

## **Jerusalem Municipality Approved [for Deposit] New Jewish Settlement in the Heart of East Jerusalem Neighborhood**

*The Local Planning and Building Committee approved unanimously [for deposit] a plan for construction of 18 housing units for Jewish families in Jabel Mukaber. The Elad NGO, which works to increase the Jewish presence in East Jerusalem, is behind the plan. “We hope that Arabs and Jews will live there in peace,” a city council member said*

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The Jerusalem Municipality’s Local Planning and Building Committee approved unanimously [for deposit] today [the Local Committee only issues recommendations on construction plans; final approval is given by the District Committee – IR AMIM] a plan for construction of 18 housing units for Jewish families in the heart of the Jabel Mukaber neighborhood in East Jerusalem. The plan was approved [for deposit] with slight reservations regarding the construction of a synagogue at the spot. It was decided that the synagogue, which is intended to serve the tenants of the compound exclusively, will be built inside the compound without the Municipality’s intervention.

This is a plan initiated by Lowell Investments, a company associated with the Elad NGO, which works to increase the Jewish presence in East Jerusalem. A building stands at the site that was built a few years ago and has been occupied since 2012 by security guards hired by Elad. The plan seeks to legalize unlicensed construction done in the building and to approve additional construction.

“The Jerusalem Municipality is embracing the Elad NGO and together they are harming all of us,” said Aviv Tatarsky, a researcher for the Ir Amim NGO. He added, “such a settlement poses another obstacle to the just political resolution that Jerusalem and Israel need.”

Hanan Rubin, a city councilman and member of the Planning and Building Committee said, conversely, that “this is a private property built in keeping with the Municipality’s policy, in such a way that legalizes unlicensed construction done there in the past; it’s not something new that is coming out of nowhere. We in the Municipality must not decide to approve or reject private plans based on the identity of the submitter. After all, no one would imagine that we in the Municipality would reject a plan for a private residence in Rehavia if it was submitted by a Palestinian, and for this reason we also don’t reject plans for private homes owned by Jews in Arab neighborhoods. I hope and believe that the residents will live there peacefully and in good neighborly relations.”

The Jerusalem Municipality stated: “This is a plan submitted by private land owners for additional construction in an existing building. The plan was examined and it meets the planning rules for the neighborhood. The plan was approved for deposit for objections in the District Committee, and its opponents have the right to voice their objections to the committee.”

The Elad NGO stated that Arabs and Jews had been living in the neighborhood on the slopes of Armon Hanatziv for several years, and maintained good neighborly relations.

The NGO stated further that after all required procedures had been completed, the Local Committee approved, in keeping with the Municipality’s policy, a request meeting the TPS 2000 plan [Jerusalem 2000 master plan], which does not distinguish between Jews and Arabs.