Technical Documented Report on
The Excavations Carried out by the Israeli Occupation Authorities in Al-Quds Al-Sharif

Prepared by
ISESCO Archeology Experts Committee
INTRODUCTION

Based on its responsibility in safeguarding cultural and civilizational heritage in Palestine, most notably in Al-Quds Al-Sharif, and in response to the new design by the Israeli occupation authorities to judaize Islamic landmarks in Al-Quds Al-Sharif through conducting excavations in the precincts of Al-Aqsa Mosque and the Al-Buraq Wall and including Al-Haram Al-Ibrahimi in Al-Khalil city and the Billal Bin Rabah Mosque in Bethlehem in the list of Israeli heritage, the Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (ISESCO) is honoured to release this documented legal report of its specialized committee which proves illegitimate those works by Israel around the Al-Aqsa Mosque, in deliberate breach of relevant international conventions, hoping that relevant international bodies will take all necessary measures for the immediate cessation of these attempts and pressurize the Israeli authorities to cease such serious violations.

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Since the last meeting held in Amman, the capital of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan on 15-16 April 2007, many things have happened in Al-Quds City in general, and the old city, its environs and the area surrounding Al Aqsa Mosque in particular. It is worth saying that the policies described in the previous report are still in force. They have even gained momentum and become widely exposed to the world.

The legal situation of antiquities in Al-Quds has not changed. The law prohibiting systematic excavations and transfer of antiquities under occupation is still in force. Therefore, a review of the legal situation in this respect will only be a reminder of those dimensions, and not a follow-up of the developments. The latest developments relative to UNESCO's decisions made last year about Al-Quds are included in the present report along with details of some of the previous points. Israel's repeated attempts to prevent fact-finding missions sent by UNESCO to observe the situation in Al-Quds are also described.

The present report focuses on two central points. The first point is concerned with revealing the close link between settlement, settlement movements, and "archaeological" excavations underway in the Old City. The second point is interested in Israel's control over the Old City's cultural landscape, aimed at usurping and Judaizing it, and strengthening the link between the Old City and West Al-Quds. In both areas, monuments and architecture, i.e. the cultural heritage, play a central role in the achievement of this objective.

The intensification of the campaign against the antiquities and cultural landscape in Al-Quds in general, and the Old City and Al Haram Al Sharif in particular, requires a strong reaction from all the Arab, Islamic and international organizations concerned with the cultural heritage to save Al-Quds from a tragic fate.

I: General Legal Framework

Since the Israeli occupation of East Al-Quds in 1967, Israel has adopted a series of decisions and legislations, and unilaterally and illegally implemented laws to take full control over occupied Al-Quds. These measures included a law enforcing the application of the Israeli law in East Al-Quds, which become subject to the Israeli legal and administrative jurisdiction. In 1980, the Knesset approved the Basic Law declaring "unified Jerusalem" the capital of the State of Israel and the seat of its basic institutions. The decision constituted a de facto annexation of East Al-Quds. The UN Security Council declared these decisions null and void.

some of the provisions of the Protocol Additional I issued in 1979 and annexed to the Geneva Conventions of 1949, constitute the primary sources to protect cultural heritage under occupation. These laws and regulations impose duties, responsibilities and obligations on the occupying power. This does by no means imply that they grant sovereignty to the occupier over the occupied territories. Occupation is only a temporary situation that may disrupt the occupied people's right to sovereignty over its territory for a limited period of time, but it does not weaken or eliminate this right.

2. International treaties and conventions have drawn up provisions and regulations calling for the protection of antiquities, cultural property, and historical and archaeological buildings. The fourth paragraph of Article 27 of the fourth annex of 1907 Hague regulations stipulated that “in sieges and bombardments all necessary steps must be taken to spare, as far as possible, buildings dedicated to religion, art, science, or charitable purposes, historic monuments.” According to the provisions of Article 23 of 1907 Hague Convention, it is prohibited to “destroy or seize the enemy's property, unless such destruction or seizure be imperatively demanded by the necessities of war.” Article 16 of Protocol II Additional to the Geneva Convention of 1949 also prohibits “any acts of hostility directed against historic monuments, works of art or places of worship which constitute the cultural or spiritual heritage of peoples.”

3. Article 5 of the Hague Convention issued on 14 May 1954 stipulates that “any High Contracting Party in occupation of the whole or part of the territory of another High Contracting Party shall as far as possible support the competent national authorities of the occupied country in safeguarding and preserving its cultural property.” Article 56 of the Hague Regulations of 1954 also banned the seizure or destruction of facilities intended for worship and charitable works and historic monuments. The Protocol additional to the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1977 - Article 53 of Protocol I and Article 16 of Protocol II - prohibit the perpetration of any acts of hostility directed against historic monuments, works of art and places of worship which constitute the cultural and spiritual heritage of the people. It should also be noted that Israel has signed this Convention, which means that it is legally bound by all its terms.

4. As an occupying power, Israel has legal obligations towards the Palestinian cultural heritage in Al-Quds, including the refrain from systematic archaeological excavations, the transfer of antiquities as well as the destruction, marginalization or falsification of cultural heritage.

5. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) has adopted many resolutions condemning and denouncing the flagrant attacks by the Israeli occupation authorities against historical and holy sites in Al-Quds Al-Sharif. The latest of these attacks was the inclusion of archaeological and religious sites in the list of the Israeli heritage in October 2010, which was condemned and considered null and void by UNESCO.

These resolutions also condemned the excavation works carried out by the Israeli occupation authorities in the vicinity of Al-Aqsa Mosque and Qubbat As-Sakhrah (Dome of the Rock), and called on Israel to immediately put an end to the excavations which legally violated the 1972 International Convention
concerning the protection of world cultural and natural Heritage. They have considered these excavations a threat to the Old Al-Quds site included on the World Heritage List and the List of World Heritage in Danger. These missions-based decisions, also called on Israel more than once to refrain from any acts that would alter the historic nature of the city and to stop excavations as they represent a danger to the antiquities of Al-Quds. They also condemned the crime of burning Al-Aqsa Mosque on August 21, 1969, and called upon Israel to preserve all sites and buildings, as well as any other cultural property, and stop archaeological excavations in the occupied territories.

6. The International Law addresses the question of deliberate destruction of cultural property and deems it a war crime. Nuremberg Tribunal decided to consider wanton attacks on historic monuments and buildings a war crime, in accordance with Article 6, paragraph (b) of the Tribunal’s Charter.

7. Finally, the report of UNESCO recent mission to Al-Quds (28 February through 2 March 2007) called on Israel to desist forthwith from all excavations carried out in Bab Al-Magharba and restore the hill, that is being bulldozed, to its normal state.

8. After the occupation of Al-Quds in 1967, Israel launched extensive excavations in the city and the entire occupied territories. Antiquities and finds were transferred by the Israeli occupation authorities, individuals possessing licenses issued to them by those authorities, Israeli soldiers or civilians dealing in antiquities. Furthermore, excavations have escalated as a result of the construction of settlements and bypass roads, not to mention the hundreds of sites that have been discovered lately as a result of the establishment of the apartheid wall. This helped reveal the hundreds of archaeological sites that needed urgent rescue excavations. These rescue excavations were hurriedly conducted, and the finds were transferred to Israel. Besides settlements and the wall, the extension of East Al-Quds railway has led to the escalation of excavations in the area of Bab Al-Jadid (the New Gate) and Bab El’Amud (Damascus Gate), as well as along Road Number 1, Sheikh Jarrah, Shuafat and Beit Hanina neighborhoods.

9. Both rescue and systematic archaeological excavations taking place in Al-Quds are conducted in line with the Israeli antiquity law, which, as explained above, is contrary to the International Law.

10. Since 1967 Israel has implemented or allowed the implementation of the following activities:

- The Israeli Government, through Israel Antiquities Authority, or through governmental, municipal or academic bodies, under a license from the Antiquities Authority, has supported the conducting of archaeological excavations in the different parts of Al-Quds, especially in the Old City and its vicinities, as well as in the area around Al-Haram Al-Sharif, and even beneath it in some cases.
- Israel has transferred antiquities from archaeological sites and museums in occupied Jerusalem to Israel. The latest objects transferred were some
stones from Umayyad Emirate House (palace), located immediately to the
south of Al-Aqsa Mosque, and conceitedly showcased one of them in the
courtyard of the Knesset.

- Israel has sold a lot of archaeological finds discovered in Al-Quds and in
the antiquity market, based on the Israeli law which allows their sell. Israel
considers itself the proprietor of this heritage, doing with it whatever it
wishes, in a stark violation of International Law.

- Israel has destroyed a lot of archaeological sites on account of the illegal
construction works carried out in occupied Al-Quds, to establish settlements,
the apartheid wall, roads and railways.

- Israel has also destroyed the eight hundred-year-old Harat Al-Magharba
with its entire cultural heritage and appropriated historic buildings enjoying
special cultural status in the Old City.

11. Israel is currently carrying out “infrastructure development” projects in the
region of Bab Al-Khalil near the Armenian Quarter. This has led to more
archaeological discoveries. Israel also plans to conduct dozens of excavations
in the different parts of the Old City. The coming project will be in Bab Al-
Amoud (Damascus Gate) and will include the Wadi Road, which means
more archaeological finds. Certainly more tunnels will be dug, to tighten
the grip on the Old City and Judaize it.

12. Despite UNESCO's decision (184th session of the Executive Board) to send
an additional fact finding mission to Al-Quds, Israel is still preventing it
from doing its job. Up to now, the mission is still unable to reach Al-Quds
and write a report on its cultural conditions, including monuments, and
submit it to UNESCO's Secretary-General and Executive Board.

13. Israel continues to hide what it is doing in Al-Quds with regard to excavations,
especially in the tunnels from the world, including UNESCO and its different
bodies. This runs contrary to the fact that Al-Quds is registered in the List
of World Cultural Heritage.

14. UNESCO Executive Board issued by vote, in its 185th session held on 19
October 2010, five important resolutions condemning Israel for its practices
against cultural heritage. One is on the Bab Al-Magharba\(^1\) and Israel's
continuous disregard for UNESCO's relevant resolutions, including the
cessation of all acts of digging and altering of characteristics. It also
condemned it for preventing the UNESCO relevant mission from doing its
job, and called on Israel to enable the Waqf Department and Jordan to reach
the site. Another resolution called on UNESCO's Secretary-General to
dispatch experts to reside permanently in Al-Quds, and submit continuous
and periodic reports to the Secretary-General on the monuments, architecture,
culture and education. The third resolution of the Executive Board condemned
Israel for registering the Ibrahimi Mosque in Al-Khalil and Bilal Ben Rabah

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\(^1\) This issue was discussed in the previous technical report (April 2007), therefore, it will not be
discussed in the present report. Only the latest technical and legal developments will be included.
Mosque in Bethlehem on the Israeli National Heritage List, given the fact that both sites are occupied Palestinian territories.

International Law prohibits excavations in occupied territories. As for occasional discoveries, all measures should be taken to protect them and deliver them to the competent authorities at the end of occupation. Article 32 of the first Charter stipulates that in case of an armed conflict, the occupying state must refrain from carrying out archaeological excavations in the occupied area, and should there be, by coincidence, any antiquity find, particularly during military construction works, it is incumbent on the occupying power to take all possible measures to protect those finds and deliver them at the end of occupation to the competent authority in the region which was under occupation with all related documents. Despite this prohibition, the Israelis have excavated hundreds of archaeological sites in the occupied territories in general and Al-Quds in particular, in a stark violation of the sanctity of Palestinian antiquities.

Therefore, excavations in the city of Al-Quds should be seen as part of the permanent breach of the International Law, especially as Al-Quds is an occupied city, as stated above.

II: Al-Quds: Archeology at the Service of Settlement

In Al-Quds, Israel has deliberately linked archaeology with settlement movements and used this "science" not only for "legitimacy", but also for the reinforcement of settlement and settlement movements and for imposing a future political reality excluding the heart of the city. The term used to refer to this policy is the "Historic Basin" or "the Holy Basin". In this geographical area of about 3 sq km, the most intensive archaeological excavations and fiercest settlement attacks are taking place.

Israel began excavations in the area surrounding Al-Haram Al-Sharif, and its archaeologists greedily jumped on this "booty", losing by that their scientific and moral balance. Also, they did not hesitate to use bulldozers during excavations, consequently, they ended up confusing politics with science. Yigael Yadin, the prominent scientist and archeologist is a case in point. (2) He piloted the broadest digging campaign in the vicinity of Al-Haram Al-Sharif. Yadin's example shows the extent of Israel's investment in the field of antiquities as a source of legitimacy. Israel today has the highest proportion of archaeologists in the world compared to the number of the population. Moshe Dayan is another example of archeologist politicians in Israel and how they influence the field of antiquities and its "scientificity". The confusion between politics and archaeology has made specialists in this field a first-rate political tool.

   His role in the establishment of the Zionist myth can be depicted in the broad studies he conducted:
   Neil A. Silberman:
1. Israeli Excavations Areas

Israeli excavations in Al-Quds concentrated in several areas:

a. Al-Haram Al-Sharif and the Surrounding Area

Israeli excavations concentrated in all the areas surrounding Al-Haram al-Sharif, especially in the southern and western sides of Al-Haram Al-Sharif. Some of those excavations are apparent, while others are hidden beneath the buildings scattered along the western wall of Al-Haram Al-Sharif, or underneath it in some cases. They included the vast esplanade, which was created after the demolition of Harat Al-Magharba in June 1967, and its surrounding areas in the south and south-east. The objective of these excavations was not to write the history of Al-Quds, nor was it to unearth interesting antiquities that might be discovered; the stated goal was, and still is, to find the remains of the first and second temples, and therefore everything dug was temples-related. Bulldozers had the upper hand in first periods, especially from 1967 till the mid-eighties. It is noteworthy that the most important thing revealed by the excavations in this region, especially in the area close to the south-western corner of Al Haram Al-Sharif, is the House of Umayyad Emirate, composed of five huge buildings (more castles have been discovered towards the south). The story of this discovery is a long one. Moreover, a Byzantine residential Quarter was also discovered. However, the most serious excavations carried out in this area are located along the western wall of Al-Haram Al-Sharif. We know nothing about these excavations, which have been kept secret, and the only way to infer their existence is through the sound of digging.

b. The “Jewish Quarter”

As is well known, Israel has identified about 12% of the Old City’s area and declared it a Jewish quarter, regardless of who owns the properties in it. Islamic properties in the region represent about 87% of the total estates. It then conducted extensive digs within the project of “Rebuilding the Jewish Quarter,” thereby destroying its historic fabric and rebuilding the majority of buildings in a way strange to any old city in the
world. This was accompanied by archaeological excavations aimed at linking the quarter to the past historic periods, mainly that of Herod. However, these excavations did not, in anyway whatsoever, prop up Israel’s historical allegations. Nevertheless, they adorned the quarter with many archaeological sites and gave it a historic depth, such as the discovery of a part of the Romanian colonnaded street (Cardo Maximus), a German church dating back to the twelfth century (crusades), a wall that is believed to hark back to the end of the Hellenistic era called “Hasamonan Wall”, the unclear history of which is being now re-examined. The focus was on Jewish synagogues located in the quarter, which were restored. It is said that most of them date back to the nineteenth century, and one of them to the Mamluk era. Recently, a synagogue has been rebuilt (Hurva synagogue) with a high dome as part of rivalry to command the horizon of the Old City. For them, the Old City cannot stay with only two domes - the Dome of the Rock and the Dome of the Resurrection - without the addition of a Jewish one.

In any case, so far no link between Jews and the quarter prior to the Mamluk era has been proved through archaeology. Even if Jewish communities existed in the city prior to that era, they were marginal and left no traces, except some accounts of travel literature talking about a symbolic existence of Jews during the different Islamic eras.
c. Silwan Area

Silwan, a village located a few meters to the south and southeast of the Old City, is another major area where intensive excavations are taking place. This part of the city was named “City of David”, the oldest hill in the city Palestinians call “Tell Al-Duhor”. It can also be noted that excavations on the site, which are still going on today, began through archaeological and evangelical missions in the second half of the nineteenth century. After 1967, the site was turned into a first-rate Jewish national park. Despite the insignificance and opacity of the finds, they were amplified in an unprecedented way and media were widely used to tell a story of no tangible existence in the site. It is also interesting to know that this hill is located above the only water source in Al-Quds, called Ain Silwan, which is linked to many underground channels. This has given free reign to imagination. The situation in this site has become funny. There is much talk about the Palace of King David the Great, and his abundant gardens and the administration centers of his vast Kingdom; nevertheless, what we see on the ground has nothing to do with this issue. All that we can see is a small village relatively different from many of the sites surrounding Al-Quds. Excavations in Silwan area are being expanded on a daily basis in hope of finding something new. This part of Silwan has even been transformed into a "national symbol" that is visited by all Israelis, mainly school students and soldiers.

d. Different Places in Al-Quds

Israel has spared no piece of land in Al-Quds area from digging. Infrastructure works carried out in East Al-Quds, especially to build settlements, bypass roads and tramways, have unearthed several sites and monumental landmarks in the different parts of the city. This has resulted in an enormous increase in the pace of digs, sparing no piece in the city.
We will not address the issue of Israeli excavations in Al-Quds since 1967, as this has been the subject of many studies but we will focus on what is happening on the ground now. In fact, several excavations are now based on the same intellectual and methodological foundations developed by the Torah “archaeologists” since the second half of the nineteenth century. It is the same methodology followed later by the Israelis to intensify their work in the field of archaeology.

III: Excavations Underway in Al-Quds

Recently, looting campaigns against antiquity and land, and what is beneath it, in the name of “archaeological excavations” have accelerated. In fact, the so-called “archaeological exploration” underway, is part and parcel of a large-scale political campaign sweeping Al-Quds region, as part of a previously and openly set plan at the highest levels. Hence, “archaeological” activities focus on the so-called “Holy Basin” or “Historic Basin”, which is the area that includes the Old City and its environs. It also includes the western slopes of Jabal Al-Zeitoun, Silwan, Wadi Hilwah, Al-Bustan Quarter and Wadi Rababa, and expands towards Sheikh Jarrah in the north. Israel has repeatedly demanded the complete and exclusive control over this area as part of final status negotiations.

This “archaeological” campaign is coupled with an extensive campaign of Zionist settlement on the one hand, and the expulsion of the Palestinian population on the other. All that is taking place precisely in this area can be realized through monitoring the intensive house demolition campaigns in Silwan in general and Al-Bustan Quarter in particular. The pace of settlement has also increased in Wadi Hilwah, hand in hand with the increase of excavations, both in number and size, in the same


4) Generalization is not intended here. Surely, many biblical and Israeli archaeologists have both critical methods and thinking. However, what is discussed here is the official school, which actually represents the majority of those who work in historical studies in general, and archaeological studies in particular.

5. This term was officially used by the Israelis in 2000 during the final status settlement negotiations in Camp David. As for the unofficial and preparatory negotiations, this term first emerged in the mid-nineties to designate the aforementioned geographical area. The Israelis express their supreme political and religious interests in this area. Despite the Israeli agreement, in principle, on the standards of former US president Clinton, which suggest dividing Al-Quds on a population basis, that is to say the Palestinian neighborhoods should be under the responsibility of the Palestinian authority, and the same should apply to the Israeli neighborhoods, the Israeli negotiator insisted on the specificity of this area.

6. The settlers have succeeded in seizing over 15 properties in Wadi Hilwah. Also, the District of West Al-Quds and Israel Antiquities Authority gained control over the majority of open spaces. It is estimated that those seized areas exceed in total the third of Wadi Hilwah. It is worth noting that settlements in Wadi Hilwah is a link in the chain of settlement projects intended to bar Palestinians living in the surrounding area of the Old City from entering it. The pretexts given for that include the greenbelt which will surround the Old City, the antiquities and the construction of cultural protected areas.
area. And the same applies to Sheikh Jarrah region, where an entire neighborhood is being emptied as part of plots for the implantation of settlers in that area.

Despite the difficulty of settlements expansion in the Old City owing to the growing awareness among the population, the institutionalization of the legal defense of property, the growing campaigns to encounter settlers, the renovation of residential and rehabilitation buildings through Palestinian initiatives to improve housing conditions for Palestinian, not to mention the urgent and growing need for houses, which has led to a rise in the value of tangible and intangible property and increased Palestinians tenacity towards their property, settlers attempts still pose a real threat to large parts of the Old City. This explains the attempts to take full control of property in the Old City using unethical means. The most dangerous attempts are happening in Bab Al Khalil (Omar Ibn Al-Khattab), as the Israelis are trying to take control of the Imperial Hotel and Petra Hotel, both of which are owned by the Roman Orthodox Church.

It is also worth noting that settlers are still controlling St. John Hostel near the Church of the Resurrection, which is also owned by the Roman Orthodox Patriarchate, and which was also confiscated through subtle ways similar to those used to take control of the two hotels in Bab Al-Khalil. There are also desperate attempts to usurp more property in the area surrounding Al-Haram Al-Sharif and in the following neighborhoods: Aqabat Al-Khalidiya, Aqabat Al-Qurmi, Aqabat Takia, Bab Al-Hadid Road, Al-Wad Road, Bab Al-Sisila Road, and to a lesser extent, Bab Hatta and Saadia Quarter.

Settlement movements abstained from entering the Quarter for a long time, but they broke that tendency with St. John's Hostel located in Aftimos Market (tanning), and their attempts to control Bab Al-Khalil.

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7) Israel took over Al-Quds Tower located in the same square in 1967 under the pretext that it is a State property, and started excavations there. When the excavations did not reveal any significant Jewish history, the existing buildings, most of which go back to the Ayyubi, Mamluk and Ottoman eras, were turned into a Museum of Al-Quds History, which relates a biased history and expresses the Israeli official point of view about the City's history. Not too far from the Tower, the Israeli police seized the barrack under the same pretext. It is worth noting that the barrack was built by Ibrahim Pasha Ben Mohammed Ali Al-Kabir during the Egyptian domination of Al-Quds (1831-1840). The fortress is currently used as the headquarters of the Israeli police and a detention center. The same building includes a security observation station linked to numerous cameras spread all over the Old City. If the settlement project is carried out in this vital area, a major area of the Old City (Bab al-Khalil area) will turn into a Jewish Israeli gate to Al-Quds, a very central gate. Israelis have repeatedly tried during all official and unofficial negotiations to gain control over the area of Bab al-Khalil, leading to the Jewish neighborhood through the Armenian neighborhood (one can recall the Israeli demanding to take over the Armenian neighborhood under the pretext that it was not Arab in Camp David in 2000). Also, Israel gave particular importance to Bab al-Khalil and the road linking it to the Jewish neighborhood in the Geneva agreements and the attached maps.

8) The number of settlement points has exceeded 85 in the Old City, outside the so-called the Jewish Quarter. Many on-the-ground and under-ground projects are planned to interlink these projects, and link them all with the Jewish neighborhood and Al-Buraq wall square. This reveals the major settlement role played by Israel Antiquities Authority under the pretext of studying the history of Al-Quds, unearthing the city's antiquities and developing tourism. The actual aim of all these activities is to implement the Israeli settlement projects.
IV: Archeology and Settlement

Recently, the relationship between the movements of extremist settlers and the Israel Antiquities Authority has clearly and expressly strengthened in an unparalleled way. Such movements as "Elad" and "Ateret Cohanim" and "the Western Wall Heritage Foundation" have financed excavation works, which are usually followed by settlement activities. One of the stark examples of this close relationship between the two parties is Israel Antiquities Authority's license to “Elad” association to manage the archaeological park located between the “Tell Al-Duhor”, or what Israelis call the “City of David”, and the surrounding areas, including the House of the Umayyad Emirate (Khatonian land), to the south and south-west of Al Haram Al-Sharif. Today every excavation in the so-called "Holy Basin" shows how strong is the cohesion between settlement, archeology and the Israelis working in this field, especially Israel Antiquities Authority.

Since last year, many an official in Israel Antiquities Authority’s activities would move to Al-Quds, in order to achieve a record number of digging operations, and that those digs would continue for many years. They also proclaimed that those excavations would change the face and nature of the city, and that archaeology in Al-Quds was at the service of the State and its political goals. Those statements are unprecedented, especially as it was alleged for a long time that archaeology in Israel is an independent science. In the past, our criticism of "archaeology" was due to its exposed ideological role as a political pretext justifying and legitimizing the establishment of the "State of Israel", and creating "historical legitimacy" and thereby the "cultural and moral" legitimacy for it. “Archeology” has also played a central role in shaping the "Israeli identity", hand in hand with the Israeli army, Histadrut and the kibbutz. After the fall of the Histadrut and the kibbutz, or say after the dramatic decline in their role, and, to a lesser extent, the decrease in the role of the army, owing to the economic and social developments that took place in the Israeli society, the role of archaeology has unprecedentedly risen, despite the collapse of many arguments that dominated the Israeli Archaeology in such key sites as Al-Quds, Masada and other areas. These arguments constituted for a long time through the stories and myths made up by archeologists in Israel, the main cultural pillars of the Israeli society, and become part of the official version of the Jewish history.

It is now almost agreed by most serious Israeli and Western archeologists that “David's Great City”, which was the capital of David's Great Empire, is in reality a village less developed than many of the surrounding cities located between Beit Lehm and Ramallah. Therefore, its link with the Jewish history is no longer a condition for linking the site with political pretexts. It has rather started to play a bald role in settlement operations, and in the right of Jews to settling anywhere in

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9) This movement provides an extremist Zionist reading of the site's history and brainwashes the visitors. This made some Israeli archaeologists challenge this approach through different means, including organizing visits to the site and providing alternative narratives. For more details, visit: http://www.alt-arch.org/tours.php.
David’s and Sulaiman’s capital, as well as in the area where the Jewish history was drawn up(10).

It is worth noting that Israel Antiquity Authority is accelerating the legal procedures, and even overlooks them on many occasions, especially when it comes to an area targeted by settlement associations, like Wadi Hilwah, where “Elad” movement dug before the eyes of Israel Antiquity Authority without having the necessary licenses. After months of digging, and following the protests of some Israeli archaeologists and the publication of some press reports, they applied for the licenses. In spite of the fact that the land on which those excavations were carried out was a purely Palestinian property, Municipality of West Al-Quds decided to turn it into a parking lot and granted Elad Association the “right” to dig it. This shows the municipality’s collusion on the settlement strategies, for it legitimatizes them and draws up detailed blueprints for their implementation. This proves what we said about the link between decision makers, at different levels, and the settlement activities taking place inside and outside Al-Quds. It also shows that the settlement groups, sometimes called “extremists”, are only the arm of decision makers in Israel, including the Archaeological arm. Moreover, official Israeli governmental institutions finance many of these settlement activities which are not compatible even with the Israeli law(11).

As is well-known, the Israeli law, like in the rest of the world, prevents the construction of any site without the approval of Israel Antiquities Authority. The initiator of the construction takes charge of the costs of digs if necessary; and normally it is forbidden to construct on sensitive sites that are declared archaeological reserves under the law. However, the law is entirely nullified when it comes to a settlement site. For example, Elad settlers in Wadi Hilwah applied for a license to build on the Ovel hill, the “City of David”(12) for Israelis, and on the archaeological site preserved since the British Mandate period. Israel Antiquities Authority rushed and undertook rescue archaeology operations on the site, and then allowed the settlers to build on it. It is true that Al-Quds Municipality did not issue a license for that, but has not demolished the building neither, even after six years of it construction, despite the protest of a number of Israeli archaeologists and some human rights organizations.

Settlement movements have become a key funder of Israel Antiquities Authority. It is believed that the amounts paid by the settlers to the Antiquities Authority exceed

10) It is true that the activity aiming to link settlement movement with archaeology is not a new Israeli practice. This applies to the early settlements built in the early 20th century, and, on an even larger scale, to the numerous Israeli settlements that were built after 1967, such as “Ifrat”, “Shilo”, “Takoa” and “Beitar”, etc. These archaeological sites were sometimes randomly linked to the Jewish history, and their names were revived or modified in order to give settlements historical depth.

11) On the other hand, Israel Antiquities Authority adopts an inflexible approach toward the restoration projects implemented by the Palestinian institutions in the Old City. This reaches the extent where even the removal of 10-centimeters deep dirt would require several legal procedures. This makes such activities almost impossible and turns them into an infernal experience. Within this framework, many projects have been stopped and their managers were taken to court because they did not obtain prior authorization, even if they were just changing their floor tiles.

12) This site is located southeast to the UNRWA-funded Silwan school for girls, where a classroom’s floor collapsed. In this particular area, it is impossible to construct a square meter, with or without authorization, even when temporary building materials are used.
USD 3 million a year, which gives this movement the power to decide on many of the Authority’s policies, not to mention the Israeli archaeologists who ideologically belong to the settlement movement. For example, the Ateret Cohanim Organization funds excavations in the northern part of the Old City and beneath “Ohel Yitzhak” synagogue(13), while “Elad” foundation funds excavations in Silwan Quarter in addition to two other sites. Also, the so-called “Western Wall Heritage Foundation” funds excavations in three other sites close to “Al-Buraq Wall”, both in the western part of the esplanade and the Hill in Bab Al-Magharba.

Before addressing the various excavations underway, it is important to note the close relation between settlement movements and the Israeli Municipality of Al-Quds. These movements have funded a set of detailed blueprints focusing on the area of Silwan. Also, structural plans, financed by the settlers, are being prepared, to serve settlement plots in Silwan, and the same thing applies to Sheikh Jarrah. What has been said above confirms the power of settlement movements and the extent of their influence on decision makers in Israel, especially with regard to land and what is on it(14).

V: Excavations in the Old City(15)

a) Excavations in the Hill of Bab Al Magharba(16): These excavations were conducted to remove the remaining hill in the Moroccan Quarter, which extended from the esplanade of Al-Haram al-Sharif to Al Buraq square. The aim of those excavations was to get rid of archaeological obstacles faced by the administration of the “Wailing Wall” to expanding the esplanade in front of Al-Buraq Wall, and providing a better entrance for the Israeli Security Forces; including the military vehicles to Al-Haram Al-Sharif. Those excavations incurred the ire of many international players: Palestinians, Arabs and Muslims, as well as many parties

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13) The construction of this synagogue has recently ended. During the construction, the digging was 10 meters deep. Israel Antiquities Authority, in coordination with settlement foundations, is planning to turn the site into a museum of historical layers in Al-Quds in order to give a historical dimension to the synagogue, whose construction ended only in 2009. This is an exposed game, especially as the synagogue was built in what is known as the Ottoman-Byzantine architectural style.

14) Among the institutions that the settlers focus on: the Ministry of Defense (especially the civil administration), the Ministry of Housing, the Ministry of Interior, the Israel Land Administration, the Absent Property Administration, Al-Quds Municipality, Israel Antiquities Authority, etc.

15) The list here includes the current excavations (2011) and not those that were conducted in the past and affected the Old City’s look, the real estate ownership and settlement.

16) For more information about this site, see the experts’ report of 2007.
It even took a more serious turn, as an international committee chaired by UNESCO was established to discuss the issue. As a result of that reaction, excavations were stopped, pending the ratification of the necessary plans. We no longer know the fate of the site, but the controversy is still going on in Israel. Moreover, a number of ministers, Knesset members and Israeli archaeologists have intensively intervened in this case, and attitudes towards these excavations took different directions. But it is worth noting that Israel Antiquities Authority was supposed to be objective and refuse any works to change the scene there given the fragility of the situation, both at the political and archaeological levels. The hill was a historical proof to the archaeological layers witnessed by the region; it was also physically linked to one of the most important civilizational landmarks in Al-Quds: Al-Haram Al-Sharif. Instead, the Antiquities Authority rushed into the implementation of the settlement plan and earmarked huge resources for that. Several plans are on the table to address the results of those excavations, including the construction of a metal, glass or concrete bridge, while the Palestinian and Jordanian sides are insisting on restoring the hill to its formal state and not to remove what is left of it. Even if the works in those excavation site are still suspended, the organization committees in the municipality are still receiving plans from time to time. The rabbi of the Buraq Wall and the Western Wall Heritage Foundation continuously present such plans to keep the project on the agenda of the different licensing committees.

A few days ago, on 9 March 2011, Al-Quds Municipality decided to build a temporary iron bridge, to replace the temporary wooden one. The decision was made in the name of the "Western Wall Heritage Foundation", following the freeze of all activities in the site as a result of the protests mentioned above. The matter may go beyond the iron bridge, as it is expected that more excavations will be conducted in the site under the pretext of establishing the iron pillars for the bridge, which requires digging deeper. However, it is too early now to predict all the dimensions of the decision.

b) Al-Buraq Wall Esplanade Excavations: Excavations continue in the west end of the Buraq esplanade. These activities arouse the fear of an above ground and underground expansion of Al-Buraq esplanade, at the expense of the rest of the Old City. The results of those excavations were already expected: a colonnaded Roman road extending from Al-Amoud Gate towards Wad Road (lower level Cardo), whose features are clear on the Madaba map, which dates back to the end of the sixth century A.D. A long part of this road was found, and several Byzantine and Umayyad, Crusader, Ayyubid and Mamluk buildings use discovered on it. Some parts of the destroyed Moroccan Quarter buildings were also found. Those digs were made in response to a request by "the Western Wall Heritage Foundation" to create a multi-purpose hall and additional centers of mass Jewish services, in addition to a center for the police and rapid intervention forces. We do not know anything about the fate of the important finds in this site, but given the fact that the Old City is on the World Heritage List of historic sites, all forms of construction are supposed to be banned, which is applied only against the Palestinian population (17). There are no signs

17) One can remember the fuss made against the Islamic Awqaf when it restored Solomon’s Stables under the eastern square of Al-Aqsa Mosque and turned it into Al Marwani Mosque. Israel Antiquities Authority, the government and the police imposed sanctions on the Islamic Awqaf that are still in effect.
Bulldozers removing the hill of Bab Al Magharba

Bab Al-Magharba Hill on 13 March 2011; there seem to be no new collapses

Madaba map: lower level colonnaded street top of the picture
indicating that works have stopped here. On the contrary, the preparations of the blueprints necessary for the construction process are underway. The recent news published in this respect was that the antiquities unearthed would be preserved and displayed below the building to be established.

c) Western Tunnel Excavations: It is the tunnel located along the western wall of Al-Haram Al-Sharif. Excavations continue incessantly here, and are most probably moving westward. But, as a matter of fact, we do not know much about the course of these tunnel excavations and we cannot exclude the possibility of their heading towards the east. Only those heading towards the west away from Al-Haram Al-Sharif are revealed. Therefore, we cannot claim that we know something about the excavations heading east, towards Al-Haram Al-Sharif, which makes the situation even worse. Sometimes, we can figure out their course from the sounds emanating from under the ground, but we cannot make sure about them. The different information reported by the residents of the buildings located above the tunnel suggest that the tunnels are heading towards different directions beneath the Old City. Nevertheless, we cannot provide more information about them because we are short of clear facts. However, it may be noted that the lower part of Ohel Yitzhak synagogue (mentioned below) was linked with a tunnel from the west to the east to meet the Western Wall tunnel. This has resulted in the collapse of some buildings (Housh Al-Zaria) and cracks in the other neighboring buildings.

d) Ohel Yitzhak Synagogue Excavations: This synagogue is fifty meters away from Al-Aqsa Mosque towards the west, to the south of Hammam Al-Ain located in the Wadi Road. The two-storey synagogue was built on a property confiscated in the seventies of the past century. It was completed and inaugurated in 2008. Below the synagogue called "Ohel Yitzhak", digs have already started and have reached deeper than ten meters so far. In the area located behind the synagogue in question (Housh Al-Zarba), digging reached more than 12 meters in depth, and it too has been linked to the western tunnel, which runs along the western wall of Al-Haram Al-Sharif. It is confirmed that these excavations may reach about 20 meters in depth, and aims at the establishment of a museum of Jerusalem's archaeological layers. These excavations caused cracks in several densely-populated buildings in the area, and led to the
collapse of the road leading to Housh Al Al-Zarba. It is noteworthy that the excavations, which reached the rock layer, have resulted in the discovery of archaeological layers from the Roman era to the end of the Ottoman era. A huge room (27.8 x 10.3 m), probably belonging to Khan Tankaz (Mamluk) laying to the north of this site was also discovered. Thus, the results of excavations gave momentum to the project of archaeological digs here, as settlers gained an additional site: a large versatile hall.

All this have been linked to the west tunnel extending along the western wall of Al-Haram Al-Sharif, which means that the site has been linked to Al-Buraq Square, to form an integrated unit. Settlers claim ownership not only of the building but also of everything discovered under its ground. Although the buildings on the ground are private property and part of an Islamic Waqf, settlers, supported by Israel Antiquities Authority and by the Israeli Municipality of Al-Quds, are acting as the exclusive owners. It is also important to note that the excavations in this region have led to cracks in many densely-populated houses located above the tunnels being dug. Excavations are continuing, and we do not know exactly the direction they will take, or what additional settlement projects they will result in, in this sensitive area adjacent to Al-Aqsa Mosque.
e) Htsislam House Excavation: this outpost is located in the north-eastern side of Al-Wadi Road, to the north of the Austrian Hospice. We know nothing about the excavations underway, but it is believed that they are taking place in two directions. The first excavation work is heading north towards the Cave (Suleiman’s Cave/Cotton Grottos) located near Al-Amoud Gate, outside the walls, to connect the two sites. The second excavation work, however, is heading south to link the site to the above-mentioned Ohel Yitzhak Synagogue, and thereby the Western Tunnel and Al-Buraq Square. This project reveals the hard work done to establish underground connections between outposts and gain control over more areas within the Old City.

f) Sabra Land Excavations: This land is located at the southern part of Al-Khawajat market. This part of the market was most probably destroyed in the nineteenth century as a result of an earthquake, but was not rebuilt. The settlers have usurped the land and are now excavating it to prepare for the expansion of the existing settlements in Aqabat Al-Saraya. This settlement is being linked with the Jewish Quarter through shops’ roofs (Attarine and Lahamin and Al-Khawajat markets). Israel Antiquities Authority is conducting excavations in this land in preparation for granting it to Ateret Cohanim settlers. Digging has already finished in this area.

g) Burj Al-Luq Luq Excavations: It is a vast land located at the northeast corner of the Old City. The land is taken care of by Burj Al-Luq Luq Social Center Society which provides cultural, sports and health services to one of the poorest neighborhoods in the Old City. Not far from this land, which has for years been subject to settlement pressure encountered by the resistance of Palestinians living in the neighborhood, there is an outpost. Settlement associations have applied for a license to build 36 residential units in addition to a synagogue on top of which there would be a golden dome. Israel Antiquities Authority did not reject the principle of building in the site, which was located directly under the historic wall, and in a vital area representing an outlet for the densely-populated neighborhood, and excavated it. The excavations revealed that the site was extensively used during Roman and Mamluk eras, and that it could not be linked to the Jewish history. This led Israel Antiquity Authority to allow construction in the site. The project has not yet been carried out, owing to many problems relating to the ownership of the site, and to some protests against the idea. The issue has thus been suspended for a while, but I will not be surprised if it is raised anew in the future, especially during the mandate.
of the current pro-settlement government. It is clear again from this example that settlement movements, Israel Antiquities Authority and the municipality agree on the same agenda.

h) Al-Sharaf/Jewish Quarter Tunnels: Plans to dig more tunnels linking the above-mentioned area to Al-Buraq Square were announced, but we do not have the details.

VI: Excavation outside the Walls near the Old City (the so called Holy Basin)

A. Excavations in the so called “Givati Parking Lot”: This land is located next to the southern wall of Al-Quds, close to Al-Haram Al-Sharif, that is less than fifty meters away from the Qiblah of Al-Aqsa Mosque. It covers an area of 10 dunums. Excavations, which started two years ago, have so far revealed Islamic tombs (over 100 corpses) and huge Umayyad buildings. It is believed that this area was part of the Umayyad administrative compound (Emirate House) built in the turn of the seventh century. An Abbasid Quarter was also discovered in the site, which makes it of utmost scientific importance, especially as the Abbasid era is not well represented in the city. The dimensions of these excavations have not been revealed yet. However, based on revealed information, a large hall for settlers, a shopping center will be built in the site. It may also be linked with Al-Buraq Square through a tunnel from the north, and with Ain Silwan from the south. Since 2007, Elad Foundation has been funding excavations, which cost millions of dollars as they reach very deep levels. It should be noted that the information center of the “City of David”, which is managed by the afore-said settlement movement, is located opposite the excavation workshop. This proves the link between this the excavation work and the settlement project in Silwan.

B. Siam Land Excavations: this land is located about 150 meters away from the southern wall of Al-Quds in Wadi Hilwah, within an area marked by an active settlement movement. Digs are heading northward through a Roman tunnel which was used for directing water surplus in the city towards the south (Wadi Hilwah then to Wadi Nar). Dozens of meters have been dug towards the north, while excavations are still underway. It is also worth noting that excavations were conducted without the license of Israel Antiquity Authority. When the issue was raised by some Israeli journalists, the Antiquity Authority issued the necessary licenses, without ceasing digs and without taking Elad to court as it is the case with Palestinians. The digs are

18) This discovery was not announced until the news leaked to the media. Then, the Antiquities Authority claimed that it delivered the remains to the Israeli Ministry of Religions, which in turn claimed that it buried them. No Muslim authority was invited to pray over the dead, as the Islamic Sharia requires. Also, no one knows in which cemetery the remains were buried, or if they were buried in the first place. It is worth mentioning that the bodies found were Muslim's from the Umayyad era.

19) The excavations actually revealed many other antiquities that date back to the Roman and Byzantine eras.

20) Many historians and archaeologists claim that Al-Quds suffered negligence during the Abbasid era. This discovery should lead to conducting studies about this era again. However, we do not expect a lot to be published about this topic, just as was the case for the Umayyad Emirate House.
taking place under inhabitants' houses as well as beneath the public avenue. Elad considered itself the proprietor of all that is under the ground and behaved like a government. Nothing is secret: the government, the municipality and Israel Antiquity Authority are all arms of the same entity. The inhabitants of the area lost the case they filed against this excavation carried out under their houses without their permission. This again proves the link between the judicial body in Israel and this project\(^{(21)}\).

C. Ain Silwan Excavations: Ain Silwan digs are taking place in three sites to the north of Al Ain, to the south of Al Ain, and at Birkat Silwan. Excavation works financed by settlement foundations continue to link Ain Silwan with a tunnel extending in the north towards the above-mentioned excavation site (Siam Land) and towards Al-Haram Al-Sharif. Archaeological activities in this area can be understood as part of a settlement plan on the one hand, and as part of the project to create a Jewish archaeological city that can lay the foundations for rewriting the history of Al-Quds based on settlers' version, which is deemed more radical and unilateral compared even with the official version. Excavations in this region have led to the collapse of many parts of the public avenue and cracks in some houses. Information about the excavations taking place here are not enough to reach scientific results about the findings\(^{(22)}\). The excavations have obviously come a long way and they may even have already finished without officially declaring it.

D. Al-Duhor Hill Excavations (City of David): Digs are still taking pace in the site and there is nothing new about that, however, the rehabilitation works are being done by settlers, who have created, on the corner of the site, an advocation building

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21) To learn about the excavations' effects on the houses, the safety of Palestinian dwellers, and the use of excavations as a means to chase the dwellers away, see: "Adina Hoffman, Archaeological Digs Stoke Conflict in Jerusalem", in The Nation, August 18, 2008. Israel Antiquities Authority usually provides information about the excavations it conducts in the different areas on its website. However, if excavations took place in a settlement area inside or outside the Old City, the researcher would find no information about them. Browse through the website of this institution: http://www.antiquities.org.il

22) Also, Israel Antiquities Authority does not provide any explanations about what is happening in this site.
where the history of Al-Quds is being selectively rewritten. This has raised the ire of the majority of the persons concerned with antiquities locally and internationally. The site provides an audiovisual presentation on the history of the hill and its relation to the Jews. Settlers deploy guides in the site to present their point of view using a clear method. The latest excavations are taking place around Al-Ain (Ain Um Durj) where fortification towers dating back to the Middle Bronze Age (Canaanite period) are being discovered.

VII: Tunnels:

The phenomenon of tunnels is not new in a city like Al-Quds, which has many archaeological layers and contains piles of buildings one on top of the other. Also, the topography of the city has played a major role in the constitution of tunnels. There are different kinds of tunnels:

a. Some of them are the result of the establishment of a bridge between two high-level areas separated by a river. Heaps of soil have piled up in that river throughout the ages and were forgotten about until they were discovered in one of the excavations, which have been taking place since the second half of the nineteenth century.

b. The second type of tunnels are the result of sewage conduits established to remove rain water, waste water, or distribute drinking water. Throughout the ages, the city was linked with networks of these conduits, but they were forgotten about following the installation of modern ones; nevertheless, they were discovered again.

c. Other tunnels are the result of the rise of the level of buildings, especially in the area surrounding Al-Haram Al-Sharif. The tunnel dug along the western wall of Al-Haram Al-Sharif is one of them.

d. Tunnels with no historical origin, being dug afresh such as the one planned between the Jewish Quarter and Al-Buraq Square and the one to link Suleiman's Cave and Sharon House.
The most famous tunnels dug in Al-Quds are:

- **The Western Tunnel:** The western tunnel is extending along the western wall of Al-Haram Al-Sharif, starting from beneath Al-Tankazia School next to the overt part of Al-Haram Al-Sharif’s western wall from the southern side, till the northwestern corner of Al-Haram Al-Sharif, past Al-Ghawanma Gate towards the north. The tunnel (from the northern corner of the Wailing Wall) is 330 meters long, along the western wall. It also extends over 35 meters towards the north of Al-Haram Al-Sharif, then turns to the east for about 16 meters. Finally, it opens on the Via Dolorosa, beneath Al Omaria School. Israelis call it Hasmonean Tunnel because there is a water channel on the northern side of the tunnel extending over about 35 meters under the Sisters of Zion School (the pond where water is gathered), which is believed to have been built during the said period. The remaining parts of the tunnel are foundations of the Mamluk buildings built on them, in addition to the parts going back to the Crusader or the Ayyubid era, especially at the beginning of the southern tunnel. Nothing else has been discovered belonging to other eras, except for two slabs dating back to King Herod era. We do not even know whether they were part of a paved road or re-used on the site during later periods.

It can also be noted that some parts of the tunnel have been known since the nineteenth century. This tunnel constitutes the foundations of the Mamluk buildings located along the western wall of Al-Haram, as the Mamluks decided to raise the level of buildings linked to Al-Haram from the western side to be at the same level with the courtyards of Al Haram. Since the western area of Al-Haram descends westward to form a deep valley (it is now called Tarik Al Wadi “Valley Road”), it was necessary to raise the buildings on pillars and props that formed a series of underground rooms and corridors. Some of these are still full of dust and architectural vestiges, while others were used as wells to collect rain water for the buildings located above them. As excavation (especially in the northern part of the tunnel as the rock was dug to form a northern exit of the tunnel) and cleaning works began after 1967, the tunnel was inaugurated by Netanyahu on 23 September 1996, giving rise to what was then called the tunnel Intifada. It is also useful to know that some parts of the tunnel are not large enough, not more than 60 cm, which means that visits should go in one direction (currently from the south to the north). Therefore, if the other exit is closed (beneath Al-Om aria School), the tunnel will be crippled in terms of tourism.

It is worth noting that this underground tunnel is branched with secondary tunnels. We do not know them all because they are not opened to visitors. Some of them head towards Al Haram al-Sharif (i.e. eastward), and therefore talking about “a tunnel” is not enough, and we have to take the branches into account.

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23) A Jewish bloodline that ruled Greece under the name of the Seleucids from 135 BC, through 63 BC (the Roman invasion).

24) To know more about the Israeli point of view as regards the tunnels, browse through their website: http://www.aish.com/seminars/tunneltours/overview.asp
The launch of excavations in the tunnel in the early seventies caused cracks and collapses of a large number of Mamluk buildings above it, bearing in mind that the excavations were first launched by settlers and the Western Wall administration without any supervision from archaeologists or engineers. The same thing applies to many sites in the Old City.

- **Ain Silwan Tunnel:** It is located in Silwan, under a part of the so-called “City of David”. It was discovered by Archaeologist Eilat Mazar, an extremist Zionist, whose writings lack scientific credibility even among Israeli archeologists. She was the one who caused the controversy about Al-Musalla Al-Marwani digs and established an association to defend the "Temple Mount". She announced the discovery of the tunnel in 2008 and said it dated back to the tenth century BC, i.e. the era of King David. No one can confirm the exactitude of the date, and the researcher herself cautiously gave her version of this discovery. So far, about 100 meters have been discovered, and work is underway in the tunnel from Ain Silwan to the Old City. The tunnel will be used to link the "City of David" with Silwan water projects and Al-Buraq Wall. It will also contribute to the expansion of settlers’ power, and will lead to the elaboration of an integrated Zionist version of the history of Al-Quds.

25) The researcher associated this tunnel with another one that was cited in the Old Testament (Samuel II: 8-5). The text says that King David used that tunnel during his invasion of Jebusite Al-Quds. This is obviously a premature ideological link especially that most torah narratives in relation to Al-Quds, especially those of Dawood and Suleiman eras, have become void of any validity from the perspective of serious archeologists.
- **Wadi Hilwah Tunnel**: The tunnel, called "Matlaa David", is located along Wadi Hilwah road, linking Silwan to the Old City. Along this road, settlements have spread, mainly after the appropriation of about 15 buildings. The settlement project here aims at evacuating Wadi Hilwah from all its inhabitants, and then linking Ain Silwan with a road going from Bab Al-Magharba in Al-Quds wall, at the southern wall of Al-Aqsa Mosque, towards Ain Silwan and Al-Bustan area. This road sees intensive vehicle and pedestrian traffic. The discovery of this tunnel in the Old City is part of a single settlement plan, and therefore plays a vital role in this project. Digging beneath a guarded tent started in 2004 and was kept secret. We still do not know how deep digs have gone, but seven years of digging and the numbers of trucks transporting the rubble extracted from the tunnel are indicators of the extent reached. Most likely, this tunnel was used for channeling waste water from the Old City towards Wadi Hilwah and then to Wadi Nar. It is even believed that the digs have finished, given the fact that the avenue above it has been strengthened by reinforced concrete.
The most dangerous thing about these tunnels is that we know nothing about the plans, and the works undertaken are kept secret. The owners of the properties, their lawyers, or even journalists are not allowed to approach them, not for safety reasons as is the case in hazardous excavations, but in order to maintain the secrecy of the project. All the tunnels of the Old City and its surroundings have been associated with settlement movements, which demonstrates their link with these projects.

The aforementioned information illustrate the extent of the settlement offensive that is concentrated in and around the Old City, in an attempt to unilaterally resolve the issue. This campaign takes on the following shapes:

1. Using archeological excavations as a pretext for intervention and control. After archeology come settlements.
3. Expelling the Palestinians from Silwan, Al-Bustan neighborhood and Sheikh Jarrah.
4. Demolishing houses in the areas targeted by settlers.

**VIII: The Old City and its surroundings: The cultural landscape reversal and Judaization**

The struggle over Al-Quds can surely be described as a struggle over the land and sovereignty. But it is also a struggle over the symbols, the appearance and shape, and the flag that flies over its buildings and walls. It is also a struggle over the narrative. The struggle has grown, and recently unilateral realities have been imposed regarding all the aforementioned aspects. One could even assume that we are heading towards the end. This can be seen in the fervent activity on the ground within and around the Old City, aiming to settle the struggle over the Holy City's features and cultural landscape. In fact, although it has been occupied for four decades, it still maintains Arab features (identity). This accelerated various Israeli projects to alter the City's features and give it a different identity, if not an Israeli Jewish one, at least less Arab.

This activity is coupled with extensive Israeli excavations in many locations under the City. Their aim is first to reorganize the movement to the City, and second to change, if not to erase, its Arab features. These developments will certainly have economic impacts on the City's old markets and social life. They will also reinforce settlement movements, and make Israeli visits to the Old City happen without necessarily seeing Palestinians or anything that refers to them. Additionally, this goes...
hand in hand with providing an Israeli Torah reading of the history of Al-Quds\textsuperscript{28}, with special focus on any details that could possibly be related to Judaism and its history, even if this entailed demolishing some parts of Al-Quds and building others, to make them tally with and serve that narrative. If the monuments do not serve that narrative, which they do not in most cases, modern technology could serve this end with the support of sound, light and fictional shapes to replace the tangible ones, in a way that would make the viewers believe that they are witnessing absolute historical facts, especially if the narratives are supported by quotes from the Old Testament and from Roman historians\textsuperscript{29}.

In this text, we will present two areas that are continually and considerably altered. This does not mean that the other areas are spared, but less directly affected, or let us say that what is planned for the remaining areas is not yet clear. The first area is Mamilla (Maaman Allah) at Bab al-Khalil till Al-Buraq Square. The second one is Al-Bustan (Silwan) up through Ain Silwan till Bab Al-Magharba and from there to Al-Buraq Square. It is worth noting that recently, many plans have been unveiled. These will not only affect the identity of these two areas, but the future of Al-Quds as a whole.

\textbf{a. From Mamilla to Al-Buraq Square:}

This project aims to wipe out the civilizational and architectural differences between western and eastern Al-Quds, making use of the Holy area that used to stretch along the City's Western wall, and which separated the City's eastern and western parts following the 1948 war. From the early days of colonization in 1967, the Israeli bulldozers removed the majority of Arab buildings that were constructed in this area. This was one of the most active areas in Al-Quds before 1948. Therefore, there is an Israeli attempt to promote this area after completely altering its identity. Indeed, after playing the role of the main linkage between the Old City and Jaffa, Beit Lehem and Al-Khalil, it has gradually become the linkage between the west of Al-Quds and Al-Buraq square.

The project starts with Maaman Allah cemetery\textsuperscript{30} where the so-called “museum of tolerance” will be constructed in the coming years, obliterating the remaining parts

\textsuperscript{28} Nazmi Al Ju'beh, Al-Quds Between Settlements and Excavation, in the Palestinian Studies Magazine, Volume 20, Issue 79 (Summer 2009), pp 39ff. Although that article covers a main part of the problem, there is a need for updating information, as rapid developments are taking place in this area, and thus it is necessary to follow up the situation.

\textsuperscript{29} In this regard, see the publication of Youssef Said Natshah: “The Digital Temple Mount”, in Jerusalem Quarterly File, 19 (October), 2003, pp 53ff.

\textsuperscript{30} Concerning the Mamilla cemetery, see Kamal Al-Asali: “Our Ancestors in the Ground of Bait-Al-Maqdis”, Amman, 1981, pp. 117-133. Concerning the project of the Museum of Tolerance, it will be constructed on the cemetery at the initiative of the Israeli government, the Israeli Municipality of Al-Quds, and the Los Angeles-based Wiesenthal Center. The compound is made up of two huge buildings, the first called “Human Dignity” and second “The Museum of Tolerance”, with a budget of over US$ 250 million. It is worth noting that the Israeli Antiquities Authority has authorized construction although the cemetery uncovered many antiquities, including a vast lake from the Roman era, in addition to a number of tombs and tombstones from the Ayyubid and Mamluk eras. The cemetery is also associated with many slaughters which hundreds of Christian clergies suffered during the Persian invasion of Al-Quds in 614.
of one of the oldest Muslim cemeteries in the City. The cemetery does not only house the remains of the ancestors of many families in the city, but also a long period of Al-Quds cultural history. In fact, in that cemetery rest the majority of scientists and rulers who lived in Al-Quds and died there since the Ayyubi era until the British Mandate. The most provocative aspect of this project is its name. This waqf land was confiscated decades ago to construct new buildings on it, or turn parts of it into a park called the Independence Park (of course the independence of Israel). Worse than that, a so-called “museum of tolerance” will be set up on Palestinian tombs.

Just a few meters away to the South of Maaman Allah Cemetery\(^{31}\), the building of Islamic waqf is being turned into a hotel and high standing flats. So far, the building has been demolished from the interior with the facade being retained. This building, in addition to the “museum of tolerance”, will be an extension of the western part of Al-Quds, with a planned gradual extension to the Old City.

\(^{31}\) This fabulous building was constructed by Haj Ameen Husseini, President of the Supreme Muslim Council, in an effort to increase the revenue of waqf. He finished constructing it in 1929. It was built to be a hotel made up of 140 luxury rooms, designed by the then renowned Turkish architect Nuhas Beik. During that period, this building was considered the most luxurious contemporary building all over Palestine, thanks to the modern technology used in its construction, while its oriental style combining local and Andalusian art was kept. It was also equipped with the first electric elevator in Palestine. The Israeli occupation forces laid hand on the building right after the beginning of the 1936 Intifada and turned it into the headquarters of the Mandate government. In 1948, the Israeli forces seized it, with the pretext that it was the property of absent owners, and turned it into the headquarters of the Ministry of Industry and Commerce till 2003. Its ownership was then passed from one company to another including Regency. In 2006, it was “purchased” by a wealthy Jewish American. Following this, the whole building was demolished from the inside with the beautiful front facade being retained, as part of a complex project to turn the building into a hotel and high standing apartments that will be sold for 2 to 5 million dollars each.
And just a few meters away to the south-east, there is another project that was carried out in the eighth decade of the 20th century. The project is a huge residential compound called the (new) City of David and was designed by the renowned Israeli architect Moshe Safdie, who is in charge of developing and arranging the whole area located to the west and south-west of Bab Al-Khalil. The buildings were designed to be topped by domes of different shapes, thereby starting a gradual altering of the architectural landscape in order to make the West of Al-Quds an extension of the Old City.

The latest project, before acceding to the Old City itself, is the shopping mall that is currently called the New Mamilla Mall, which extends over hundreds of meters, starting from Maaman Allah cemetery in the east, extending in parallel with the Western Wall of the City, between the north-west corner and Bab Al-Khalil, only 20 meters away from the walls of the city. The mall is a rectangular building with domes over the majority of its parts. Owned by the Israelis, obviously, the mall includes restaurants, coffee shops, and shops for selling souvenirs, books and clothes of various international brands, in addition to a parking lot in its lower floor. It extends from Mamilla to Bab Al-Khalil, in a way that would make visitors coming from the West of Al-Quds through the mall feel that they have not left one city and entered another - as was the case before the construction of the mall. Once the visitors cross the mall, they find themselves within the Old City, and the first thing they behold is the Israeli flag flapping over Al-Quds Tower (Now called the Tower of David).
Once they cross Bab Al-Khalil to Omar Ibn Al-Khattab Square, visitors face two huge and extremely beautiful buildings, the first being the Imperial Hotel and the second Petra Hotel. Owned by the Roman Orthodox Patriarchate. Both hotels represent the early 20th century architecture style and an important part of the history of Al Quds. They were bought as part of a suspicious deal, which is still ongoing, by some settlement movements. If the deal is concluded and the Palestinians using these buildings are evacuated, Omar Ibn Al-Khattab Square will turn into a settlement area and may be called “Moshe Dayan Square”.

Once visitors leave Omar Ibn Al-Khattab Square and turn southward, they find the entrance of Al-Quds Tower which was changed into a museum of Al-Quds history, where Israeli flags are flapping, and where the city's history is related from an Israeli perspective. On the Eastern side facing the Tower, there is a Church called “Christ Church”, which is affiliated to a Zionist evangelical messianic movement.

32) Israel took over the Al-Quds Tower located in the same square in 1967 under the pretext that it is State property, and started excavations there. When the excavations did not reveal any significant Jewish history, the existing buildings, most of which go back to the Ayyubid, Mamluk and Ottoman eras, were turned into a Museum of Jerusalem history, which relates a biased history and expresses the Israeli point of view and narrative of the City's history. For more details on this museum see: Nadia Abu El Haj, Facts on the Ground, Chicago, 2001, pp. 170-176.

33) The Church was built in 1848 as the first European project in Al-Quds after the end of the Crusades. It was built by the London Society for Promoting Christianity among the Jews. It is run today by an evangelical society that does not believe in Israel's right to existence, but in the necessity of Israeli domination over all Palestinian territories of the Mandate era as a condition for the return of the Messiah. Inside the Church, Israeli flags are hoisted and all the writings inside are in Hebrew. This church is a main part of the Christian expedition that organizes a yearly march to celebrate Al-Quds Day (commemorating the colonization day of Al-Quds in June 1967). The slogans chanted during that march call for not abandoning the “land of Israel”.

Omar Ibn Al-Khatab square in Al-Khalil: removing obstacles or controlling the cultural landscape

Technical Documented Report on
The Excavations Carried out by the Israeli Occupation Authorities in Al-Quds Al-Sharif
Just a few steps to the south of the Tower, there is the Qishla building (fortress), built by Ibrahim Pasha Ben Mohammed Ali Al-Kabir after he took control of Al-Quds from 1831 through 1840. Israel confiscated the building in 1967 and turned it into the headquarters of the Israeli police in charge of the Old City. The building also contains a control station linked to hundreds of cameras that spread all over the alleys of the Old City. The building covers an area of over 3,000 m² and includes an incarceration center.
The only block between the aforementioned area of Bab Al-Khalil and the extended Jewish neighborhood is the Armenian Monastery. But after crossing the Armenian Monastery through a paved road used by vehicles, we reach David's Gate which is linked to the cemetery compound of Prophet Dawood and Dawdyia (Dajani) neighborhood, which was confiscated in 1948 to be used as a Jewish holy site. Then it was gradually turned into Jewish religious schools in addition to the synagogues.

The parking compound, which is destined to facilitate settlement within the Old City, is close to Prophet David's Gate. This compound is part of a bigger plan for the construction of a multiple-floor underground building to be connected with an on-ground or underground gate linking it to a large parking lot outside the wall in the same area. With this location, we reach the end of the Mamilla area arriving to the Jewish neighborhood, and from there to Al-Buraq Square. Along this area, which goes past many confiscated buildings, there is an infrastructure project. Along with these infrastructure works, intensive excavation works are being conducted in search of antiquities and tunnels. There is also another project that aims at enhancing the appearance of the area and reinforcing the connectivity of its parts. Many building facades will be renovated and any sign of the Arab identity will be removed. Direction signs will be put to lead visitors to the Jewish neighborhood and al-Buraq Wall. This will decrease the natural flow of the City’s visitors towards the shopping markets, and lead them through the Jewish neighborhood as much as possible.

34) Israel repeatedly tried in its official and unofficial negotiations to guarantee control over the area from Bab Al-Khalil until the Jewish neighborhood, going through the Armenian neighborhood. One can recall the Israeli demand for the Armenian neighborhood in 2000 in Camp David when it asked for its annexation under the pretext that it is not Arab.

35) The AL-Dajani family had received the sanctuary of Prophet Dawood since the 16th century from Sultan Suleiman Qanuni, and their name became “Dawudi” in reference to Prophet Dawood. The Dawudis built their houses in the area surrounding the sanctuary. The houses eventually grew into a neighborhood that continued extending until 1948 the date in which they were forced to leave the neighborhood, which was then confiscated by the Israeli army. It was turned into military quarters, and then into Jewish religious schools and churches. It is worth noting that the Jewish heritage does not associate that location with Prophet Dawood. This association is rather recognized by the Muslim and Christian heritage. But in 1948, this association was adopted by the Israelis for political reasons and for domination purposes.
b. From Silwan to Al-Buraq Wall

The project starts from Al-Bustan neighborhood in Silwan, at about 10 kilometers south east of the Old City walls. The Israeli Municipality of Al-Quds plans to demolish the neighborhood's houses in order to “recreate King David Garden”, as part of a broader plan to create an fence of monuments and gardens between eastern Al-Quds and the Old City. It is worth noting that this logic applies only to the eastern and southern sides of the walls surrounding the Old City, namely in the area where the Old City is linked with eastern Al-Quds. As can be seen in the “upgrading” project of the Mamilla - Al-Buraq Wall axis, this plan does not apply to the Western area where western Al-Quds is linked with the Old City. The resistance of the inhabitants of Al-Bustan neighborhood against this project is based on different grounds. On the one hand, this project is a settlement project by excellence, allowing the settlers to expand the area they control in this region which is already subject to a strong settlement assault. On the other hand, the inhabitants hold the colonizers responsible for the deterioration of their housing conditions, as a result of the confiscation of their lands in favor of settlements. This forced them to add slum houses to the existing ones. The inhabitants of the Silwan neighborhood do not oppose upgrading their neighborhood and adding green spaces to it, but oppose its appropriation under the pretexts of history, environment and antiquities, which constitute together settlement tools that have been frequently and intensively used.

36) Al-Bustan neighborhood extends over an area of about 46 dunums, and includes 100 houses with about 1,000 inhabitants. The majority of this neighborhood's lands are owned by families from Silwan. The lands were used in the past as plantations of vegetables and fig trees. But due to the sheer housing crisis in East Al-Quds, as a result of the various Israeli policies, this neighborhood has expanded at the expense of the natural landscape. Today, the Israeli Municipality of Al-Quds is planning to expel all families (about 142) and demolish all the buildings there.
Al-Bustan neighborhood is the meeting point of two important valleys in Al-Quds. The first starts from the aforementioned area of Mamilla about 2 km northwest of Bab al-Khalil. The valley continues down towards the southeast until Bab al-Khalil, forming a vast lake, called “Sultan Lake”\(^{37}\), which was used in the past for water collection. The valley then runs towards the southeast by the southeastern corner of the Old City, forming a deep valley called Wadi Rabab and which ends at Al-Bustan neighborhood in an area known as Bir Ayoub.

As for the second valley that joins in the same area, it is Wadi Sitna Mariam, also known as Wadi Al-Nar and Wadi Qadrun. It extends from Mount Al-Masharif over some 3 kilometers northeast of the Old City. The northern part of this valley is called Wadi Jawz. When it reaches the northeast corner of the walls of the Old City, it gets called “Wadi Sitna Maryam”. It continues southward about 2 meters away from the eastern wall, between Muslim cemeteries and the Jewish ones, to meet in Al-Bustan neighborhood with Wadi Rababa.

These valleys are not meant to be a historical greenbelt or archeological parks relating the history of Al-Quds’s civilizations with its different phases. They are designed to be a historical park that tells only one story, one version, overlooking the authenticity of the story. In fact, no one knows whether King David really lived in Al-Quds at all, or at least no evidence has been found which proves that. They do not even need proofs; the Israelis can make up the story and manifest it through some gardens rebuilding the story according to what is said in the Torah\(^{38}\).

Encircling the Old City with green valleys and historical gardens isolates it from East Al-Quds. This should not only be seen as a physical isolation from Palestinian areas, but also as an attempt to exclude it from the Palestinian narrative and link it, by force, to the biblical narrative.

Worst still, there is a series of components extending from Al-Bustan neighborhood to the Old City and which are being reinforced by the Israelis. The first is Ain Silwan Lake\(^{39}\) at the end of the rock tunnel\(^{40}\), which links the spring of Ain Silwan with its lake.

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\(^{37}\) In reference to the Ottoman Sultan Suleiman the Magnificent, who developed the lake by building a dam in its southern side and also made a passageway over that dam. The now dry lake is used by the Israeli Municipality of Al-Quds to organize festivals and music concerts.

\(^{38}\) Concerning the debate over the history of Dawood and its link with Al-Quds, see: David Van Biema, “Judaism’s Stake: The Mysteries of Solomon’s Temple,” Time, April, 16, 2001. As for the Israeli point of view on the debate and its reaction to the so called the Copenhagen School of Biblical Studies, which draws up most biblical narratives, within a mythical framework, see: Eilat Mazar, “Did I Find King David’s Palace”? Biblical Archeological Review, January/February 2006. For its part, the Israeli point of view regarding the biblical history of Al-Quds is presented by Israeli diplomat Dore Gold: Dore Gold, The Fight for Jerusalem, Washington, 2007, pp. 35-61.

\(^{39}\) This lake is associated with Christian beliefs, including the one according to which Virgin Mary washed her Jesus in the waters of the Spring, or drunk from that water. Also, the miracle of the blind regaining sight happened in that same lake. During the late Roman era, a huge bathing compound was built over there. This may be related to some water gods and a Roman temple. During the Byzantine era, the value of this water was supported by the miracle of Jesus and his extraordinary ability to heal the sick. For this reason, a Church was erected next to Lake Silwan before the middle of the 5th century. It can also be observed that part of the building constructed on Ain Um Ad-Daraj goes back to the Mamluk era (14th century). Part of the building is a mihrab. This
The Silwan Lake is witnessing today a daily struggle for control over the surrounding area, where outposts are spreading and from where a waste water evacuation tunnel extends southward linking the Old City to the vicinity of the Silwan Lake. About 100 meters of this tunnel, which dates back to the Roman era, have been excavated, and the rest is underway. In addition to connecting settlements to each other while ensuring a bypass of the Palestinian neighborhood “Wadi Hilwah”, these digs are apparently aimed at giving a historical and civilizational dimension to these settlements. The narrative that will be made up about this tunnel is not yet clear, but it will end somewhere near Al-Buraq Wall square. In fact, it would not be surprising if the tunnel is linked with one of the Jewish rebellions, alleging that rebels attacked the city using this tunnel, or any narratives of the sort.

The aforementioned tunnel is linked with two historical excavation sites. The first is located half-way, 200 meters away south of the City walls, that is towards the south of Al-Aqsa Mosque. No results have been announced yet as to its history. The excavation, which is sponsored by the “Elad” settlement movement, is taking place under a tent, which makes it impossible even to have a look at what is happening there. It is true that the excavation is executed by Israel Antiquities Authority, but everything else is subject to the settlers’ desires. As for the second excavation site, it is in the vast land located just a few meters (about 20 m) from the city walls. In the Israeli narrative, this land is called Givati Parking Lot. So far, this excavation site, according to the website of the Israel Antiquities Authority, has unearthed only a neighborhood dating back to the Abbasid era and the remnant of Umayyad palaces and an Umayyad Islamic cemetery. Nothing else has been published which can help in formulating a point of view about this site.

According to the Israeli plans, this piece of land will be turned into a multi-floor parking lot, to provide as much space as possible for the visitors of Al-Buraq Wall. The building will also include multi-purpose rooms and a shopping mall where presents and souvenirs related to the Temple, David and Solomon will be exhibited for sale.

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**40)** The tunnel is about 535 meters long, and was made to allow water canalization. It goes back to the Canaanite era (18th century BC), and was renovated in subsequent eras.

**41)** The settlers have succeeded in seizing over 15 properties in Wadi Hilwah. Also, the Municipality of West Al-Quds and the Israel Antiquities Authority have gained control over the majority of open spaces. It is estimated that these seized areas in total exceed the third of Wadi Hilwah. It is worth noting that settlements in Wadi Hilwah is just one link in the chain of settlement projects, planned to isolate the majority of the Old City from the Palestinians living in the surrounding area. The pretext for that is sometimes the greenbelt which will surround the Old City, and in some others times antiquities and the construction of cultural protected areas.

**42)** The only thing announced about this cemetery is the number of bodies discovered there. The location of this cemetery is extremely interesting. In fact, it is not located near Bab al-Rahmah where another Muslim cemetery dating back to the era following the entry of Islam to Al-Quds is located. This new cemetery is annexed to the Umayyad palaces. Therefore, it may be part of a royal Umayyad cemetery. But no additional information can be confirmed as long as everything about this excavation is kept secret.
East and northeast of this site, there is a vast site developed to support the Jewish narrative. It is the historical hill which includes antiquities from the Bronze Age until the pre-Greek era. The site is locally called Tell Al-Duhor, which the Israelis call the City of David. This whole hill was turned into a scene showcasing the story of King Dawood. The Israeli government has entrusted the administrative management of this site to the Elad Foundation, which does not provide a Biblical version of the site’s history, but that of Israeli Far Right. This hill will be the core of the Israeli narrative of the Jewish history in the City. It is given much importance in the Israeli propaganda, and every Israeli student and soldier is required to visit the site whose story is told to them from the point of view of a representative of Elad. It is also part of the tour offered to tourists and pilgrims. In reality, the narrative presented there is contested even by many Israelis who see it as threat academic narrative and offense against history.

To the south of Al-Aqsa Mosque, where Al Haram Al-Sharif is connected with the Old City by the southern wall, there is a part of what is now called the Archeological Park. It starts from inside the walls beneath Al Haram al-Sharif runs through the walls and extends beyond. The major part of this park is made up of the Umayyad Emirate House. Most of its components have been removed and all that remains of all the palaces are a few rocks. The garden also includes some Roman elements and a neighborhood dating back to the Byzantine era.

43) Elad is an extremist settlement movement striving to dominate all Silwan. It operates in the majority of the Old City’s surrounding area. Elad benefits from government support provided by many ministries, in addition to the donations it receives from wealthy American Jews.

44) In this regard, see: Greenberg, Rafael, Archaeology in Jerusalem 1967-2008: Towards an Exclusive Archaeology in Jerusalem: The Case of Silwan/the City of David. In Public Archaeology, Vol. 8, No. 1, pp. 35-50.
A look at what is happening between Al-Bustan neighborhood and the wall of the city clearly reveals the scale of the settlement project on the one hand, and the grave nature of the Israeli narrative, on the other. In this area, archaeology and settlements’ objectives clearly converge, openly supporting each other. If the Israeli plans in this connection come to be fulfilled, the cultural landscape will be dominated and Judaized.

VIII: The Old City once again

The state of the extended Jewish neighborhood (about 12% of the Old City) has already been set. Most of its parts have been rebuilt and stuffed with institutions, museums and extended historical excavations, all contributing to the area’s alienation. Any visitor of the extended Jewish neighborhood would feel he is in a world totally different from the rest of the Old City. Everything conveys a deeply-rooted and authentic Jewish history. In fact, the material, cultural and human features, in addition to the excellent services provided, make you feel you are anywhere but not in the ancient Arab Al-Quds.

a) Al-Buraq square:

The vast Al-Buraq square, which was constructed in 1967 on the ruins of Al Magharba neighborhood, is being renovated to make of it a major visually attractive area. There are many construction plans that will change the face of this square, and will contribute to the complete alteration of Al-Quds’s civilization identity if carried out. The plans can be categorized depending on their missions:

- Enlarging the Jewish worship area: The projects provide for removing the hill linking Al-Buraq square with Bab Al Magharba, which leads to Al-Haram al-Sharif. It is worth noting that the construction plans of an alternative bridge are still under study, after the vast wave of protests from different parties including the Palestinian Authority, Jordan, Egypt, Turkey, in addition to some European and American parties, as well as UNESCO and the Israeli justice which received claims from various parties. As a result, an international commission chaired by UNESCO was set up to examine the situation, but it failed to find an alternative solution, and the plan is still pending, especially after the Israeli court demanded the drawing up of a detailed plan for the entire Al-Buraq square. During its meetings held in October in Paris, UNESCO condemned Israel for demolishing the hill of Bab Al Magharba.

45) This part does not discuss settlement and estate confiscation, but it would be important to note that settlement pressure inside the Old City walls is still growing, and that over the past two years, there has been much pressure on the Christian neighborhood and the area of Bab al-Khalil. This goes hand in hand with the plan aimed at ensuring control over the southern part of the Old City and turning it into a unified Jewish neighborhood, in addition to the destabilization of the Palestinian neighborhood from within.

46) The only disruption to the general image of the Jewish neighborhood is the high minaret of the small Omari Mosque which dates back to the Umayyad era, before the emergence of the Jewish neighborhood.

47) The Arab Group succeeded in passing five resolutions related to Israeli transgressions against the holy sites in the West Bank, including Al-Quds. These resolutions were passed by votes for the first time since decades. These resolutions provoked the fury of Israel. Concerning the official Israeli position, see this article published in Haaretz on 10/29/2010: Israel slams ‘absurd’ UNESCO decision on Jerusalem, West Bank holy sites.
- We will surely reexamine the issue of this bridge again and again because the situation has not been resolved yet. In fact, after the long freeze of talks about the bridge, Al-Quds Municipality has recently (March 2011) approved a plan to build an iron bridge, under the pretext of a new collapse in the hill. However, as the picture shows, after this false argument, no changes have taken place on the site. It is also worth noting the plan was presented by the Western Wall Heritage Foundation, which is the party in charge of providing detailed blueprints to the Israeli Municipality of Al-Quds, the party authorized by the Israeli competent court to manage and upgrade Al-Buraq wall.

![Al Buraq Square which will be completely altered](image)

- The construction of two new buildings in Al-Buraq square. The first, called “Bayt Nar/Torah Flame”, will be constructed on the western side of the square, over an excavation site made by the Israel Antiquities Authority with the financial support of the Western Wall Heritage Foundation. This excavation revealed the Roman lower-level Cardo, in addition to other findings from the Roman, Byzantine and Umayyad eras. On top of these important ruins, a multi-storey building of over 700 m² will be constructed. Obviously, the plan includes ideas to preserve the excavation site, such as using an underground floor as an archeological site and reinforcing the building by pillars to keep the majority of the excavation visible. The second building, called Al-Jawhar, is located on the north side of the square. It will be the expansion of an already existing building after adding new floors to it. Both buildings will be used for religious, social, historical and security purposes. This means that they will be the headquarters of rapid intervention forces. Moreover, the roofs of both buildings will be used for specific religious and secular ceremonies.

- Roofing a major part of Al-Buraq square: A major part of Al-Buraq square will be roofed after lowering its ground level by several meters, which not

48) Al-Buraq square, which is being developed, extends over an area of 7,160 m² according to the plans submitted to the Construction Commissions by the Israeli Municipality of Al-Quds in order to obtain the relevant construction licenses. The proposed changes are being justified by the number of the square’s visitors which reached 8 millions in 2009. The site’s infrastructure is said to be too small to host such a big number which may increase in the future. By the same token, the plans also include the upgrading of the water, electricity and sewage networks.
The yellow area represents Al-Jawhar building that will include a multi-purpose hall, a police station and a post of rapid intervention forces. In the upper part of the picture there is another building, “The Permanent Flame House”.

A comprehensive plan for Al-Buraq square: The bridge of Bab Al Magharba, the House of the Umayyad Emirate, a roof for the square and new buildings.
only means more excavations, but also the construction of halls extending over several thousands of square meters.

- Developing the Historical Park area (to be named the Davidson Center) after adding a few buildings in order to present the Biblical narrative in different ways.

- Developing a new road network to consolidate the connectivity of West Al-Quds with the Old City and facilitate Israelis' access to it 24 hours a day. This network will be used to create a totally controlled area, and will include many components:

  a) Extending the light train network to connect Bab Al-Jadid area (the north-western corner) with Bab Al-Khalil (alongside the western wall of the Old City), then turning eastward through Bab Annabi Dawood, until Bab Al Magharba. Extending this network right next to the City walls will not only deeply affect the area's landscape, but will also weaken the foundations of the City walls and large parts of the Old City itself.

  b) Creating an integrated network of bus transportation covering all the Old City, from all its parts, and leading to Al-Buraq square. This network will be strongly connected with the bus network of West Al-Quds.

The train railway: the red represents already constructed parts; the yellow one represents the parts that are still at the planning stage.

49) The first stage of this tramway network has been carried out. This part links West Al-Quds with the Jewish settlements in East Al-Quds. The tram runs beside Bab al-Amoud and continues under the City walls west of Bab al-Amoud, arriving at the northwestern corner of the Old City. This means that the settlements of East Al-Quds as well as West Al-Quds are now connected with the Old City thanks to this tramway. In the second stage of this project, the tramway will be linked with Bab Al-Magharba; hence with Al-Buraq wall.
c) Creating sufficient parking lots for cars in the Old City, its surrounding area and beyond. The lots will allow the Israelis coming from outside Al-Quds to easily reach the Old City. The planned parking lots are:

- A parking lot near Bab Al Magharba (less than 200 meters away from the southern wall). This plan includes opening a gate (tunnel) under the city walls to link the parking lot with the Old City. This parking lot is expected to accommodate about 300 cars and busses, in addition to several halls and a mall.

- A parking lot close to Bab Annabi Dawood outside the city walls, planned to accommodate up to 90 cars and busses. The plan of this lot also includes opening a gate (tunnel) under the City walls.

- A parking lot close to Bab Annabi Dawood inside the Old City (the Jewish neighborhood), which will be an underground multi-floor lot located under the current parking lot. It is planned to accommodate over 600 cars.

- Many parking lots in different locations at a radius of many kilometers from the Old City, with a capacity of 7,000 cars and busses. These parking lots will be connected with the Old City through public transportation means working 24 hours a day.

With more than four decades of Israeli policies inside the Old City, an a worse situation outside, one can understand that we are witnessing the final stage of the implementation of project aimed at the Judaization of the cultural landscape, especially in the Western and Southern areas and part of the Eastern area of the Old City, using all the means available to facilitate settlement in the Old City and its surrounding area. The plan also ensures a Biblical interpretation through archeology and architectural landmarks, diminishing the Arab presence and any sign that would refer to it, as well as hoisting Israeli flags in every location. The war waged against the City’s cultural identity can be seen through the rebuilding of the Hurva Synagogue with a high dome that shares the city’s scenery with the Dome of the Rock and that of the Church of Resurrection, the construction of another synagogue close to Al-Aqsa Mosque, and the Menorahs placed on top of settlement buildings next to Israeli flag.

Should such designs be fulfilled, not only the scene will be dominated and exploited in imposing a de facto status in the city in the future, but also the situation in the southern part of the City will be determined once and for all in favor of the Judaization plot, turning it into an extension of West Jerusalem after removing all relevant obstacles. These projects will certainly have demographic dimensions, as large groups of Palestinians will be deported, while Jewish settlements will be reinforced.

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50) If this plan is carried out, it will affect the antiquities of the second most important Church of Al-Quds. It was built upon orders by Emperor Justinian in the 6th century on an area of about 6,000 m².

51) The latest large Israeli flag was hoisted on a building on the summit the Mount of Olives after that building had been confiscated. This flag can be seen from everywhere in the City, since the Mount of Olives is the highest peak in Al-Quds.
Al-Quds, its Palestinian inhabitants and their supporters are fighting against those plots on two fronts. The first of these is at the international level, particularly at the level of UNESCO. In fact, the Implementation of these plans consists in a systematic destruction of the cultural heritage in Al-Quds together with thousands-year old holy scene. The fact that Al-Quds is on the World Heritage List and the List of World Heritage in Danger makes of these plans an international crime. This should be strongly exploited, whether in attempts to stop those plans and/or in raising awareness about these policies and unmasking them.

The second battle is two-fold. Resistance, opposition and persistence on the one hand, and the use of all sorts of objection and protest means on the other, including rallying advocates of the protection of the world heritage in Al-Quds. This second front has actually been active for some time now in Silwan and Al-Bustan neighborhood. Also, the legal part of the struggle is being undertaken by many 1948 Palestinians.

To conclude:

1. Al Quds is a world heritage that cannot be categorized under one single color. This does not contradict the fact that Al-Quds is the political and cultural capital of Palestine.

2. The heritage of Al-Quds is the outcome of several eras, cultures, religions and civilizations that have existed in Al-Quds. Therefore, the duty to protect Al-Quds is Palestinian, but the international community has its share of responsibility to undertake in this regard.

3. The Palestinian People is the biological and historical offspring of these diverse cultures, and their legitimate heir, including the Jewish culture which emerged and evolved on the land of Palestine.

4. Cultural heritage is an integrated entity whose components cannot be devised.

5. The current situation in Al-Quds is a scientific, civilization and national challenge which requires the multiplication of history-oriented scientific studies in order to refute the unilateral narrative and present a scientific, objective and holistic narrative of the city, with no falsification or exclusion.

6. Objective narratives should be given central position in publications around the world.

Theoretical work is extremely important but not sufficient. Therefore, it is necessary to launch a large international campaign, especially at world heritage institutions, in order to unmask the Israeli designs and try to stop them.