

Position Paper



Implications of Establishing a Separate Local Authority for the Neighborhoods Beyond the Barrier in Jerusalem

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A. Introduction

The Separation Barrier in the Jerusalem area was established over a decade ago, along a route that diverged both from the municipal boundary of the city as determined in June 1967 and from the Green Line. The substantial discrepancies between the course of the Barrier and the municipal and political borders – which were well-known to the planners of the Barrier and to the government that approved it – **have created a new reality of governmental vacuum, legal uncertainty, and planning chaos.** These in turn have led to serious human rights violations and to a deterioration in the condition of the neighborhoods and the enclaves that were detached from the city.¹

This position paper, published by the Association for Civil Rights in Israel (ACRI), examines the proposal to remove the large Palestinian neighborhoods beyond the Barrier from the jurisdiction of the Jerusalem Municipality, and to establish a new Israeli local council there. According to this proposal, the local council will operate under the Israeli Ministry of the Interior, and the Palestinian-Jerusalemite residents of this area will continue to hold Israeli

¹ See: ACRI’s [appeal](#) to Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, “Ten Years of Unfulfilled Promises in East Jerusalem,” 9 August 2015.
“[Displaced in Their Own City](#): The Impact of Israeli Policy in East Jerusalem on the Palestinian Neighborhoods of the City beyond the Separation Barrier,” Report by Ir Amim, June 2015.
[Update](#) from the B’Tselem website: “A-Sawahreh a-Sharqiyah and a-Sheikh Sa’ed isolated from rest of East Jerusalem,” 26 May 2015.
[The Nowhere Neighborhoods of Jerusalem](#), chapter from Nir Baram’s book *The Land beyond the Mountains* (Am Oved, 2016).

identity cards. The initiative is focusing on Kafr 'Aqab in the north of the city, and on Shuafat Refugee Camp and the three adjacent neighborhoods² to the northeast.

In this paper, we seek to explain why this proposal, if implemented, can be expected to cause a further significant deterioration in the already dire condition of the neighborhoods beyond the Barrier, and to affect other parts of the city. The new local council, if established, can be expected to be weak, poor, inexperienced, and impotent. It will not be able to solve the unbearable problems created in these neighborhoods due to their extreme neglect. The planning chaos will only get worse, as will the standard of the services to which the residents are entitled (education, health, roads, welfare, and so forth).

As was the case when the Barrier was established, the Israeli decision makers once again seek to make drastic changes to the reality of life in East Jerusalem against the wishes of its Palestinian residents, and while further eroding their status. The proposed initiative is liable to replicate and exacerbate the negative phenomena that accompanied the construction of the Barrier: the creation of impoverished and dangerous urban ghettos beyond the Barrier marred by disgraceful living conditions; the movement of some residents into Jerusalem inside the Barrier, raising the cost of living in this area and imposing a socioeconomic burden on a population that is already very poor; elevated crime rates and increasing national tension and violence; and – as the result of all the above – further damage to the fabric of everyday life in the city and to the relations between residents from all communities.

We believe that the crisis facing the neighborhoods beyond the Barrier can only be addressed through the serious investment of government budgets in these neighborhoods. The Jerusalem Municipality and the other relevant authorities must accept responsibility for the provision of services and the rehabilitation of infrastructures. The establishment of a new local council will solve nothing and will only serve to advance the Israeli interest of changing the demographic balance in the city.

B. Background: Fifteen Years of Deterioration in the Neighborhoods beyond the Barrier

In 2002, the Israeli government, headed by then Prime Minister Ariel Sharon, decided to establish a Separation Wall / Security Fence/ Barrier between Israel and the West Bank. In the Jerusalem area, the course decided on for the Barrier left Palestinian-Jerusalemite neighborhoods outside the Barrier, creating enclaves along its route. Conversely, the Barrier included areas that are part of the West Bank in the "Jerusalem" side of the Barrier.

² The neighborhoods of Ras Khamis, Ras Shehadeh, and Dahyat A-Salam (the Peace Neighborhood) are adjacent to Shuafat Refugee Camp and included in the municipal area of Jerusalem. The Ministry of the Interior customarily refers to the area as "New Anata," as distinct from the adjacent town of Anata, which is in the Palestinian Authority area. Others refer to the area as Shuafat Ridge, although the neighborhood of Shuafat itself lies to the west of the area referred to here.

Following the publication of the planned course of the Barrier in Jerusalem, residents of the neighborhoods left outside the Barrier and residents of the enclaves it created submitted petitions to the Supreme Court.³ The petitioners demanded the complete cancellation of the Barrier or, alternatively, to modify its course so that it would not separate them from the remaining parts of the city.

The Supreme Court rejected the petitions. The justices based their decision on promises by the Israeli government that the reality of life beyond the Barrier in Jerusalem was not expected to be impaired following the construction of the Barrier. In particular, the justices referred to Government Decision No. 3873 from July 2005, entitled “Preparations by Government Ministries regarding the Jerusalem Seam and Attention to the Population in the Jerusalem Area due to the Construction of the Fence.”⁴

Despite the promises to the court, however, the government never implemented this decision. The government ministries did not meet their undertakings to build schools, hospitals, post offices, Interior Ministry bureaus, and so forth. On the contrary: governmental and municipal bodies essentially abandoned the neighborhoods completely following the construction of the Barrier. Similarly, the promise that the checkpoints connecting the neighborhoods and the rest of the city would permit quick and easy passage remained solely on paper. In reality, the residents are forced to cope with unreasonably long waiting times at the checkpoints, as well as with the bureaucratic complications involved in crossing.⁵

Over the past 15 years, the residents of the neighborhoods beyond the Barrier have experienced a severe and unprecedented deterioration in their living conditions. The population of these neighborhoods has swollen since housing costs are significantly lower than in other parts of Jerusalem and since the areas enjoy open access to the West Bank. While the Palestinian neighborhoods inside the Barrier are forced to cope with severe

³ Regarding the large neighborhoods, see, for example: BHC 6080/04 *Meselmani v Prime Minister* (ruling dated 13 Dec. 2006), and HCJ 6193/05 *Ras Khamis Residents Committee v Empowered Authority* (ruling dated 25 Nov. 2008). Regarding the enclaves created by the Barrier in the south of Jerusalem, see, for example: HCJ 9516/10 *Walaja Village Council v Military Commander in the West Bank*; HCJ 1285/06 *Jadu v Prime Minister*; and HCJ 1695/06 *Zawahreh v Prime Minister*.

⁴ [Government Decision](#) No. 3873, “Preparations by Government Ministries regarding the Jerusalem Seam and Attention to the Population in the Jerusalem Area due to the Construction of the Fence,” 10 July 2005.

⁵ The checkpoints for Palestinians in the Jerusalem area are completely different to those used by settlers entering the city. For example, lines at Qalandiya checkpoint can lead to waiting periods of an hour or more; at Shuafat checkpoint, a man using a wheelchair or a woman with a baby stroller must walk between the cars, since the pedestrian route is blocked with a revolving gate; passage at Sawahreh checkpoint is only allowed for residents whose names and vehicle numbers appear on a list held by the soldiers; while Sheikh Sa’ad checkpoint is solely for pedestrians, with no possibility to enter in a vehicle.

restrictions imposed by the Jerusalem Municipality with the goal of limiting Palestinian construction, the police and municipal enforcement bodies ignore construction beyond the Barrier. As a result, a large number of high-rise apartment buildings have been constructed, in a development that is highly unusual in East Jerusalem. In 2007 Israel estimated that the total population of these areas was 55,000.⁶ Just 10 years later, it is estimated that the population has increased dramatically to between 100,000 and 150,000. The impact of this growth has been exacerbated by the extreme neglect of services and infrastructures, while the disappearance of enforcement agencies has led to rising crime rates. The result is that these neighborhoods have become slums of a type that Jerusalem has never before known.

The establishment of the Separation Barrier in Jerusalem also led to an increase in the number of Palestinians living in the neighborhoods beyond the Barrier who are residents of the West Bank and do not hold Israeli identity cards. No one knows the precise number of such residents. Most of them are the partners or children of Palestinian residents of Jerusalem, in other words – families in which some members hold Israeli identity cards while others hold Palestinian documents.⁷ In accordance with a “temporary order” enacted by the Knesset over a decade ago,⁸ residents of the West Bank who have a first-degree relationship to Israeli citizens or residents cannot obtain status in Israel. Instead, they are required to apply to the military to receive permits to be present in Israel for a period of a year or less. Authorization for the purpose of family unification is granted when residents can prove that they are residing within the boundaries of the State of Israel.

The situation faced by these families creates severe socioeconomic hardship due to the restrictions Israel imposes on the family members who do not have status in Israel. For example, their freedom of vocation is limited; they are not eligible for national insurance payments; and their health insurance is significantly more expensive.⁹ The neighborhoods beyond the Barrier attract these families,¹⁰ thereby exacerbating the difficult socioeconomic reality in these neighborhoods and the complex legal status of their residents.

⁶ “The Obstacle and the Crossings in the Jerusalem Seam,” State Comptroller’s Annual Report 59A from 2008-2009, p. 72.

⁷ According to [official figures](#) provided in response to a freedom of information request submitted by HaMoked – Center for the Defence of the Individual, some 9,900 Palestinians holding permits granted on the grounds of family unification live in the State of Israel, including East Jerusalem. It is unknown how many of them live in the neighborhoods beyond the Barrier.

⁸ “[Temporary Order?](#): Life in East Jerusalem under the Shadow of the Citizenship and Entry into Israel Law”, HaMoked – Center for the Defence of the Individual, 2014.

⁹ Ibid. See also [HCJ 2649/09 Association for Civil Rights in Israel v Health Minister](#), regarding the granting of national insurance and health insurance to those affected by the Citizenship Law and residing in Israel by virtue of family unification.

¹⁰ There are a number of reasons for this. The area is within the borders of the State of Israel, and the military permit requires proof of such residence; living costs are significantly lower than in the other neighborhoods of East Jerusalem and in cities in Israel; the area offers easy access to the

C. Previous Proposed Laws in the Knesset

In July 2017 the Knesset passed at its First Reading a proposed amendment to the Basic Law: Jerusalem, Capital of Israel (Temporary Provision regarding the Municipal Area of Jerusalem and the Majority Required for Its Changing).¹¹ The proposal, advanced by Members of Knesset from the Jewish Home party, includes two parts. The first part establishes that any attempt to divide Jerusalem and transfer any of its area to a foreign entity may be passed only with the support of 80 Members of Knesset. The second part will enable the changing of the borders of Jerusalem, provided that areas removed from the boundaries of the city remain under the control of the State of Israel. This change is intended to facilitate by legal means an initiative to remove Palestinian neighborhoods beyond the Barrier from Jerusalem and to establish a separate local council there. Now that the Knesset has returned for the Winter Session, discussions on the proposed law are due to continue in the Constitution, Law, and Justice Committee.

An alternative proposed law advanced by Members of Knesset from the Likud is the “Greater Jerusalem” Law.¹² According to this proposal, the Jerusalem Municipality will be expanded to include the settlements around the city, such as Ma’ale Adumim, Beitar Illit, Efrat, and others. The local councils in the settlements will be considered subsidiary municipalities of the expanded Jerusalem Municipality. Similarly, the neighborhoods beyond the Barrier will also be separated from the Jerusalem Municipality and will be given the status of subsidiary municipalities. The result is that the number of Jews living in Greater Jerusalem and able to vote for the municipality will increase significantly, while the percentage of Palestinians will decrease.¹³ This proposal has not yet been tabled for discussion in the Knesset and is expected to be examined by the Ministerial Committee for Legislation prior to its further advancement.

D. The Interests and Implications of the Proposal

Israeli politicians and public figures who support the program to establish a separate local authority in the neighborhoods beyond the Barrier have raised two key arguments in support of their position.¹⁴ The first is the Israeli demographic interest: despite extensive attempts by Israeli governments to reduce the number of Palestinians living in Jerusalem,

West Bank for the purpose of work and family visits, which is not the case in other parts of East Jerusalem due to the need to cross checkpoints and obtain permits to this end.

¹¹ [Knesset Statement](#) dated 26 July 2017.

¹² [Proposed Law: Jerusalem and Its Satellites](#), 5777-2017.

¹³ Palestinian from the West Bank who live in the area between Jerusalem and the settlements will not be included as residents of Greater Jerusalem.

¹⁴ [Israeli Minister to Push Plan Aimed at Reducing the Number of Arabs in Jerusalem](#), Nir Hasson and Jonathan Lis, Haaretz, 29 October 2017.

[The City that Was Mixed Together](#), Nadav Shragai, Hashiloah, 6 July 2017.

they now account for 37 percent of the residents of the city.¹⁵ As noted above, the authorities estimate that between 100,000 and 150,000 residents live in the neighborhoods beyond the Barrier. Although some of these residents do not hold Israeli identity cards, and are therefore not included in the demographic calculations of the State of Israel, it can be assumed that most of them are included; in any case, of course, they live in the area. The removal of these neighborhoods from the boundaries of Jerusalem could reduce the proportion of Palestinians living in the city from one-third to one-fourth. (Naturally, these residents will continue to form part of the overall demographic balance in the State of Israel, and will continue to be counted in this context, but within a population of millions of residents, their presence is statistically insignificant.)

The second reason given by supporters of the proposal is that a separate local council will facilitate earmarked budgets and investment in the neighborhoods, significantly improving the poor condition of infrastructures and services. The argument is that if the Jerusalem Municipality has failed over a period of more than a decade to prove itself willing or able to invest in the neighborhoods beyond the Barrier, it should be replaced by a new local council that will do a better job.

This second argument ostensibly favors the residents and seeks to encourage real change in the neighborhoods. However, our position is that the proposal will not lead to the desired improvement, since it is based on several mistaken and even misleading assumptions:

- 1. The assumption that the Jerusalem Municipality is incapable of providing services is incorrect.** Municipal services are a function of budgets and capabilities. The Jerusalem Municipality enjoys extensive budgets including, among other sources, generous special grants as the capital city and significant income from tourism and commerce. Although Jerusalem has a high poverty level, it also enjoys enormous investments. Those who head the Jerusalem Municipality have chosen not to channel budgets to the neighborhoods beyond the Barrier. By way of illustration, the privatization of sanitation services in these neighborhoods was imposed with minimal budgetary investments,¹⁶ and the government decision to improve sanitation in the east of the city excluded the neighborhoods beyond the Barrier.¹⁷ This ongoing policy has turned the streets of these neighborhoods into garbage heaps.

¹⁵ [East Jerusalem: Facts and Figures 2017](#), ACRI, May 2017.

¹⁶ In 2012, for example, just NIS 2 million were earmarked for garbage disposal in Kafr 'Aqab, out of a total budget of some NIS 328 million allocated to the municipal Sanitation Department. The figures appear in the reply from the Jerusalem Municipality dated 3 June 2012 to a freedom of information request from Attorney Moien Odeh. See also: [Residents of the Shuafat Area Ask Court to Require Municipality to Collect Garbage](#), Nir Hasson, Haaretz, 21 February 2017.

¹⁷ [Statement by the Government Secretary](#) following the government meeting held to mark Jerusalem Day, 28 May 2017.

As for capabilities: Jerusalem Municipality has a very large number of employees and the professional knowledge it has accumulated in managing such a complex city is extensive and longstanding. The municipality is able to cope with most of the problems confronting the neighborhoods beyond the Barrier: It can pave and fix roads; increase the number of welfare workers; promote informal education programs, and so forth. It will be very difficult for the Jerusalem Municipality to completely solve the enormous planning chaos in the area, with the problems this brings. Yet we see no reason to assume that a new local council will succeed in this mission.

A further challenge facing the Jerusalem Municipality is cooperation with the Palestinian residents, due to the protracted political conflict and the mutual mistrust between the two sides. Our experience working in East Jerusalem shows that mistrust can be reduced considerably when a municipal or governmental body chooses to act in a manner that promotes the good of the residents and respects their desires, rather than acting in a coercive or deceitful manner. As for the inherent political barrier regarding cooperation, there is little reason to believe that establishing another Israeli local council will overcome this problem, given that it will be established against the residents' will and will further disconnect them from Jerusalem.

- 2. The assumption that establishing a new local council will be accompanied by significant budgets is mistaken and misleading.** Local councils in Israel have access to several budgetary sources that will not be available from the outset to the proposed new authority in the area, such as significant income from municipal taxes on residential and commercial properties, or income from domestic and overseas tourism. Accordingly, the authority's budget will rely mainly on adjustment grants and funds transferred by the State to each authority according to needs and to the number of residents. Yet not all of the residents in these neighborhoods will be included in the figure formulated by the Interior Ministry: Some are residents of the West Bank, while others are East Jerusalem residents registered as residing in other neighborhoods of the city. Accordingly, the local council will receive limited funding relative to the actual number of residents.

The supporters of the plan explain that the Israeli government will earmark extensive budgets for the new local council. However, the government had more than a decade to invest in these neighborhoods, whether by transferring earmarked budgets for the area to the Jerusalem Municipality or by increasing the budget of the Jerusalem Seam Line Community Center, which was established following the construction of the Barrier. The government decided to establish the Center and should have assisted in its funding. In reality, however, no budgets have been transferred over the past decade to the municipality nor to the Community Center, which survives on an infinitesimal budget.

The elected head of the proposed council, or, more probably, the head of an appointed committee, will have virtually no political power by comparison to the heads of strong

local authorities, such as the Jerusalem Municipality, who manage to secure promises and budgets from the state by means of political pressure and other initiatives. We do not believe that there is any chance that the head of the local authority will be able to apply pressure on the government if it is not interested in investing budgets in the first place. Perhaps it is convenient to advance a proposal while making promises that will later be broken, as has been the case in the past.

- 3. The assumption that the new authority will manage to solve problems where the Jerusalem Municipality has failed is implausible.** Even if the responsible individuals in the new authority devote all their time and energy to the neighborhoods beyond the Barrier (unlike certain officials in the Jerusalem Municipality), they will not be able by themselves to overcome the complex matrix of problems that has been created in the area. The very limited staff available to the authority and its lack of experience will only make the task more difficult.

Anyone who assumes the responsibility as head of the Education Division in the area, for example, will discover that the number of schools is completely inadequate for the number of students. However, there is little land available for the construction of new schools and it is extremely difficult to obtain a building permit. Currently, the Education Division of the Jerusalem Municipality offers places for students in other neighborhoods of the city, but such an arrangement will not be within the authority of a separate director of education. The director of the Planning Department, for example, will be amazed to find that not only are the existing outline plans irrelevant given the actual state of construction on the ground, but that some of the neighborhoods have never had an outline plan prepared since 1967. The result is that almost any private or public construction, whether of homes or of infrastructures, is illegal. A solution permitting new construction and the retroactive approval of existing buildings would require the cooperation of the Ministry of the Interior, the Ministry of Justice, and possibly even the Knesset, in order to amend regulations and legislation relating to the Israeli planning and building laws. The new local council will have neither the connections nor the skills required to launch such an initiative, which constitutes nothing less than a planning revolution.

E. ACRI's Position and Alternative Solutions

On the basis of the above analysis, ACRI's position is that the proposal to establish a new local council in the neighborhoods beyond the Barrier will have catastrophic ramifications for the residents' lives and rights, just as the decision to establish the Barrier had. Since some of the residents of these neighborhoods can be expected to move inside the Barrier following the establishment of the new authority, the change will also lead to a deterioration in East Jerusalem inside the Barrier, which already faces a housing crisis and a lack of services and infrastructures. Once again, this outcome is can be foreseen, since this is precisely what happened following the government's decision to establish the Barrier.

The new local council can be expected to have very limited budgets. Its employees will lack the necessary tools (staff, experience, political power, and so forth) to offer meaningful solutions, particularly concerning two of the most complex problems: the total planning chaos in a dense urban area with high-rise construction; and the complex legal, civil, and political status of the residents. As mentioned earlier, the residents of these neighborhoods are not Israeli citizens. Most of them are permanent residents of Israel while others are citizens of the Palestinian Authority. No local council head in Israel is confronted with a similar situation.

An examination of the proposal in the context of local authorities inside Israel also shows that it is doomed to failure. The establishment of new local and regional authorities for the Bedouin population in the Negev did not lead to the desired planning and building solution, nor to the introduction of services and infrastructures appropriate to the 21st century. Instead, Bedouin citizens in Israel live in neglected and impoverished townships that consistently appear at the bottom of the official socioeconomic scales. This example shows us what we can expect if a new local council or appointed committee is established in the neighborhoods beyond the Barrier. Such an authority would take off from the worst possible starting point: without proper planning or basic infrastructures and services; without budgetary sources; and without any tradition of local management. The population in question lacks civil status in Israel, does not recognize Israel's control of the area, and has doubled or tripled over a decade. The Central Bureau of Statistics might very well have to create a new cluster, lower even that that including the Bedouin authorities in the Negev, in order to reflect the socioeconomic standing of the neighborhoods.

Moreover, in recent years Israel has promoted various initiatives to unify local authorities and to reduce the total number of municipalities, so that each one will include a larger and more diverse population. This initiative seeks to improve the condition of the weaker authorities and to pool resources and forces. By contrast, the proposal in Jerusalem acts in the opposite direction, perhaps reflecting the strong prior placed by its proponents on the demographic interest rather than on the humanitarian interest of improving the residents' lives.

Everyone agrees that urgent action is needed to improve the situation in the neighborhoods beyond the Barrier and to end the grave violation of the residents' rights. The proper solution is that the Israeli government, having decided to impose its sovereignty on East Jerusalem and having decided to build a Barrier dividing the city, should assume responsibility for the people who live in this area and for the outcomes of its decisions. **The government must allocate substantial earmarked budgets over a period of many years for the neighborhoods beyond the Barrier. It must present the Jerusalem Municipality and other relevant authorities with concrete demands ensuring that they urgently provide the residents with the necessary services.**

This action should be accompanied by the formation of an interministerial committee or a dedicated professional team to supervise the allocation of budgets, establish measurable objectives for each authority, monitor implementation, and submit periodic reports to the government. This initiative should be implemented in a similar manner to other reforms and strategic processes the government has advanced. Just as the government invested enormous financial and human resources in planning and constructing the Separation Barrier, so it is certainly capable of making investments to improve the miserable conditions of the ghettos it has created beyond the Barrier. At the time, the government chose to ignore the residents' objections completely and to treat them as it desired. The result was catastrophic. To succeed the Israeli authorities must find the way to advance a solution that the residents can support, and perhaps even take an active role in.

In contrast to the proposal to establish a separate local council, the initiative we propose will not exacerbate the already difficult living conditions and status of the residents. It will also mitigate rather than intensify the segregation between them and the other parts of the city. The Israeli government is capable of implementing such a course of action; indeed, it is its responsibility to do so.

F. Closing Remarks: Annexed Jerusalem as an Act of Perpetual Deviation

The most prominent characteristics of "United Jerusalem" – the city whose borders were hastily drawn in June 1967 – is its permanent state of deviation from the norm. Even after fifty years, confusion remains regarding who are the residents of the city and what are its boundaries. The answers to these questions change over time. Jerusalem experiences perpetual deviations in terms of its area, its status as the capital, and the status of its Palestinian residents.¹⁸ This state of affairs influences daily life in the city, and has far-reaching ramifications for the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

The proposal to establish a separate authority for the neighborhoods beyond the Barrier is an extreme deviation. Almost 100 percent of the residents of this authority will not be Israeli citizens (Palestinian Jerusalemites are not citizens, but permanent residents). Some of the residents even hold Palestinian rather than Israeli identity cards, and some are considered to be "unlawfully present" in their own home.

There is a reasonable probability that the appointed committee that the Ministry of the Interior will establish as a first step toward managing the residents' lives in the new authority will continue to control the area for many years. Accordingly, the decision will not lead to the establishment of an elected local council as is the usual practice in Israel.¹⁹ This is yet another deviation, and one that creates a new sub-category of East Jerusalem residents

¹⁸ [Permanent Residency: A Temporary Status Set in Stone](#), report by Ir Amim, 2012.

¹⁹ It is interesting to compare this situation to that of the Druze local authorities in the Golan Heights: [In First Since 1967, Druze Villages in Israeli Golan Heights to Hold Democratic Elections](#), Noa Shpigel, Haaretz, 8 July 2017.

who will wake up one morning to find that they no longer live in Jerusalem and no longer even have the right to vote to the municipal authority that manages their lives.²⁰

It is hardly surprising that such proposals have been accompanied by rumors and notions regarding a future intention to deprive these residents of their status as permanent residents of Israel. Without this status – that is to say, without an Israeli identity card – the residents will not be able to live inside Israel and in East Jerusalem, nor to work or even visit the area. This constitutes nothing less than uprooting. Since Israel's policy toward the residents of East Jerusalem changes every few years, and each change exacerbates their living conditions, the level of suspicion and the transitory character that the Palestinians attribute to each Israeli decision are the product not of anxiety or paranoia but of a rational analysis of the reality of their lives since 1967.

The past 50 years have been characterized by the imposition of political, legal and territorial changes by the Israeli government on the Palestinian population subject to Israeli occupation and annexation. Human rights organizations that have worked through these changes have repeatedly emphasized the fact that every time Israel created a new sub-category and a distinct status for a segment of the Palestinian population, this led to a further exacerbation in the Palestinians' rights and in the fragmentation they endure - geographical, family, political, legal etc. For the Palestinians, decisions such as buying a home, getting married, or finding work are dramatically influenced by the actions taken by the Israeli government – a government they never elected.

The fragmentation and enfeeblement experienced by the Palestinian population that Israel chose to annex into its territory, and their daily dependence on the Israeli authorities, can only be expected to worsen if the proposal to establish a new local council is implemented. We can only hope that the recognition that this will be the harsh outcome of the proposal will lead to its shelving, rather than it gaining new supporters.

²⁰ Residents of East Jerusalem are entitled to vote in the elections for the Jerusalem Municipality, though they choose to boycott these elections. As permanent residents, they are not entitled to participate in the Knesset elections.