



ZU·LAT Equality
and Human
Rights

(In)Humanity and Occupation

**Palestinian East Jerusalem
Women Speak Out**

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December 2022



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Executive Summary

This report by Attorney Juliette Abuiyun is the outcome of a study of the daily hardships encountered by Palestinian women living under Israeli occupation in East Jerusalem. The data was collected by conducting in-depth interviews in Arabic with ten Palestinian women from various backgrounds and locations in occupied East Jerusalem. By reporting the women's first-hand accounts and by analyzing and sharing their voices, experiences, and insights, this report seeks to contribute to a distinct understanding of the complex effects the protracted Israeli occupation and deepening annexation of East Jerusalem have had on the lives of East Jerusalem women, the scope of human rights abuses they experience on a daily basis, and their visions of possible political solutions to the Jerusalem issue.

The theme of dehumanization at the hands of the occupier and the struggle to retain a sense of dignity appeared repeatedly in the women's narratives, providing context to the anger and frustration they conveyed. The women believe that at the very core of the occupation lies a fundamental view of them as inhuman and urged that the study be used to compel the occupier and the world to recognize their humanity and end both the perception and the treatment of them as subhuman.

An analysis of the findings yielded insights related to motherhood and mother-child relationships, fragmented identity, and human security in occupied East Jerusalem. Palestinian women in East Jerusalem live in a painful, menacing, and stressful reality that is constantly changing, and not for the better. Listening to the women's narratives, what emerges is a bleak picture of an East Jerusalem that is militarized, fragmented, and neglected, while its Palestinian residents live under increasing physical and psychological threats.

The study describes the understanding or the perceptions of the interviewees regarding how the discrimination and oppression of Palestinian East Jerusalem women have been integrated into the strategic, structural, and institutional policies and practices – both visible and invisible – implemented by Israel as an occupying power and points to the measures Israel has put in place to achieve the state's political objectives: altering the boundaries of Jerusalem and undermining the presence and legal status of the Palestinian residents of the city in order to reinforce the demographic Jewish majority and foil the possibility of East Jerusalem one day becoming the capital of a sovereign Palestinian state.

The issues raised by the women demonstrate the ways in which the Jerusalem question can be seen as a microcosm of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, with the core issues of borders, settlements, refugees, and security clearly at the center of their accounts of life under occupation in the disputed holy city. Their proposed political solutions for the future of Jerusalem reflect their deep ties to the city, with a majority supporting division along the 1967

borders with full Palestinian sovereignty over East Jerusalem, including Al-Haram al-Sharif, and their uncompromising rejection of Israeli settlement in their midst.

All of the women without exception voiced the need for initiatives to achieve national independence from occupation rather than securing individual human right improvements intended to facilitate life under occupation without bringing the occupation to an end. They stated their opposition to engaging in Israeli-Palestinian dialogues that basically "engineer" a façade of coexistence or in joint projects such as studies about equity and bridging gaps that serve as Band-Aids that enable the preservation of the status quo when what is needed is amputation of the occupation.

Among the egregious policies pursued by successive Israeli Governments and raised repeatedly by the women in the study is the application of the Entry Into Israel Law, 5712-1952, which regulates entry into and residency in Israel for foreigners, to determine the status of native-born Jerusalemite Palestinians and confer upon them so-called "permanent" residency which, in reality, can be easily revoked. The injustice and illegality of this refusal to recognize the Palestinians' unique position as indigenous people and their right under international law to protection and secure permanent residency as the population of an occupied territory is so great that the report's sole recommendation is the termination of this practice.

Prologue: Recounting as Resistance

Carrying out this study was anything but straightforward, given the highly suspicious and politicized environment and the sensitivity of the researched topics. Among the Palestinians in the Occupied Palestinian Territory there is a general attitude of mistrust, unwillingness to cooperate, and a tendency to boycott relations and dialogue with Israelis. The current anti-normalization position adopted by many Palestinians and supported by all the interviewees, which rejects participation in any joint Israeli-Palestinian activity that does not explicitly aim to expose and resist the occupation and all forms of discrimination against and oppression of the Palestinian people, posed a real challenge to the implementation of the study.

The fact that the interviews took place in an environment in which thousands of East Jerusalem Palestinians are threatened with house demolitions or evictions – an issue of great concern to all Palestinians – contributed to the hesitancy of the women we approached to participate in this study. Their skepticism was also based on troubling experiences in the past in which overtures from Israeli organizations often turned out to be efforts to benefit politically and professionally from the misfortunes of East Jerusalem Palestinian women. Another significant factor driving their reluctance was their desire to protest against what one woman described as Israel's "ongoing brutal efforts to erase Palestinian identity, dignity, and existence".

Whenever we contacted a woman about participating in the study, we explained its purpose and provided detailed information about Zulat – the fact that it is an Israeli organization, its mission statement, the names and backgrounds of its Palestinian and Israeli board members, etc. – yet the suspicions sown in the women's minds left me repeatedly facing the challenge of having to re-establish Zulat's credibility. None of the participants were familiar with the organization, which was established on May 2020, but some knew of B'Tselem and respected Zulat President Zehava Galon as its founding director. Four questions repeatedly asked by most of the interview subjects were: What is Zulat? Why is this Israeli organization interested in us and in conducting this research? Who is funding your study and what is Zulat's agenda? We always addressed these questions with full transparency and respect; nonetheless, several of the women we approached declined to participate in the study.

Having Ms. Jihad Abu Zneid, a former member of the Palestinian parliament on behalf of the Fatah party and East Jerusalem region and an expert on East Jerusalem and Palestinian women's issues, serve on the study Steering Committee bolstered its credibility among Palestinian women. The relationship between Zulat and myself and between Zulat and Ms. Abu Zneid, along with the purpose of the study, were meticulously defined prior to carrying out the research. This was deemed necessary to alleviate the fears of some women who had

felt tricked by Israeli researchers in the past who had published reports that differed from what had been agreed to.

Despite refusals from many of the women we approached, eventually ten women who corresponded to the diversity of the sample we envisioned gave their consent to participate in the study, but they were all very clear about why they

chose to take part and about wanting their reasons to be known. They emphasized that their participation should not be interpreted in any way as legitimization of Israel's occupation of East Jerusalem. Most of them stressed that they were sharing their perspectives with Zulat not as an act of normalization but rather as an act of resistance intended to leverage this study as a vehicle to make their voices heard.

Three of the women who had backgrounds in political activism reported having participated in Israeli-Palestinian encounters in the past. After many years of dialogue which, they claim, led nowhere, these women came to the conclusion that the differences between Israeli society and Palestinian society have widened to the point that there is no level playing field on which they can meet. They said there have been too many reports written on East Jerusalem without bringing about any significant improvements in their reality, and they voiced their scorn for "research conducted by the occupier", as they claimed that it tends to be condescending toward the Palestinians.

My participation in this interview is not about normalizing relations between Palestinian and Israeli women or about legitimizing the occupation. I am not looking to start a dialogue between Israelis and myself. (...) I hope Zulat doesn't think of this as another research project to help the "poor Palestinians". That's not what we want, need, or stand for. However, if the purpose of this study is to put pressure on the Israeli Government to end the occupation, that's another story. The suffering and the rights violations you want to talk about result directly from the ongoing occupation. **I've been living in this place for more than 60 years, and I can assure you that the situation has been getting progressively worse with each year.** Generally, I no longer do these types of interviews; I've stopped believing in this stuff. I took part in many discussions among Palestinians and between Israelis and Palestinians, and I don't believe in it anymore.

Another interview subject, a prominent figure in the Palestinian women's movement, participated because of her strong belief that women should express themselves regarding

The women emphasized that their participation in the study should not be interpreted in any way as legitimization of Israel's occupation of East Jerusalem

every aspect of their lives, all of which are affected by one overarching issue: the occupation. In other words, all the issues the women face stem from the occupation, which should be tackled in its totality rather than broken down into an array of issues.

For me, taking part in this project is of the utmost importance, because we need to make the voices of women in East Jerusalem heard. You see the inhumane injustice in the streets, and your heart bleeds. You don't want to feel helpless; you want to speak up. We must help women express themselves, help them talk about these issues and make their voices heard in all aspects of their lives, not just the political one. The political aspect holds within it other aspects, all of which need to be brought to light. In the meantime, we are losing so many rights. Generation after generation, we lose rights, and we need to act against this!

Some of the women addressed the repetition that runs through the research on the plight of East Jerusalem women and said that it is important to tell and retell the stories, even if nothing has changed.

I think conducting this research is important, even though many reports have been written about East Jerusalem. It's important to continue reporting about the violations of rights that Palestinians face in the city, even if we must repeat our stories over and over and even if there is no easy solution. We must continue raising our voices. We need to keep telling our stories!

Others spoke of their refusal to be intimidated by anti-normalization proponents who object to participation in studies of this kind.

I am not afraid to participate in this research. I was already jailed in the past. I am participating because I think that the occupier does not fulfill his responsibilities toward us and does not respect the treaties it has signed. I want to use my voice to state that this must stop and that the occupation should get out of our lives.

Introduction

This report is the outcome of a study of the daily hardships encountered and endured by Palestinian women living under Israeli occupation in East Jerusalem. The data was collected through the conduct of in-depth interviews with ten Palestinian women from various backgrounds and locations in occupied East Jerusalem. By reporting the women's first-hand accounts and by analyzing and sharing their voices, experiences, and insights, this report seeks to contribute to a distinct understanding of the complex effects the protracted Israeli occupation and deepening annexation of East Jerusalem have had on the lives of East Jerusalem women and the scope of human rights abuses they experience on a daily basis. The theme of dehumanization at the hands of the ruling power and the struggle to retain a sense of dignity appeared repeatedly in the women's narratives, providing context to the anger and frustration they conveyed.

The study provides insights into the themes of motherhood and mother-child relationships, fragmented identity, and fundamental forms of human security in occupied East Jerusalem. It also conveys the women's views on political solutions and concerns regarding the question of Jerusalem, which represents one of the most sensitive and intricate issues to be addressed in any future Israeli-Palestinian agreement.

Listening to their narratives, what emerges is a bleak picture of an East Jerusalem that is militarized, fragmented, and neglected

Israel's occupation of the Palestinian territories in general and East Jerusalem specifically began in 1967 and is now the longest occupation in modern world.¹ With more than half a century having passed since that time, neither the territory and inhabitants of occupied East Jerusalem nor the occupation itself have stayed the same. Palestinian women in East Jerusalem live in a painful, menacing, and stressful reality that is constantly changing, and not for the better. The women described living under the weight of endless oppressive measures that Israel attempts to justify under the pretext of security. Listening to their narratives, what emerges is a bleak picture of an East Jerusalem that is militarized, fragmented, and neglected, while its Palestinian residents live under increasing physical and psychological threats, scrutiny by high-tech surveillance, restrictions on their freedom of movement created by the separation barrier and checkpoints, and encroachment on their neighborhoods designed to shift the demographic balance in favor of the Jews.

¹ Office of The United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), [UN expert calls for "brave" new approach to end Israeli occupation of Palestine](#), *OHCHR's website* (25.10.2021).

Occupied East Jerusalem is inhabited by two populations of approximately 350,000 Palestinians and 230,000 Israeli settlers,² who are subject to two distinct sets of political, legal, and socioeconomic practices operated by Israel on the basis of race, nationality, and ethnicity, with social integration virtually nonexistent. In the study, the interviewees describe how the discrimination and oppression of East Jerusalem Palestinian women have been integrated into the strategic, structural, and institutional policies and practices – both visible and invisible – implemented by Israel in its various roles as an occupying power. According to the interviewees, the use of zoning concepts such as “Greater Jerusalem” and “Metropolitan Jerusalem”,³ restrictions on the issuance of building permits to Palestinian residents and the application of the Entry Into Israel Law 5712-1952⁴ to native-born East Jerusalem Palestinians have been deliberate methods Israel put in place to achieve the state’s political objectives: altering the boundaries of Jerusalem and undermining the presence and legal status of the Palestinian residents of the city in order to reinforce the demographic Jewish majority and foil the possibility of East Jerusalem one day becoming the capital of a sovereign Palestinian state.

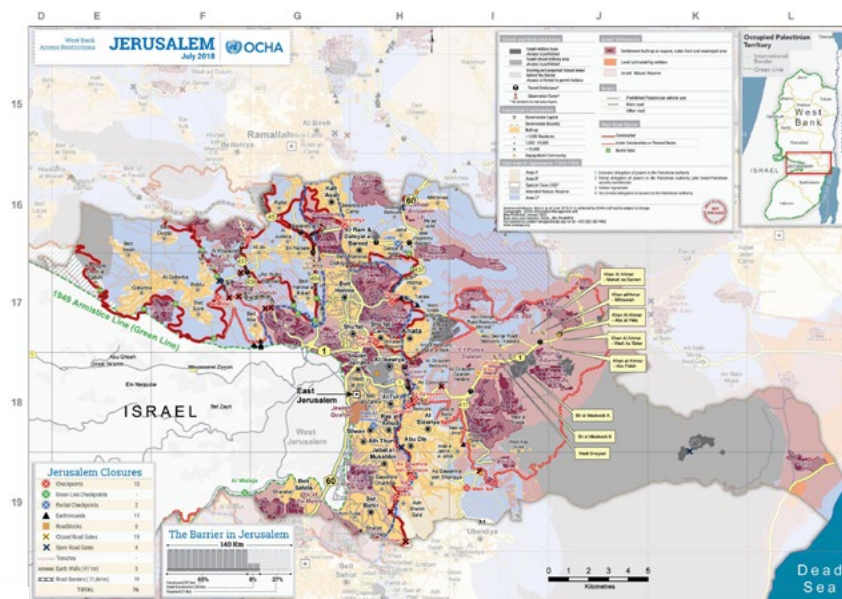
The state’s political objectives: altering the boundaries of Jerusalem and undermining the presence and legal status of the Palestinian residents of the city in order to reinforce the demographic Jewish majority and foil the possibility of East Jerusalem one day becoming the capital of a sovereign Palestinian state

² European Union Office of The European Union Representative (West Bank and Gaza Strip, UNRWA), [Six-Month Report on Israeli Settlements in The Occupied West Bank, Including East Jerusalem, Reporting Period - July-December 2020](#), *European Union – European External Action Service’s website* (22.11.2021).

³ The Israeli Committee Against House Demolitions (ICAHD), [Map 9: The Three Jerusalems: Municipal, Greater and Metropolitan](#), *ICAHD’s website* (retrieved on 23.5.2022): “Jerusalem is being turned from a city into a region that controls the entire central portion of the West Bank. In addition to municipal Jerusalem whose boundaries were established by Israel unilaterally as political facts in 1967, an artificial urban entity defined by an “inner ring” of settlements, a “Greater Jerusalem” with an “outer ring” of settlements is in the process of extending the city far into the West Bank. If “Greater Jerusalem” is intended for annexation, an even wider area – Metropolitan Jerusalem – is a planning unit designed to ensure that Ramallah and Bethlehem remain undeveloped satellite cities dependent upon Israeli Jerusalem even if they eventually fall across a political border separating Israel from Palestine”.

⁴ HaMoked, [Entry Into Israel Law, 5712-1952](#) (published on *Hamoked’s website*).

Map of East Jerusalem including checkpoints and the route of the separation barrier⁵



In some cases, threats to the women's motherhood, identity, and human security in occupied East Jerusalem derived from the never-ending wait to conclude the family reunification process, while others were the result of the precarious legal status of permanent residents granted by Israel to East Jerusalem Palestinians after 1967. This status is granted to foreigners who choose to immigrate to Israel, yet Israel applies it to Palestinians living in East Jerusalem who never moved anywhere but simply continued to reside in their homeland after it came under Israeli occupation. It is easier to cancel or nullify permanent residency status rather than that of citizenship. Thus, the women live in a constant state of instability, which hinders their dreams, movement, family life, sense of belonging, and fundamental sense of human safety. Although Israel offers an arduous path to citizenship to East Jerusalem Palestinians, the vast majority refuse it because it involves accepting Israel's occupation of East Jerusalem and recognizing its sovereignty over the entire city, as well as taking an oath of loyalty to the Jewish state. According to Israeli Ministry of Interior figures, between the start of the occupation in 1967 and 2021, Israel revoked the status of 14,727 Palestinians from East Jerusalem on the grounds that their status had "expired of itself"⁶ and that they had failed to prove that Jerusalem is their "center of life".⁷

⁵ United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), [West Bank Closure Maps](#), *OCHA's website* (July 2018).

⁶ Hamoked, [Freedom of Information data: In 2021, Israel's Ministry of Interior stripped 26 East Jerusalem Palestinians of their permanent residency status as part of Israel's "quiet deportation" policy; 15 of them women and one minor](#), *Hamoked's website* (25.1.2022).

⁷ Human Rights Watch (HRW), [A Threshold Crossed: Israeli Authorities and the Crimes of Apartheid and Persecution](#), *HRW's website* (27.4.2021).

According to the interviewees, Palestinian women in East Jerusalem face many threats to their survival, livelihood, and dignity that derive from life under occupation, resulting in the denial of their fundamental right to human security in accordance with UN Resolution 66/290. These threats include discrimination on the civil and national levels, rising poverty rates and declining employment and developmental opportunities, violence on the part of settlers and on the part of the authorities whose responsibility it is to protect them from such violence, and housing shortages exacerbated by a callous Israeli policy of evictions and house demolitions. It is worth noting that from 2004 to 2022, the Israeli authorities demolished 1,756 structures in East Jerusalem for lack of a building permit, leaving 3,959 people without a home.⁸ From 2009 to 2022, the Israeli authorities carried out 14 punitive home demolitions, leaving 75 people homeless.⁹ At least one-third of all Palestinian homes in East Jerusalem lack a building permit because of a policy of denying or delaying the issuance of permits in order to meet Israel's strategic objective of reducing the Palestinian presence in the city. This places more than 100,000 Palestinian residents at risk of displacement, with women bearing the brunt of the hardships because of their matriarchal responsibilities.¹⁰ These pervasive threats have shaped the women's understanding of the mechanisms and characteristics of the conflict, as they are constantly confronted by political, emotional, cultural, and psychological borders/barriers which have influenced their visions of a political solution to the Jerusalem issue.

The Jerusalem question can be seen as a microcosm of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, with the core issues of borders, settlements, refugees, and security clearly at the center of their accounts of life under occupation in the disputed holy city

The study touches on the complexity and diversity of the human fabric of Palestinian women in occupied East Jerusalem, the ties between locality and identity, and the struggle of these women to preserve their Palestinian identity. The interesting mix of participants in this study – one was originally a Jordanian citizen, one grew up in Egypt, one is a refugee from Shu'fat refugee camp, some hold Israeli-issued blue identity cards for permanent residents and live in the Old City in the proximity of settlers – reflects this complexity and diversity. The issues raised by the women also demonstrate the ways in which the Jerusalem question can be seen as a microcosm of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, with the core issues of borders,

⁸ B'Tselem, [House Demolitions: Demolition on the pretext of unlawful construction](#), *B'Tselem's website* (retrieved on 23.5.2022).

⁹ B'Tselem, [House Demolitions: Demolition of houses as punishment](#), *B'Tselem's website* (retrieved on 23.5.2022).

¹⁰ United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), [Record number of demolitions, including self-demolitions, in East Jerusalem in April 2019](#), *OCHA's website* (23.5.2019).

settlements, refugees, and security clearly at the center of their accounts of life under occupation in the disputed holy city.

All of the women without exception voiced the need for initiatives to achieve national independence from occupation rather than securing individual human right improvements intended to facilitate life under occupation without bringing the occupation to an end. They stated their opposition to engaging in Israeli-Palestinian dialogues that basically "engineer" a façade of coexistence or in joint projects such as studies about equity and bridging gaps that serve as Band-Aids that enable the preservation of the status quo when what is needed is amputation of the occupation. They refused to serve merely as subjects of a study and called for supporting them in their aspiration to end the occupation and achieve national independence. They do not see the facts of their daily lives as a binary equation that is separate from politics but as a representation of the politics of the occupation that they reject.

Methodology

The study methodology was developed through brainstorming meetings with members of the Zulat staff, an assigned Steering Committee, and Palestinian and Israeli experts in the academic and nongovernmental spheres. The study aimed to feature the voices of East Jerusalem Palestinian women on the daily hardships of life under the Israeli occupation, assess the impact of their experiences, and convey personal perspectives from the standpoint of the participants. Due to budgetary constraints, it was conceptualized as a relatively small-scale study with limited staff, time, sample size, and research breadth. The research exclusively utilized a qualitative approach of in-depth, semi-structured interviews designed to generate insightful observations; comprehensive, thorough, and nuanced information; and meaningful data analysis.

Time and time again, the study demonstrated that working with people in highly politicized conflict zones requires a great deal of time and effort and introduces a high level of unpredictability that is not easily managed within the constraints of a carefully structured, externally funded project. For example, the timeline met with delays because of unanticipated challenges in enlisting women who met our criteria to participate in the study. We encountered broad opposition to cooperation with Israeli NGOs based on bitter experiences in the past, frustration with the current situation, suspicions regarding exploitation and hidden agendas, and refusal to engage in anything that could be construed as normalization of the occupation. Those women who ultimately agreed to participate underscored that they were doing so not in a spirit of cooperation but as an act of resistance.

The author of the report is a quadrilingual lawyer, with extensive experience dealing with the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and human rights and refugee issues, including work with Human Rights Watch and UNRWA. She has a sound understanding of the Palestinian environment, including the culture and diversity of the people, and is experienced in interacting with interlocutors on sensitive subjects and conducting fieldwork and research in conflict contexts. This helped prepare her to meet the challenges that arose as she listened to the accounts of the interviewees.

The study was conducted with the oversight of a Steering Committee composed of Ms. Jihad Abu Zneid, a former member of the Palestinian parliament on behalf of the Fatah party and East Jerusalem region and an expert on East Jerusalem and Palestinian women's issues, and Professor Naomi Chazan, a former member of the Israeli parliament on behalf of the Meretz party, fellow researcher at the Van Leer Jerusalem Institute, and a recognized human rights and feminist activist. These women lent their expertise as individuals who believe in the

importance of this study as a vehicle to raise awareness about what Palestinian women are enduring in East Jerusalem and bring about change.

Although the scope of the sample was not representative, much thought went into the selection of the ten women who participated in the study to ensure a broad range of perspectives based on age, origins, marital and familial status, education, profession, and place of residence. Ultimately, four key informants and six members of the general public were selected. The women's ages ranged from 24 to 73, and they reside in five areas within the Israeli-defined municipal borders of Jerusalem: the Old City, Shu'fat refugee camp, Al-'Isawiya, Bet Hanina, and Kufr 'Aqab. Of the six, two were single and four were married with children; three were employed in East Jerusalem and the West Bank and three were unemployed; and three were university graduates with bachelor's and master's degrees, two had high school diplomas, and one is currently a student. The four key informants included women who have firsthand knowledge of the political and urban reality in occupied East Jerusalem and understand the gender dimensions of the situation.

All participants gave their verbal or written consent to participate in the study. Based on their requests, care has been taken to maintain the anonymity of seven of the ten women. Three of the key informants agreed to be identified: Zahira Kamal, a women's rights activist and former minister of women affairs in the Palestinian Authority (PA), the first to hold that portfolio; Fadwa Khader, a women's rights activist and head of the Palestinian People's Party; and Rania Arafat, a women's rights activist and lecturer on gender and development at Al-Quds University.

The data was collected between January and April 2022. The researcher and author conducted all ten interviews, some by Zoom because of Covid-19 and others in person. She conducted the interviews in Arabic and later translated them verbatim into English, taking care to remain true to the vocabulary and tone of the speakers. The duration of all interviews was between 1 hour and 45 minutes to 2 hours and 15 minutes.

All ten interview subjects were asked the following questions:

1. What are the hardships you encounter because of the Israeli occupation?
2. What kind of impact do these hardships have on you?
3. What do you think could be possible political solutions for the issue of occupied East Jerusalem?
4. What are your recommendations to address the current prevailing reality?

The first round of interviews and literature review took place in January and February 2022 with the four key informants and constituted a reference point to contextualize the study by mapping their views on the most pressing challenges faced by Palestinian women in East Jerusalem as a result of the Israeli occupation, prior to conducting the in-depth interviews with the other six women. The responses of the key informants to the interview questions and the views they shared were validated later by the content of the six interviews during the second round, which took place in March and April 2022. The analysis of the narratives and gathered data revealed key areas of common concern, from which the themes of motherhood, identity, human security, and political solutions were extrapolated.

Findings

Mothers on and Under Guard

Reflecting on the narratives that were voiced by the interview subjects, the theme of motherhood under occupation and in occupied East Jerusalem specifically, as well as the effect of life in an environment of political violence on mother-child relationships, emerged repeatedly. Of the ten women interviewed, eight are mothers and three of them grandmothers. Of course, all of them had mothers and could attest to the difficulties they experienced. One interviewee reported feeling deprived of her motherhood, "which was stolen by the Israeli occupation". All the mothers said they were struggling with their role and their responsibility to meet the minimum needs of their children, such as nutrition and shelter, and above all expressed the wish that their children could have a normal life like other children in the world.

One interviewee reported feeling deprived of her motherhood "which was stolen by the Israeli occupation"

Interview subjects reported that as mothers living under occupation, they cannot afford the luxury of spontaneity in their and their children's lives. They must plan every aspect of daily life meticulously but must also be flexible, as the occupation can shuffle all the cards at a moment's notice. Most mothers reported that the occupation has quashed their dreams and expressed fears that the same fate awaits their children, who "have grown up knowing nothing but conflict and occupation". They said that the occupation has penetrated their lives to the extent that it has become part of their identity and violates their very sense of self.

The occupation has penetrated their lives to the extent that it has become part of their identity and violates their very sense of self

Most interviewees said that the occupation creates situations where mothers feel and look vulnerable or incompetent in their own eyes or those of their children, generates trauma for both mothers and children, and threatens the mothers' individual security and their children's safety.

Family Reunification

According to the Citizenship and Entry Into Israel Law, Palestinian East Jerusalemites who marry spouses who hold PA or foreign passports and want to live with them in Jerusalem must apply to the Israeli Ministry of Interior for family unification. The application process is arduous, demanding that they submit numerous documents and comply with the very rigid rules set by the Interior Ministry for the approval of the applications. If the applicants fail to meet any of the conditions, their requests are rejected. As a result, many couples live in East Jerusalem illegally under threat of deportation; others choose to live apart; and still others eventually opt for divorce. The rationale for the law put forward by successive Israeli Governments has been one of security needs, but human rights organizations have long contested this assertion, claiming that the true motive is to restrict the number of Palestinians living within the State of Israel.

Mothers whose requests for family reunification have not been approved live in constant fear of being detained and deported, and this affects their freedom of movement at the most basic level. Several respondents expressed pain at not being able to be present for their children at events of significance for their cognitive, emotional, and mental development, depriving the children of the memories and bonds forged at such moments. The constant fear of deportation overshadows their lives, denying them the simplest of pleasures such as taking their children to play outdoors, strolling with them in the streets of the Old City, or accompanying them to a birthday party. Far worse are cases in which mothers are unable to accompany children in need of medical care because the children are registered as East Jerusalemites, but the mothers are not. The women reported a pervasive sense of vulnerability, and those who have been waiting for permits for decades expressed fatigue over the ongoing need to hide their existence.

I've been in Jerusalem for 25 years now, and my application for family reunification has not been approved yet. Israel wants to erase my existence as a person and as a mother in the world by imposing its discriminatory actions and laws on me. It wants to steal my basic and mother's rights from me. (...) The Israeli occupation wants to make my kids experience life events alone, as if they have no mother, as if they were orphans. I cannot participate in my kids' activities and ceremonies at school or go elsewhere with them. I have lived my entire life in the Old City in fear. (...) There are police everywhere I go. If I step out for quick shopping, there can be a sudden checkpoint on the way back home, and if I get caught, I'll be deported to Gaza and separated from my children, who are only registered in their father's identity documents.

This interviewee lives in a house whose roof the police want to take over to monitor the neighborhood. In their efforts to get the family to evacuate the premises, she argues, the police use the children as pawns, applying psychological pressure with veiled threats about arresting their mother and transferring her to Gaza. She also reported police behavior intended to humiliate her in front of her children.

The police came to my house one day in the early morning and asked me to come with them for interrogation. (...) I needed to use the toilet because I had my period. They sent a policewoman with me to the bathroom! I told her that I need some privacy because I wanted to change my pad, but she refused. I used my sanitary pad while she was staring at me, with two of my children who woke up from the noise standing on the other side of the bathroom door.

After she emerged from the bathroom, the policewoman wanted to put her in hand and ankle cuffs. The children were terrified at the sight of their mother in cuffs, and she was afraid that the police might detain the children, so she tried to think of a way to calm them. Using her wits, she smiled and reminded them that she had always wanted to wear bracelets on her wrists and ankles and said that the cuffs the policewoman had just put on her were the bracelets she had always wanted.

Another interviewee grappling with the harmful effects of family reunification policies spoke about the choices and efforts mothers have to make for the sake of holding their families together. Married to a man with an East Jerusalem ID, she chose to live in the dirty, overcrowded neighborhood of Kufr 'Aqab, which lies within the municipal borders of Jerusalem although it is located beyond the separation barrier, so that her children would not lose their rights in East Jerusalem. As the children are registered only on the father's ID, she cannot cross through checkpoints with them. She painfully recalled an incident when she was forced to leave her crying baby behind in the car with her husband as she had to cross through a different checkpoint for Palestinians who do not have East Jerusalem IDs.

(...) she was forced to leave her crying baby behind in the car with her husband as she had to cross through a different checkpoint

I was married at the age of 18. Seven years of my life passed while waiting to reach the age to be able to apply (for family reunification). (...) Through my four pregnancies, I was always haunted by bad thoughts that I would not make it to Jerusalem in time to give birth because it won't be easy to pass the checkpoint or, even worse, they won't let me pass at all. (...) If a mother wants to take her kids on

vacation, she'll need the father's official approval because the kids are registered on their father's ID. The only official connection with your kids will be the piece of paper given by the father. (...) When crossing a checkpoint, I'm not allowed to stay in the car with my husband and kids. I have to use a different path for people who don't have a blue (Jerusalem residency) ID. No one cares if I have a crying baby in the car. I still have to leave the car and use the special line for screening West Bankers. My kids go through a different line and then wait for me on the other side, sometimes waiting a long time until I finish.

She also spoke of the impact of family reunification policies on custody issues in divorce cases. Once the women's temporary residency permits expire, they are forced to leave East Jerusalem, but the Ramallah courts cannot obligate Palestinian husbands in East Jerusalem to pay child support. The husbands can choose to withdraw the reunification application and/or to keep the children in Jerusalem, denying the mothers access to them until they turn 18.

Graphic depiction of inequality between Jewish citizens of Israel and native Palestinian residents of East Jerusalem¹¹

BORN UNEQUAL EAST JERUSALEM

 <p style="writing-mode: vertical-rl; transform: rotate(180deg); font-weight: bold; font-size: 2em;">NOA</p> <p style="text-align: center; font-weight: bold; color: green;">JEWISH CITIZEN OF ISRAEL BORN IN EAST JERUSALEM (SETTLEMENT)</p>	 <p style="writing-mode: vertical-rl; font-weight: bold; font-size: 2em;">ZEID</p> <p style="text-align: center; font-weight: bold; color: orange;">PALESTINIAN RESIDENT BORN IN EAST JERUSALEM</p>
IS MY LEGAL STATUS IN JERUSALEM SECURE?	
<p style="font-weight: bold; color: green;">YES</p> <p>You're an Israeli citizen and it's government policy to maintain a Jewish majority in the city</p>	<p style="font-weight: bold; color: orange;">NO</p> <p>Just like foreigners who move to Israel, you're a resident, a conditional and revocable status. You can apply for citizenship, but you're unlikely to get it</p>
CAN I MOVE ABROAD FOR A FEW YEARS AND COME BACK?	
<p style="font-weight: bold; color: green;">YES</p> <p>Whenever you decide to move back to Jerusalem, you'll be welcome</p>	<p style="font-weight: bold; color: orange;">MAYBE NOT</p> <p>You can leave, but if you stay away too long, your residency could be revoked, leaving you without legal status</p>
WILL I KEEP MY LEGAL STATUS IF I MOVE TO OTHER PARTS OF THE WEST BANK?	
<p style="font-weight: bold; color: green;">YES</p> <p>You can move to an Israeli settlement in the West Bank. Your legal status is secure, regardless of where you live</p>	<p style="font-weight: bold; color: orange;">MAYBE NOT</p> <p>If Israeli authorities determine that you no longer "maintain a connection" to Jerusalem, you might lose your residency</p>
CAN I EASILY MOVE TO A NEW HOME IN EAST JERUSALEM?	
<p style="font-weight: bold; color: green;">YES</p> <p>You should have no problem moving into a settlement</p>	<p style="font-weight: bold; color: orange;">MAYBE NOT</p> <p>It's virtually impossible to obtain a building permit, and built-up Palestinian areas are already overcrowded</p>



VISUALIZING PALESTINE

The individuals depicted above are fictional representations for illustrative purposes only
 SOURCES HRW (2011) A Threshold Crossed
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APR 2021



¹¹ Human Rights Watch (HRW), *A Threshold Crossed: Israeli Authorities and the Crimes of Apartheid and Persecution*, HRW's website (27.4.2021).

Economy, Employment, and Education

Most of the interviewees expressed concerns about the high cost of living and their struggles as mothers to provide for the needs of their children in a context where occupation affects access to decent employment, where East Jerusalem women are sent by the Israeli Employment Services to work in demeaning jobs, and where women often have to hold down two or three jobs in order to provide for their family. While economic concerns and the threat of sexual harassment were common to all women, in the case of mothers there is the added aspect of having to tolerate abuse in order to provide bread for their children.

While economic concerns and the threat of sexual harassment were common to all women, in the case of mothers there is the added aspect of having to tolerate abuse in order to provide bread for their children

There are immense rights violations when it comes to economic and employment opportunities for mothers in East Jerusalem. Women are subjected to abuse at the hands of their employees. They are forced to work at night, they suffer from sexual harassment, and they can't complain without losing their income. They can't speak out!

This interviewee also spoke of the difficult schedule working mothers must keep in order to get themselves to work and their children to school on time.

What time do you think a mother from Kufr 'Aqab who works in West Jerusalem needs to leave the house? She would have to go through the Qalandiya checkpoint, which means in order to avoid heavy traffic she might need to be at the checkpoint at 4 AM. Before that she needs to prepare everything for her kids to go to school, make sure they have food when they return, make sure someone will be there to wake them up and get them to school, all this before she even gets to work. It's insane. Some women go to work at the factories in 'Atarot, an industrial zone that has mostly Palestinian workers doing hard labor. Some other mothers are sent to work in cleaning jobs with bosses who are settlers! It's a very harsh and painful reality, but mothers accept it because they need to put food on the table for their children.

Language barriers, cultural differences, and prejudice add to the routine challenges faced when seeking employment, and mothers worry that the cycle will continue in the future. The interviewees expressed concerns about their children's future, worrying about their ability to

secure decent jobs that match their skills, qualifications, and aspirations or about employers who will take advantage of them because they come from East Jerusalem, where jobs are very scarce and not well paid.

I think about how I can improve my children's lives and break the poverty cycle. Mothers also have to worry about their daughters: Should they learn Hebrew? Should they complete their matriculation? Another issue when deciding which schools or universities to send their daughters to is that of identity; will they be in an environment that may have a negative impact on their Palestinian identity and culture? (...) I wonder how my daughter will make a living if her diploma is not recognized? As a mother, I have a hard time envisioning the future. I know that in a few years I might not be able to afford to live here anymore.

Another interviewee reported the dependency of women on their husbands to register children for school when the mother is undocumented, as it is up to the father to prepare the necessary papers.

My husband was lazy and neglected matters, and I felt dependent on him. As a mother, I was not at all aware of the importance of the procedures and documents or how complicated it was to get issued birth certificates for the kids. I hadn't imagined that things would be so convoluted and didn't know the Israeli laws. I didn't know that I needed the actual birth certificates of the children, a Jerusalem address, and proof of residency to register them for kindergarten or schools.

Logistical challenges, such as the need to pass through checkpoints, affect decisions about which schools children attend, the number of hours they spend getting to and from school, and the quality of their education. At the same time, the dearth of nearby public schools often forces parents to choose private schools despite the cost and distance.

If my grandson is a minute late for the school bus at the other side of the checkpoint, he has to return home. Can you imagine? If there were enough good municipal schools, why would one send them to private schools in Beit Hanina? This would reduce my fear about my kids; when my son is in a school close by, I feel more secure.

Physical and Emotional Well-Being

All interview subjects said that their main concern is the safety and well-being of their children, whose daily experience is that of a conflict zone. A key informant described the psychological toll.

As a mother, you get anxious every time your child leaves the house. You have to call them to make sure they get to their destination safely. (...) Just imagine what kind of stress and anxiety that creates inside a person and in society, with people constantly calling each other to check on their well-being. The child can feel suffocated by these calls; they feel like they're being followed, like they can't have a moment alone for themselves. They also get mentally tired of this.

A mother from Shu'fat refugee camp described the dangers posed to children by the activity of the Israeli security forces in the camp and the strain this places on mothers. She spoke of the use of tear gas within the dense quarters of the camp and the exchanges of fire that threaten the lives of innocent children caught in the crossfire or mistaken for culprits involved in illegal activity.

Watching over minors under house arrest changes the parent-child relationship, forcing the mother into the role of warden in the service of the occupation – a role that totally negates her identity as a mother

Imagine your child going to school and getting hit by tear gas or hearing the sound of bullets. As the mother of other children who are with you in the house, you don't know whether to leave the house to look for the child. (...) The mother's nerves remain on edge until her child returns from school. She suffers like this daily.

One interviewee mentioned the numerous arrests of minors, some of which result in house arrests. She explained how this abnormal situation changes the parent-child relationship, forcing the mother into the role of warden in the service of the occupation – a role that totally negates her identity as a mother.

When that happens, Israelis essentially take away the role of a mother and turn her into a prison guard in her own home over her own children. It completely warps the mother and child relationship, and it's not normal. It plants violence and hatred in the heart of the small child, who sees how their mother is compelled to

treat them differently. The mother also loses patience with her child because she feels obligated to stay at home as long as the child can't leave. It's important to realize that this is not a normal or healthy mother-child relationship!

House Demolitions

It is well known that many families in East Jerusalem face eviction or house demolition orders because their homes were built without permits (usually as a result of the Israeli policy of making the attainment of permits next to impossible) or because their ownership is contested by Jewish settlers. The emotional trauma of losing one's home is easy to understand, but the interviewees presented a new dimension in their descriptions of the experience from the point of view of mothers.

No one thinks or writes about the invasive violations of intimacy and of the values of modesty of these Muslim mothers and what they go through once they get thrown out of their homes! When women or mothers are evicted from their homes, they must live inside the usually crowded space of the person who is hosting them. Women who have lost their homes are faced with a conundrum when it comes to daily hygiene and comfort. Think about a mother who wants to take a shower, bathe her children, or walk around in her pajamas or without a headscarf. How can she do that in someone else's home? Sleeping and changing one's clothes become tasks subject to scrutiny by those outside the immediate family. They suffer from this violent invasion, directly or indirectly, on the part of their hosts, resulting in psychological effects mentally and socially. This constant psychological pressure can lead to impaired mental and physical health, which can even be deadly.

One interviewee described in painful detail the flood of thoughts and emotions that overtake a mother as the Israeli security forces approach the threshold of her home.

Can you, or the reader of this report, imagine being evicted from your home? Can you imagine what goes on in a mother's head when that happens? Her mind races in different directions. She must take care of so many things; she becomes overwhelmed and doesn't know where to begin. She thinks: Should I gather the most important documents of the family from the house first? Should I take some food? Some clothes? Or should I take the children's schoolbooks? Should I go find them, so they don't get beaten or arrested during the eviction? She worries where she and her children and family or parents can go. What to leave behind, what to carry? What happens to this woman and her children once her house is demolished? Where will she live? Who will be willing to take her in and bear

another family in their home? Who will welcome her with open arms? Most people barely have enough space for themselves in a two-room apartment; how will they find space for someone else?

In an attempt to illustrate the impact on the children's psyche and the long-term implications, one interviewee shared the story of a young girl who always went to school with a five-shekel coin in her pocket. When asked by the teacher why she did this, she said it was to make sure she had money to get to her grandmother's house in case her house was destroyed while she was in school.

Other children take their toys to school because they fear their homes will be demolished and they will lose them all. These fears inhabit these children from a young age. They cannot sleep in peace, cannot relax for a moment; they jump at every knock on the door, thinking it's someone coming to evict them. They're petrified all the time!

Fragmented Identity

The interviews revealed interesting insights about the complexity and diversity of the human fabric in East Jerusalem. The data also illustrates different ways in which the word identity can be thought of in the East Jerusalem context and how the interviewed women struggle to preserve their Palestinian identity.

The women spoke in detail about the bureaucracy associated with establishing residency in East Jerusalem, even in cases of women who have lived in the city all their lives. Some of them have no formal documents that confer upon them an official identity, while others are assigned nationalities that do not reflect their true identity as Palestinians. Some are caught in a classic "catch-22" situation in which they cannot travel because they do not have a passport and cannot get a passport because they cannot travel.

Personal decisions such as whether to marry or what career to pursue are also affected by their residency, limiting the women's ability to fully exercise self-realization and fulfill their potential. The women also described how manifestations of Palestinian culture in East Jerusalem have been eroded, further eating away at expressions of Palestinian identity.

The extent to which the occupation has permeated every aspect of Palestinian life was voiced perhaps most succinctly as follows:

(The occupation) has entered every facet of our existence; it has become part of our identity, something we did not choose to always have to take into account in everything we do!

Identity as a Legal Term

Most Palestinian residents of East Jerusalem are not citizens of Israel; their legal status is that of permanent residents and is granted to them by Israel in accordance with the Entry Into Israel Law of 1952, which regulates entry into and residency in Israel for foreigners. As explained by two of the interviewees, by applying this law to Palestinians, Israel is treating native East Jerusalem Palestinians as immigrants who have entered Israel. The women underscored the absurdity of this situation, as they did not move to Israel in 1967 but simply continued to reside where they were under a change of regime. As one key informant put it:

They simply do not want us here; they want us out of Jerusalem. We have been here forever, this is our birthplace, yet when I want to travel, I need to get an entry visa from the Israeli side to return to my home!

This and other explicit or implicit remarks made by the interviewed women revealed without doubt that they have major concerns about the nature and the precariousness of the legal status they were granted by Israel, which differs from that of Jews living in the same city, and that the majority of East Jerusalem Palestinians share these concerns.

Many Palestinians struggle with the question of identity, as various papers are either thrust upon them or invalidated as they move in and out of the maze that is the occupation, and they are faced with painful choices at times to avoid forcible deportation. In the case of East Jerusalem residents, the ties between locality and identity are even less straightforward, as is reflected in the narratives of the interviewed women.

One of the interviewees was born in Jordan to Palestinian parents who returned to the PA in 1997 after 25 years in exile. Now in her 40s, she used to be a Jordanian citizen before she moved with her parents to the West Bank. Once there, she lost her Jordanian citizenship and became a citizen of nowhere, instead being granted a Palestinian West Bank identity card. Married to a partner from East Jerusalem and after awaiting approval of her family unification application for 15 years, she was granted a 00-permit by Israel – a temporary permit that means that she can stay in Jerusalem for unlimited periods of time, unlike others from the West Bank whose entry permits do not entitle them to stay overnight or remain beyond a certain hour as specified on the permit. Her 00-permit is not automatically renewed.

Every year, she must present a slew of documents such as water and electricity bills, rental contracts, sick fund payments, etc. to prove her residency. If even one of the documents is missing, her permit will not be renewed, and she will not be able to enter East Jerusalem. The bureaucratic barrier placed between her and her family by her different status creates situations in which they are physically separated, with ensuing psychological implications. For example, plans to travel with her children to her brother's wedding in Jordan were aborted because of her pending unification application.

The lawyer told me it's not necessary that they attend the wedding of their uncle. Go alone and leave them here. If they travel, they might get stuck for months or even years pending their family reunification, which might not even be approved, so don't risk it. So, I only took my two-year-old daughter with me, but when I reached the border the Interior Ministry clerk told me to go register her in the Palestinian records, so I went back home and traveled the next day without her.

One of the women, of Palestinian origin, grew up in Egypt and has been living in East Jerusalem for the past 25 years with her husband and seven children. The couple's application for family unification was never approved. When she first came to Jerusalem, she had an Egyptian travel document – not an Egyptian passport, because her Palestinian father was born in Gaza. When her travel document expired, she had to travel to Egypt to renew it; however, with her unification application pending and without having been granted any document from the Israeli side as a resident of East Jerusalem, she could not travel. She, like many other women who are married to partners from East Jerusalem, feared to leave and never be allowed to come back to her husband and children. She spoke of the agony of not being able to travel to see her mother or father before they passed away. Seeking a way out of this "catch-22" situation, she turned to the Egyptian Embassy and learned that she was entitled to an Egyptian passport because her father, with foresight regarding his daughter's future status, had taken out Egyptian citizenship years earlier. The Egyptian authorities, however, informed her that she had to go to Egypt to complete the process, which returned her to square one.

I don't have any official paper – neither a permit nor any legal document – that proves my residency or identity. (...) I have felt like an orphan for 25 years; this feeling has been with me ever since I came to Jerusalem to get married. My parents were never able to visit me, and I stopped enjoying the Ramadan, the Eid holidays, because my family was not around. (...) Israel wants to cancel my existence in the world by its discriminatory actions and laws. It wants to steal our rights from us. I don't have the minimum rights. All I want is freedom of movement. Is that too much to ask for?!

All the interviewees spoke about their struggles to maintain sufficient income to retain residency within areas recognized by Israel as being located within the borders of the Jerusalem Municipality. An interviewee who was born in Bir Nabala, an area which was left outside of the boundaries of Jerusalem after the construction of the separation barrier, narrated painfully how her parents were forced to leave the spacious and beautiful house they owned in Bir Nabala and rent a smaller place in Bet Hanina within the city limits.

The place we rented was much smaller than the house we had in Bir Nabala. There, we lived very comfortably; the space was very nice and roomy. Then they built the barrier, and all of a sudden we were left on the other side, with me not being able to walk to my school which was now on the other side of the barrier. The income my family earned became insufficient for the new living expenses, and my parents were forced to work very hard to find additional income sources to raise us.

In terms of identity papers, unlike the interviewee who has no "official" identity, this woman holds a dizzying array of documents that show her as living in Israel without being an Israeli and holding Jordanian citizenship without being a true Jordanian. She said she has a Jerusalem identity card issued by Israel to Palestinians born in Jerusalem; a laissez-passer travel document that is granted only to residents who hold a Jerusalem identity card; a type "P" Jordanian passport, which differs from the passport granted to Jordanian citizens; and a green border crossing card that differentiates her from Jordanian citizens who hold the yellow card. In addition, her father is recognized as a refugee according to UNRWA and holds a refugee card.

While the Jordanian-born woman expressed frustration over the number of documents she must present annually to maintain her temporary residency, an interviewee who is a permanent resident reported that she, too, maintains an archive with the meticulous documentation needed to prove that East Jerusalem is the center of her life in order to renew her ID, although she was born and has always lived in East Jerusalem.

I am tired of filing every single bill paid in order to prove my residency. I have 50 files full of papers to prove my family ties and my residency. I keep the certificates from my kindergarten; I keep all my family's Jerusalem rental contracts. I still have all the electricity bills since 1970. (...) Although we are in the digital age, to renew my ID I have to show physical evidence from the last five years, including sick fund and tax payments, to prove that I live in Jerusalem.

She reflected on the struggles she grew up with when trying to define her national identity, explaining the absurdity of having to reconcile her sense of self with the labels the authorities applied to her.

The question about my nationality was first raised on my university application. It came up repeatedly during my years of study and later as a professional. In school they teach us that our nationality is the country of which we are nationals. But in my case, what would be the answer? I was raised as a Jerusalemite. I was granted permanent residency status with an ID card that carries the symbol of the State of Israel on the outside cover and states that my nationality is Jordanian. But I am not Jordanian. I am Palestinian, but I have no document that states that my country is Palestine. My mother tongue is Arabic. My official documents have Hebrew on them. One of my ID cards said that Jerusalem is my address, without specifying East or West Jerusalem. For nationality, it said "Arab minority". Now nationality has been replaced with asterisks and my address is listed as East Jerusalem. These are all kinds of notions that make me feel marked by labels I have not chosen. This saga made me struggle with my identity. I carry a Jordanian passport that indicates no nationality. What is all this? When the PA signed the Oslo agreement, another label surfaced. Am I now a Palestinian national? I decided to build and define my own identity. I am a proud East Jerusalemite! I am a Muslim who wears a hijab and works in humanitarian organizations.

Impact on Marital Status and Career Choices

The aforementioned interviewee reported that even when it comes to marriage, decisions are built around the identity papers of the person: whether or not he or she has an Israeli Jerusalemite ID card. Although this woman does hold such an ID, she decided to remain single after witnessing the amount of suffering the Israeli Ministry of Interior regulations caused her sisters, who married partners who were not from East Jerusalem.

I found myself having to reject all marriage proposals from men who were from the West Bank, from outside the country, or from countries that do not have normalization with or recognition of Israel, because of the endless complications of family reunification procedures. I don't want to suffer like my sister and her kids did. To date, my nephews do not have birth certificates from the place where they were born. I feel like we are leasing our right to exist in this place from the Israelis.

The risk of revocation of permanent residency affected some of the interviewees' decisions about accepting excellent job opportunities abroad that could improve their quality of life

and give them a sense of fulfillment. As far as the Israeli authorities are concerned, pursuing one's dreams by accepting such jobs means that the woman has shifted her "center of life" outside Jerusalem, and therefore she will lose her status and never be allowed to return. One interviewee pointed out the double standard and discrimination in Israel's residency policies and underscored how they affect the professional identity of East Jerusalem Palestinians.

Jewish Jerusalemites can travel and leave the country for as long as they like. This does not prejudice their right to return to this place. Why do Israeli Jews get to have two or more citizenships and still preserve their residential status in this country? Why can they leave Israel for a year or more and still have their rights whenever they return? Why doesn't the Israeli occupation see me as a human being, with rights, just like theirs? This is hypocrisy and a double standard. They encourage deepening their roots by allowing settlers to live in the West Bank, and they do everything to uproot us from our land!

Culture and Education as an Expression of Identity

Some of the interviewees recalled how Jerusalem used to be the center of Palestinian cultural life and identity, lamenting the fact that this is no longer the case and that Ramallah has replaced Jerusalem in this regard. One placed some of the blame on the construction of the separation barrier, which has isolated East Jerusalem Palestinians from Palestinians in the West Bank. Another spoke of the fatigue and despair generated by unemployment and poverty which have deflated the residents' interest in entertainment but also described the threatening presence of settlers in the Old City as a factor in the Palestinians' reluctance to leave their homes after dark.

After 5 PM, the Old City is like a ghost town; people are scared to leave their houses. Settlers beat people and spray them with tear gas. They're like ticking time bombs waiting to explode when the right person comes along. Sometimes such stories make it into the media, like when a 45-year-old man was walking in the Old City and was severely beaten by settlers.

Two interviewees explained how the Jerusalem Municipality, to which they pay taxes, imposes the Israeli curriculum on them as a condition for funding Palestinian schools. They see this as an attempt to intensify Israel's presence in their lives and to change the Palestinian identity of the East Jerusalemites with textbooks that do not tell the history of the Palestinian people and are foreign to their identity.

We don't have the right to choose our education system. Schools that get support from the Jerusalem Municipality have to follow the Israeli curriculum. This is unacceptable! The municipality has the responsibility to provide education to all residents regardless of the choice of curriculum. Education is a basic right. We pay taxes and deserve to get these services. It's not like they'd be doing us a favor, as we pay for these services.

Another interviewee expressed the dilemma involved in choosing between an Israeli or a Palestinian university for her daughters because of the culture clash and the fear that they will feel the need to change in order to fit in.

While they can attend Israeli universities, it's a very difficult path both financially and culturally. Parents might not be able to afford tuition, and the culture is so different that girls may feel they need to change their identity, which we don't want them to have to do. I don't want my daughter to be taught and exposed to things that are not part of our Muslim values and culture.

Human (In)Security

The analysis of the data shows that various forms of insecurities are inherent to the reality of the lives of the interviewees in East Jerusalem – a reality they described as painful, menacing, and stressful. The threats they face derive from various causes emanating from living under prolonged occupation and from Israel's deepening annexation and control of East Jerusalem. The interviewees claimed that the hardships they endure include discriminatory municipal services; alarming rates of poverty; inadequate living conditions, insufficient infrastructure, and housing shortages; a crippled job market and limited development opportunities; house demolitions and evictions resulting in the transfer of Palestinian residents and "Judaization" of Palestinian neighborhoods; settler violence; misconduct of Israeli security forces, including arbitrary arrests and interrogations and sexual harassment; and restrictions on movement. The sum of these oppressive measures amounts to challenges to their survival, livelihood, and dignity which, in accordance with UN

Being subjected to almost daily physical and verbal violence and abuse by Israeli security forces and settlers has had a terrible effect on [the women's] sense of safety and security

Resolution 66/290, means that East Jerusalem women are being denied their fundamental right to human security.

The issue of lack of physical safety was at the center of all the interviewees' narratives and concerns. According to the women, being subjected to almost daily physical and verbal violence and abuse by Israeli security forces and settlers has had a terrible effect on their sense of safety and security. They described how their daily lives are permeated by fear from the moment they rise.

The first thing I do every morning is turn on the news and tell myself "O-k-a-a-a-y, let's see what problems the day has in store": Which roads are open, and which have been closed to us Palestinians? Any clashes or shootings I should be aware of? Which checkpoints are jammed?" Do I feel safe when I wake up every morning? The answer is clearly, no!

The interviewees reported that this reality has a negative impact on their psychological well-being. They spoke about feelings of social suffocation and isolation since the construction of the separation barrier; feelings of anxiety, frustration, and fury stemming from their lack of control over their lives and surroundings; fear of being forced out of their homes and out of the city; fear of the possibility of losing their livelihood and being impoverished; fear of abuse at the hands of the security forces or settlers; feelings of turning into nervous and aggressive people; feelings of humiliation and loss of hope and dreams for the future – all of which add up to, as one interviewee said, a "feeling of existential insecurity".

One example of how the Israeli authorities keep the Palestinians off balance and agitated is the case of the traffic light in the Shu'fat camp. On the side of the road where the Palestinians turn into the camp, the light changes from red to green for a few seconds before turning red again for a long time. Meanwhile, settlers traveling on the other side benefit from smooth sailing as the light stays green most of the time. While there is nothing life-threatening in an errant traffic light, the policy of throwing spokes in the wheels of the Palestinians' lives wherever possible is clear.

Listening to the women's narratives, it became clear that to them the concept of security means human life and the individual's right to live in freedom from fear and with dignity, as opposed to the concept of security held by the Israeli authorities, which focuses exclusively on security based on territory and weaponry.

Dehumanization

The study revealed the women's firm belief that at the very core of the occupation lies a fundamental view of them as subhuman. In their narratives, the women expressed a profound sense of outrage at being viewed and treated as less than human. They contended that Israel is convinced that the only language they understand is humiliation and force and that it considers their dehumanization and that of Palestinian society at large critical to maintaining its inhumane and unjust occupation, which violates all standards of international law and human rights. Consequently, they perceive their struggle for Palestinian nationhood as not just a struggle for justice but also a struggle for humanity.

There is no such a thing as a "more humane occupation". Humanity and occupation do not go hand in hand. If Israelis tried to see us as fully human, this would inevitably result in granting us full rights that humans are entitled to, which would result in ending the occupation – a reality that most Israelis and current politics and government will never do.

Israelis denigrate our morality and think that they are moral; they strongly believe that we were born violent, barbaric, terrorists, suicide bombers, people who do not sanctify life; they are convinced that we are the aggressors and they are the victims; therefore, they think we deserve to be treated like some abstract thing.

One of the women pointed to the need for Israeli society to do some introspection and question the source of its indifference to the trampling of the Palestinians' human rights, while another addressed the toll that the perpetuation of an immoral occupation and the disregard for Palestinian lives is taking on Israeli society in general and the younger generation in particular, whose moral fiber is being eroded.

The focus is frequently on us – the occupied society – but the Israelis and the international community should focus their efforts on studying the occupying society. Please make it an important point in Zulat's report to remind the world that we are humans and tell the international community and Israel to do a critical self-examination and ask both why they allow the violation of our human rights and the denial of our right to self-determination to continue.

If the children of Israeli mothers are not killed in a war with Palestinians, they will nevertheless lose their children as human beings, because when a human being like their child loses important human values and is forced to become heartless by shooting at, or beating, or humiliating us, they can treat a Jewish person the same

way tomorrow because something in the core of their value system changed. The occupation violates moral principles that are the basis for universal human rights. Their child will no longer be the same child. They will become less humane.

Persecution Instead of Protection

According to the vast majority of interviewees, the Israeli security forces (police, Border Police, and army) act in ways they described as "unnecessarily humiliating or provocative or brutal when simply addressing East Jerusalem Palestinians or when arresting or interrogating them", at times resorting to unprovoked beatings. Some charged that the fingers of the security forces are loose on the trigger, citing the case of Iyad al-Hallaq, a 32-year-old autistic Palestinian man who was shot to death by an Israeli police officer for behaving in a suspicious manner.

The Border Police people are very arrogant, mean, and biased and treat us like enemies. Every East Jerusalem Palestinian is a suspect in their eyes.

Most of the interviewees reported feeling that the Israeli police were deployed in East Jerusalem for the sole purpose of protecting the Jewish residents and looking out for the nationalistic settlers. One interviewee said that Israel is committing a major mistake by deploying large police forces to patrol the city on a regular basis and charged that much of the violence is a result of provocations on the part of the police. On the other hand, the interviewees from the Shu'fat refugee camp and Kufr 'Aqab described the reluctance of the police to enter these two areas although they lie within the municipal boundaries of Jerusalem, because "only Palestinian lives are involved". The interviewee from Kufr 'Aqab noted that she pays taxes to the municipality but does not get the protection to which she and her family are entitled. The interviewee from Shu'fat elaborated that the absence of law enforcement allows rampant crime in the camp, including theft, beatings, shootings, family disputes, and drug dealing and usage. She claimed that the Israeli authorities enable this lawlessness intentionally because "they want the younger generation to keep busy with internal violence and drug use rather than with the national struggle".

The Israeli police do not fulfill their duty to protect East Jerusalem Palestinians and their property from harm. You can see a similar phenomenon when it comes to the 1948 Arab Israelis. The police are politicized.

Two interviewees reported that there were attempts to rip off their hijab as a means of humiliating them during confrontations. One described in detail how she had suffered at the hands of a particular female member of the Border Police, alleging that the nature of the abuse was meant also as an insult to Islam and an assault on the woman's belief in protecting her modesty.

I was on my way to work near Al-Aqsa Mosque when I saw that clashes had broken out between Israeli security forces and men from the neighborhood. When I came nearer to get to my work, a border policewoman with whom I had clashed in the past saw me coming, and she and a male comrade walked in my direction. She pushed me and I told her to get her hands off me. Things quickly escalated. She hit me with her rifle on my head and then on my knees. When I fell on the ground, she sat on my chest, then covered my face with my hijab. I felt strangled. Then the male who was with her held my arms so tightly that he broke my wrists. I bit her fingers because I was suffocating and needed to breathe. Then they pulled me by my hair, the hijab slipped off, and dragged me through the streets of the Old City while beating me on my back. I was screaming. The policewoman said: You should leave the city, go to Gaza. You belong there, not here.

The woman said that at the police station she was accused of trying to kill the policewoman, but footage from the surveillance cameras in the area proved the accusation to be totally unfounded. She refused to collaborate in the interrogation and eventually her hijab was returned, and she was released. She reported that she and other women who were subjected to similar treatment suffer from health problems. In her case, she was left disabled and in chronic pain, for which she will be on medication for a lifetime. Ironically, she is entitled to disability payments from Israel's National Insurance Institute for the damage inflicted on her by the Israeli security forces.

Three interviewees who suffered from Israeli police violence reported choosing not to file a complaint because of their complete lack of faith in police investigations. They said it was useless to file complaints because they will either not be pursued, or the investigators will blame the victims. One interviewee described such an incident.

There was an escalation between Israeli police forces and Palestinian youth close to my house. I took shelter in the innermost room to avoid tear gas and the random police shooting at the windows. My father's car was damaged in this incident. When we went to file a complaint at the police station, we were told to return home and tell the youth to stop acting like criminals.

Settler Incursions and Violence

All interviewees expressed fury over the growing presence of Jewish settlers in the Palestinian neighborhoods of East Jerusalem, which they see as dangerous and intrusive, and over efforts to “Judaize” the city. Some interviewees spoke about the alarming threats of property dispossession and lawsuits filed by the Ateret Cohanim and Elad settler organizations. According to them, these ultranationalistic groups could not have invaded their already crowded neighborhoods without the assistance of the Israeli security forces, legal system, and authorities. A major concern raised by several interviewees was the status quo regarding Al-Haram al-Sharif and pressure by settler groups to allow Jewish prayer there. One interviewee said every Israeli Government since 1967 has been obsessed with preserving a Jewish majority and moving the Palestinians who have lived in their homes for generations to the outskirts or completely out of the city.

Every now and then, the government has a new plan for Jerusalem. It is bullshit that the city is unified; the discrepancies between East and West are so obvious. There was a 2020 master plan for Jerusalem. Now I hear that there is a 2030 whatever-it’s-called plan that I think states that the strategic and demographic goal of the Israelis is to empty Jerusalem of Palestinians and to bring more settlers into the neighborhoods.

Several interviewees spoke about threats to their physical safety caused by settler violence and daily harassment. They described shoving and physical attacks, stone throwing, verbal insults and mockery, beatings on the bellies of pregnant women, pulling the hijab from women’s heads, and the use of guns. One interviewee pointed out that armed settlers are allowed to walk around freely, while local East Jerusalem women walk around in fear.

Their behavior is disgusting; they make our daily lives unbearable. Because of them, there are more police and all kinds of security people everywhere, barricades on roads leading to our homes, and clashes in my neighborhood which in the end lead to more of us being arrested, while they are immune from prosecution.

One interviewee spoke about a more serious form of settler violence which consists of attempts, sometimes successful, to kidnap East Jerusalem youngsters. She mentioned the case of Mohammed Abu Khdeir, who was kidnapped, beaten, and burnt alive by Jewish settlers in 2014. She said she has heard of other attempts to kidnap Palestinian children and recounted an attempt by a Kakh member to snatch her 2-year-old brother more than 30 years ago. She said this incident was etched in her memory and shaped her political opinion about the conflict.

When I was 11 and my brother was 2, my mother went to visit her friend who lived a few blocks away. When my brother woke up, I gave him a chocolate bar and took him to my mother. On the way, he dropped the chocolate and I put him down in order to pick it up. A settler who had been following me grabbed my brother and began to drag him away. I ran after him, and he pulled a gun and told me: Either you leave the kid, or I will shoot you in the head. I told him: Shoot me. A young Palestinian man standing at the corner saw me but did not interfere. When I was 18, this guy came to marry me, and I refused him because I remembered that he had done nothing. Luckily for us, another man saw me and ran toward us screaming. This made the settler let go of my brother and run away.

One interviewee whose brother owns a shop in the Old City spoke about a different tactic settlers use to drive Palestinians out of the city: They offer huge amounts of money and foreign passports as incentives to leave.

My brother owns a shop in Al-Sharaf neighborhood in Jerusalem, which is called the Jewish Quarter. I swear to God that he was offered millions of shekels to move out of there and sell his shop. He received calls from people in America who told him they were not Jews but were really interested in buying the store and were ready to offer tons of money. We suspected they were linked to settler groups. My brother answered them: If you give me all of your New York, I won't leave my shop and move out of here.

Insecurity at Checkpoints

Most of the women spoke about the challenges the checkpoints pose to their daily lives, describing the thinking and planning involved every time they need to leave the house: What would be the best route to travel? Which checkpoint would be best to cross and what might happen along the way? They need to make sure the car has enough gas if they get held up for a long time at the crossings or if they have to make detours, and they have to make sure there is enough food and water for the children, etc. All of the women said the checkpoints have affected the very fabric of their lives, with one giving the example of how she no longer attends funerals or weddings in Nablus because the trip that used to take 40 minutes can now take an entire day, and there's no way of knowing what awaits in advance.

The Palestinian areas are like Swiss cheese; you go from Area A to Area C and then back to A, and then there is what they call B. It's a rare occasion when we go directly and safely from our point of departure to our destination. We need to be alert, to adapt and change our route every time.

An interesting observation by one interviewee was that women cross the checkpoints more than men and therefore suffer from them more.

If you calculate the number and gender of people who go through the checkpoints, you will see that more women than men cross them daily. Women are the ones who take the children to the doctor or go grocery shopping for the household or drive the kids to school, etc., especially since most working men start their day very early and end very late.

Other interviewees spoke of the time wasted at checkpoints, sometimes with consequences that can affect health or employment.

The problem is that there is no checkpoint that can be crossed quickly! Quickly does not exist at any checkpoint. Even if you have to wait only five minutes, that can feel like an eternity when you're sick or in labor or need to get to a medical appointment or to work or school.

Another interviewee highlighted the absurdity of the checkpoint experience, while also lamenting the time wasted waiting to get from one place to another.

When you talk about checkpoints, you hear so many stories that are funny and very sad at the same time; you hear things that you think will never happen in real life, that you think can only happen in the movies until they actually happen. **Do you know how many minutes of my life I have wasted waiting at checkpoints?! Nobody counts those very precious minutes for us!**

Several interviewees described sexual harassment by soldiers at checkpoints, which intimidates women and makes them feel very unsafe.

In principle, the soldiers at checkpoints should verify the car and check our identity cards and let us pass if all is okay; that's it. Sometimes, however, they will spend half an hour or more asking all kinds of personal questions that are none of their business, saying that they would like to date us. Sometimes they insist, and this makes us feel insecure. Once a soldier stopped me while I was driving, and although my mother was next to me, this did not stop him from being very vulgar. He asked for my ID and my driving license, which was a pure provocation. When I got home, I saw that he had messaged me on Facebook saying: Hi, we just met a short while ago. How are you? Let's meet. I'm at the checkpoint. Why don't you drop by? I was shocked! I immediately blocked him. After that if I had to pass

through this checkpoint but saw that soldier there, I would turn around and go looking for a different route to avoid his nonsense and holding me up for hours as a punishment because I did not respond.

One interviewee spoke about the policy of having people get off the bus at checkpoints to check their identity cards, including on days when the weather is very hot or cold. She wondered why the soldiers do not board the bus to do the ID check. One of the women claimed that Israel set up the checkpoints with the aim of annoying and agitating the Palestinians more than for security reasons.

Say a checkpoint has three lanes; the soldiers close two and use only one even though they have enough personnel for all three. Why do they do this? Because they want people to pass through as slowly as possible. **The goal of the checkpoint is to mentally exhaust and agitate the people who are waiting to cross.** If they opened all three lanes, people could cross efficiently without any issues or delays. Sometimes the people are waiting to cross and have a sick person with them or have a job or meeting to get to, but they can't cross in time because the soldiers don't feel like opening another lane. This is an issue that can be easily resolved, but the policy is designed to create chaos and spark violence. The more they wait in line, the more people begin to lose their tempers, and that's when fights break out between them or with the soldiers. Essentially the Israelis are creating the troubles.

Perpetuating Poverty

One interviewee pointed out that over 70% of the population in East Jerusalem lives in poverty.¹² She said that "East Jerusalem women make certain employment choices not because they are their best option, but because they are their only option". Some interviewees explained that it feels more natural to work in a Palestinian environment, but those who are or were employed in Ramallah and Bethlehem pointed out that salaries in the West Bank are low when measured against the high cost of living in East Jerusalem,

(...) not recognizing diplomas or offering women demeaning jobs is yet another way to make their lives in the city unbearable in order to meet the ultimate goal of forcing them to leave

¹² The Association for Civil Rights in Israel (ACRI), [East Jerusalem – Facts and Figures](#), ACRI's website (May 2019). According to the statistics published by ACRI, 72% of Palestinian families in Jerusalem live below the poverty line, compared with 26% of Jewish families.

which is constantly on the rise. Three interviewees mentioned that not all diplomas from Palestinian universities or particular faculties are recognized in Israel. Therefore, many women choose not to pursue their fields of interest as they won't be able to find jobs if they want to work in East Jerusalem. Interviewees who had considered exploring employment opportunities in West Jerusalem said that the language barrier is an issue, but they also said that the Israeli Employment Services, which are supposed to help with job hunting in both East and West Jerusalem, treat them in a humiliating manner, offering menial jobs such as mopping floors or cleaning toilets, for which they are overqualified. One of them observed that not recognizing diplomas or offering women demeaning jobs is yet another way to make their lives in the city unbearable in order to meet the ultimate goal of forcing them to leave.

Political Solutions for Jerusalem

The final status of Jerusalem was clearly one of the most salient issues for the interviewees. Its complexity stems not only from its religious, cultural, and national significance but also from the fact that daily life in Jerusalem can be seen as a microcosm of the Israel-Palestine conflict and, therefore, any solution for Jerusalem touches on the core issues of a comprehensive Israeli-Palestinian peace agreement. One interviewee, a prominent activist, said that the question itself is very painful. Regarding their vision of a solution, a distinct majority supported division along the 1967 borders with full Palestinian sovereignty over East Jerusalem, including Al-Haram al-Sharif, and all firmly rejected any settler presence in East Jerusalem. There was no consensus or even a majority opinion among the interviewees regarding relations between the two sides after a solution has been achieved. For them, reaching an agreement on the delineation of the borders of Jerusalem is most important and should precede any discussions about the nature of relations between the two sides after its partition. Several mentioned that their key takeaway from the Oslo process was that interim solutions don't work. In recounting how they arrived at their solutions, the importance of personal experience emerged as a factor. The stories they told showed how the challenges of daily life shaped their understanding of the workings of the conflict and the physical and psychological barriers they create, while some mentioned how encounters with Jewish Israelis had influenced their opinions on future interaction between the two sides.

(...) a distinct majority supported division along the 1967 borders with full Palestinian sovereignty over East Jerusalem, including Al-Haram al-Sharif, and all firmly rejected any settler presence in East Jerusalem

Microcosm of the Conflict

The responses of the interviewees to the question about their vision of a political solution for Jerusalem revealed that the Jerusalem issue encompasses many of the complex and outstanding issues of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Among the disputed issues that emerged as the interviewees pondered the question of Jerusalem was the delineation of the border between East and West, which ties into the question of delineating the border between the State of Israel and the future State of Palestine; a solution for the refugees living in the Shu'fat refugee camp located within the municipal boundaries, which leads to the need to resolve the status of all the Palestinian refugees and address their rights; the growing presence of settlers in East Jerusalem, which leads to the issue of the settlement enterprise in its entirety; as well as the general issue of historical and residency rights in what one interviewee called "this forever disputed piece of land". Considering how these core issues converge when one examines a solution for Jerusalem, she posed the question: "What solution do you want me to give you with all that in mind?"

Physical and Psychological Barriers

All interviewees stated that the opinions they have formulated about political solutions for Jerusalem cannot be disentangled from their experience living in the city and from the challenges they face in all aspects of their daily lives. These challenges have shaped their understanding of the mechanisms and characteristics of the conflict, as they are constantly confronted by borders and barriers that would impede a smooth resolution of the issue of Jerusalem specifically and the conflict in general.

Their accounts of a typical day in the life of an East Jerusalem woman pointed to the existence of structural and institutional barriers resulting from systematic harmful and discriminatory policies and bureaucratic practices of the occupier in east Jerusalem, which operates under various faces: occupier-state, occupier-municipality, occupier-police, occupier-soldiers, occupier-settlements, occupier-Ministry of Interior, occupier-unemployment agency, occupier-Ministry of Education. According to one of the interviewees, the occupier does not consider Palestinians to be a nation, and this is a barrier the occupier will have to overcome if it wishes to reach a real agreement.

Furthermore, the narratives and, at times, the tone and body language of the interviewees also revealed a range of emotional, cultural, and psychological barriers to a political solution, such as suspicion, concern over the preservation of a Palestinian national identity and faithfulness to the Palestinian historical narrative of the conflict, the desire to see "absolute

justice” based on international law, and anger over not being “seen, thought of, or treated like human beings”.

Past and Present Diplomacy

For some of the interviewees, the first thing that came to mind when asked about possible political solutions for Jerusalem was the signing of the Oslo Accords between the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) and the Israeli Government in 1993. Almost three decades on, they described Oslo as a failure and an illusion due to the ongoing Israeli occupation and Israel’s deepening control over their lives. They reported having completely lost faith in any “temporary”, “transitional” or “gradual” solutions. One interviewee drew an analogy to describe what she sees as the guile with which Israel operates.

Israel is very smart. It has very slowly violated our most basic rights one after the other. It dealt with us like a doctor treating a patient. “Here, this is the right medication for you, but we will give it to you in small dosages to ensure that you do not overreact. One little spoon today, another little spoon tomorrow, until we feel that you are cured of your aspiration to self-determination!”

Some of the interviewees expressed great disappointment with the international community’s failure to exert real pressure on Israel to comply with United Nations resolutions, international law, and agreements signed between the Israelis and the Palestinians and to implement practical measures to end the occupation or resolve the issue of East Jerusalem.

Possible Political Solutions

On the question of borders, eight of the ten interviewees stated that the border of East Jerusalem in a political solution should be the 1967 borders, making Al-Haram al-Sharif an inseparable part of the territory that would be held by the Palestinians. They said that agreement on the delineation of the border of East Jerusalem is of primary importance and should come before discussions about issues such as whether the city should remain open.

Referring to what they described as the “alarming growth” of Jewish settlement in the city, all interviewees stated that there should be no place for settlers and that no concessions should be made regarding the settlements built by Israel after 1967. All the settlers and settlements should be evacuated.

Total Separation

Four of the interviewees believe that there should be two divided and physically separated capitals with full Palestinian sovereignty over East Jerusalem, including Al-Haram al-Sharif. There should be no freedom of movement or access from one side to the other, although one of the four said that special arrangements should be made for Jews and Christians who wish to visit the holy sites. They said that they are not interested in making any concessions to nor in having any interaction with Israelis, declaring that they have had enough of unequal relations in the city.

The four had different reasons for arriving at this vision of a solution. One said that she "knows the Israeli military mentality" and does not believe that Israel is interested in peace with the Palestinians or that it will make any concessions regarding Jerusalem, so she sees no reason for the Palestinians to behave any differently toward the Israeli side.

Another interviewee recounted that she had been severely beaten by members of the Israeli security forces on different occasions and her husband imprisoned and tortured, demonstrating that these experiences had shaped her desire for total separation. She has physical disabilities and strong emotional episodes from what they endured as a family.

I do not love Israelis; I hate them. I don't want to see the faces of those who beat me severely, who tortured and burned my husband, who confiscated my university diplomas, who broke my furniture, who even confiscated my thobe, saying it was terrorist material! I want my Old City to be peaceful, with foreign tourists. I want to be able to go to Al-Aqsa without seeing Israeli police every 2 centimeters. I miss cooking and enjoying a peaceful lunch on the Al-Aqsa premises. I miss praying in the mosque on Laylat al-Qadr with no one shooting at us and feeling that I can go home peacefully.

The third interviewee shared a somewhat different logic. According to her, as long as the occupation continues, the city can remain undivided and open because the occupier is responsible for the occupied according to international humanitarian law. Once there is an agreement to end the conflict, however, Israelis should go their way and Palestinians should go theirs. She claimed that an arrangement like the one that exists today between the PA and Israel will not be acceptable and said that the Palestinians should invest all their efforts in building the Palestinian nation. This interviewee's children work in Israel and when asked about their future employment security, she answered that they will have to "return home to Palestine and help build a nation". She suggested that there will be special arrangements for Jews and Christians to come pray at their holy places, just like Muslims from all over the world can go and pray in Mecca.

I want a real end to the occupation, with an independent Palestinian nation, and not a PA that is essentially occupied. I want a country with no security coordination or economic cooperation with Israel, no ties between the two countries, no embassies, and no say for Israel whatsoever. Let us regain control over our lives and build our Palestinian nation.

The fourth explained that the Palestinians have their own narrative about the Nakba (catastrophe) which can be remedied only if there is complete separation between the two sides. According to her, East Jerusalem Palestinians are caught between Israel, which does not want them, and the West Bank, to which they don't feel they really belong. She added that Israelis and Palestinians are two different societies, each with its own history and national identity and with different lifestyles, and that they cannot and should not live together. She also claimed that living in an undivided, open city would raise the cost of living in East Jerusalem and mean paying taxes to one municipality, whereas she would prefer to pay taxes to a sovereign Palestinian state rather than paying money that would also benefit Israelis.

Divided But Open

Three interviewees believe that there should be two divided and open capitals, with the entire Old City under full Palestinian control and sovereignty, including Al-Haram al-Sharif, but with freedom of movement and access from one side to the other. Explaining how she arrived at this solution, one interviewee said it would make life "easy for people, more comfortable and pleasant". Once the occupation ends, the settlers are evacuated, and the Palestinians achieve their right to self-determination, she said, there will no longer be political tensions between Israelis and Palestinians. In that case, to not complicate matters and keep life easy and comfortable, Palestinians should be able to go to the West side and Israelis to the East side if they feel like it.

(...) solutions that were once possible are no longer so because of the continuous disfiguration Israel has done on the ground to East Jerusalem as a space and to East Jerusalemites as a people

Another interviewee said that once there is a Palestinian state with East Jerusalem, including the Old City, as its capital, the city should remain open because "Jerusalem is a no man's city; it should be inclusive. It is a city that does not belong to one particular race or religion". She explained that she wants to be able to move between East and West Jerusalem. She reported that her husband had had a heart attack while working in Israel and that Jewish people had helped get him to a hospital where his life was saved. She said that she would never make

peace with Jews like the settlers who live next to her, who want to take her house, and who behave violently toward her and her children; however, making peace with "good-hearted Jews who care about Palestinian lives is a different story".

A third interviewee who is very familiar with various scenarios for Jerusalem that were presented in the past emphasized that solutions that were once possible are no longer so because of the continuous disfiguration Israel has done on the ground to East Jerusalem as a space and to East Jerusalemites as a people. Nonetheless, she believes that solutions for Jerusalem should be based on international law and UN resolutions, meaning an end to the occupation and a return to the 1967 borders. She suggested that "there should be international protection in Jerusalem so that all residents can live safely and without having their rights violated". Like the other two interviewees, she believes that people of all religions should have access to the holy sites in East Jerusalem and asserted that the war over Jerusalem is not a religious one but that religion is being used as an excuse to prolong the conflict. She said that Israelis are welcome to "come visit and pray in East Jerusalem, but not to control us, not to take ownership of our houses".

Vatican City-State Model

One interviewee believes that Jerusalem should have a status similar to that of the Vatican City-State. She explained that she has totally lost faith in the negotiations processes that took place over the past few decades. She saw a glimpse of hope in the Oslo Accords at the beginning but was disappointed by the Palestinian negotiators and by the "tricky trap" of moving forward in stages, with Israel always blaming the Palestinians for the delays, claiming that they had not fulfilled their obligations. Chastising politicians for being driven by greed and political interests, she said they should leave the people to live in peace. She proposed that Jerusalem follow the same model as the Vatican City-State, free of politics.

Jerusalem in all religions is the City of Peace; Israelis and Palestinians should take care of this unique and sacred place for Christians, Jews, and Muslims from all over the world; there should be no weapons, no violence, no political symbols, no colonialism over holy sites, no control by one side or the other. Let the city keep its vocation and let it live and be in peace, beyond stupid disputes.

Wavering Between Division and Unification

One interviewee has mixed feelings about the status of the city. Being well versed in various scenarios on the status of Jerusalem in a final agreement, she recalled proposals that Abu Dis be the capital of the Palestinian state and stressed the importance of a division along the 1967 borders with full Palestinian sovereignty in the East, including Al-Haram al-Sharif. She made a significant distinction between the political will of the parties to resolve the issue of Jerusalem and the lesser issue of "working out the technicalities", noting the importance of reaching an agreement through negotiations. Explaining her indecision on the nature of a solution, she said that her preference is for two separate, divided capitals; however, when she thinks of the uniqueness of this holy place and its religious significance for Christians, Muslims, and Jews around the world, she has second thoughts and can understand a solution that would impose international sovereignty over the entire city. When talking about the separation barrier, she mentioned the Berlin Wall and said that the fall of the wall and the unification of East and West Berlin could serve as a model for Jerusalem, adding that Palestinian rights in such a scenario must be protected.

In the end, the solution will depend on an agreement that can be reached by both sides, and then the mechanisms can be put in place to ensure the implementation of the technicalities of the agreement. They can do that with physical borders that will divide the city or by assigning areas of control to each authority without dividing the city. Like in Europe, where there are clear frontiers without necessarily physical borders. I believe that a solution can be found but whatever it might be, the Palestinians must get their rights back.

Deflecting the Question

One interviewee was visibly shaken by the question, which caused the pain and frustration of years of occupation with no end in sight to surface. She said that the question opened deep wounds in her and chose not to answer it, countering with a question about what can be done to mend the gaping hole in her heart.

Summary and Recommendation

The findings of this report clearly demonstrate the devastating effects of Israel's politics of domination, fragmentation, and expulsion on the everyday lives of Palestinian women in occupied East Jerusalem. The report has shown the association between the exposure of these women to Israel's harmful policies and practices and their role as mothers, their struggle to preserve their national identity, and their strong sense of human insecurity. It also conveys the women's views on political solutions regarding the highly sensitive question of Jerusalem, which emerged as a microcosm of the conflict in its entirety. The study found that a majority supports division along the 1967 borders with full Palestinian sovereignty over East Jerusalem, including Al-Haram al-Sharif, and that the women are uncompromising in their rejection of Israeli settlement in East Jerusalem. It affirms that Israel's illegal occupation of East Jerusalem has resulted in the continued blatant violation and abuse of East Jerusalem Palestinian women's fundamental protected human rights in all areas of life in accordance with international human rights law, including the right to a dignified existence; the right to life, liberty, and security; the right not to be subjected to inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment; the right to freedom of movement; the right to a nationality; the right to education; the right to family life; the right to equality; and the right to health.

The study revealed the women's firm belief that the Israeli occupation is framed in a narrow concept of security and blinded by the arrogance of power and that at the very core of the occupation lies a fundamental view of them as subhuman. They contended that Israel is convinced that the only language they understand is humiliation and force. In their narratives, the women expressed a profound sense of outrage at being viewed and treated as less than human and urged that the present study be used to compel the occupier and the world to recognize their humanity and end both the perception and the treatment of them as subhuman. Consequently, they perceive their struggle for Palestinian nationhood as a struggle not just for justice but also a struggle for humanity, dignity, and respect, which they believe will also restore to Israel the humanity it has lost in the exercise of their prolonged oppression.

The study revealed that the women have zero tolerance for notions such as "shrinking the conflict", and they unanimously rejected what they see as "gestures of false generosity from the Israeli authorities". They didn't want to hear about partial measures to ease their daily lives, which would lend an air of benevolence to and help sustain the unlawful occupation

These persecuted Palestinian women were exclusively focused on only two objectives: gaining recognition of their humanity and their inherent ties to Jerusalem and putting an end to the occupation

of East Jerusalem that has been going on for more than half a century. These persecuted Palestinian women were exclusively focused on only two objectives: gaining recognition of their humanity and their inherent ties to Jerusalem and putting an end to the occupation.

Having reflected at length on the women's call for a life of dignity, their demand for a status that reflects their true identity, and their rejection of partial measures, the author's sole recommendation addresses the fundamental issue of the legal status of Palestinian women living in East Jerusalem and calls to abolish the application of the Entry Into Israel Law, 5712-1952 to native-born East Jerusalem Palestinians. This recommendation is not designed to create equality between the Palestinians and the Jewish residents of a city that was unilaterally and illegally occupied and annexed; rather, it is meant to recognize the Palestinians' unique position as indigenous people and their right under international law to protection and secure permanent residency as the population of an occupied territory, until such time as the conflict comes to an end. The absurdity of the application of the Entry Into Israel Law, which regulates entry into and residency in Israel for foreigners, to determine the residency rights of East Jerusalem Palestinians who are living in the city of their birth is painfully obvious. Equally obvious is the illegality of the application of Israeli law to a population living under occupation as protected civilians according to the Fourth Geneva Convention.

In the case of East Jerusalem Palestinians, the term "permanent" resident is a stretch at best, as their status is highly precarious. Their residency rights can "expire" or be revoked easily if they fail to meet a variety of conditions, primarily the requirement to prove that the city is and remains their "center of life" based on a judicial doctrine that emerged from a 1988 ruling of the Israeli High Court but was not utilized by the Ministry of interior until 1995. Since 1967, close to 15,000 Palestinians have lost their permanent residency status as a result of the Interior Ministry's manipulation of the law, rendering them stateless in a clear violation of their right to nationality.¹³

In a precedent-setting ruling in March 2017, Israeli High Court Justices Uzi Fogelman and Meni Mazuz and Court President Miriam Naor ruled that Palestinian East Jerusalemites are not immigrants but native-born residents and, as such, merit more generous consideration when requesting to restore their permanent residency status in cases where it was revoked. Fogelman wrote that when

The application of the Entry Into Israel Law to Palestinians in East Jerusalem should be terminated

¹³ Danielle C. Jefferis, [The "Center of Life" Policy: Institutionalizing Statelessness in East Jerusalem](#), *Jerusalem Quarterly 50* (by the Institute for Palestine Studies) (Summer 2012).

considering a request to restore permanent residency to a resident of East Jerusalem, the interior minister "must consider the special circumstances of these residents – that as opposed to immigrants seeking status – they have a strong affinity to the place where they live, as people born in this area – and sometimes even their parents and grandparents were born there – and where they have enjoyed family and communal life for years".¹⁴

Zulat recommends that the High Court ruling be taken to its logical conclusion and that instead of calling for more leniency in the judgments of the Interior Ministry when applying the law to native-born East Jerusalem Palestinians, their ties to the city should go unchallenged. The application of the Entry Into Israel Law to Palestinians in East Jerusalem should be terminated and replaced by the application of international law – specifically, international law of belligerent occupation and international human rights law – as the foundation of their rights as an occupied people. The cancellation of the application of the Israeli law to them and its replacement with the application of international law will reframe the narratives about the Palestinian population and its ties to the city prior to and since 1967. It will also negate the arguments put forward by Israel to continue its illegal policy of expanding Jewish settlement in East Jerusalem, delegitimizing the Palestinian presence there, and confiscating homes and property in a land that it occupies in contravention of international law.

¹⁴ Nir Hasson, [In precedent-setting Ruling, Israel's Top Court Recognizes East Jerusalem Arabs as 'Native-born Residents'](#), *Haaretz* (16.3.2017).

Zulat institute works to promote a policy of equality and human rights and to restore the legitimacy of the human rights discourse in Israel.

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