



# The “Minor” Annexation of Greater Jerusalem is a Major Disaster

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As pressure mounts on Netanyahu to delay and even avoid annexation steps, both Israeli and US officials are looking for a more limited, thereby presumably more “acceptable”, deal for annexation. Many signs indicate that **these substitute proposals are likely to focus on Greater Jerusalem**. What may be presented as simply a “minor” annexation of areas to east, north, and west of the East Jerusalem lands already annexed in 1967, will in fact cause serious and irreversible damage.

‘Greater Jerusalem’ includes the three settlement blocs of Ma’aleh Adumim, Gush Etzion, and Givat Ze’ev - and in the case of annexation, perhaps an additional fourth bloc, Adam-Kokhav Ya’akov. Each of these blocs, in particular the seemingly ‘normative’ Ma’aleh Adumim, takes a big portion out of the West Bank, splits it, and prevents contiguity of Palestinian space that is essential for a viable and independent Palestinian entity. Moreover, these settlement blocs are not homogeneous but rather a complex weave of mostly small Jewish settlements, Palestinian communities, and open areas- many of which are agricultural lands owned by Palestinians who will be cut off from accessing their land should annexation occur.

While a decision on formal annexation has yet to take place, since the announcement of the Trump plan Israel is taking significant steps to enhance the **de facto annexation of Greater Jerusalem** through the advancement of settlement plans in Har Homa E, Givat Hamatos, and E1. The first two are located along the southern perimeter of East Jerusalem, and the advancement of settlement plans in these areas would significantly detach East Jerusalem from the West Bank and enhancing its contiguity with the Gush Etzion settlement bloc. The E1 area is the connecting link between Maale Adumim and Jerusalem; Construction of this area, located between Ramallah, East Jerusalem, and Bethlehem, will have dramatic negative effects. All three settlement plans, whose announcements received a US' silent concurrence, constitute red-lines in longstanding international policy. In addition, tens of thousands of housing units and supporting infrastructure have been planned and partly constructed in and around the settlements comprising Greater Jerusalem, further consolidating Israeli contiguity and fragmenting the Palestinian space (*see more here: [Ramifications of the US Middle East Plan on the Future of Jerusalem](#)*).

This paper illustrates the dangers of both the formal annexation of Greater Jerusalem and the moves taken on the ground to promote the *de facto* annexation of this area. Even without further steps toward annexation, Greater Jerusalem on its own destroys any chance for the two-state solution; denies the right of the Palestinians to self-determination and sovereignty; and destroys

their fabric of life. This dooms both Israelis and Palestinians to a growing, irreversible, apartheid reality.

## **The Ramifications of Annexation in the Greater Jerusalem Area**

### *The Future of "Two States with Two Capitals in Jerusalem"*

The annexation of Greater Jerusalem will reach deep into the West Bank and includes areas on both sides of the Separation Barrier. It will turn the Palestinian space around the city into a twisted "fractal" form that is fragmented into isolated enclaves. To the north of Jerusalem, annexation will surround Ramallah from three sides; to the east, it will engulf Abu Dis and Azaria and will reach towards Jericho; in the south, annexation will surround Bethlehem from three directions and disconnect it from many of the nearby villages. Thus, the area between Ramallah and Bethlehem – a distance of merely 25 kilometers, as the crow flies – will be broken up into five enclaves (*see annexation map on page 7*). The Palestinian cities will be disconnected not only from each other but also from significant parts of their surroundings and neighboring villages on which they rely politically, socially, economically and for future much needed urban development. This "enclavization" of major areas of the West Bank will result in the continued deterioration of the Palestinian economy and will likely weaken Palestinian institutions. Additionally, annexation of parts or of the entirety of Greater Jerusalem will increase the detachment of East Jerusalem from the West Bank and further East Jerusalem's engulfment by Israeli settlements, consolidating a huge Israeli metropolitan area around Jerusalem.

These developments will be accompanied by accelerated road infrastructure and massive settlement construction. As a result, East Jerusalem will cease to function as a viable future Palestinian capital. Together, these developments will deal a final blow to Palestinian aspirations for Jerusalem and for Palestinian statehood as a whole.

### *Population and Civil Status*

About 170,000 settlers live within the areas in and around Greater Jerusalem (including in the fourth bloc of Adam-Kokhav Ya'akov) alongside about 600,000 Palestinians. A hundred thousand of these Palestinians will remain in the areas slated for annexation, while the remaining half a million will find themselves just outside – and in many cases, completely cut off – from their agricultural lands, their regional and urban centers, and from each other. This reality will have grave ramifications for the Palestinian economy, family and community life, and territorial and demographic integrality.

As of today, the Israeli government has revealed almost nothing of its intentions towards the status of the Palestinian population living in the areas to be annexed. It is not very likely that Israel will automatically grant permanent residency status to all of the annexed population, as was largely the case in East Jerusalem in 1967. Israel may make up conditions for eligibility for

residency status with the intention to use bureaucratic obstacles as a means to deny residency and force as many Palestinians as possible out of the annexed area.

Another possibility, which fits more with the outline depicted in the Trump plan, is that the Palestinian communities within the annexed areas will not be annexed but will remain as tiny, isolated enclaves engulfed by annexed territory. Prime Minister Netanyahu has actually declared that this is his intention. Since all of these communities rely heavily on Palestinian towns in Areas A and B for their most daily needs, it is unimaginable that they will be able to survive as such enclaves. Furthermore, most of these communities cannot survive without their agricultural or pastoral lands which are likely to be annexed and thereby become off-limits to them.

### *Displacement and Erosion of the Palestinian Communities and Space*

The areas targeted for annexation in Greater Jerusalem are determined along the lines of a well-known Israeli policy: "Maximum territory, minimum Palestinians". Judging from Israeli practices in East Jerusalem and Area C, one can understand that "minimum Palestinians" will be a goal that Israeli policy-makers will pointedly pursue in the areas it succeeds to annex.

Palestinian communities in the areas around Jerusalem that are targeted for annexation include small to medium-sized villages in addition to tiny and very vulnerable communities, Many of whom do not even have continuous access to electricity or water infrastructure. Among the former are villages such as Walaja (to the south of Jerusalem, between Jerusalem and Bethlehem) and A-Nabi Samwil (to the northeast); among the latter, Khan al-Akhmar in the E1 area to the east of Jerusalem, is best known. All three suffer from a variety of displacement policies. Although these three communities are the best known, they are certainly not the only ones in the Greater Jerusalem area. Among the numerous other examples are villages such as A-Za'-yim and small Bedouin communities in E1 where roughly 2,000 Bedouins are living. *See annexation map on page 7 for further details.*

South of Jerusalem, the Al-Makhrour area, located in between East Jerusalem and the Gush Etzion settlement bloc, is a large area rich with agricultural lands, belonging to the residents of Batir and Beit Jalla. Whereas Al-Makhrour is marked for annexation, Batir and Beit Jalla where the landowners live will not be annexed. Once their land comes under Israeli sovereignty, these land owners who have no legal status in Israel will not have the right to access it. Israel is likely to set up fences, checkpoints etc. that will physically prevent Palestinians living outside the annexed territory from accessing their land. Similar situations will take places in other areas such as the agricultural lands to the south of Bethlehem.

## *Far-reaching Human Rights Violations*

The Palestinian communities in and around the annexed areas in Greater Jerusalem will be particularly vulnerable to further land take-overs and displacement as follows:

- **Potential for wide scale demolitions as a means of displacement** – After decades during which Israel has prevented the communities in Area C from receiving building permits, a significant portion of the dwellings in which they live have been built without a permit. Applying Israeli sovereignty will likely be an incentive for Israel to aggressively carry out "law enforcement" against these violations. In practice, this will mean wide-scale home demolitions. Thus, under the guise of planning regulations, Israel will be able to displace parts of or even entire communities and force them out of the annexed territory.
- **Land Expropriation** – Today there are obstacles preventing Israel from expropriating privately owned Palestinian land in Area C. In many cases, Palestinian ownership is preventing settlement expansion or the legalizing of outposts. Annexation will allow expropriation through the use of Israeli law that has thus far not applicable to land with the status of "occupied territories". The area targeted for annexation includes large swaths of lands owned by **Palestinians who live outside of the annexed area**, such as in the Al-Makhroun area mentioned above. These lands are likely to become a target for expropriation, as indicated by a small illegal outpost established last year in the Al-Makhroun area. It is clear that new options for expropriation and expansion will be open for this settlement once the area is annexed.
- **Seizing of land through the Absentee Property Law** – as explained above, many Palestinians who own land in the areas targeted for Israeli annexation live in the towns that Israel does not intend to annex; they will be considered "absentees" from the land that will be formally annexed to Israel. This will allow Israel to apply the Absentee Property Law to these lands, meaning that ownership rights of the "absentees" living outside the annexed territory will be annulled and private Palestinian land will be turned by the Israeli authorities into state land.

Thus, **annexation will gravely impact the human rights and daily lives of Palestinians not only in the annexed area but also those living outside of it.**

## *Accelerating de facto Annexation by Advancing Crucial Facts on the Ground*

Since the announcement of the Trump Plan, Israel has been advancing settlement construction plans in the areas to be annexed within Greater Jerusalem as well as on the perimeters of East Jerusalem, connecting East Jerusalem to Greater Jerusalem. This is happening in the extremely sensitive areas of E1, Givat Hamatos, and Har Homa E. Outline plans for more settlement construction are already in different stages of approval. Much of the road infrastructure necessary

for such expansion has been constructed in recent years with the investment of billions of shekels and further damage to the Palestinian space:

- **Two Detailed Outline Plans in E-1** – The E-1 area connects Jerusalem to the Maaleh Adumim settlement and therefore has a critical role in the Greater Jerusalem plan. Its construction will amount to cutting off East Jerusalem from its Palestinian surroundings and bisecting the West Bank into two enclaves: Ramallah and the north of the West Bank and Bethlehem and the south of the West Bank. In addition, construction in the E1 area will engulf East Jerusalem from the east and will further disconnect it from the West Bank. Construction of E-1 alone will therefore deal a death blow to the possibility of a viable Palestinian state with East Jerusalem as its capital. In the beginning of March 2020, Prime Minister Netanyahu instructed to deposit two plans – E-1 South (TPS YOSH420-4-1-7) and E-1 East (TPS YOSH420-4-10) on a total area of 2,100 dunams and for a total of 3,400 housing units. Objections to the plans can be submitted to the Supreme Planning Council of the Civil Administration by August 28th. For more details, see [Ir Amim's alert](#) on the topic.
- **Givat Hamatos Tender**– A tender for 1,077 housing units in Givat Hamatos was published in February 2020. If constructed, Givat Hamatos will become a new settlement on the southern perimeter of East Jerusalem. The opening of the tender for bidding has been postponed several times since. Givat Hamatos, along with Har Homa E, will seal off the connection between Bethlehem and East Jerusalem and bolster its connection with the Gush Etzion settlement bloc. Plan 14295 was approved by the Jerusalem District Committee back in December 2012, but for eight years Israel has had to refrain from publishing tenders for construction in the area. Prime Minister Netanyahu instructed the tender to be published as part of his latest election campaign. For a more complete explanation of the tender, see [Ir Amim's alert](#) on the topic.
- **Givat Hamatos Masterplan** – In April 2020, the District Committee discussed a new masterplan for Givat Hamatos. The masterplan lays out an increase in the number of housing units for the approved plan of Givat Hamatos A (TPS 14295 mentioned above) as well as determines the scope of construction in other parts of Givat Hamatos where detailed outline plans have yet to be approved. The plan calls for a total of 6,500 housing units – an increase of 3,900 to the 2,600 housing units currently approved in the Givat Hamatos A plan. The committee discussed the plan and decided to continue its advancement. Since it is not an outline plan, its approval will not enable the issuing of building permits, for which the approval of detailed outline plans is required.
- **Har Homa E Masterplan** - In April 2020, the District Committee decided to approve the masterplan for Har Homa E (TPS 15399), a new settlement along the southern perimeter of East Jerusalem. The plan contains 2,200 housing units and it expands the existing Har Homa settlement westwards all the way towards Givat Hamatos. The construction of this

new settlement, together with Givat Hamatos (and the existing settlement of Gilo and Har Homa), will seal off the connection between Bethlehem and East Jerusalem and strengthen the connection with the Gush Etzion settlement bloc. Like the tenders for Givat Hamatos and the E-1 plans, Prime Minister Netanyahu instructed to advance the plan after many years that he refrained from doing so. Similar to the case of Givat Hamatos, the Har Homa E masterplan does not allow for the issuing of building permits without first approving detailed outline plans. For a more complete explanation, see [Ir Amim's alert](#) on the topic.

- **Har Homa E Detailed Outline Plan** – On February 27<sup>th</sup>, the Jerusalem District Committee reviewed and decided to advance TPS 285411, a new plan for 500 housing units in part of the area of Har Homa E. If the plan is deposited and then reaches final approval, it will allow for the issuing of building permits for the construction of this new settlement.

**The scope of Israeli plans for the areas around Jerusalem is notably larger:** In 2015, a Freedom of Information appeal by Peace Now revealed that the Ministry of Construction has hired planners for dozens of outline plans in the settlement blocs around Jerusalem:

- In and around the Givat Zeev settlement bloc, northwest of Jerusalem
- In the fourth settlement bloc along Road 60, such as in Geva Binyamin and Kochav Hashachar, northeast of Jerusalem, cutting off Ramallah in the east.
- In the Gush Etzion settlement bloc, south of Jerusalem and surrounding Bethlehem.

**The outline plans for these areas (currently in different stages of the approval process) contain a total of more than 30,000 housing units.** These not only expand settlements but aim to create contiguous, Israeli, built-up areas that will prevent the development of Palestinian towns and hugely disrupt the integrity of the Palestinian space.

## Conclusion

The annexation of parts or all of “Greater Jerusalem” is not a disentangling of any sort, rather it is an entanglement of immense proportions. It further entrenches Israeli control of East Jerusalem and the majority of the West Bank, while foiling any prospect for a just and agreed resolution to the conflict. A significant portion of this plan is already being advanced on the ground. Aside from providing an escape route for politicians, this decision will only cause greater harm to peoples’ lives and consign both Israelis and Palestinians alike to an accelerating apartheid reality.

In Jerusalem, as within the entire Israeli-Palestinian arena, a secure and stable life can exist only with recognition of the entirety of the connections and rights of both peoples to the land; when each can conduct their daily and public lives- without fear- in an independent, democratic, and equal manner.

**Annexation Map** – click [here](#) for higher resolution

