



July 2024

Assessment report: The Impact of the war on East Jerusalem

Preface

The war in Gaza has had a profound and deeply unsettling impact on East Jerusalem, particularly affecting the Old City and its immediate surroundings. In the early weeks of the conflict, the city became a flashpoint for heightened tensions, leading to what effectively became a voluntary curfew. As fear and uncertainty gripped the city, many young Palestinians who worked in West Jerusalem chose to stay home, avoiding their daily commutes due to escalating violence. This violence was often perpetrated by extremist Jewish groups targeting young Palestinians, creating a pervasive sense of danger and insecurity.

In parallel with the street-level violence, Israeli police launched an extensive campaign of arrests focused on activists and youths who expressed dissent or opposition to the war on social media platforms. This crackdown on free expression contributed to an atmosphere of fear and harassment, particularly among Palestinian youth, who felt increasingly vulnerable and targeted by the authorities. The fear of being arrested or harassed for their views further isolated these young people, cutting them off from both physical spaces in the city and from their online communities.

The turmoil in East Jerusalem during this period also had a crippling effect on daily life. Schools across the city closed their doors, leaving students without access to education for weeks. Businesses, particularly those in the Old City, also shut down, with many remaining closed for an extended period. The economic impact of these closures was severe, adding to the already significant financial strain faced by many Palestinian families in the area.

The city's checkpoints, which link East Jerusalem to surrounding neighborhoods and the broader West Bank, became even more restrictive. Many checkpoints were open only for limited hours, while others were completely blocked off, effectively cutting off large segments of the population from the city center. This restriction on movement was particularly harsh within the Old City itself, where access became highly controlled. Only registered residents were permitted entry, a policy that remains in place even months after the initial outbreak of the conflict.

These restrictions were especially strict for Palestinian youth, who have been effectively barred from entering the Old City. Even older residents, those aged 65 and above, have faced occasional restrictions, further curtailing the movement of the city's Palestinian population. The Al Haram Al Sharif, one of the most significant religious sites in the city and a historically vibrant center of community life, has been reduced to a shadow of its former self. Once bustling with worshippers and visitors, the site now often stands eerily deserted, save for organized visits by extreme Jewish groups who are escorted by police. These visits have further inflamed tensions, as they are seen by many Palestinians as provocative and a symbol of the ongoing conflict over control and access to sacred spaces.

The combined effects of violence, arrests, economic disruption, and severe movement restrictions have profoundly altered life in East Jerusalem. The Old City, once a dynamic and diverse community, now feels like a city under siege, with its residents isolated and under constant pressure. The long-term consequences of these conditions are likely to be severe, with deepening divisions and a growing sense of alienation among the Palestinian population. The war in Gaza has not only intensified the immediate challenges faced by East Jerusalem's residents but has also set the stage for ongoing conflict and instability in the heart of the city.

East Jerusalem during the war

In the evening of 7th of October 2023, Israeli military were deployed in large forces in the surrounding of the Old City and main roads leading to Palestinian neighborhoods in East Jerusalem. youth were subject for arresting, physical search and field investigation, some of them were severely beaten especially around the old city.

Fear of going outside homes and main roads at the neighborhoods felt from day one of the war in Gaza, in some cases people witnessed a mode of revenge and a collective punishment by both the Israeli public, police and at their working places in West Jerusalem because of Hamas attacks in the south. In the same day checkpoints were completely closed, Qalandia and Shufat refugee camp checkpoint closed in the first 2 weeks of the war and no access to the city was possible including in emergency cases.

The Checkpoints connection Bethlehem and Beit Jalla with East Jerusalem were closed for months, the movement between west bank and Jerusalem declined to almost 10% of its regular tendency because of the full closure and preventing west bankers from entering Jerusalem, not only those work in Israeli market but also many who works for churches and hotels and services in East Jerusalem specially from Bethlehem and Abu dies and Al Izzariyya. In the evening of Saturday the 7th of October a sporadic confrontation of youth with Israeli police covered the neighborhoods of Silwan, Shufat refugee camp, Al Tur, Wadi al Joz , Issawiya and Beit Hanina.

A comprehensive commercial strike in support of Gaza took place in East Jerusalem and the West Bank, the entry to the old city was restricted to prevent worship in Al Haram Al Sharif (Al Aqsa Mosque), only people who registered as the old city residences were allowed to enter, youth were stopped and searched before allowing them to enter if they live in the old city some of them were stopped for investigation and some were severely beaten during detention inside the military watch tours in Damascus gate. Since the first day of the Al-Aqsa flood Operation, the forces continue to prevent sitting in Damascus Gate Square.

Jewish and foreigners were allowed to access the old city, from day one the visits (raids as defined by the Awqaf administration because it's accompanied with military present with no permission for Awqaf which is the sovereign entity under Jordan managing the compound since 1967), the visits of extreme temple movement people 76 of them continued, and was declared as an opportunity to change the status quo and declare Israeli sovereignty on Al-Haram Alsharief especially that Hamas use "Al Aqsa Flood" as a title of its operation against Israel. The total number of Jewish who break into the Mosque in the last 300 days of the war reached 40,000 most of them pray in loud voice, dance and raise Israeli flag or religious symbols. Unlike the declared Israeli policy that "Jews can visit and not pray", Israeli police is not anymore stopping them from praying.

In addition to the total closing of the checkpoints leading to the city and connecting it with neighborhoods and suburbs outside of the wall, an internal checkpoint placed on road number 1, entrances to Palestinian neighborhoods of Shufat, Issawiya, Sur Baher, Jabal Al Mukaber and Al-Tur.

In the first week of the war 4 Palestinian youth were shouted by Israeli police, 2 from Silwan and 2 from Issawiey, 180 youth were arrested in the first two weeks, nights clashes is becoming a pattern of a daily clashes covering in many neighborhoods between youth and Israeli police, especially in the first 2 months of the war.

On Friday's new friction areas where Israeli military prevented prayers for entering Al Aqsa like Wadi Al Jouz and Ras Al Amoud neighborhoods especially on Fridays, youth were not allowed to enter until today, 10 months after the war break. In the first Friday prayer only 5000 worshipers were allowed to enter most of them elderly people live in the old city. For almost 6 weeks the number of prayers allowed on Fridays was between 3500-4000, young people prevented from accessing Al Aqsa prayed on the asphalt in the surrounding of the old city and in Wadi Al Jouz and Ras Al Amoud, Israeli forces suppress the youth from praying (near the road blockades preventing them from heading to Al Aqsa) and attacks on worshipers with sound bombs, gas bombs, and sprayed waste-water on prayers and residential buildings and shops. The siege on Al Aqsa and the protest praying in the surrounding areas continued for 5 months, in the second day of the holy month of Ramadan (11 Mach 2024), Israeli allowed for the first-time residence of Jerusalem from outside the old city especially young people from entering the Mosque. The table below summarised the Israeli measures in East Jerusalem neighbourhoods, the Old city and its direct surrounding suffered most from a continuous siege and restrictions preventing religious, commercial, social and institutional functions. The old city was almost empty in the first two weeks of the war, 80 % of shops were closed, the siege was eased for entering Damascus gate during the week, excluding young people, the local consumption shops were reopened but for a very limited hours, usually late morning until early afternoon time, 90% of shops oriented to tourism and were totally closed until today, except for a very limited hours. Palestinian Kids were complete not allowed to go out of their home for their safety avoiding the violence of police and settlers, the old city become dominant by ultraorthodox live in the Muslim and Christian quarters in addition to youth Yeshivas students who clam new spaces like roofs and permanently closed shops and courtyards in the Muslim quarte

Main incidents and Israeli measures in East Jerusalem - first 8 weeks of the war (7 October -6 December 2023)

Old city	Neighbourhoods inside the separation wall	Neighbourhoods outside the separation wall
-intensive military present in all the old city gates and surrounding. -Siege preventing a nonresidence from entering the old city and Al Haram Al Sahrif (Al Aqsa Mosque). -restricting the entry of Waqf guards' entry to the old city and preventing some of them from resuming their duties inside Al Haram Al Sharif. -Prevent students from entering the Old city and Al Haram Al Shrif to join their school, for at least one month. -searching young men near Damascus gate and the East Jerusalem city centre, standing against the wall, detaining inside military observation tour and assaulted some by beating and pushing. -preventing sitting in the Damascus gate plaza. -prevent prayer in Al-Aqsa Mosque. Only elderly people 60 years and above living in the old city allowed to performance praying on	- City's schools was suspended for 2 weeks. And moved to distance teaching. -night clashes in Silwan, Al-Tur, Wadi Al Joz, Issawiya, Sur Baher, Jabaal Al Mukaber and Beit Hanina. -3 comprehensive commercial strike covering the Old city and all neighbourhoods. In solidarity with Gaza people (8 October, 18 October – “500 killed in a massacre of the Baptist Hospital” -, 1 November “to mourn the souls of he Jabalia Refugees camp massacre” - 528 youth arrested (including Shufat refugee camp) - prevent prayers near wadi Al Jo and Ras Al amoud after preventing them to reaching the old city, police supressed prayers using sound , tears gas bombs and spraying wastewater in the streets and towered homes and shops. - 11 killed: 4 boys during clashes (2 in Silwan and 2 in Issawiey), 1 driver from	-Closing checkpoints for almost 2 weeks -prevent crossing to access work, education, medical. -limiting operation hours of checkpoints and long searching time and procedures. -night clashes in Shufat Refugee camp. -examine mobile phones for girls and boys. Searching for their social media videos, images and “likes”. -municipal fines on shops and private houses and tax authorities raid on businesses and individuals. -preventing all west bankers from accessing East Jerusalem.

Fridays- small number prayers – average of 4000 on Friday prayer (in 8 weeks) -Jewish and foreigners were allowed to access the old city freely. Expel activists from Al Aqsa Mosque by police order. -tightening the entry procedure to the old city in conjunction with prayer times. - around 4441 extreme right-wing activists of the “temple movement” and their supporters raid Al Haram Al Sharif with the heavy police protection and performed prayer and singing in a large group (the policy until 5 years ago was allowing visiting in small groups of 9 and stopped praying and raising Jewish symbols). -for the first time since 1967, the Israeli police and intelligent deployed inside the mosque during Friday prayers time, especially outside the dome of the rock and the Islamic Museum area, they checked ID of prayers even during the Jumma prayer.	Issawiey, 2 boy and one girl accused of stabbing police. And 3 young men in shouting incidence against police and civilians. -Al Rashied street was closed with iron and concrete barriers after shotting on the police station (12 October 2023). until today (August 2024). - Revoking vehicle licence as a punishment to prisoners and their families. -municipal fines on shops and private houses and tax authorities raid on businesses and individuals. -17 home demolition of residential structures, 14 of them self-demolition to avoid high cost in case that the municipality and police will demolish those structures.	
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Settlement activities in the shadow of the war

On October 9, 2023, the Jerusalem District Planning Committee convened to review and ultimately approve amendments to the East Jerusalem Preliminary Plan for the new settlement of Kidmat Zion, albeit with specific conditions. This approval marked the culmination of ongoing discussions, including a significant meeting on September 11, 2023, where the plan had been approved with reservations. These reservations highlighted the need for further examination by a representative from the Ministry of Transportation, as well as clearance from the Ministry of Defence. Despite the complexities surrounding the plan, including the absence of a representative from the Ministry of Defence due to the ongoing conflict and requests from committee members to postpone the discussion, the meeting on October 9th proceeded, leading to the plan's approval.

The settlement of Kidmat Zion is planned to be constructed in the heart of the Palestinian neighbourhood of Abu Dis, East Jerusalem, comprising 384 housing units. The location of this settlement is particularly sensitive, as it is within entirely Palestinian territory, close to Jericho Road, and abutting the separation barrier that divides Jerusalem and Abu Dis. On the opposite side of this barrier stands a building intended to serve as the Palestinian Parliament, constructed in the late 1990s.

The planning process has encountered several challenges, primarily related to transportation and security. In the September 11, 2023 discussion, two major obstacles were identified: 1) The narrowness of the road leading to the intended settlement, which would struggle to accommodate the anticipated traffic flow from Wadi al-Joz to the neighbourhood, and 2) The need for approval from the Minister of Defense's representative concerning emergency access along the adjacent security barrier. These challenges underscore the complex logistical and security considerations that must be addressed before the settlement can proceed.

During the October 9 discussion, alternative solutions, such as connecting the neighbourhood to the eastern natural road, were proposed. However, these alternatives require further adjustments and clarifications, particularly regarding transportation, security, and environmental impact, which will be discussed in subsequent meetings.

The land on which Kidmat Zion is planned to be built holds significant historical and political implications. Part of the land was defined as Jewish-owned before 1948, while other portions were acquired by Irwin Moskovitz, a prominent donor to settler organizations in East Jerusalem. The settlement's history dates back to 2004, when the first families moved into the area, residing in two houses constructed on the outskirts of the compound. Notably, one of these houses was built shortly before the settlers' entry. To accommodate the settlers' presence, the route of the separation barrier was altered, moving it eastward to align with the building intended to serve as the Palestinian Parliament.

This settlement plan is spearheaded by the Ateret Cohanim settler organization, which aims to expand Jewish presence in East Jerusalem. The location of Kidmat Zion is strategically significant, as it lies on one of the few remaining open lands at the western edge of Abu Dis. The ongoing approval process and the conditions attached to it reflect the contentious nature of settlement expansion in East Jerusalem, a region already fraught with tensions between Israeli and Palestinian communities.

In summary, the approval of the Kidmat Zion settlement plan on October 9, 2023, reflects the Israeli government's determination to proceed with settlement expansion in East Jerusalem,

despite the significant challenges and opposition it faces. The plan's implementation will likely heighten tensions in the region, given its location in a predominantly Palestinian area and the historical, political, and logistical complexities involved.

Home demolition

As of mid-March 2024, a total of 133 buildings, including 97 residential structures, were demolished across East Jerusalem. Additionally, nine housing units in the village of Walajeh, located within Jerusalem's municipal boundaries, were also torn down. The majority of these demolitions were carried out by the property owners themselves, acting under the directives of the Israeli authorities. In six cases, the buildings were demolished by the municipality and police as a punitive measure, adding to the tension and displacement in the area.

The total number of structures demolished since the start of the conflict in October 2023 has now reached 185, marking a significant increase in demolitions. This escalation is part of a broader pattern of demolitions and confiscations that has intensified in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem. According to a report from the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) dated August 7, 2024, the number of Palestinians displaced by these demolitions and confiscations has more than doubled since October 7, 2023, when the conflict began. Over this period, 3,070 Palestinians were displaced, compared to 1,252 in the preceding ten months.

This sharp rise in demolitions and displacements highlights the ongoing and worsening humanitarian crisis in the West Bank and East Jerusalem. The forced removal of residents, coupled with the destruction of their homes, has further exacerbated the already fragile situation, leading to widespread displacement and increased tensions in the region. The actions of the Israeli authorities, including both punitive demolitions and those carried out by property owners under duress, reflect the severe and ongoing challenges faced by Palestinian communities living under occupation. The report from OCHA underscores the urgent need for international attention and intervention to address the escalating crisis and to protect the rights and lives of those affected.

Economic Impact of the war

The ongoing conflict has had a profound economic impact on East Jerusalem, where the Palestinian population, already vulnerable, has been thrust into an even deeper crisis. As of 2024, a staggering 75% of East Jerusalem's Palestinian residents live below the poverty line, and the war has exacerbated this dire situation. The conflict has led to a significant increase in poverty, pushing many Palestinian families into severe economic distress and food insecurity.

One of the immediate impacts of the war was a sharp rise in unemployment. During the first two weeks of the conflict, access to the city was heavily restricted, particularly for Palestinians living in neighborhoods outside the separation wall. All checkpoints were closed, and the limited operation of those that remained open caused long waits and delays for those trying to reach their workplaces in West Jerusalem. As a result, many young Palestinians lost their jobs

due to these movement restrictions. The inability to access the city for work not only disrupted livelihoods but also further entrenched economic instability.

The scale of the unemployment crisis is evident in the statistics reported by the Israeli Employment Bureau. In Jerusalem, the number of unemployed individuals actively searching for work increased by 140%. Among the Palestinian population in East Jerusalem, the situation was even more severe, with unemployment rising by 300% in October 2023 alone. Over the course of 2023, this increase in unemployment among Palestinians in East Jerusalem reached a staggering 340%, reflecting the devastating impact of the conflict on the local economy.

The situation is particularly dire for those who lost their jobs as a result of the war. Many of these individuals are unable to access social welfare benefits, as they were not formally employed or registered as employees. A significant portion of the Palestinian workforce in East Jerusalem consists of temporary workers, often employed on an hourly basis and through subcontracting companies that provide services. These workers, who lack fixed-term employment contracts, have found themselves particularly vulnerable, with no safety net to fall back on during times of crisis.

The combination of widespread poverty, rising unemployment, and the lack of access to social welfare has created a humanitarian crisis in East Jerusalem. The war has not only intensified the economic hardships faced by the Palestinian population but has also exposed the deep-seated inequalities and vulnerabilities that exist within the city's economy. As a result, many Palestinian families are struggling to meet their basic needs, including food and shelter, and are facing an uncertain future.

The economic impact of the conflict on East Jerusalem underscores the urgent need for targeted interventions to address the growing poverty and unemployment in the area. Without meaningful support, the situation is likely to deteriorate further, with long-term consequences for the stability and well-being of the Palestinian population in East Jerusalem.

Impact on Tourism

The COVID-19 pandemic further deteriorated the already grim social and economic situation in East Jerusalem. With urban living conditions deteriorating further and the unemployment rate rising to 40-50% due to the breakdown of public life during lockdown period, East Jerusalem witnessed a severe economic and social crisis in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic waves the first closure lockdown started from 14 March 2020 and lasted for more than 50 days, no one predicated that the lockdowns will cover almost one full year (14 March 2020 until the end of third lockdown on the 7th of March 2021), Only after May 2021 a sort of normal life under pandemic conditions was possible (forth COVID 19 wave was between June 2021 until August 2021, fifth wave from December 2021 until mid-January 2022, six wave was between June 2022 until August 2022).

The number of tourists who visited the holy land in 2023 reached 3.01 million, 228.8 thousand as a day visitor. 2.6 million tourists arrived in 2022 among them 176.3 thousand as a day visitor. During pandemic period only 395.5 thousand tourists visited in 2021 which is the lowest

number in decades. In 2020 only 835.5 thousand tourists visited, a series drop compared to the highest number of tourists ever 4.5 million in 2019.

Prior to Covid the city witnesses a major growth of tourism sector, the number of hotels according to a survey conducted by IPCC in February 2020 is 26 hotels with 1886 rooms. The number of Guest Houses in East Jerusalem is 12 with 527 rooms, and the number of hostels is 11 with 253 rooms. The number of total rooms available in East Jerusalem is 2666. According to Israeli statistics the total number of hotels in East Jerusalem in 2019 is 31 hotels with 2052 hotel rooms, thereof 37% of level 1 or 2 and 45 % of level 3, according to the Israeli standards. The total number of tourists staying in East Jerusalem hotels was the highest in 2019, amounting to 229.7 thousand tourists with 701.4 thousand overnight stays, which constitutes a slight increase compared to 2018 and an increase of 10% from 2017. The lowest number of tourists was registered in 2015 with 135.9 thousand (440.9 thousand overstay nights). The room occupancy increased from 53 % in 2010 to 73.9% in 2019, the number of Israelis, mainly Palestinian citizens of Israel, who stayed in East Jerusalem decreased by 15.5% in 2019 compared to 2017.

According to Israel central bureau of statistics data published in March 2024 the number of hotels in East Jerusalem dropped to 25 with 1,825 rooms in December 2023 (compared to 29 in 2020 with 1957 rooms, 28 in 2021 with 1932 rooms and 25 in 2022 with 1817 rooms, number of rooms in open hotels in December 2023 was only 1,028 meaning 44% of hotel rooms in East Jerusalem were close end of 2023. In 2022 only 979 rooms (46.1%) out of 1817 were opened, this indicate that recovery from covid in tourism sector was a very slow process. In West Jerusalem number of hotels increased from 59 hotels with 9035 rooms in 2020 to 62 hotels with 9048 rooms (in 2021 number of rooms were 9188 and 9200 in 2022 with 61 hotels in both years. By December 2023, 8597 rooms out of 9048 were in open hotels (94%) in comparison by end of 2022 8808 out of 9200 (95.7%).

Number of tourists stayed in East Jerusalem in 2023 were 123.8 thousand with 408.8 thousand persons-nights, the highest occupancy of 72.6% in May 2023, occupancy dropped to 27.7% in November 2023 and 14.6% in December 2023. Number of tourists in East Jerusalem increased in 2023 by 33% compared to 2022 (81.7 thousand tourists with 281.8 person-night). 54.2 thousand of tourists to East Jerusalem in 2023 arrived from Europe (United Kingdom with 7.8 thousand, France 7.4 thousand, Germany 7.1 thousand, Spain 7.0 thousand, Italy 5.9 thousand, Russia 2.7 thousand). 19.3 thousand tourists arrived from the United States stayed, 9.1 thousand from South American. In comparison with West Jerusalem 670.1 thousand stayed in West Jerusalem in 2023 with 2.3 million tourist's person night the highest occupancy of 74.9 % in May 2023, dropped to 55.9% in November 2023 and 55.9 % in December 2023. Number of tourists in West Jerusalem increased in 2023 by 13.2% compared to 2022 (591.9 thousand tourists with 2.1 million person-night). 151.1 thousand of tourists to West Jerusalem in 2023 arrived from Europe (France 25.6 thousand tourists, United Kingdom with 22.2 thousand, Germany 20.4 thousand, Italy 15.1 thousand, Russia 9.4 thousand, Spain 12.7 thousand, Netherlands 8.5 thousand). 350.6 thousand tourists arrived from the United States stayed in West Jerusalem, 66.1 thousand of tourists arrived from South American and stayed in West Jerusalem.

Number of tourists stayed in East Jerusalem in 2022 were 81.7 thousand with 281.8 thousand persons-nights, the occupancy of 55.3%. number of tourists in West Jerusalem increased almost 10 times in 2022 compared to 2021 (8.4 thousand tourists with 31.6 person-night). 28.8 thousand of tourists to East Jerusalem in 2022 are Europeans (United Kingdom with 3.4 thousand, France 4.8 thousand, Germany 4.2 thousand, Italy 3.6 thousand, Russia 1.8 thousand, Spain 1.6 thousand, 13.1 thousand tourists from the United States stayed in East Jerusalem, 5.4 thousand from South American. 2021 was the worst year East Jerusalem witness in terms of number of tourists staying in East Jerusalem, only 8.4 thousand tourists stayed in East (31.6 thousand person-night), in 2020 number of tourists was 48.9 thousand stayed for 166.5 thousand person-night person-nights.

In comparison 591.9 thousand tourists stayed in West Jerusalem in 2022 with 2.1 million tourist's person night with an occupancy of 51.1%. Number of tourists in West Jerusalem increased in 2022 by almost 10 times compared to 2021 (60.7 thousand tourists with 177.5 thousand person-night). 119.9 thousand of tourists to West Jerusalem in 2022 arrived from Europe (France 27.6 thousand tourists, United Kingdom with 18.5 thousand, Germany 17.6 thousand, Italy 9.9 thousand, Russia 8.4 thousand, Spain 6.9 thousand, Netherlands 5.6 thousand). 325.6 thousand tourists arrived from the United States stayed, 65.3 thousand from South American.

In November 2023 only 9.5 thousand tourist's person night (occupancy of 27.7%) stayed in East Jerusalem (compare to 40.6 thousand in 2022 and 67.6 thousand in 2019 which was the peak of tourism in East Jerusalem). in December 2023 the number of tourists stay dropped to 5.9 thousand overnight stays in East Jerusalem (occupancy of 14.6 %). (occupancy of 27.7%) stayed in East Jerusalem (compare to 40.6 thousand in 2022 and 67.6 thousand in 2019 which was the peak of tourism in East Jerusalem). in December 2023 the number of tourists stay dropped to 5.9 thousand overnight stays in East Jerusalem (occupancy of 14.6 %).

Internal tourism of Palestinians from Israel staying in East Jerusalem (mainly for prayer on Friday in Al Aqsa Mosque) dropped in 2023 to 17.1 thousand (39.8 thousand person-nights) compared to 20.3 thousand in 2022 (31.7 thousand person-nights), during 2020 only 7.6 thousand stayed in East Jerusalem with 19.5 thousand person-nights.

In the first six months of 2024 495.3 thousand tourists arrived at the holy land, only 5.3 thousand as a one-day visitors. 34.7% of them are US citizens (172.2 thousand), and citizens of countries with large Jewish communities like France (63.2 thousand), UK 39.2 thousand and 35.2 16.8 thousand tourists crossed King Hussain Bridge (Allenby), the assumption that large number of them stay in East Jerusalem hotels. Data covering the period between January 2024 to end of June 2024 indicate that 8.3 thousand Indonesian visited, 3.2 thousand tourists from Jordan (mainly family visits), 2.1 thousand from Turkey, 0.6 thousand tourists from Malaysia, 5.6 thousand from South Africa. Majority of these touristic groups stay in East Jerusalem and the main reason of visiting is praying in Al Aqsa Mosque.

In the first quarter of 2024, East Jerusalem hosted 26.6 thousand person-night for tourists in addition to 12.0 thousand person night (increase of 71.4% compare to the same period in 2023) of Palestinians citizens of Israel visiting for religious reason specially for Friday prayer in Al

Aqsa Mosque and Sundays' service at the Church of Holy Sepulchre. The number of person nights decreased by 81% in East Jerusalem in comparison with same period in 2023. Number of person nights in West Jerusalem reached in this period 173.9 thousand for tourists (62% of them Americans), the internal tourism 723.8-thousand-person nights including displaced Israelis from the North and Gaza envelope area.

According to IPCC survey conducted early July 2024, 11 hotels (811 rooms) in East Jerusalem are still totally closed. By end of June 2024 with 811 rooms. Another 13 hotels were partially closed between October 2023 to June 2024 with total of 1009 rooms, at least 6 of those hotels were totally closed until April 2024. The occupancy in hotels in East Jerusalem between April – June 2024 ranged from 5% to 25%, at least 50% of occupancy is of local tourism especially weekends.

In July 2024 most of the guesthouses of churches are partially open, 309 rooms in total outside the old city (within East Jerusalem) and 292 inside the old city walls. Most of the hostels inside the old city are totally closed (141 rooms).

Commercial activities related to tourism in the Old City were shut down for almost 10 months, affecting around 1370 shops. By April, only 10% of souvenir shops reopened due to the small number of tourists during Easter. Currently, more than 80% of souvenir shops remain closed (total of 462 shops) especially in the Christian quarter and Jaffa Gate Road and As Silsileh road.

The old city was the most impacted neighborhood during the war, for this reason a special focus on the old city will be illustrated in this report.

The Physical Structure of the Old City

The Physical Structure of the Old City The surface area within the walls of the Old City is less than one square km, or 215 acres. Today it is divided into four ethnic/religious quarters: Muslim, Jewish, Armenian, and Christian, and within the latter, neighborhoods based along sectarian (e.g. Greek Orthodox and Latin Patriarchy) affiliation. The Muslim quarter is Sunni; the Jewish quarter is a mixture of religious and secular families and today majority of rich American ultraorthodox. And within the four areas there is a gradation in the social structure, the infrastructure, and the roads network. When viewed closely, the Old City is not a homogenous community but has the complexity one associates with urban life.

The Old City has had its current configuration since the Ottoman rule, during which time the wall was built and the city boundaries set. The first municipality was created inside the walls in 1863; soon after, the built-up areas outside the walls were added to the municipal administration, neighborhoods such as Al Musara, Sheikh Jarrah, and Bab As Sahira. The Old City walls constitute its physical boundaries, and its gates provide contiguity with the surrounding neighborhoods. The walls are signature structure of the entire city, a key element of the city landscape, and are a major tourist attraction. The height of the Old City walls runs to 17 meters in some areas, and they have an average height of 11.6 meters. The walls are two meters thick in most places; it supports 34 towers and has 11 gates, 4 of which are closed. It is fair to say that its architectural style gives a special image to the city. During the British

Mandate (1918-1948), Jerusalem's boundaries expanded to include a western area where a Jewish concentration had developed, as well as several new Palestinian neighborhoods in the east and south. In 1948, as a consequence of the war, Jerusalem was divided physically and geo-politically into two municipalities—Israeli and Palestinian, and the latter section was placed under Jordanian control, which lasted from 1948 to 1967. Originally the Palestinian area of the city included East Jerusalem and the Old City. During the Jordanian era, the Palestinian Jerusalem territory expanded further to include villages and neighborhoods east and north of the Old City. Jerusalem's boundaries assumed their current approximate configuration after the Israeli occupation of 1967, although there are differences between the Israeli and Palestinian definition of those boundaries.

Most of the Old City's buildings go back to the Ayyubid era (12th to 14th centuries) or the Mamluk era (14th to 16th centuries) or the Ottoman period (16th century to 1917). The only significant modification to the urban fabric occurred after the occupation of 1967 when the Jewish Quarter was created on the demolished area that had supported the Ash Sharaf and the Al Maghariba (Moroccan) neighborhoods. Effectively, this expanded the Jewish area from approximately 20 dunums to over 120 dunums; this six-fold expansion gives the Jewish community 13.6% of the Old City terrain. That change reflected Israeli control and altered the Old City social structure. Before the Israeli occupation of 1967 the quarters and neighborhoods of the Old City were reckoned at 23. They were named in the Ottoman era and most of the neighborhoods bore the names of the families of groups that inhabited them. However, under the Israelis, the Old City was divided strictly along religious and ethnic lines against the reality of the organic mixed development that had taken place over the centuries. The physical structure of the Old City and its surroundings is the result of a historical development of social, cultural, economic, geo-political and migratory factors, as well as the evolution of construction practices.

Current situation

The Old City of Jerusalem suffers from difficult conditions through the systematic Judaization of its physical space; the loss of Palestinian properties through aggressive settler activities, marginalization, and destruction of historical monuments, threatening lives and buildings. The present situation of the Old City needs an urgent intervention to protect it from the inevitable failure and collapse of the whole city in all regards. A clear planning program needs to be prepared in order to protect the Old City from losing more historical monuments, in order to build communities, and to ensure the continuity of a descent quality of life. There is an urgent need to start a field survey to document the existing buildings and communities in order to collect quantitative, qualitative, and spatial information. This data will be the base to protect and preserve the historical buildings from degradation, deterioration, and complete loss.

The area of Old City of Jerusalem is around 871 dunum (871,000 m²), comprising 0.71% of the total area of the whole of Municipal Jerusalem including the Western, Israeli side of the city occupied in 1948 and the Eastern side, occupied in 1967. The number of residential units in the old city in 2021 is 6,437 covering an area of 286 Dunnum; Muslim quarter 25,390 residential units in 2016 dropped to 21,850 in 2021. In the Christian quarter number of residential units in 2016 were 1,289 and 1,289 in 2021. The Arminian Quarter have the same number of residential units in 2016 and 2021 with a total of 677 units. The Jewish quarter residential units increased from 593 in 2016 to 642 in 2021. Within the walls of Old City religious institutions cover an area of 311.4 Dunnum.

1. Population, density and migration

In 2011, the population of the Old City stood at 39,865 in total, with around 34,805 Palestinians living in the Muslim quarter with a population of 30,328, the Christian quarter (4,577 inhabitants) the Armenian quarter with a population of 1,631 inhabitants. The population of the Jewish quarter was 3,329 inhabitants in 2011. The highest density is the Christian quarter with 25.8 residential unit per Dunnum according to data from 2021, followed by density in Muslim quarter of 23.9 residential unit per Dunnum compared to 16.9 units per Dunnum in the Jewish quarter and 17.8 units per Dunnum in the Arminian quarter.

In 2022 the population of the Muslim quarter dropped to 20,480, the Christian quarter to 3,740 the Armenian quarter population reached 2,310 and the Jewish quarter 3,210. In 2011 the Muslim quarter negative migration reached -1,240, this number increased in 2013 and 2013 losing 1,610 inhabitants every year, in 2018 and 2019 the number of negative migrations was -1,450 and -1,450 respectively. Neighborhoods outside of the separation wall attracted most Palestinians who moved out of the old city. Between 2011-2020 16,450 old city residents moved to Kfar Aqab. At the same period 7,490 moved to Shufat Refugee camp and new Anata enclave cut from the city by the wall of separation. Meaning the total people moved in the 10 years is higher than the current Palestinian population of the Old city. According to assumptions by IPCC survey in June 2024 at least another 20% of the Palestinians living in the Old city moved physically to neighborhoods outside the separation wall while keeping their Old City Address. It's important to mention that the Israeli interior ministry refuse to register new population address if in the old city.

The main reason for migration especially of young families beside socio-economic condition, high density and the lack of services is the conflict escalation and the high restriction and control of the old city by intensive military presence. In 2014 1,730 inhabitants left to Shufat Refugee camp and new Anata (highest number in 10 years between 2011-2020), during the same period 2018 and 2018 witnessed the highest migration from the old city to Kfar Aqab 1,940, and 2,580 respectively.

During pandemic the number of populations leaving the city due to lack of hygiene and high density intensified, the severe infected number of Covid in the old city never reported for the reason

2. Poverty, socio-economic conditions and policing

The old city is the most hardship neighborhood of East Jerusalem in terms of poverty, according to latest Israeli statistics in 2022 58% of Palestinians in East Jerusalem (217,800 inhabitants) are below poverty line, compared to 32% among Jewish population (195,000), mainly among ultra-orthodox communities. The average monthly income for household in Jerusalem is 12,600 NIS (3500 USD) for religious and ultra-orthodox families, monthly income average for Jewish secular household is 20,400 NIS (5,600 USD), Palestinian household average is 10,400 NIS (2,888 USD).

Level of poverty in the old city is higher than the average percentage at the level of the city, it's estimated to be at least 40% less than the average income for Palestinian households.

Youth in the old city suffer from harsh police behavior, between 2018-2022, 1396 investigation files opened against Palestinians in the Muslim quarter, in 2023 this number increased to 1,650 files opened 1,182 are "disturbance of public order", 237 files are causing body harm which is the accusation of resisting arrest by police or violence of settlers. Only 55 files were considered as a security one.

In addition to aggressive security check and restrictions and violence by settlers, youth and children in the old city suffer from lack of public spaces, sport and informal education activities, these conditioned intensified social problems like violence among families and drug addiction which is much higher in the Old city compare to other neighbourhoods.

3. Education, health, public institutions and social services

According to IPCC Education in East Jerusalem review 2020, there is 23 schools inside the walls of the old city, 7 private schools, mainly churches schools serving the city level with 2,451 students in the academic year 108 classes. 3 Israeli municipal schools with 1,185 students in the academic year 2020/2021. The number of Awqaf Schools are 12 with a total of 1,866 students studying in 99 classrooms as in 2019/2020. There is only one school of UNRWA in the old city with 72 students studying in 9 classrooms as in 2018/2019.

Most of the old city residence are members in the Israeli health management organizations, 60% of them in Clalit clinic near the central bus station just outside the historical wall in Damascus gate with a total members of 21,500 and another Clalit clinic in Musrara area with 4000 registered members. Others receive health services from other health management

originations and small clinics inside the old city, 4 small clinics exist in the old city under churches and Islamic Awqaf. The only UNRWA clinic inside Herod's gate is struggling with the Israeli policy to end its mandate not only Jerusalem but also in Gaza as the current war indicated.

Hostile and friction in the old city

In October 2023, the old city became a military fortress, a ghost city except for military, very few Palestinians residence in the public space and dominant settler groups. Israeli media reported that more than 2,500 officers and volunteers were patrolling the Old City and its vicinity. New friction areas were becoming spatially visual. All gates of the Old city are becoming a checkpoint and a hostile place generate tension, harassment, provocation, and violence: -the following are the main friction areas.

- The Damascus gate and its stairs symbolize the Palestinian national character of the city, mainly the linkage between the Old city and its markets and holy places and the city center of east Jerusalem alongside the northern adjacent areas and outer lying neighborhoods, and the first destination for Palestinians visiting the city. In May 2021, Palestinian youth, and after being banned from utilizing this area by the Israeli police, reclaimed this space by gathering there and initiating social activities during the holy month of Ramadan, as has been the case for the past decades. Damascus gate is now the most hostile site in the city due to the military present of boarder police occupying 3 Permanente iron structures of "check-towers", the intensive electronic devices and cameras. Recently the Israeli municipality reconstructed the public park next to Damascus gate as an open field (for security reasons), cutting plants and leveling work. In the last 5 years this area is witnessing a continuous attempt of the police, the municipality, and the extreme right-wing groups to change the character and symbolism of this gateway to the old city. (Hebrew name of the stairs, exclude the area from the East Jerusalem city center masterplan, and the settlers' associations plan to build hotels in the area and rebuild what the call Shechem square. In the first 6 weeks of the war, only residence of the old city and some shopkeepers were allowed to enter the old city, for youth this area became a field investigation and arrest and severe violence by military.

- Al Wad Street. the road leading to Al Haram Al sharif was considered as a hostile area, since the Ariel Sharon occupied a house on this main road in early 1980s. a military present near the Austrian hospice and the junction to the Majlas gate (Head quarter of the Awqaf offices) with the Yeshiva in between creates a friction contiguity from Damascus gate to Al Haram. the weak commercial activities resulted from this hostile (different form the parallel Khan El Ziet market) contribute to the sense of unsafe and untrusted collision area. Only on Friday this road wetness an active commercial life.

- Bab Al Haded, the Housh (courtyard) of Al Shihabi family which turned into a friction point (the so called "little Kotel"). The road leading to this gate includes a police station and settlement on the second floor of the Old City Youth Association. Recently the Awqaf reject the municipality plan to restore the courtyard which is an owned by Waqf (Khairi- public trusteeship), the municipality went to court against Awqaf that insistent not to allow the Israelis to renovate their property. Recently the Awqaf restore the courtyard

- Al Quattaneen Market. this covered market suffered from poor commercial activities since the 1980s and recently renovated by the Awaqaf (after rejecting the municipality offer to renovate this market), the municipality lighted the market and since then it became a friction point, many right-wing activists visit the place to overlook to Dome of the rock, last October the police closed all shops (52 in number) and allow Jewish prayer. Awqaf perceived this action as a further steep to undermine its authority and as a dangerous assault on its properties.

- Al Silsiley Road. This area is becoming the frontier between the market and the chain gate of Al Haram Al sharif and the Jewish quarter. 3 checkpoints prevented Palestinians from using the Jewish quarter as an access road to get from Silwan and south to Al Haram Al Shrif. One checkpoint prohibited youth from entering to Al Harim al Sharif through the chain gate. settler groups dominate the street and alleys of this area.

- Lion Gate and northeast corner of the old city. The main gateway to Al Haram Al sharif, the area extended from the cemetery of Yosueefiey and the wholesale market (Hisbah) in the northern east corner of the old city to the main road connecting the lion gate with Silwan and Ras Al amoud is becoming an area during the time of prayer and in a large-scale protest on Friday morning. Israeli military present all the time segregation north and east of Jerusalem neighborhoods from the old city.

-Jaffa Gate. this area was always considered calm because of the dominant percent of tourists, during Fridays a checkpoint blocked Palestinian from entering the city, Jewish were all allowed to access the old city and only Palestinian who are registered as residence of the old city were allowed to enter.

Main Trends in East Jerusalem During the War

1. **Old City Restrictions:** Since October 7th, 2023, the Old City of Jerusalem has been subjected to stringent restrictions, affecting residents, shopkeepers, and visitors alike. Access to the Old City has been entirely limited to those whose official ID addresses were registered within the Old City for at least 45 days. Even Jerusalemites with valid IDs were barred from entering the Old City, making it nearly impossible for shopkeepers living outside the Old City to open their businesses. This policy effectively turned the Old City into a closed zone, drastically impacting its vibrant commercial and social life.
2. **Restricted Access:** Only residents of the Old City have been allowed entry since the onset of the war. Neighboring areas such as Wadi Al Joz and Bab Alsaherieh faced particularly harsh restrictions, especially for individuals under the age of 50. These restrictions varied depending on the gate, with main entrances like Damascus Gate and Lion Gate being subject to the most stringent controls. The selective and inconsistent application of these restrictions added to the chaos and confusion among the local population.
3. **Police Violence and Arrests:** The war has seen a sharp increase in police violence and arrests in East Jerusalem. Every Friday, young worshippers were dispersed with tear gas and dirty water cannons in areas like Wadi Al Joz, a practice that continued until

early March 2024. By the end of 2023, police confrontations had resulted in the deaths of five young Palestinians, particularly in the neighborhoods of Al Issawiyya and Al Tur. Additionally, 987 youths were arrested, many of whom were not involved in protests but were targeted due to suspicions or social media activities. Reports of police violence against non-protesting youth further exacerbated the atmosphere of fear and repression.

4. **Al Aqsa Mosque Restrictions:** Access to Al Aqsa Mosque was completely restricted until the second day of Ramadan, March 11, 2024. These restrictions were part of a broader effort to prevent protests and gatherings within the Old City and Al Haram Al Sharif, particularly among younger Palestinians who had already been barred from entering these areas for five months. While the restrictions were slightly eased to avoid further unrest, the tension around the mosque remains high, with ongoing concerns about access and the rights of worshippers.
5. **Checkpoint Closures:** The first two weeks of the war saw the complete closure of checkpoints linking East Jerusalem with neighborhoods outside the separation wall. These checkpoints later reopened but operated under limited hours, severely restricting the movement of people and goods. Since April, the checkpoints have been open for longer periods, but the disruptions to daily life and commerce have had lasting effects on the local population.
6. **Public Transport System Disruption:** The public transport system in East Jerusalem was nearly shut down during the first two weeks of the war. By the end of 2023, a total of 225 buses operated by seven companies served 31 routes, covering both northern and southern parts of the city. Daily trips reached 1,935, serving approximately 81,000 passengers. However, the number of passengers on lines crossing checkpoints decreased by at least 70% due to the total closure that prevented West Bank residents from entering East Jerusalem or crossing into Israel for work. The local public transportation network within Jerusalem also saw a 30% decrease in usage. Additionally, Palestinians largely avoided using the Israeli tram system for the first six weeks of the war, further straining public transport options.
7. **Tourism-Related Commercial Shutdown:** The war led to the prolonged shutdown of commercial activities related to tourism in the Old City, severely impacting the livelihoods of those dependent on this sector. Approximately 1,370 shops were closed for over six months. By April 2024, only about 10% of souvenir shops had reopened, primarily due to the limited number of tourists during Easter. As of the end of July 2024, more than 80% of these shops remain closed, with only 462 shops currently in operation. The collapse of the tourism industry has been one of the most visible and economically damaging impacts of the war on East Jerusalem.
8. **Local Market Decline:** The local commercial activities within the Old City also suffered a significant decline. Out of approximately 700 shops, only 20% were open during the first six weeks of the war. Currently, these shops operate under limited hours, from 11:00 AM to 4:00 PM, reflecting the ongoing challenges and reduced customer

base. The reduction in operating hours and the overall decline in business have further strained the economic resilience of local merchants.

9. **East Jerusalem City Center:** In the first six weeks of the war, 629 shops in the East Jerusalem City Center were either fully or partially closed, with only essential food shops remaining open. Commercial activity in this area dropped by 70%, highlighting the broader economic downturn across East Jerusalem. The reduced foot traffic, coupled with movement restrictions and fear of violence, has devastated what was once a bustling commercial hub.
10. **Hotel Closures:** The war has led to the closure of 21 hotels and 12 guesthouses in East Jerusalem, totaling around 1,100 rooms. These establishments have remained closed since October 7th, with only brief reopenings during Easter and Ramadan in 2024. The closures have had a severe impact on the local hospitality industry, which had already suffered from a 2.5-year closure during the COVID-19 pandemic. The repeated disruptions have left the industry struggling to recover.
11. **School Attendance:** The war severely disrupted education in East Jerusalem, with more than 120,000 students unable to attend school during the first two weeks of the conflict. Fear, tension, and movement restrictions contributed to this massive disruption in schooling. Additionally, 80 students were placed under house arrest due to their activities on social media. The gradual return to school has been marred by challenges, including police searches of students' bags and phones, and limited accessibility due to checkpoint restrictions and reduced public transportation, particularly for students living in neighborhoods outside the separation wall.
12. **Community Activities:** Community activities in East Jerusalem saw a sharp decline during the war. Many community service institutions, including Al Quds University and various civil society organizations, were either partially closed or operated under severely restricted conditions. This decline in community engagement further isolated residents, particularly the youth, from social support networks and educational opportunities.
13. **School Enrollment:** The number of students attending schools inside the Old City has dropped significantly. The Israeli municipality's policy aimed at reducing the number of pupils in the Old City by providing incentives for transportation to schools in other parts of the city. This policy, coupled with the war's disruptions, has led to a decline in school enrollment within the Old City, further weakening the local educational infrastructure.
14. **Increased Jewish Presence:** The war has been accompanied by a noticeable increase in the presence of national religious and ultra-Orthodox Jewish families in the Muslim Quarter of the Old City. There has also been a rise in the number of Jewish yeshiva students and Israeli secular tourists in areas such as Jaffa Gate, New Gate, and the Christian Quarter. Alongside this demographic shift, there has been an increase in Israeli infrastructure projects within the Old City. These projects, often perceived as

efforts to assert Jewish dominance and identity over the area, have conflicted with the administration of the Waqf, which owns many properties in these areas. Projects like the construction of a new synagogue in the Qattanien market or the installation of park roofs over markets have fueled tensions and are seen as part of a broader strategy to alter the cultural and religious landscape of the Old City.

Implications

1. **Shrinking Freedom of Speech and Protest:** The war has significantly curtailed freedom of speech and the right to protest, especially concerning the high number of civilian casualties, including women and children, caused by the Israeli army. For many Jewish Israelis, the war is viewed as essential for the protection and existence of Israel. As a result, any expression of humanitarian concern, solidarity with Gaza, or opposition to the war is often seen as a betrayal. The state has responded to such expressions with threats and punitive measures, targeting those who sympathize with Gaza or have family ties there.
2. **Increased Enmity and Discrimination:** The war has fuelled unprecedented hostility towards Arabs among large segments of the Israeli Jewish public. This enmity is reflected in the growing opposition to Arab presence in public spaces, media, and economic sectors. The social fabric of the city has been severely strained, with rising discrimination and exclusionary attitudes toward Palestinians.
3. **Perceived "Internal Threat":** From the outset of the war, Palestinians in Jerusalem have been viewed by the Israeli political and military establishment as a "potential internal threat." The military has been prepared and trained to address this perceived threat, with Jerusalem considered one of the war fronts by political and military leaders. This perception has led to heightened security measures and increased surveillance, further alienating the Palestinian population and deepening mistrust between communities.
4. **Calls for Retribution:** A dominant sentiment among many Israelis is the desire for revenge against Arabs, whom they hold responsible for events like the October 7th attack. This sentiment has been widely expressed on social media, where Palestinians in Jerusalem are often labelled as terrorists or potential terrorists. The atmosphere of retribution has contributed to an increase in vigilante violence and has further polarized the city's population.
5. **Economic and Social Impact:** The war is expected to have a lasting negative impact on the socio-economic conditions of Palestinians in East Jerusalem. Budget cuts for special programs, coupled with increased taxes and rising unemployment, are already creating significant hardships. These challenges are likely to worsen in the coming years, further entrenching poverty and inequality in the city. The war has not only disrupted daily

Final Word Since the outbreak of the war, the situation in East Jerusalem has been marked by violence, arrests, and severe restrictions. A total of 12 Palestinians have been killed in East Jerusalem, in addition to four Jerusalemites who were deported to Gaza after being former prisoners. The war has also led to the arrest of over 2,000 Palestinians, including 364 children and minors, 145 women, and 75 individuals placed under administrative detention. The extensive use of administrative detention has drawn significant concern, as it often involves detaining individuals without trial or formal charges. Moreover, 325 police deportation orders have been issued, targeting individuals for their presence at specific locations: 150 deportations from Al Aqsa Mosque, 85 from the Old City, and 41 from Jerusalem entirely.

During Ramadan, the city experienced a temporary calm. Youths who had previously been barred from entering Al Aqsa Mosque were eventually allowed access, but only after passing through at least 3-4 checkpoints and undergoing a rigorous "filtering process." This process involved thorough identity checks, with individuals often required to deposit their ID cards at the gate before being allowed entry. Despite these restrictions, the easing of some barriers during Ramadan marked a slight shift toward normalcy in the city.

Small groups of Muslim tourists, primarily from Turkey, South Africa, and Indonesia, began to visit the city, marking the first signs of a tentative recovery in tourism. By April 2024, Western tourism had resumed, albeit with very low occupancy rates—only about 10% from April to July 2024. This limited return of tourists, however, provided some economic relief to the city's struggling hospitality sector.

On the social front, the atmosphere in East Jerusalem has started to show signs of recovery. Weddings, engagement parties, and graduation ceremonies, which had been largely absent during the initial stages of the war, have slowly resumed. By May, solidarity with Gaza, which had previously been a dominant theme in public and private discourse, no longer deterred residents from participating in daily life and family celebrations. This shift reflected a gradual adaptation to the ongoing conflict, as residents sought to maintain a sense of normalcy despite the overarching tensions.

Ongoing Impact and Need for Recovery

The current war has exacerbated the already dire conditions in East Jerusalem, compounding the challenges that have accumulated over years of conflict and disruption. The aftermath of the 2014 war, the escalation in 2021, and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic have collectively deteriorated nearly every aspect of life in East Jerusalem, particularly in the Old City and its surrounding areas. This continuous strain has highlighted the urgent need for a comprehensive recovery strategy to address the immediate and long-term challenges faced by the city's Palestinian population.

A city recovery action plan for East Jerusalem is urgently needed to facilitate the city's return to normalcy and promote sustainable development. This plan should be developed through a participatory process, involving local communities, stakeholders, and international organizations. It should be guided by the principles of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), with a particular focus on SDG 3 (Good Health and Wellbeing),

SDG 4 (Quality Education), and SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities). These goals emphasize the importance of safe, resilient, and sustainable community development.

1. Safeguarding Palestinian Identity

- **Recovery and Resilience Strategies:** It is crucial to develop and implement strategies aimed at safeguarding the Palestinian identity and presence in the Old City. This includes protecting the cultural, social, and historical fabric of the community against ongoing pressures and changes.
- **Cultural Initiatives:** Foster initiatives that celebrate and preserve cultural traditions, both tangible and intangible. These initiatives should focus on the unique identity of the various neighbourhoods (Hara or Mahala) within the Old City, ensuring that the rich heritage of East Jerusalem is passed down to future generations.

2. Preserving the Character of the Old City and Surrounding Areas

- **Urban Recovery and Regeneration:** Promote East Jerusalem as a vibrant Palestinian living space through comprehensive urban recovery and regeneration plans. These plans should focus on revitalizing the core of the city and its immediate environs, ensuring that they remain livable and reflective of the community's needs and aspirations.
- **Cultural and Architectural Preservation:** Develop and implement strategies to protect and enhance the cultural and architectural character of the Old City. This includes safeguarding historic buildings, public spaces, and the unique urban landscape that defines East Jerusalem. Efforts should be made to prevent further alterations that could undermine the city's Palestinian identity or erode its historical significance.

This recovery plan not only aims to address the immediate needs resulting from the ongoing conflict but also to lay the groundwork for a more resilient and sustainable future for East Jerusalem and its residents. The successful implementation of this plan will require the cooperation of local authorities, international agencies, and the community at large, working together to rebuild and strengthen the city's social, economic, and cultural fabric.

