

# **Jerusalem's Gate Keepers: THE ETHNIC CLEANSING OF PALESTINIAN BEDOUIN COMMUNITIES IN THE EASTERN JERUSALEM GOVERNORATE**

THE HEART OF THE AREA OF E1 SETTLEMENT PLAN



**“This circle will suffocate East Jerusalem and destroy the two-state solution; it will be the last nail in the coffin for the two-state solution.” Dr. Saeb Erakat - on the planned [E1 settlement project](#).**

## **INTRODUCTION**

In the overall context of Israel's aim to annex vast areas of the Occupied State of Palestine to Israel, through its settlement enterprise and accompanying policies of colonization, the Palestinian Bedouin communities stand at the eastern gateway of Jerusalem; the very part that connects the northern and southern West Bank to East Jerusalem, allows for territorial contiguity between the north and south of the West Bank and is pivotal for the establishment of a viable contiguous Palestinian State. This fact sheet explains the plight of the Bedouin community and its place in the broader context of Israeli policy and prevention of a two-state solution.

## **LOCATION**

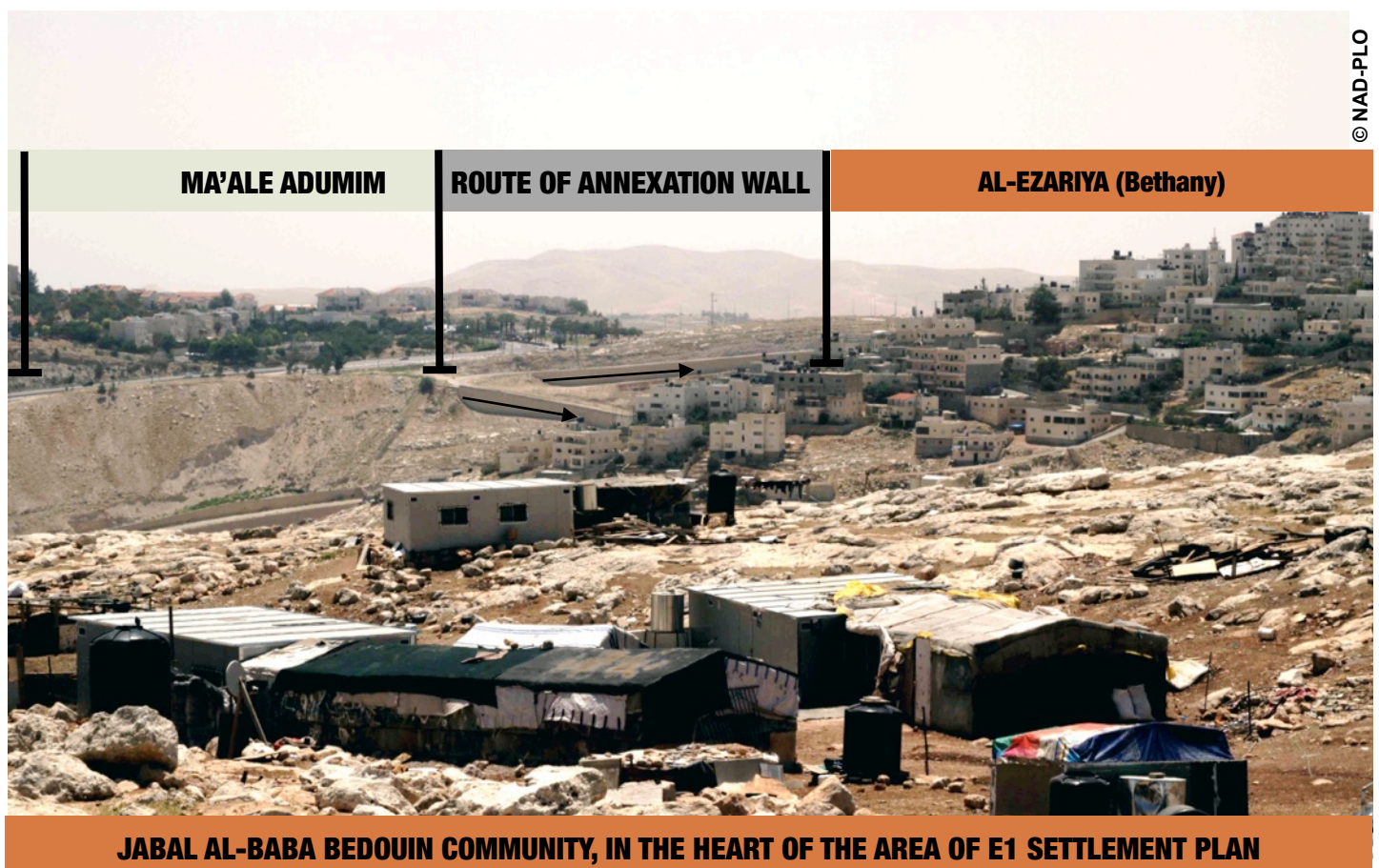
Most of the Bedouin communities located in the Eastern Jerusalem Governorate lie between At-Tur/Mount of Olives and the Jordan Valley. The main surrounding urban centers are Abu Dis, Al-Ezariya (the biblical Bethany) and East Jerusalem. The area is a network of mountains that has been quickly taken over by Israeli settlements, all of which are illegal under international law. Israel plans to annex most of the area, slowly dispossessing Palestinian Bedouin communities from their land and sources of livelihood.

## ISRAELI SETTLEMENTS IN THE EASTERN JERUSALEM GOVERNORATE

### THE MA'ALE ADUMIM AREA

Named after Ma'ale Adumim, the first and largest settlement in this area. It was created in 1975 as a small settlement of **37** people, was more firmly established through construction of concrete buildings in the mid-1980s and now has a population of almost **37,000**. The area around Ma'ale Adumim, the so-called "Bloc"<sup>1</sup>, is a network of settlements that sits illegally on a large part of the Eastern Jerusalem Governorate, it includes:

- ▶ **5** Settlements: Ma'ale Adumim, Kfar Adumim, Qedar, Almon and Alon with a combined population of approximately **42,770** <sup>2</sup>
- ▶ Industrial Zone: Mishor Adumim, in which **300** businesses are based
- ▶ Control over an area approximately the same size as Tel Aviv's municipal area (**~50km<sup>2</sup>**).



During the last round of negotiations (July 2013 to April 2014) alone, announcements of **206** new settlement units were made in Ma'ale Adumim and **334** in Kfar Adumim.<sup>3</sup>

The area is also due to be surrounded by a section of **Israel's annexation wall**, which will expand the overall area allotted to the settlements to **58km<sup>2</sup>**, thereby adding another physical element which will contribute to the severance of the West Bank into two separate and non-contiguous cantons. Parts of the wall that have been built in the area have already separated Palestinian communities from their service center in East Jerusalem as well as grazing and agricultural land. Together with the annexation wall, Israel's settlement enterprise takes land which is an unquestionable and integral part of the State of Palestine and threatens those Palestinians who have lived in the area for centuries, in particular the Bedouin community.

<sup>1</sup> Israel refers to the area as a settlement "bloc". The term is a creation by Israel in order to annex more land around and between settlements, by artificially joining them into groups. "Blocs" are not recognized under international law.

<sup>2</sup> Israeli CBS, 2013

<sup>3</sup> Summary of the 9-Months Talks: Unprecedented Settlement Development Settlement Watch, Peace Now, 29/4/2014.



## E1 SETTLEMENT PLAN

This is a plan for another illegal settlement to the east of occupied East Jerusalem and west of the Ma'ale Adumim area. Building in this area would link settlements in East Jerusalem to the settlements in the Eastern Jerusalem Governorate and complete the separation of the north of the West Bank from the South. This will severely affect not only Palestinian lives and livelihoods in the area, but also the national economy and the very viability of the State of Palestine.

The E1 plan was officially announced in 1999, at the end of the interim period as set out in the Oslo Accords. That year should have marked the end of Israel's occupation and a fully independent and sovereign State of Palestine on the area in question, along with East Jerusalem, the rest of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. Even more striking is the fact that the plan was first ordered by Israeli PM Yitzhak Rabin in 1994, at the height of the Peace Process.

The plan involves the seizure of almost **12.5km<sup>2</sup>** of Palestinian land from the villages of Anata, Al-Tur, Issawiya, Abu Dis and Al-Ezariya and the forced transfer of Palestinian Bedouin communities, for the construction of **3,000** settlement housing units for the expansion of Ma'ale Adumim towards occupied East Jerusalem. In the broader picture, this plan serves to help consolidate Israel's illegal annexation of East Jerusalem in order to fulfill its goal of 'the eternal and undivided capital of the Jewish people', by 'cleansing' it and the surrounding area of its Palestinian Christian and Muslim identity and heritage.

**In November 2013**, as part of an official Israeli announcement to build an unprecedented **20,000** settlement units throughout the West Bank, **1,200** units were planned in this area. The **1,200** units were later retracted due to external political pressure over this sensitive area, given the impact on the viability of the Palestinian State within the two-state formula, the other **18,800** were not.

## PALESTINIAN OFFICIAL POSITION

The area is an integral part of the occupied State of Palestine. Under the interim agreement of 1993 it lies in 'Area C', an area comprising of 62% of the West Bank. As part of the interim agreement, Area C was temporarily placed under Israeli military and administrative control for a period not exceeding 5 years. Almost two decades later, Area C remains under Israeli control. Israel actively denies access and movement for Palestinians and prevents development of those areas for the benefit of the Palestinian population. This is one of the most vital areas for a sovereign Palestinian State, as it provides East Jerusalem with an area for expansion and development towards the Jordan Valley. Continued Israeli control over the area, including the settlements of Ma'ale Adumim and Mishor Adumim, makes the achievement of a sovereign Palestinian State impossible. The E1 Settlement Plan aims at totally negating Palestinian independence. The displacement of the Palestinian population resulting from Israeli plans in the area is part of the Israel's program to turn occupation into annexation through the forced displacement of Palestinian population and its replacement with foreign settlers.

## INTERNATIONAL POSITION

The international community has never recognized Israeli sovereignty over any part of the occupied State of Palestine. The International Court of Justice stated that all States are **"under an obligation not to recognize the illegal situation resulting from the construction of the wall and not to render aid or assistance in maintaining the situation created by such construction."**<sup>4</sup> Some members of the international community have commendably tried to support Palestinian presence in the area through several projects, but very often face the obstacles imposed by the Israeli occupation, including the demolition and/or confiscation of donor-funded projects. The European Union, the United Nations and the Red Cross have continuous presence in the area and have supported the efforts of the Palestinian government to ensure that the people remain on their land.

<sup>4</sup> International Court of Justice "Advisory Opinion on the Legal Consequences of the Construction of a Wall in the Occupied Palestinian Territory by Israel", July 9<sup>th</sup> 2004.

## LIST OF PALESTINIAN COMMUNITIES AFFECTED BY THE E1 SETTLEMENT PLAN AND THE ANNEXATION WALL AROUND MA'ALE ADUMIM

There are **18** Palestinian communities located in the area of Ma'ale Adumim and the surrounding settlements, at least **5** of which are located at the heart of land earmarked for the E1 Settlement Plan. Most of the structures have demolition orders pending against their homes; more than **85%** of them are refugees; **50%** are connected to a water network and none of them are connected to electricity network.<sup>5</sup>

- 1. JABAL AL BABA (CASE STUDY)**
- 2. WADI AL JIMEL**
- 3. AZ ZA'AYYEM ZA'ATREH HERDERS**
- 4. AZ ZA'AYYEM BEDOUINS**
- 5. ABU NWAR**
- 6. AL MUNTAR**
- 7. BIR AL MASKOOB 'A'**
- 8. BIR AL MASKOOB 'B'**
- 9. ABU GEORGE ROAD BEDOUINS - KASSARA**
- 10. ABU GEORGE ROAD BEDOUINS - NKHEILA**
- 11. KHAN AL AHMAR - ABU AL HELU**
- 13. KHAN AL AHMAR - ABU FALAH**
- 13. KHAN AL AHMAR - MAKAB AS SAMEN**
- 14. KHAN AL AHMAR - WADI AS SIDER**
- 15. KHAN AL AHMAR - MIHTAWISH**
- 16. WADI ABU HINDI**
- 17. WADI AL A'AWAJ**
- 18. WADI SNEYSEL**



## THE BEDOUIN, THE NAKBA OF 1948 AND ITS CONTINUATION TODAY

The majority of Palestinian Bedouin families in this area were forcibly evicted from Al-Naqab desert in 1948 during the Nakba (catastrophe) whereby two thirds of the Palestinian population, approximately 800,000 people, were forcibly exiled by Zionist militia prior to the creation of Israel. The Nakba has never ended. Their forced displacement continues till the present day, tearing apart their social and economic structure, and now threatening the very existence of their communities. This process is a flagrant violation of international law, in particular the Fourth Geneva Convention, which prohibits both the forcible transfer of the protected population and the transfer of the occupying power's own civilian population into the territory it occupies.<sup>1</sup> Israel's establishment or expansion of existing illegal settlements always entails the expulsion of Bedouin communities. The Bedouin communities live in shacks, without electricity or running water, and face enormous difficulties in grazing their sheep. In the last 15 years they have been subject to demolitions, settler attacks and requisition of their livestock, all tactics which aim at pushing them away from the area to allow for further settlement expansion.

<sup>5</sup> OCHA, 2013

## CONCLUSION

Since 1948, Palestinians constitute the largest refugee group in the world and, since 1967, the Palestinian people has been subjected to the longest occupation in modern history. The effects of this can be seen on a daily basis and one of the most graphic examples is the situation of the Bedouin communities in the Eastern Jerusalem Governorate, who suffer from both refugee-hood and colonization. 2800 men, women and children, a majority of whom have been forcibly displaced from their land before, and all of whom have lived with the constant threat of displacement, stand to be forced from their homes by a foreign military power that is illegally occupying their land.

Contrary to international law, Israel is seeking to unlawfully retain vast areas of the occupied State of Palestine under its control, turning occupation into annexation. Annexing these areas requires eviction of the people who live in those areas, often accompanied by the demolition of their homes. The Bedouin community in the Eastern Jerusalem Governorate is sadly only one example of an appalling policy being implemented in the Jordan Valley, East Jerusalem and the many other parts of the occupied State of Palestine that Israel seeks to annex.

Most significantly, Israel's actions are contrary to basic human rights. All people have a right to feel secure in their own home, to farm their land and graze their animals, to ensure their children have space to play, learn and grow. In a context where people of one ethnic-religious category are given privileges in a land which is not theirs, while those of another ethnic category are forced from their own homeland, it is absolutely imperative that the international community acts now, for the sake of these communities, others like them, and the future prospect of peace.

## CASE STUDY: JABAL AL-BABA (The Pope's Mountain)

Located north of Al-Ezariya (Bethany), and within the area designated for the E1 Settlement plan between East Jerusalem and Ma'ale Adumim, this community is classified as 'Area C' in the Oslo Interim Agreement and all its residents hold West Bank Identification cards.

Jabal Al-Baba overlooks Al-Ezariya and Jerusalem's Jabal Al-Masharif (Mount Scopus), in addition to the settlement of Ma'ale Adumim, various parts of the Israeli annexation wall and the whole area designated for the E1 Settlement plan, among other views.

There are three types of land in this area. One plot is owned by the Vatican: King Hussein of Jordan gave it as a gift to Pope Paul VI during his pilgrimage to Jerusalem in 1964. This specific plot of land is fenced off and there are no families living in it. There are also Palestinian lands which are privately owned by the Al-Khatib, Ghaith and Far'on families. Finally there are Palestinian state-owned lands, which are under Israeli military occupation.

Until today, Jabal Al-Baba is without developed infrastructure, having a single dirt road as the only way in and out to this community, and it entirely depends on Al-Ezariya for everything, including electricity, water, and medical services. The community consists of 40 families (mainly children) with approximately 300 people; the majority of them became refugees following the Palestinian Nakba of 1948.

The majority of this Bedouin community has been living on Jabal Al-Baba since the early 1950s, following their expulsion in 1948 from their privately-owned lands in Al-Naqab, known as the Negev, in what is now Israel. Some others moved here in the early 1970s, having first gone to the south Hebron area and then deciding to move to the Jerusalem Governorate following Israel's military occupation of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip in 1967.



This Bedouin community, like many other Bedouin communities in the Eastern Jerusalem governorate, relies on livestock as their primary source of income. This is their traditional economy, how they make a living. However, the Israeli policies that have been implemented in the area since 1967 have been very restrictive on this traditional economy of the Bedouin: Israel has expropriated large areas of land for the construction of illegal settlements and their infrastructure. The construction of the annexation wall meant that the community began to lose even more access to grazing lands, intensifying their hardships to the point that some Bedouin families had to give up on livestock farming, even though their income depends on it. These policies are deliberate: they aim to make life impossible for the Bedouin, so they will leave voluntarily without the need to use military force.

Sulieman Kayed (in his fifties), known as Abu-Ghassan, is a Palestinian Bedouin from the Al-Jahalin tribe. He was born in Jabal Al-Baba. He has been blind since the early 1980s, but still remembers the exact geography of the place and how it looked before the development of Ma'ale Adumim settlement in 1985 and the construction of the annexation wall in 2004. He said: "Despite all the difficulties that were here before, we were happy with what we had. Today we live every moment here in fear".

The community started receiving demolition orders in the late 1990s. In March 2014, Abu-Ghassan's house became the first ever home to be demolished on Jabal Al-Baba, more than 46 years after Israel's occupation began.



In February 2014, 26 EU-funded residential caravans were placed in the exact location of almost each tent they replaced, for those families who wished to have a caravan. Each caravan includes a bathroom, kitchen, and a living area with windows. Since then, Jabal Al-Baba has been subjected to a significant wave of demolitions and displacements by the so-called Israeli Civil Administration, a body that administers the occupation on behalf of the Israeli government, as detailed below:

DATE	STRUCTURES DEMOLISHED	PEOPLE DISPLACED	REFUGEES
12 March 2014	1 home	10 (including 5 children)	Yes
3 April 2014	3 homes, 2 animal structures 1 one fodder storage tent	31 (including 14 children)	Yes (Partially)
9 April 2014	3 donor-funded residential caravans were disassembled and seized.	19 (including 10 children)	Yes
19 May 2014	<b>18 FINAL DEMOLITION ORDERS WERE DELIVERED AGAINST 18 RESIDENTIAL CARAVANS</b>		
	1 home, 1 animal structure.	5 (including 3 children)	Yes (Partially)
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>50</b>	

Source: (OCHA). The total is 50 (not 65) because 15 people were displaced twice.



#### WEDDING CELEBRATION IN JABAL AL-BABA ON 29 MAY 2014

Abu-Ghassan's first house was demolished on 12 March 2014. He was later provided with one additional EU funded residential caravan, which was also demolished and confiscated with two other caravans on 9 April 2014. As a result, his family was displaced twice. Another family was also displaced twice during this wave of demolitions. According to community leaders, Israeli settler youth participated in the demolition that took place on 9 April 2014, alongside the Israeli Army and the Israeli Civil Administration. This seems to be a disturbing precedent: the community made it clear that they had never heard of participation by settler youth in demolitions before.

Atallah Mazara'a, also from Al-Jahalin Tribe, said: "We have no other option but to stay steadfast on the land or go back to Al-Naqab. Where else can we go? To somewhere else that will strangle our Bedouin way of life. In fact, they are offering us a land that is privately owned by other Palestinians. Israel stole this land. We can never accept it."