations of the colonial enterprise labeled “E1”, targeting the Eastern Jerusalem Governorate, were laid in 1999. The scheme is one of the most alarming and critical carried out by Israel, the belligerent military occupying force, and has increasingly become dire under the extremist right-wing Netanyahu governments.

If implemented, the “E1” colonial enterprise would exclude Jerusalem from any final status settlement and consolidate the “greater Jerusalem – eternal capital” program of successive Israeli governments, including the current Netanyahu government.

Since 1999, the Israeli government has been racing against time to construct the “E1” zone northeast of East Jerusalem. The construction and development of infrastructure, including water, sewage, and apartheid roads was completed, and police headquarters and investigation offices were built within the municipal boundaries of the illegal Israeli settlement of Ma’ale Adumim.

The danger of the “E1” zone lies in the fact that it fragments the land of Palestine and blocks territorial contiguity between the north and south of the West Bank. According to the master plan that was approved in 1994, around 5000 housing units, 10 hotels, industrial and commercial zones will be built in the “E1” zone which will entail the confiscation of 12.5 square kilometers from the land of Al-Tur, Al- Issawiya and Al- Eizariya (Bethany). What is worse is that the “E1” zone will divest Jerusalem of the last remaining territory that can secure the economic growth of the city and its expansion as the future capital of the State of Palestine.

## TARGETING BEDOUIN COMMUNITIES

For the purpose of expanding its settler-colonial enterprise and emptying Jerusalem of its indigenous population, the Israeli government has stepped up its systematic onslaught against Palestinian Bedouin communities. Currently there are 46 Bedouin communities in the center of the West Bank, most of them refugees who were expelled from their villages and homes as a result of the emergence of the State of Israel in 1948. Israel has been severely targeting these vulnerable communities in an effort to forcibly transfer and expel them a second time.

As Israel refuses to acknowledge any Bedouin claims to land title, only half of these communities have been connected to the public water network, whilst none have been connected to the public electricity network. Building permits are typically refused by the Civil Administration and the vast majority of homes are subject to pending demolition orders. In addition, access to crucial grazing land is made increasingly difficult, if not impossible, as a result of the route of the Wall and the expanding boundaries of colonies. This expansion also brings with it increasing and persistent harassment and threats of violence from settlers and the Israeli army. The cumulative result is an entirely desperate living environment accompanied by the ever-present and imminent prospect of

removal.

In 1997, 150 Bedouin families were forced to move from their rural lands as a result of Israel's appropriation of Palestinian villages to establish the illegal settlement of Ma'ale Adumim. The construction of the illegal settlement essentially began before Israel had forced the Bedouin communities to leave, slowly pushing them further from the land.

## THE NAKBA CONTINUES...

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- **In Focus: JABAL AL-BABA**

The roots of Jabal Al-Baba community can be traced to Beer Al-Saba' in the Naqab from where they were forcefully displaced during the 1948 Nakba. Part of the community moved to Jabal Al-Baba in the 1950s and others followed in the 1970s. Jabal Al-Baba was named after Pope Paul VI, whose 1964 pilgrimage to Jerusalem prompted the late King Hussein of Jordan to gift the Vatican a plot of land.

In three waves between 1997 and 2007, over 150 families were forcibly evicted and relocated to the Jabal Al-Baba site, close to the Abu Dis landfill and its many associated health risks. Meanwhile, Ma'ale Adumim continues to expand. This displacement is achieved through an oppressive Israeli legal framework consisting of selectively-deployed Ottoman, British Mandate, and Jordanian-era land laws, as well as an extensive web of Israeli military orders. It is a framework designed to serve the interest of the Israeli state which is to rid the area of non-Jewish inhabitants, primarily through often arbitrary declarations of large swathes of land as belonging to the 'state', and to replace them with illegal Israeli settler-colonies.

Presently, approximately 56 families constituting more than 300 individuals, mostly children, are living in Jabal Al-Baba. Jabal Al-Baba is bordered by the town of Al- Eizariya from the west, the town of Z'ayyim from the north, Ma'ale Adumim settlement from the east, and Wadi Al-Jamal and Al- Eizariya from the south. Like any other Bedouin community in East Jerusalem, Jabal Al-Baba relies on animal herding and husbandry as a main source of income, however the Israeli occupying forces have confiscated large portions of the grazing land for the benefit of illegal Israeli settlements and related infrastructure. Furthermore, the annexation and expansion Wall renders access to the grazing land impossible, resulting in a sharp increase in the rate of unemployment among the Jabal Al-Baba population. In addition, school children are forced to walk two kilometers to the neighboring town of Al- Eizariya to reach their schools, and are often barred from using public transportation, thereby relying on the use of tractors and donkeys on unpaved roads in poor condition.

According to Atallah Mazara'a, a representative of the Jabal Al-Baba community, the community aims to build a school and provide its residents with basic services, such as education and healthcare instead of relying on the neighboring town of Al- Eizariya. Mazara'a hopes that one day they will have adequate funds to build a medical clinic and kindergarten.

Mazara'a further highlights the Israeli occupying forces' escalation against the Jabal Al-Baba community, including the increase of home demolitions, use of violence against residents, and systematic raids on the community which take place in the middle of the night and/or during extreme weather conditions. Reports from UNOCHA reveal that since 2014, Israeli occupying forces have carried out seven home demolition operations, displacing 90 residents. The same reports note that the last demolition operation in Jabal Al-Baba took place on 21 January 2016 during which the Israeli occupying forces demolished six establishments, four homes and two water and sewage pipelines. As a result 16 people, including six children, were displaced and rendered homeless.

Mazara'a concluded: "If the Israeli government does not want us to live here it must let us go back to our land and

homes in the Naqab from where we were forcefully displaced in 1948.”

- **In Focus: ABU NUWAR COMMUNITY**

The Abu Nuwar community is the largest Bedouin community in East Jerusalem and it is systematically targeted by the Israeli occupying forces with the aim of forcibly transferring its population to urban areas. Approximately 113 families reside in Abu Nuwar and are provided with basic healthcare services from nearby Al- Eizariya. School children travel 2-4 kilometers a day by foot to reach schools in neighboring Arab Al-Jahalin and Al- Eizariya respectively. Like all other Bedouin communities, the Abu Nuwar community depends largely on livestock and animal herding for its sustenance.

The Israeli occupying forces target Abu Nuwar community with the aim of transferring its inhabitants to Khillet Al-Raheb area. According to UNOCHA, Israeli bulldozers have demolished five homes, five water and sewage pipelines, and one tractor, displacing 26 persons, including 18 children. On 10 January 2016, Israeli occupying forces confiscated 10 tents donated by the Palestinian Red Crescent and demolished three EU-funded residential structures four days later.

Da'ood Ibsisat, a representative of the community, asserted that since 6 January 2016, the Israeli occupying forces and police have been systematically raiding and harassing the Abu Nuwar community, issuing traffic tickets and seizing vehicles in an attempt to threaten the population and drive them out voluntarily. Ibsisat added,

“We will continue our struggle for survival against Israel’s attempt to terrorize us. They will not intimidate or dishearten us. We will stay steadfast and strong. We will not leave.”

## **INTERNATIONAL REJECTION OF “E1” SETTLEMENT PROJECT AND DEMOLITION OF BEDOUIN COMMUNITIES**

*“The Secretary-General is following with concern developments regarding the announced plans for Israeli settlement construction in the so-called E1 area, on which he expressed his grave disappointment in his statement of 2 December. He notes that Israeli settlements in the West Bank are illegal under international law. The Secretary-General repeats his call that any such settlement plans for E-1 must be rescinded.”*

*UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, 14 January 2013*

*“The European Union is deeply dismayed by and strongly opposes Israeli plans to expand settlements in the West Bank, including in East Jerusalem, and in particular plans to develop the E1 area. The E1 plan, if implemented, would seriously undermine the prospects of a negotiated resolution of the conflict by jeopardizing the possibility of a contiguous and viable Palestinian state and of Jerusalem as the future capital of two states. It could also entail forced transfer of civilian population. In the light of its core objective of achieving the two-state solution, the EU will closely monitor the situation and its broader implications, and act accordingly. The European Union reiterates that settlements are illegal under international law and constitute an obstacle to peace.”*

*Council of the European Union, 10 December 2012*

*“Our longstanding position on such actions is very clear. We view this kind of activity as illegitimate and counterproductive to the cause of peace, and our concerns specifically about the E1 site are well known. We strongly oppose any steps that pave the way for settlement construction in E1. Such steps we believe are fundamentally incompatible with a two-state solution and, frankly, call into question the Israeli Government’s commitment to peace.”*

*Mark Toner, Deputy Spokesperson of United States Department, December 29, 2015*