

The Geopolitical Status of Beit Safafa Town



Prepared by



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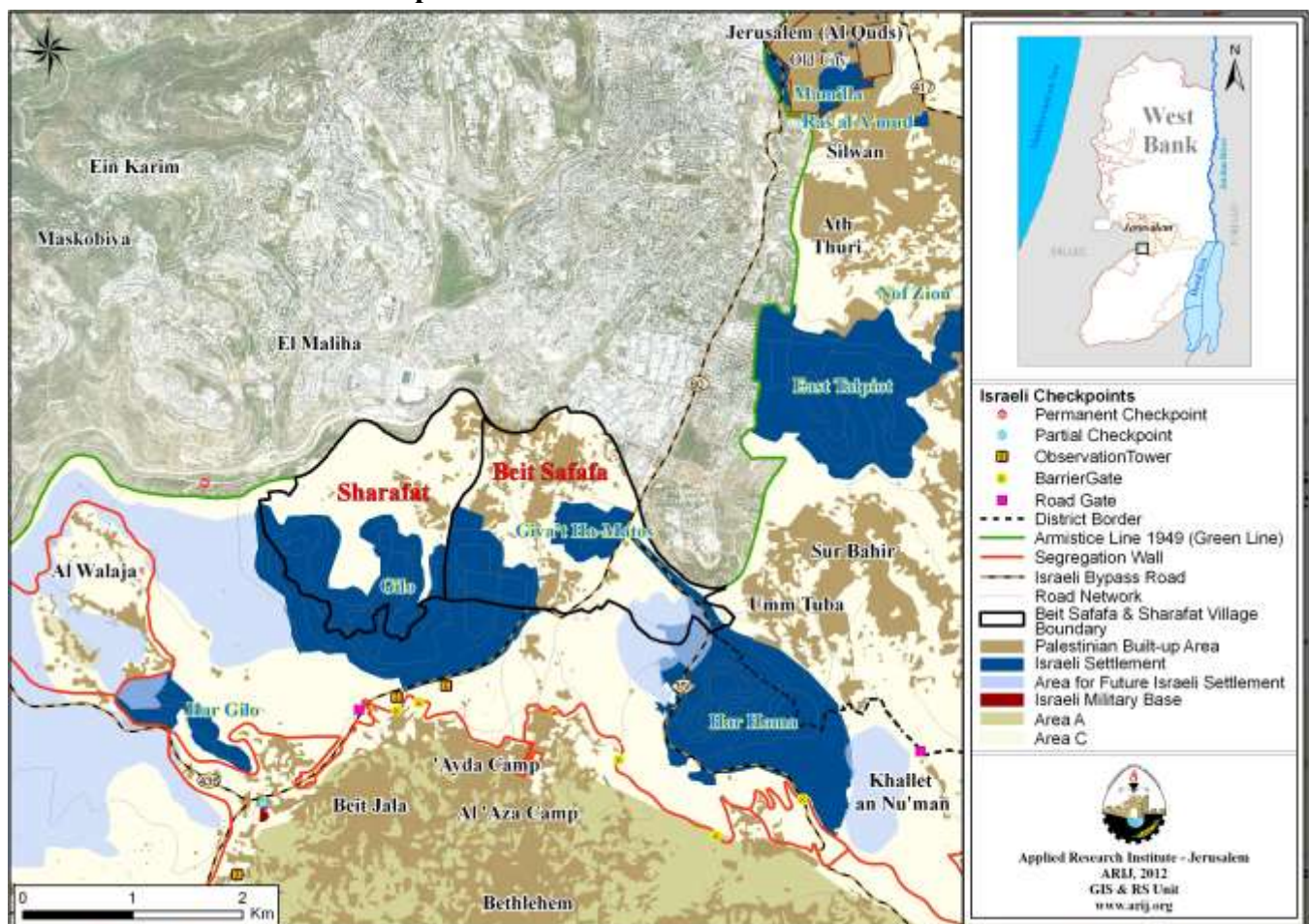
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Beit Safafa Town Profile

Location and Population

Beit Safafa is a Palestinian town in Jerusalem Governorate located southwest of Jerusalem City. It is bordered by Umm Tuba & Sur Bahir tows, and the settlement of Giv'at Hamatos to the east, Western Jerusalem to the north, Sharafat Town and Gilo settlement to the west, and Bethlehem and Beit Jala cities to the south (ARIJ, 2022) (See map 1)

Map 1: Beit Safafa location and borders



Map 1: Location of Beit Safafa town
Source: ARIJ - GIS Unit, 2022

Population

Unfortunately, no census has been conducted by the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS) in 2017 to ascertain the population and housing in Beit Safafa town, however, according to The Jerusalem Institute for Policy Research, the town population had reached 14,820 in 2020 (Israel Yearbook 2022).

Geopolitical Status of Beit Safafa Town

The entirety of Beit Safafa town, covering an area of 3,096 dunums is located under the control of Jerusalem Israeli Municipality, which was, illegally and unilaterally, declared and expanded in 1967 after the Israeli Occupation of the West Bank including East Jerusalem, in addition to Gaza Strip and other Arab lands. Jerusalem Governorate was divided into two main regions. J1 area is located inside the borders and under the control of Jerusalem Municipality, and includes many Palestinian communities from the old town and Jerusalem City (Beit Al Maqdis), in addition to Beit Safafa town, which is located in (J1) area from its southern side. The other region is J2, which is located outside the borders and control of Jerusalem Municipality. The eastern and western parts are under the control of Palestinian Authority's where the central part of the Governorate remains under Israeli Occupation control.

The Israeli Occupation Authorities have also used the segregation plan, which is represented by the construction of the Segregation Wall to redraw the boundaries of Jerusalem Municipality illegally and unilaterally, aiming to create a *de facto* situation in favor of the Jewish presence in the city. The Segregation Wall has separated the whole area of J1 from Jerusalem Governorate, except for Kafr 'Aqab and Shu'fat Camp towns.

According to the Oslo II Interim Agreement signed between the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) and Israel on 28th September 1995, the West Bank was classified into areas "A," "B" and "C." The town of Beit Safafa was not subjected to this classification, but remained as it was before this agreement, under the control of Jerusalem Israeli Municipality.

Israeli Occupation Practices in Beit Safafa Town

Beit Safafa town has been subjected to a number of Israeli confiscations for the benefit of the various Israeli targets, represented in; the construction of Israeli settlements on the town territories and its surroundings, the construction of Israeli bypass roads, in addition to the Israeli segregation plan. That which follows is a breakdown of Israeli confiscations in Beit Safafa town territories:

During Israeli Occupation of Palestinian territory, the Israeli government confiscated 988 Dunums in Beit Safafa town (32% of the total town's area) to establish three Israeli settlements; "Gilo" settlement located south of Beit Safafa and separates the town from Bethlehem city, in addition to Abu Ghneim "Har Homa" and "Giv'at Hamatos" settlements located south and south-east of Beit Safafa (Table 1).

Table 1: Israeli Settlements constructed on Beit Safafa & Sharafat lands

Settlement Name	Year of construction	Area confiscated from Beit Safafa & Sharafat (dunums)	Population of Settlement (2020)
Gilo	1971	503	31,570
Jabal Abu Ghneim “Har Homa”	1997	152	25,240
Giv’at Hamatos	1991	333	170 (ARIJ)
Total		988	56,810

Source: ARIJ, 2022

Jerusalem Institute for Policy Research - Jerusalem Statistical Yearbook 2022 (Statistics of 2020)

Israeli bypass Roads on lands of Beit Safafa Town

Along with launching a vigorous settlement program following the Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip in 1967, the consecutive Israeli governments adopted a separation concept based on the creation of an Israeli controlled road grid system, which will work to facilitate the construction of Israeli settlements and the Israeli settlers movement between occupied territory settlements and Israel and eventually incorporate the Israeli created and controlled road grid system in the occupied territory with the road grid system in Israel.

The Israelis built these roads under the pretext of 'security needs'; a term that presented the Israeli Army with legitimate excuse to expropriate Palestinian lands; a procedure that proved its efficiency before when the Israeli Army would expropriate Palestinian lands under the 'security needs' pretext to establish an Army base, which later on is turned to Israeli settlers control who would turn it on their part into a civilian inhabitant area.

For Israel, that was the only available option or the only loop to bypass the international law, which considers, expropriating land for any purpose other than military use a 'grave breach'. Israel also argued the military role of the settlements and the bypass roads to its security, which allowed the Army to expropriate private Palestinian lands to build settlements and its roads; Israel also argued that the roads it is building will also benefit the local Palestinian population who would be allowed to travel on these roads. Furthermore, the Israeli built roads on confiscated Palestinian lands contributed immensely to stimulate the habitation of the Israeli settlements, which encouraged the Israeli settlers to take initiative and construct roads on their own, but would later on be endorsed and adopted by the Israeli Army to cast a shadow of legitimacy on these roads. In addition to its role in connecting settlements, the Israeli built roads worked to restrain the development of the Palestinian communities in the West Bank by creating de-facto obstructions to areas designated for development.

Israeli Bypass Road No. 4 (50)

In this regard, the Israeli occupation Army (IOA) have confiscated more lands from Beit Safafa town to construct the Israeli bypass road number 4 (50) in order to link Israeli settlements in the area with

Jerusalem city and Israeli settlements in the southern West Bank and with those inside the 1949 Armistice Line (Green Line). It is worth mentioning that the real threat of bypass roads lies in the buffer zone formed by the IOF along these roads, extending to approximately 75 m on the roads' sides.

In 2013, the Israeli Moriah Jerusalem Development Company along with the Israeli Municipality of Jerusalem and the Israeli Ministry of Transportation commenced the work to extend the Menachem Begin Road (Also known as Road 50) to penetrate deep inside the 1967 borders, on lands of Beit Safafa and Sharafat towns south of Jerusalem city. The Israeli Bypass road No. 50, extends from Golomb¹ Intersection inside the 1948 lands and heads south towards Sport Beitar Agodat, passing by Teddy Stadium² and the Railway station in Al Malha town inside the 1948 lands. The road continues to extend southwards to Al Malha Shopping Mall to connect with Road No. 39 (Yetzhaq Modia³ Road), which is the last connection point inside the 1948 lands. From this point (Road 39), the road extends towards the south, penetrating deep inside the lands of Beit Safafa and Sharafat south of Jerusalem city, inside the 1967 borders, and heads towards the Israeli settlement of Gilo, to finally connect with the Israeli Bypass Road No. 60 which is the main connection point between Israeli settlements in southern Jerusalem (Bethlehem and Hebron Governorates) and those in the north and inside the 1948 lands.

The Israeli Municipality of Jerusalem claimed that the main goal behind constructing the Bypass Road No. 50 is to ease and improve the flow of traffic in the southern outskirts of Jerusalem while the construction of the road was mainly to benefit Israeli settlers living in settlements in southern Jerusalem (mainly Gilo, Giv'at Hamatos and Har Homa) and those of the Gush Etzion settlement Bloc, so that settlers will be able to drive to Jerusalem and to areas inside the 1948 lands without having to stop at any single traffic light.

The construction of the road was implemented on three stages; whereas the overall budget of constructing the road No. 50 is USD 1.1 Billion. The construction of the Israeli bypass Road No. 50 created a bitter and irreversible reality on the Palestinian population of Beit Safafa and Sharafat as the road separated between the town towns which were on a permanent geographical connection over the past years and both depend on each other in all the services.

The Rosemary Junction - An Entrance gate to Southern Jerusalem settlement

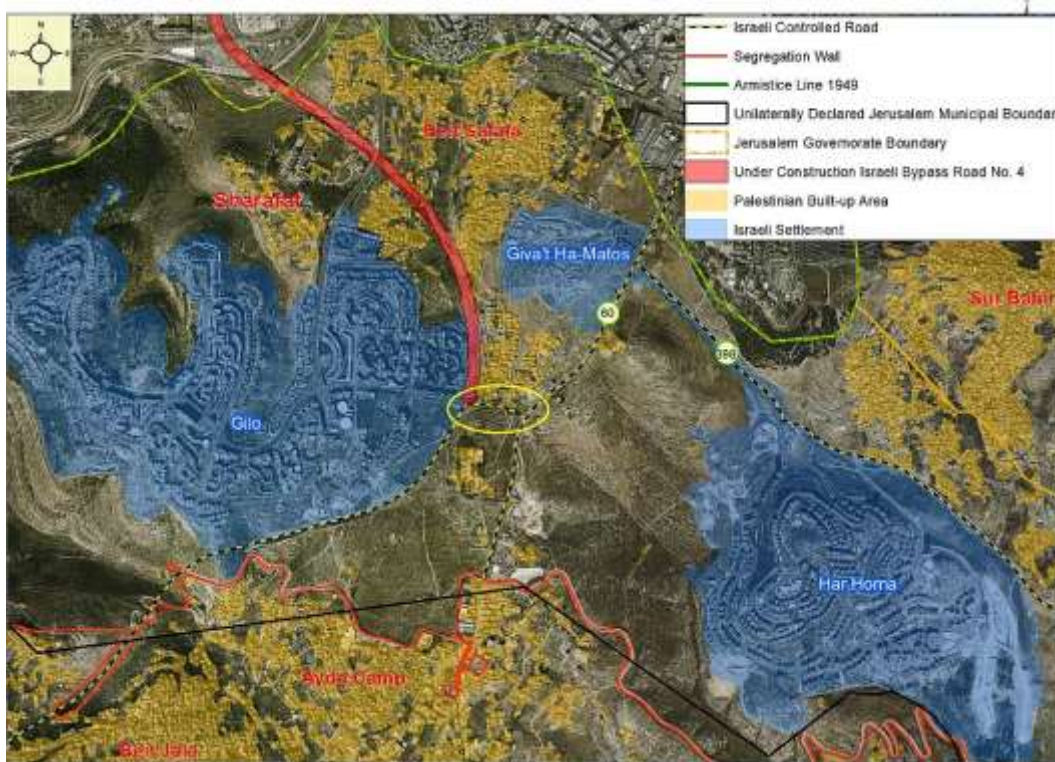
In February 2016, the Israeli Municipality of Jerusalem, and in cooperation with the Israeli transportation ministry, commenced the construction of a new bypass road section and a road interchange that will link the Israeli so-called "Begin Road" or the Israeli bypass Road number 4 (50) with the Israeli bypass road No. 60 (the section locally known to the Palestinians as the Historic Bethlehem-Jerusalem road). The road interchange is made via a new tunnel road that goes under the ground, from the southern endpoint of the "Begin road – Bypass Road number 4 (50)" near Gilo Settlement to link with the Israeli bypass Road No 60, the main Jerusalem artery. The road was implemented under plan (TPS 258270) which acted as an entrance gate to southern Jerusalem settlements and was implemented in two levels: **(i)** an underground tunnel road of 70 meters long with two lanes on each side; **(ii)** and an upper road interchange that will serve the traffic on the road leading to Gilo settlement and its surroundings (and vice versa). The road interchange also serves the Jerusalem

¹ It was named after Eliyahu Golomb, the chief architect of the Haganah, between 1920 and 1948.

² Teddy Kolek served as the mayor of Jerusalem from 1965 to 1993

³ etzhaq Modia was an Israeli politician, who served five terms in the Knesset for Likud.

light rail which is going to pass via this point, on lands of Beit Safafa. The overall cost of the road is NIS 120 million, and was completed in 2018. See Map 2



Map 2: [The Rosemary underground tunnel and road interchange](#)

The Jerusalem light rail

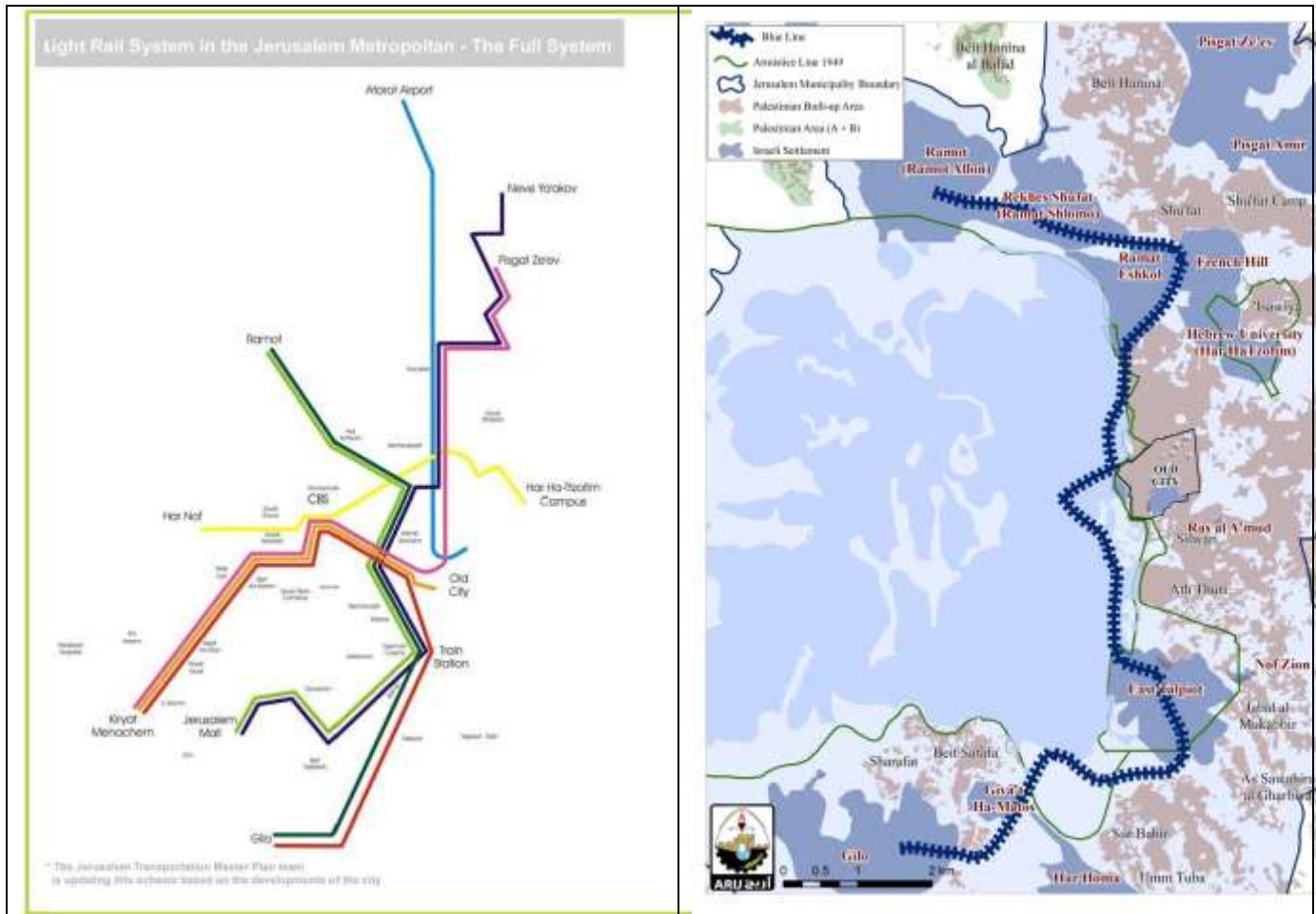
The Israeli settlement project in the occupied West Bank territory is a corner stone in the comprehensive Israeli project; and while it is valid to consider the needs of the people to facilitate accesses for them to major cities and workplaces, it will also be naïve to think that anything happens here is not politically related and to dismiss the concept that whatever Israel plans in relation to the occupied West Bank territory; particularly in occupied East Jerusalem is not related to its plans to grape as much possible land from the West Bank and Jerusalem to ultimately maneuver the peace process to its own course of plan.

To this end, the need for practical, purposeful, serviceable and well-designed public transportation network was more important than ever between Jerusalem as the center core of the settlement project in the West Bank and the major cities where industrial and businesses centers exist. Jerusalem has always been a vortex for the rest of the Israeli settlements in the West Bank and the point where the leave the occupied territory into Israel. More than that the success, in fact the durability of the settlement project in the West Bank became somehow associated with providing a swift and functional transportation system for the settlers between the settlements within Jerusalem and the outskirts of the occupied city to

major cities to the settlers' work areas. The whole transportation system is an integrated one that aims to complement settlements, Jerusalem and Israel in the following phased scenario:

In 1999 the Israeli government approved a project to build a light rail that links settlements in East Jerusalem with each other and with west side of the occupied city. In 2005 the Israeli government contracted two French companies (Alstom, and Veolia) to implement the project with a budget set at 1.7 billion NIS (515 USD) of which 1.2 billion NIS (364 USD) financed by the Israeli private sector.

The work on the light rail started in April 2006 and according to the plans set, the first phase of the project was set to complete by 2009 across 13.8 km with 23 stops and serving more than 150,000 Israeli settlers in settlements Neveh Yaccov, Pisgat Ze'ev, French Hill, and Ma'alot Dafna. Furthermore, the light rail plan have several other serving tracks to link Ramot settlement located northwest of Jerusalem with West Jerusalem and others linking south Jerusalem settlements such as Gilo settlement through East Talpiot settlement.



Maps 3 & 4: The light rail in Jerusalem and its surroundings

Israeli settlement Plans in Beit Safafa Town:

1. “Giv’at Hamatos” Israeli Settlement:

On October 11 2011, the “Israel Land Authority” posted for public review a new plan (No. 14295) for “Giv’at Hamatos” Israeli settlement located on expropriated Palestinian lands from Bethlehem and Jerusalem Governorates. The plan issued by the Israeli Land Authority, under the direct supervision of the Israeli Government, includes the construction of 2,610 housing units on 370 dunums of land, in the area located west of Gilo and south of Beit Safafa town. Israeli authorities claim that the plan will include the construction of many housing units for the benefit of Palestinian residents in Beit Safafa. However, this claim is misleading and the real aspirations of the Israeli Government are to expand the construction of Israeli settlements on occupied territory. When the Israeli occupation authorities started establishing “Har Homa” settlement on Jabal Abu Ghneim area, they claimed that part of the construction will be for Palestinians in the area, but the reality did not reflect this. Instead, authorities established the settlement through confiscating the surrounding lands and building a Separation Wall around the settlement to prevent Palestinians from reaching their confiscated lands. below is break down of the plans awaiting implementation in the area. Table 2

Table 2: List of plans for the expansion of Givat Hamatos settlement on lands of Beit Safafa and the surrounding areas				
No.	TPS No.	Area of plan (dunums)	Purpose	Date of receiving plan
1	5834/ 7	191	the building of Two Tourist Hotels	May 2002
2	5834/ 2	153	the building of 1214 units	October 2003
3	5834/ 8	412	building of 2355 units	January 2005
4	5834/ 3	416	the building of 647 units	May 2006
Total		1172		4216 Units
Source: Israeli Ministry of Interior Retrieved in September 2022				

Giv’at Hamatos settlement is located in the area that mediates Jabal abu Ghneim “Har Homa” and “Gilo” settlements. It is being planned for this area in order to create a geographical contiguity between the settlements and those in East Jerusalem and “Gush Etzion” bloc in the south. At the same time, this plan will further complete the separation of Bethlehem Governorate from Jerusalem city and will destruct any possibility of creating geographical contiguity among Palestinian communities surrounding the planned location (POICA, 2011).

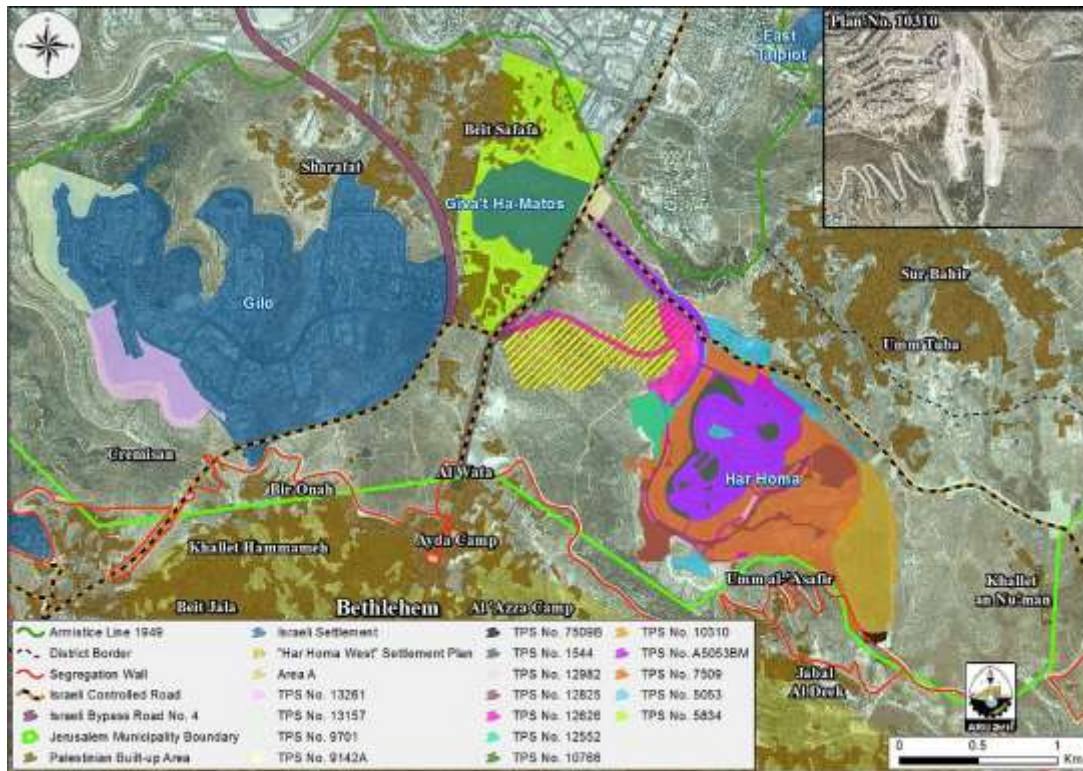
2. Har Homa west settlement plan on lands of Beit Safafa

In March 2016, the Jerusalem Municipality website indicated that Israel is planning for a new settlement to the west of Har Homa settlement, identified as “ Har Homa West ” - **TPS No. 285411**. The new

settlement is planned to include 1600 new settlement units over total land area of 445 dunums, to the south of Saint Elias Monastery.

During the past few years, Israel started constructing a new bypass road, which extends from the northwest end of Har Homa settlement towards Bethlehem-Jerusalem Road, to connect with the Tantour Junction. The construction of this new bypass road serves the Israeli plans in the area, which is to establish the aforementioned new settlement. The construction of the road comes as part of TPS number 12626 which states the confiscation of 141.7 dunums of land for the construction of the aforementioned bypass road. The plan was first deposited on 26 September 2011 and construction work commenced right after it gained the approval of the designated Israeli Authorities.

Note that TPS No. 5053 was the first town planning scheme (TPS) issued for Har Homa settlement on 2 March 1997. The plan included the development of an urban residential with all issues related to it on lands of Beit Sahour, Bethlehem in Bethlehem and Sur Baher, Um Tuba and Beit Safafa in Jerusalem Governorate, on the part located within the illegally and unilaterally declared Jerusalem Municipality boundary of 1967. The plan stated the construction of a new settlement by the name “Har Homa” over 1992.3 dunums of land to encompass up to 6,500 settlement units that time. Several plans were issued afterwards commencing the building in the settlement. Today, the settlement stands on 2316 dunums of land and is home to nearly 24,000 Israeli settlers.



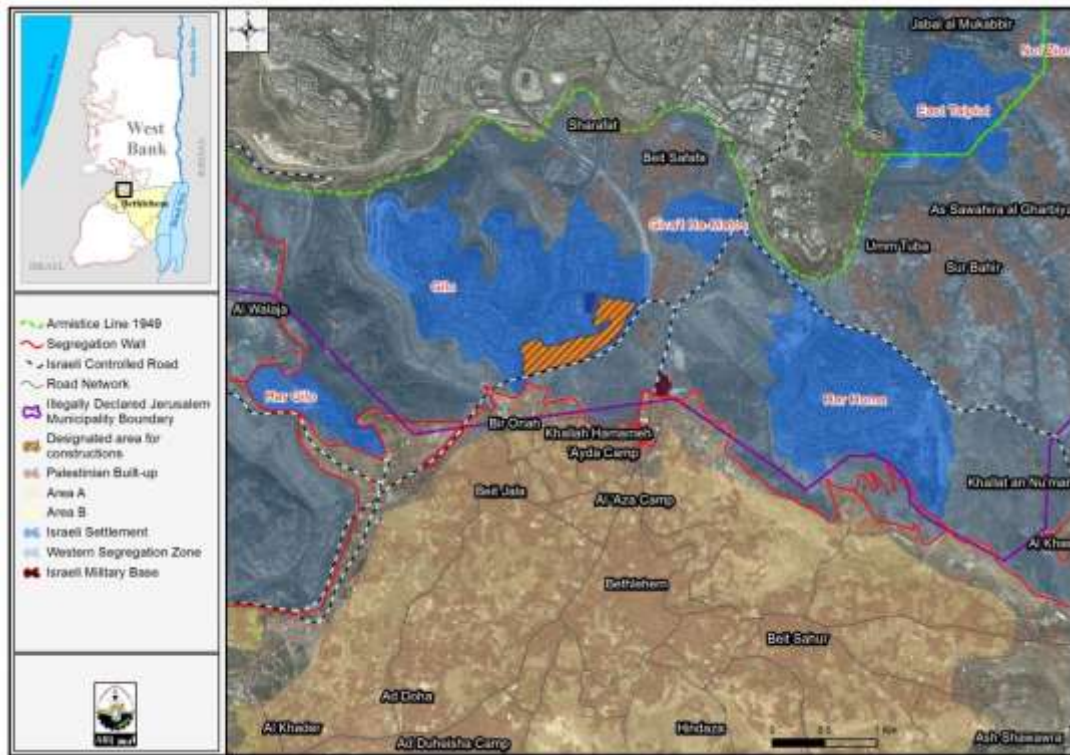
[Map 5: Israeli plans issued for the construction of Har Homa settlement since 1997](#)

3. The Refayem Park on the western edges of Beit Safafa and Sharafat towns

The Refayem Park – Israeli TPS No. 12222: In July 2013, the Israeli District Planning and Building Committee related to the Israeli Ministry of Interior approved the town plan scheme No. 12222 to build “Refayem Metropolitan Park” in the southern parts of the city of Jerusalem – on the western edges of Sharafat and Beit Safaf town . According to the plan that was developed by the Israeli Municipality of Jerusalem and the “Israeli Development Authority”, the Refayem Park will fill in the “public” spaces between the expanding settlements on Jerusalem's southern side, further erasing the Green Line and contributing to the “buffer” between Jerusalem and Bethlehem. Additionally, the plan that, Refayem Valley Park will occupy an area of 5,649 dunums, of which, 1195 dunums beyond the Green Line (Armistice Line of 1949), on lands belonging to Bethlehem Governorate, Beit Jala, Battir, Beit Jala and Al Walajeh.

4. The “Ahuzat Nof Gilo” Settlement Project

On 8 August 2016, the Israeli developer Nehemiah Davidi and architect David Guggenheim advanced a new plan to build a large neighborhood to south-eastern side of Gilo settlement, located between Jerusalem and Bethlehem Governorates. The plan holds number “125195” and states the construction of 3,045 new settlement units, public buildings and commercial facilities, on 271 dunums of land, located southeast of Gilo settlement and along the Israeli Bypass road No. 60.



See Map 6: The “Gate of Bethlehem” Settlement Project

The Segregation Wall plan in Beit Safafa Town

The construction of the Israeli Segregation Wall has had a negative impact on Beit Safafa town. According to the last amendment of the plan that was published on the webpage of the so-called “Israeli Defense Ministry” (30th April 2007), the Segregation Wall isolates all lands of Beit Safafa from the remaining Palestinian Territory in the West Bank. This is significantly difficult for the people of Bethlehem Governorate, which have historical relations with this town. The isolated lands include the whole Palestinian residential area of the town, agricultural lands, open spaces, Israeli settlements built on the town’s territory and others (Table 3).

Table 3: Land classification of lands isolated west of the Segregation Wall in Beit Safafa Town - Jerusalem Governorate

No.	Land classification	Area (dunums)
1	Agricultural Areas	466
2	Forests and Open Spaces	785
3	Artificial Sites (Parks, cemeteries, roads, other constructions)	432
4	Palestinian Built-up Area	425
5	Israeli Settlement	988
	Total	3,096

Source: ARIJ, 2022

The Segregation Walls Negative effects on Beit Safafa & Sharafat Town Residents

Since the outbreak of the Second Intifada in September 2000, the citizens of Beit Safafa south of Jerusalem City have lost their association with Bethlehem city and other Palestinian cities in the West Bank. The city of Jerusalem along with surrounding towns such as Beit Safafa & Sharafat were separated from lands of the West Bank, as the Segregation Wall was constructed to isolate Jerusalemite towns from the Palestinian body. The citizens of Jerusalem who hold the Jerusalemite identity (the Blue Identity) can enter the West Bank areas through the Israeli terminals, which often witness huge congestion, while being subjected to inspection from Israeli soldiers, thus restricting Palestinian’s freedom of movement.

On the other hand, Palestinian citizens of the West Bank who hold a Palestinian Identity (Green Identity) are prohibited from entering Jerusalem city and its surrounding towns due to the Segregation Wall. This resultantly isolates them from health, education, social and economic services, such as hospitals, schools and medical centers, in addition to their places of work in Jerusalem. None of those holding the Green ID are able to reach the city except if holding special Israeli permits which are rarely issued to Palestinian citizens. These citizens must also pass through military checkpoints where they are inspected on a daily-basis, causing humiliation and the suffering of Palestinians in terms of movement and the breaking of family and social bonds between West Bank and Jerusalem residents. This distressing scenario occurs for many Palestinian families, especially in the case where one in a couple holds a Palestinian identity (Green) and the other holds the Jerusalemite identity (Blue). Moreover, the

Segregation Wall has prevented Palestinians from reaching places of worship in the Holy City and has also deprived them from practicing their religious rituals in Jerusalem.

The Segregation Wall plan, which was published, on the webpage of the so-called “Israeli Defense Ministry” in 2007 showed that lands of Beit Safafa town are isolated from neighboring Palestinian towns and villages since the Segregation Wall along with the Israeli settlements’ belt around Jerusalem City, isolated East Jerusalem area from the rest of West Bank. The existing Segregation Wall is located south of the town and is currently isolating the town inside Jerusalem city boundaries, which became off access to Palestinians living in the West Bank territory.

Parallel to the establishment of the Segregation Wall, Israeli Occupation Authorities constructed a settlement belt around Jerusalem city, which aims at founding an isolation area in addition to preventing of Palestinian urban expansion in the towns of Jerusalem. Israeli Occupation Authorities constructed these settlements close to the urbanized areas in Jerusalemite towns, which have led to the increase of total area confiscated in these towns, and have minimized the area available for future Palestinian urban expansion. This move will create a new reality on town residents that will be difficult to reverse.

Israeli policies and plans particularly in Jerusalem, and the remaining Palestinian Territory, have led to the creation of high population densities as a result of the lack of lands needed for urban expansion, thus forcing people to adopt internal and vertical expansion. This has caused Jerusalem and its surrounding towns to have one of the highest considered population densities in the world. **The population density in Palestinian neighborhoods in East Jerusalem is approximately 13,500 person/ km² compared to 9,000 person/ km² in the settlements of Eastern Jerusalem and 8,300 person/ km² in Western Jerusalem.**

The Dilemma of Lands and Building’s Licenses in Beit Safafa & Sharafat Town

The problems of lands and building’s license are considered one of the most difficult problems in Beit Safafa town and in the other Jerusalemite towns in East Jerusalem. The reason for this is two-fold; the high prices of lands and the very high cost of licenses for construction Beit Safafa town. According to citizens of Beit Safafa, land price (one dunum) in the town ranges between JOD 150 and 250 thousand, (equivalent to 750,000 Israeli shekels), in order for a Palestinian to own a piece of land in this town, especially within the area of the Municipality of Jerusalem; This applies to all Jerusalem towns and even doubles in price in other places near the city of Jerusalem and the surrounding neighborhoods.

The Israeli Occupation Authorities have used the money as an effective tool to buy Palestinian lands in Jerusalem in an attempt to Judaize the area and settle Jewish settlers instead. Individual Jews or Jewish organization offer Palestinians open cheques (price of land or property to be set by the property owner himself (the Palestinian) (Leninology, 2009). For anyone in Jerusalem who has a land and wants to build a house, has to take the authorization and permission of the Municipality of Jerusalem which puts obstacles in the way of Palestinian Jerusalemites who want to get a license for the building in an attempt to expel Palestinians out of Jerusalem city and change the demographic balance for the benefit of the Jews, thus making Palestinians in Jerusalem a minority. One of the main obstacles that comes in the way of obtaining a building license is that one has to prove the ownership of the land. The Israeli Occupation Authorities require that Palestinians seeking to build a house/structure must prove their ownership of the land, which is considered a political problem related to the occupation since 1967.

According to a report prepared by Bimkom Organization (Planners for Planning Rights), approximately 50% of the East Jerusalem lands are unregistered in the archive of ownership such as the town of Kafr 'Aqab and the area extending from Al 'Isawiya town in the north to Sur Bahir in the south. Additionally, 25% of the lands in East Jerusalem are in the process of survey and registration (such as Beit Hanina and Shu'fat towns); and only 25% of the lands in East Jerusalem are officially registered and include parts of Al Birih, Qalandiya, Beit Hanina, Hizma and 'Anata, Ash Sheikh Jarrah and Beit Safafa (Bimkom, 2004).

According to the testimonies of Palestinians in the town of Beit Safafa and Sharafat town, any Palestinian applying to the Israeli Authorities to get a building license, the licensing procedure is lengthy (sometimes lasting years) and carries a very high cost depending on the land area and type of building, and ranges between NIS 250,000-500,000. Moreover, due to the high cost imposed on Palestinians acquiring building permits and the Israeli lengthy licensing procedures, Palestinians tend to build without waiting for the Israeli Authorities license approval, to meet their housing needs. Because of the political problem of land registration and ownership, the unreasonable prices of licenses, in addition to the lengthy time it takes to secure licenses many citizens because of humanitarian needs and the natural family growth resort to building without licenses. In this case, the Israeli occupation Authorities usually demolish the property and force the Palestinian owner to pay for his own demolition and submit for a new building application with new fees and time procedure. On top of this, the majority of Palestinian people in Jerusalem are living in difficult conditions because of high poverty rates, which is a consequence of the Israeli Occupation closures, which restrict the movement of the Palestinians, thus preventing them from reaching their work places. These Israeli restrictions and harassments against the Palestinians in east Jerusalem, along with the housing problems, lack of lands for building and increase of unemployment rate, force many Jerusalemites to migrate outside the borders of the Municipality towards the West Bank or even travel abroad to find better living standards.

According to the 'Civic Coalition for Defending Palestinian Rights' in Jerusalem, (CCDPRJ, 2009), the Israeli Authorities adopted many policies that aim at enacting pressure on Jerusalemites; for example, in the case of the demographic status and urban growth in Jerusalem, the area that is allocated for the development of Palestinian neighborhoods in East Jerusalem and lies under the jurisdiction of the Jerusalem Municipality is estimated at approximately 9,200 dunums, which represents only 13% of the total area of east Jerusalem; whereas the remaining area (of East Jerusalem and under the jurisdiction of the Jerusalem Municipality) is classified as Israeli settlements, green areas -which are off use to the Palestinian urban growth-, public buildings, roads and others.

Furthermore, the Israeli Authorities often don't prepare the needed Master Plans for the Palestinian neighborhoods in East Jerusalem which are necessary for the urban planning process, and in case of preparing such plans for Palestinian neighborhoods, the Israeli Authorities usually put restrictions and give limited of areas for Palestinian urban expansion, below the needed areas for natural urban growth which varies between 25%-75%. If one compares these percentages with the percentage of lands used for Israeli settlements, it is found that urban growth varies between 75%-120%. In Beit Safafa for example, Israeli Authorities determined the urban growth percentage to be 50%, whereas for the neighboring settlement of "Gilo" which was illegally constructed on Beit Safafa land, this percentage was set at 75% (CCJ, 2009) .

It is further noted that Jerusalem Municipality has classified some areas within its boundaries, including areas from Beit Safafa, as “Green Areas”, which the Occupation Authorities have used as a way of controlling and confiscating more lands in Jerusalem. Moreover, the Occupation Authorities have demolished houses in Jerusalem under the claims that these houses were built on “Green Areas”, as seen in the ethnic cleansing process in “Al Bustan Neighborhood,” Silwan, which is very close to Al Aqsa Mosque’s southern side. The process of land confiscations in Al Bustan came after the Municipality announced on 20 February 2009, a plan to relocate more than 1,500 Palestinian citizens living in the 88 houses of Al Bustan neighborhood in Silwan town to alternative locations. Here they are planning to demolish all 88 houses to establish what they called “King David Garden” as part of the “Biblical Gardens” around the Holy City. Furthermore, the Israeli Authorities under the name of “Green Areas” have built many settlements in Jerusalem such as Rekhes Shu’fat (Ramat Shlomo), and Jabal abu Ghneim (Har Homa settlement) which were built on areas that were classified as “Green Areas”. One should note here that there are some areas within Beit Safafa classified as “Green Areas,” which will remain for use in future plans of the Israeli Authorities in Jerusalem.

The right of adequate housing is laid out in international treaties and international humanitarian law, which has called for respect of human dignity through everyone’s right to adequate housing. However, Israel through –its aggression against Palestinian housing rights, as demonstrated above considers itself to be above international laws and treaties.

A Dangerous Escalation in Jerusalem Housing Demolitions.

During the past years, Israeli occupation Authorities have escalated their attacks against houses of Palestinians living in Jerusalem by targeting them through housing and other building demolitions under the pretext of “unlicensed construction”. According to ARIJ violations database, more than 2000 Palestinian homes were demolished in occupied east Jerusalem since 1993, in addition to thousands of other constructions (ARIJ, 2022). Thousands of homes and other structures are also threatened by demolition under the pretext of “unlicensed construction”, despite the fact that residents fulfill the needed procedures for the license. The Municipality of Jerusalem however typically procrastinates in granting the license and finally they refuse the request under non-justified pretexts.

The Municipal Tax (Arnona) negatively affects the living status and economic situation of Palestinians in Jerusalem

The Municipal tax which named in Hebrew as “Arnona” is imposed by the Jerusalem Municipality on the holders of buildings and lands in Jerusalem. This tax is considered one of the greatest that burdens Palestinian residents of the city, including the residents of Beit Safafa town. The Israeli Authorities use this tax as an instrument to put pressure on Palestinians to force them to leave the city.

The “Arnona” tax, which is imposed on Jerusalemites by the Municipality, is calculated based on criteria that take in consideration the classification of area and land-use classification of the master plan (residential areas, commercial, industrial, agricultural, public buildings, parking... etc). They also consider the zone type, the type of use and the area of building or land (Jerusalem Municipality,). Regarding the residential areas for instance, they classify them into four categories (A, B, C and D)⁴, and based on

⁴ Tariffs for Residential Assets

this zoning, along with the area of building, they determine and calculate the amount of tax that must be paid for the municipality. For example, the tax tariff in the residential areas varies in the four zones between 40-113 NIS/m² which is equivalent to approximately 12-34 US\$/m², meaning that a small house with an area of 120 m² will cost its owner around 12,000 NIS yearly for the “Arnona.” At the time of writing this was equivalent to approximately 3,400 US\$.

In terms of economic impact, the segregation plan, which has focused on the isolation of Jerusalem city from the Palestinian Territory, had a huge negative impact on the economic situation of the Palestinians living in Jerusalem in general and on the commercial sector particularly, which has suffered from global recession. Much of the trade in Jerusalem is largely dependent on the Palestinian visitors of the Holy City from the West Bank, Gaza Strip and the Palestinians from the occupied land in 1948, but Israeli closure of the city has negatively affected the economic situation of the city and its residents. Despite these difficult situations, the Occupation Authorities impose taxes without taking into consideration the situation of the Jerusalemites, who represent the poorer class in the Holy City. Moreover, the Municipality by the beginning of last year (2020) decided to increase the “Arnona” by approximately 3%, which increases the burden on the Palestinians of Jerusalem.

It is further noted that, Palestinians are forced to pay these taxes in order to preserve their presence in the city without receiving a decent level of Municipal services. The planning process in the Municipality of Jerusalem focuses on the political-demographic dimension that aims to Judaize the city more than planning for the purposes of prosperity and well-being of its citizens. Furthermore, the Palestinian neighborhoods and communities in Jerusalem are deliberately neglected in different services provision. For instance, the Municipality rarely makes the needed maintenance for the infrastructure of the Arab neighborhoods, including; roads, water and wastewater networks, solid wastes and others. The most obvious problem that the people of Jerusalem suffer is the lack of cleaning service and the accumulation of solid wastes despite their commitment in paying the taxes for the Municipality. This can be easily understood if we compare the situation of the Palestinians in Jerusalem with the situation of the illegal settlers living in the occupied city who get all the facilities and services in order to stay in the Holy City.

Israeli Terminal (Gilo 300) near Beit Safafa and Sharafat separates the town from Bethlehem City

On 15 November 2005, Israeli occupation Authorities inaugurated Gilo 300 terminal/crossing (Rachel’s Terminal) on the southern entrance of Jerusalem city near Beit Safafa, replacing the old Israeli checkpoint which was erected following eruption of the second intifada in September 2000 between Bethlehem and Jerusalem to restrict Palestinians entry to the Jerusalem and Israel. This terminal/crossing was established on the path of segregation wall that separates Jerusalem from Bethlehem, which contributes to the Israeli isolation plan in the area.

Palestinians in Beit Safafa, who have been isolated by the effect of the wall and the terminal, have historical social relations and economic interests with Bethlehem city; however, after the segregation plan took place in the area, the interaction between this town and the city of Bethlehem became difficult, especially for citizens living in the West Bank side of the barrier and holding the Palestinian identity (Green Identity Card) who cannot reach the isolated areas inside Jerusalem.

This checkpoint allows crossing to Jerusalem for Palestinians holding special permits issued by the Israeli Civil Administration, in addition to touristic, religious and diplomatic delegations. All persons crossing through this terminal are subjected to security and personal inspection by Israeli soldiers who are permanently present on the checkpoint.