

The Geopolitical Status of Sur Bahir & Umm Tuba Town



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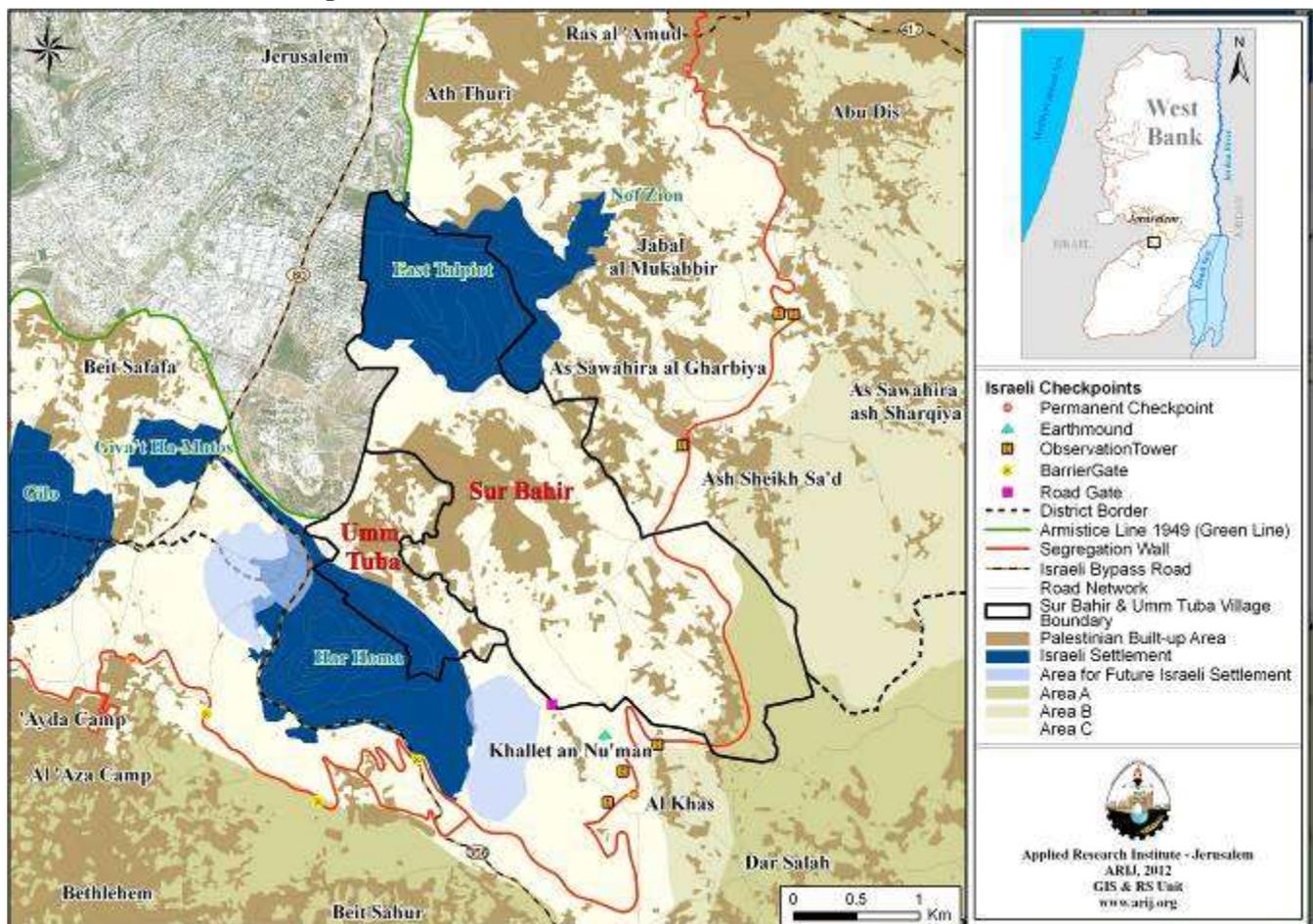
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Sur Bahir & Umm Tuba Town Profile

Location & Population

Sur Bahir & Umm Tuba is a Palestinian town in Jerusalem Governorate, located 5 km to the south of the city of Jerusalem. It is bordered by As Sawahira al Gharbiya and Ash Sheikh Sa'd from the east, the no-mans Lands and Western Jerusalem from the west, the settlements of East Telpiot and Nof Zion and the community of Jabal Al Mukkabbir from the north, and the communities of Al Khas, An Nu'man and (in Bethlehem Governorate) and the settlement of Har Homa from the south (ARIJ, 2022), (Map 1). The town of Sur Bahir & Umm Tuba is home to 24,620 in 2022 (The Jerusalem Institute for Policy Research, 2022)¹.

Map 1: Sur Bahir & Umm Tuba location and borders



Source: ARIJ - GIS Unit, 2022

¹ Jerusalem Statistical Yearbook
[shnaton_C0522.pdf \(jerusalemresearch.org.il\)](http://shnaton_C0522.pdf(jerusalemresearch.org.il))

The Geopolitical Status of Sur Bahir & Umm Tuba Town

The majority of Sur Bahir & Umm Tuba town, which covers an area of 8,244 dunums is located under the control of Jerusalem Israeli Municipality, which was illegally and unilaterally expanded in 1967 after the 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 which 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 Sur Bahir & Umm Tuba town which is located in J1’s southern area. 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 National Authority where the central part of the Governorate remains under Israeli Occupation control.

The area under the control of Jerusalem Municipality (inside J1) within Sur Bahir & Umm Tuba town covers approximately 6,543 dunums (79% of town’s total area), while the area outside the Municipality’s control (J2) is nearly 1,701 dunums (21% of town’s total area). Three quarters of Sur Bahir & Umm Tuba town’s population is located in J1 area, whilst a small percentage is located outside the Municipality borders, in J2 area.

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 Sur Bahir & Umm Tuba was not subjected to this classification, but remained as it was before this agreement under the control of Jerusalem Israeli Municipality, except for an estimated area of 1,701 dunums (21% of town’s total area) located near Al Khas village in Bethlehem Governorate, an area known as Wadi Al Hummos area. This area remained outside the borders of Jerusalem Municipality and was subjected to Oslo II Interim Agreement land classification system. This part was divided into areas “A”, “B” and “C”. Approximately 773 dunums (45% of J2 area in Sur Bahir & Umm Tuba) were classified as area “A” where the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) holds all responsibilities for internal security and Public order. 118 dunums (7% of J2 area in Sur Bahir & Umm Tuba) were classified as area B, where the Palestinian National Authority has a complete control over civil matters but Israel continues to have overriding responsibility for security. An area constituting 810 dunums (48% of J2 area in Sur Bahir & Umm Tuba) were classified as area “C”, where Israel retains full control over security and administration related to the territory (Table 1). In area “C” Palestinian building and land management is prohibited unless through the consent or authorization by the Israeli Civil Administration. It is worth mentioning that most of lands lying within area “C” in Sur Bahir and Umm Tuba are classified as Palestinian built-up areas, agricultural areas and open spaces.

Table 1: The Geopolitical Divisions of (J2 area) in Sur Bahir & Umm Tuba town according to Oslo II Agreement 1995 – Jerusalem Governorate

Classification	Area in dunums	Percent from Total town area
Area A	773	45
Area B	118	7
Area C	810	48

Nature Reserve	0	0
Total	1,701	100

Source: ARIJ, 2022

The effect of Israeli Occupation Practices on Sur Bahir & Umm Tuba Town

Sur Bahir & Umm Tuba town has been subjected to a number of Israeli confiscations for the benefit of the various Israeli projects, represented in the construction of Israeli settlements and bypass roads on the town’s land and its surroundings, in addition to the construction of the Israeli Segregation Wall and the building of new settlement projects. That which follows is a breakdown of the Israeli confiscations of Sur Bahir & Umm Tuba town lands:-

During the Israeli Occupation of the Palestinian territory, the Israeli government confiscated 1,160 dunums in Sur Bahir & Umm Tuba town (14% of the total town’s area) to establish two Israeli settlements: “East Talpiot” and to the north and “Har Homa” to the south-west. More than 39,000 Israeli settlers live in these two settlements, (ARIJ, 2022). Table 2

Table 2: Israeli Settlements constructed on Sur Bahir & Umm Tuba lands

Settlement Name	Year of construction	Area confiscated from Sur Bahir & Umm Tuba (dunums)	Population of settlers (2009)
East Talpiot	1973	809	14,820
Jabal Abu Ghneim (Har Homa)	1997	351	25,240
Total		1,160	40,060

Source: ARIJ-GIS Unit, 2022

Israeli settlement plans in Sur Baher and Um Tuba community

- Ramat Rachel settlement plan:** In the year 2008, *the coalition of pro-Israel organizations* in Jerusalem city in cooperation with the Environment Protection Company in occupied Jerusalem city published a new settlement plan, which calls on Jerusalem Municipality and the Israeli Ministry of Housing and Construction to sanction a plan to build 4700 new housing units in the vicinity of Ramat Rachel, south of Jerusalem city, beyond the 1949 Green Line (Armistice Line); inside the occupied Palestinian territory (oPt). The plan aims to create physical and structural contiguity between occupied East Jerusalem settlements and Israeli settlements in West Jerusalem, which undoubtedly would hamper any future separation between the two sides and undermine the possibility of developing Palestinian urban expansion in the city of Jerusalem. In addition, the plan seeks to generate a Jewish majority in the city to alter its future. According to Israeli planners, the development plan of Kibbutz Ramat Rachel does not conflict with the Israeli municipal plan for South-East Jerusalem within the inclusive 'Jerusalem 2020' plan, which sanctions construction in the area of Kibbutz Ramat Rachel. The plan’s total area covers 1558 dunums, of which 1,435 Dunums (92%) will incorporate the planned housing units, as for the remaining 317 Dunums; it is the current standing built-up area of Kibbutz Ramat Rachel. The

Christian monastery of Mar Elias and the settlement of Abu Ghneim (Har Homa) stand at the proposed development area’s south side. At the eastern side sets the Palestinian community of Sur-Baher and Um Tuba. To the north, stands Arnona neighborhood, Armon Hanetzv, and East Talpiot settlements. According to the Israeli planners, most of the targeted location for development (24 %) is a state land, which means that the land has been subject to confiscation from Palestinians under the Israeli **Absentee Property Law of 1950**. Table 3

Table 3: Land ownership of the land threatened sue to the construction of the Ramat Rahel settlement		
Land Ownership	Area – Dunums	% out of total area
State land	383	24
Jewish National Fund	816	51
Jerusalem Municipality	72	4.5
Jewish National Fund (Confiscated)	7	0.47
Private	137	8.6
Orthodox Patriarchate	96	6
No Data	75	4.7
Total	1588	100

Resource: sustainable-Jerusalem.org

The settlement plan as set by the Israeli planners is set to build 4690 housing units and a commercial center on 717 dunums, in addition to 250 hotel rooms and offices on an area of 31 Dunums. Furthermore, the plan is to include 352 dunums of parks and open space areas, and 56 dunums of roads.

The settlement plan endeavors represent the missing link, which in its turn will close off the gap in the belt of Israeli settlements along the southern side of occupied East Jerusalem. The planned construction of Kibbutz Ramat Rachel will work to connect the settlements of Abu Ghneim (Har Homa), Gilo, and Giv’at Hamatos with East Talpiot settlement. On the other hand, the planned Israeli construction at Kibbutz Ramat Rachel will lead to the separation and isolation of the Arab communities of Sur-Baher and Um-Tuba in East Jerusalem from their natural extension. Effectively, the development plan will form a physical barrier between the southern West Bank and East Jerusalem, which comes as a part of the overall Israeli plan to isolate Jerusalem from the West Bank and break the physical contiguity of the West Bank.

- **A new settlements former Defense Ministry:** In April 2018, Israeli bulldozers escorted by the Israeli occupation Police razed lands and uprooted dozens of olive trees from land farmed by Palestinians in the town of Sur Baher in occupied East Jerusalem. The Israeli government claims to have seized the land from Sur Baher and Um Tuba community in the year 1970 for “public use,” but continued to allow land owners to farm the land; in 2012, the Israel Land Authority

(ILA) submitted plans to build 180 residential units on the site for former “Defense Ministry employees” (whom the project is meant to serve).

Moreover, the Israeli Municipality of Jerusalem confiscated lands in Sur Bahir & Umm Tuba town to construct a network of bypass Roads. Usually, building Israeli settlements is compounded by the construction of a series of bypass roads. These are built for the use of Israeli settlers in the first place, to link settlements to each other and with Israel. At the same time these roads "bypass" Palestinian communities, thus creating a physical separation between the Palestinian communities and Israeli settlements. A 75 meters "buffer zone" also cleared on either side of these roads results in the confiscation of vast tracts of Palestinian land. Often Palestinian houses are bulldozed in order to clear the land for the buffer zone. Palestinians are forbidden to use this land for cultivation or any kind of construction activity. Below is a description of the Israeli bypass roads that have been constructed on lands of Sur Bahir & Umm Tuba town and those planned to be constructed in the future

- The Israeli bypass Road Number 398 (Existing): This road branches from the Israeli bypass road No. 60, which connects Jerusalem with Bethlehem. It passes by Sur Baher and Um Tuba community from the south, Abu Ghneim (Har Homa) settlement from the northeast, and continues towards the southeast to connect with Za'tara bypass Road which was constructed on lands of Beit Sahour and Bethlehem communities as well as Za'atra, Ras-El Wad, Tekoa, Al-Shwawreh and Al-Fureidis communities in the eastern part of Bethlehem city, according to the military order number 02/02/C. The road has been constructed following the establishment of Har Homa settlement to the south of Sur Baher and Um Tuba community in an attempt to ease settler's movement in the area between Jerusalem and the eastern Gush Etzion settlement bloc. and with Israel.
- **The American Road – the construction of a southern section of the "Eastern Ring" road** from the Sheikh Saad junction to the Al Mu'arabat Valley (Wadi Al Mu'arabat) junction in Bethlehem: the Israeli Transportation ministry along with Jerusalem Municipality and the Israeli Moriah company has completed the planning for a section of the Eastern Ring Road on lands of Sur Baher and Um Tuba community, to its east. Work on constructing the road commenced in May 2019, and is expected to finish by June 2021. This road section will allow the movement of settlers' vehicles and will act as a territorial link between the southern Jerusalem settlements and the Gush Etzion-east settlements with those inside the city of Jerusalem. The length of this section is about 2.5 km with average width of 14 m. The road project also includes the building of a bridge that will divert the movement of Palestinians on this road to a new one separate from that of the settlers despite the fact that the road is being constructed on hundreds of dunums of privately owned lands.
- **The “Asher Wiener” East road** - a complementary road to the northeast of Sur Baher and Um Tuba community - that will connect with the southern section of the Eastern Ring road being constructed on lands Sur Baher and Um Tuba. The Israeli Transportation ministry along with Jerusalem Municipality and the Israeli Moriah company has commenced the construction of this road section in June 2019 and is expected to finish by December 2021, on lands of Sur Baher and Um Tuba community. This section is a single-lane road that will include a 270-foot bridge and will act as an additional entrance to the community's citizens. Note that the road is set to act as an “alternative route” in the future for Palestinians living Sur Baher and Um Tuba community and communities nearby so that they won't have to use the southern section of the Eastern Ring Road (the under-construction road). The road will also create another territorial discontinuity

with the nearby Um Al lison neighborhood (to the northeast of Sur Bahir and Um Tuba). The road threatens hundreds of dunums of Palestinian Agricultural lands in the area.

The Segregation Wall’s impact on Sur Bahir & Umm Tuba Town

The construction of the Israeli Segregation Wall has had a negative impact on Sur Bahir & Umm Tuba town. According to the last amendment of the plan that was published on the webpage of the Israeli Occupation Ministry (30th April 2007), the Segregation Wall which extends for more than 2.2 km on the community’s territory, isolates Sur Bahir & Umm Tuba lands from the remaining Palestinian territory in the West Bank. A total area of 7,407 dunums (90% of town’s total area) has been isolated inside Jerusalem city by the Segregation Wall, while the remaining area of Sur Bahir & Umm Tuba town (837 dunums) is set on the Palestinian side of the wall and disconnected from the center of life in the town. The isolated lands contain Palestinian residential areas in the town (center of life), agricultural areas, open spaces, illegal settlements constructed on the town’s land, and others (Table 3).

Table 3: Land classification of areas isolated west of the segregation wall in Sur Bahir & Umm Tuba Town - Jerusalem Governorate

No.	Land classification	Area (dunums)
1	Agricultural areas	2,532
2	Palestinian built-up area	1,964
3	Israeli settlements	1,160
4	Forests & Open spaces	1,539
5	Wall zone	39
6	Construction Sites	173
Total		7,407

Source: ARIJ, 2022

The Segregation Wall causes Suffering to Sur Bahir & Umm Tuba Town Residents

Since the outbreak of the Second Intifada in September 2000, citizens of Sur Bahir & Umm Tuba have lost their association with Bethlehem and other Palestinian cities in the West Bank. The Segregation Wall was constructed to isolate Sur Bahir & Umm Tuba and many other Jerusalemite neighboring towns from the Palestinian body. However, citizens of Jerusalem who hold the Jerusalemite identity (Blue Identity) can enter the West Bank areas through Israeli terminals. The crossing points often witness huge congestion and inspection from Israeli soldiers manning them, causing restrictions to Palestinian freedom of movement.

On the other hand, Palestinian citizens of the West Bank who hold the Palestinian Identity (Green Identity) are prohibited by the Segregation Wall from entering the city of Jerusalem and its surrounding towns. This cuts off West Bankers totally from Jerusalem and from health, education, social and economic services. In reality, this stops West Bank Palestinians from accessing hospitals, schools and

medical centers, in addition to isolating them from their places of work in Jerusalem. Access to the city is only allowed for those with special Israeli permits that are rarely issued and citizens must pass through military checkpoints, where they are inspected on a daily-basis. This causes suffering to Palestinians through restricting their movements and dismantling family bonding and social interaction. This has caused the dispersal of many Palestinian families, especially couples where one partner holds a Palestinian identity (Green), and the other the Jerusalemite identity (Blue). Moreover, the Segregation Wall has prevented Palestinians from reaching places of worship in the Holy City and thus has deprived them from practicing religious rituals in Jerusalem.

Upon the Segregation Wall plan published on the webpage of the Israeli Ministry of Occupation in 2007, lands of Sur Bahir & Umm Tuba town became isolated from neighboring Palestinian towns and villages. The Segregation Wall, along with the settlement's belt around Jerusalem City has isolated East Jerusalem area from the rest of West Bank. Parallel to the establishment of the Segregation Wall, Israeli Occupation Authorities constructed a settlement belt around Sur Bahir & Umm Tuba, and around Jerusalem City, which aims at founding an isolation area, in addition to preventing urban expansion in Palestinian towns of Jerusalem. Israeli Authorities have constructed these settlements close to urbanized areas in Jerusalemite towns, which has led to an increase in the total area confiscated in these towns, and has minimized the area available for future urban expansion. This move will create a new reality on the town residents that will be difficult to reverse. These 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 to urban expansion and forced residents to adopt internal and vertical expansion. The city of Jerusalem and its surrounding towns are considered to have one of the highest population densities all over the world. The population density in the Palestinian neighborhoods in East Jerusalem is approximately 13,517 person/ km² compared to 16,000 person/ km² in settlements of Eastern Jerusalem.

The Dilemma of Lands and Building's Licenses in Sur Bahir & Umm Tuba Town

1. Inside Jerusalem Municipality Boundary

The problems associated with lands and building's license is considered one of the most difficult problems in Sur Bahir & Umm Tuba town. The reason for this is two-fold; the high prices of lands and the very high cost of licenses for construction in Sur Bahir & Umm Tuba due to its strategic proximity to the Old City and Al-Aqsa Mosque. This has made it an important target for Judization and colonization, in addition to restrictions related to buildings' licenses imposed by Israeli Municipality of Jerusalem. According to citizens of Jerusalem, land prices (one dunum) in occupied East Jerusalem, most specifically lands located within the illegally and unilaterally expanded borders of the Jerusalem municipality, -which is rarely available- is relatively higher than land located outside the borders of the municipality, and are even doubled in places closer to the city center.

The Israeli Municipality of Jerusalem has used the money as an effective instrument to take over Palestinian lands in occupied East Jerusalem for enormous prices and 'Judaize' these lands by implanting Jewish settlers in the city. Israeli settler organizations offer Palestinians unlimited prices for such lands and houses especially in the city center and its neighborhoods. For anyone in Jerusalem who has a land and wants to build a house, or additional land, has to take authorization and permission from

the Municipality of Jerusalem which puts obstacles in the way of Palestinians 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 Municipality of Jerusalem requires 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 Bireh, Qalandiya, Beit Hanina, Hizma and 'Anata, Ash Sheikh Jarrah and Beit Safafa (Bimkom, 2004).

According to the testimonies of Palestinians in the town of Sur Baher and Um Tuba 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 150,000-300,000. 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 Municipality's 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 Jerusalem Municipality 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 occupied 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 a better living standards.

Furthermore, the Israeli Municipality of Jerusalem often does not prepare the needed Master Plans for the Palestinian communities in occupied East Jerusalem, which are necessary for the urban planning process. In cases when the Municipality prepares master plans for Palestinian communities in East Jerusalem, it usually put restrictions and give limited percentages of areas designated for Palestinian urban expansion, which are below the needed percentages for natural urban growth, which is between 25% and 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 Sur Baher and Um Tuba town for example, the Israeli Municipality of Jerusalem determined the urban growth percentage to be 35%-50%, whereas the neighboring settlement of Abu Ghneim (Har Homa) which part of it was illegally constructed on the land of Sur Baher and Um Tuba town, covers a percentage of 90%-120% (CCJ, 2009).

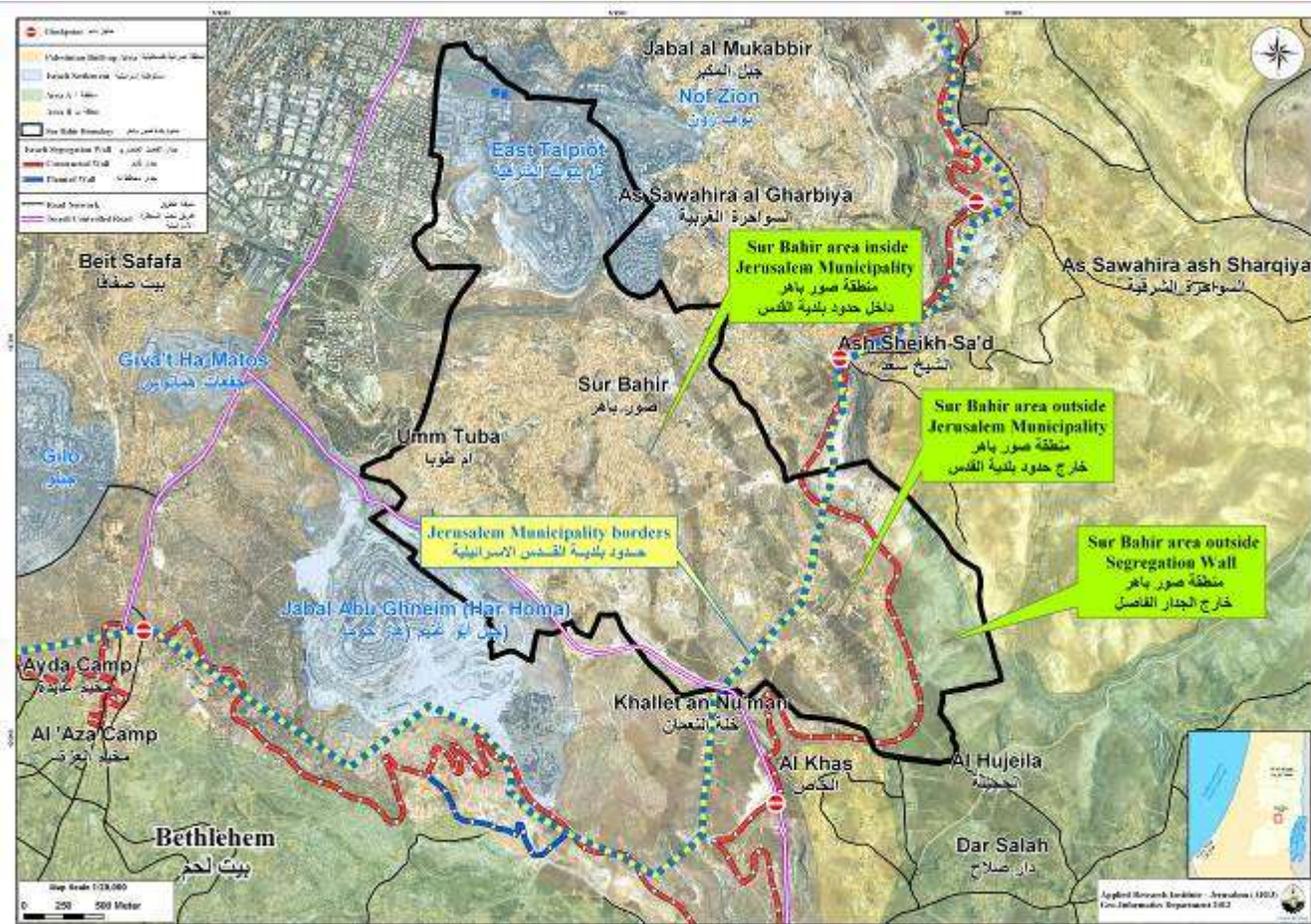
It should be noted that the Israeli Jerusalem Municipality has classified some areas within its boundaries including areas in Sur Bahir & Umm Tuba as "Green Areas." The Israeli Occupation Authorities (IOA)

have used this classification as a way of controlling and confiscating more Palestinian lands in the town. Moreover, the IOA demolished houses in Jerusalem under the claim that these houses were built on “Green Areas”, as seen in the ethnic cleansing process in “Al Bustan Neighborhood” in Silwan. The targeting of Al Bustan came after the Israeli Municipality of Jerusalem announced on February 20, 2009 a plan to relocate more than 1,500 Palestinian citizens living in the 88 houses comprising Al Bustan neighborhood to an alternative location. The Municipality plans to demolish the 88 houses to establish the “King David Garden” as part of the “Biblical Gardens” around the Holy City. Also, the Israeli Authorities under the name of “Green Areas” have built many settlements in Jerusalem, such as Reches Shu’fat (Ramat Shlomo) in the no, and Jabal abu Ghneim (Har Homa) in the south. One must also note that some areas within Sur Bahir & Umm Tuba town and which are classified as “Green Areas,” will remain captive of the Israeli future settlement plans in Jerusalem city and surroundings.

2. “Area C” classifications (Oslo II Agreement)

An estimated 1,701 dunums (21% of town’s total area) of Sur Bahir & Um town is located outside the boundary of Jerusalem Municipality (J2) and is subjected to the Oslo II Agreement classification system. 810 dunums (48% of the town’s total area) have been classified as “Area C” outside the Municipality, which includes most of the town’s citizens who are living outside the Municipality borders. This area faces same problems of obtaining licenses for building from the Israeli Civil Administration, the military unit responsible for implementing **Israel's civilian** policy in the occupied West Bank.

However, the area which is not under the control of Jerusalem Municipality has a lower cost of authorization (license) for building, than Municipality controlled areas within Sur Bahir & Umm Tuba. According to a number of citizens, the cost reaches approximately 10,000 NIS. However, obtaining a license is a complicated procedure, and the Israeli Civil Administration puts restrictions in the way of those wishing to have a license. (Map 1).



3. Areas under Palestinian National Authority Control (A & B):

The Segregation Wall has isolated 7373 (89% of Sur Bahir & Umm Tuba lands inside Jerusalem city, leaving an area of 871 dunums (11% of town’s total area) outside of the segregated area within the West Bank. This area is near to Al Khas village in Bethlehem Governorate, namely Wadi Al Hummos neighborhood. An estimated 891 dunums of this area is located under Palestinian Authority control (A & B) which includes classified; rugged areas, open spaces, and a small part of agricultural area, with no Palestinian built-up areas because of the difficult topography.

Sur Bahir & Umm Tuba represents a rare case in the Palestinian segregation plan as part of the segregated area is classified as Area A (Oslo Accords II). Israeli Authorities usually annex areas that are under their control or partial control (Areas B and C). This segregated region covers an estimated area of 773 dunums. According to both the Oslo Agreement which was signed between the PLO and Israel, and according to the laws of building’s licenses currently in force in West Bank areas, this area is under the Palestinian Authorities’ (PA) administrative and security control. Consequently, the PA has the responsibility of authorizing license of building in this area. However, despite this legally binding scenario, Israeli Occupation Authorities do not recognize this authorization, as demonstrated by the

demolition orders they have recently issued for some buildings within this area, because of their proximity to the Segregation Wall.

The right of adequate housing is considered one of the most prominent rights asserted in charters and international treaties and in International Humanitarian law, which calls for the respect of human dignity and the right of adequate housing. However, the Israeli state –through their aggression against the Palestinian human rights- classifies itself to be above such laws and standards.

Wadi el-HummusAnother Palestinian Humanitarian Tragedy on Live Camera

At the breaking dawn of July 22, 2019, dozens of Israeli bulldozers escorted by hundreds of Israeli border police and Israeli municipality staff members stormed Wadi el-Hummus, a neighborhood south of Sur Baher and Um Tuba communities, southeast of Jerusalem, to execute demolition orders of 16 buildings holding 700 apartments that accommodate some 500 Palestinians. The targeted buildings are located within areas “A” (9 buildings) and “B” (7 buildings), which, according to the signed Oslo Accords of 1995 gives the Palestinians total rights to construct and inhabit the areas without any interference from the Israeli side. Today’s; (July 22) demolitions included 9 buildings located in the area “A” and 5 buildings in area “B” and 2 buildings in area “C”. The Army demolition squad has initiated preparation to demolish 8 buildings of the total 16 targeted for the demolition; yet, they carried out **five** demolitions (52 apartments) today (July 22) including one action using explosives. The Israel High Court of ” Justice” confirmed a previous ruling to demolish the targeted buildings last June (22) and dismissed a petition by Palestinian residents requesting the cancellation of the demolition order. The Palestinians refused the Israeli pretext of security concerns (for location within the buffer zone of the denounced and illegally stamped segregation wall); exclaiming that it is only a pretext to push the Palestinians out of Jerusalem in the service of a political agenda aiming to demographically diminish the Palestinians existence in Jerusalem. Palestinians added that it is nearly impossible to receive construction permits from the Israeli Municipality of Jerusalem, which forces many Palestinians to build on their own in order to cope with their population growth, or leave the city, which put their residency at risk as Israel consider Palestinian Jerusalemites living outside the Israeli defined boundary of the city no longer residents of Jerusalem. It’s worth mentioning that the Israeli ministry of interior has revoked the residency right of more than 14,800 Palestinians since the year 2000 for living outside the Israeli defined Jerusalem city border.

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

The Municipal tax, is 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 burdens on Palestinian residents of the city, including the residents of Sur Bahir & Umm Tuba 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 imposed on Jerusalemites, is calculated based on a criteria, which takes in consideration the classification of the area and the land-use classification of the Jerusalem Master Plan (residential areas, commercial, industrial, agricultural, public buildings, parking... etc). They additionally take in consideration the zone type, the type of use and the area of building or land (Jerusalem Municipality, 2012). Regarding the residential areas they classify these into four categories (A, B,

C and D), and based on 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 35-98 NIS/m² which is equivalent to approximately 10-25 US\$/m². This means that a small house (apartment) with an area of 100-150 m² will cost his owner 3,000-10,000 NIS a year. This is equivalent to approximately 800-3,000 US\$. For commercial shops, the tax imposed by the municipality is folded, which affect the economic activity as these taxes force the merchants to increase prices. The tax tariff for the commercial shops varies between 309-319 NIS/m² depending on the area of the shop which is equivalent to approximately 80 US\$/m². In addition to the taxation on the residential and commercial areas, the Municipality imposes taxes on worship places, agricultural areas, schools, kindergartens, elderly homes and others.

In terms of economic impact, the segregation plan, which focused on the isolation of Jerusalem city from the Palestinian Territory, has 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 residents' economic situation. 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.

It is further noted that in the case of Jerusalem, the 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 of the city more than planning for the purposes of prosperity and well-being of its citizens. Furthermore, the Palestinian communities in Jerusalem are deliberately neglected in the different services provision. For instance, the Municipality rarely makes the needed maintenance for the infrastructure of Arab neighborhoods, including; roads, water and waste water networks, solid wastes and others. A notable 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 settlers living in settlements in the city who get all the facilities and services in order to encourage them to stay in the Holy City, while Palestinians live in poor conditions and lack services and rights that they should receive in return for paying the tax.

Mazmuria Terminal near Sur Bahir & Umm Tuba:

On the southern entrance of Sur Bahir & Umm Tuba, Israel established Mazmuria terminal (previously known as An Nu'man checkpoint) which was constructed on lands of Al Khas and An Nu'man villages in Bethlehem Governorate, nearby to Sur Bahir and Umm Tuba. This terminal completed the Israeli segregation plan to separate Jerusalem towns including Sur Bahir & Umm Tuba from Bethlehem. After the construction of the segregation wall and these barriers, interaction between this town and Bethlehem city became difficult especially for people holding the Palestinian identity (Green Identity Card) who cannot reach the isolated towns within Jerusalem city.

The establishment of this terminal dates back to 2003, when Israeli Occupation Authorities handed residents of Al Khas and An Nu'man a detailed map of a terminal to be established in the area, in

addition to a military base to protect the terminal and the Segregation Wall. The terminal occupies an area of 84 dunums of lands isolated behind the wall. The map additionally showed an Israeli bypass road near the wall to connect the terminal and the military base with settlements in Jerusalem and those in the east and north of the city. When Israeli bulldozers attacked the villages and started the implementation of the plan, residents of the two villages submitted their objections regarding these plans to the Israeli Higher Court of Justice, which obstructed the implementation of the project until the first quarter of 2005. On the 3rd September 2005, Israeli Occupation Forces handed residents of Al Khas and An Nu'man four Israeli military orders holding numbers; 156/05/T, 155/05/T, 154/05/T and 52/05. These informed residents that 43 dunums of An Nu'man and Beit Sahour lands in Bethlehem Governorate will be confiscated to construct a trade passage. Later in 2007, Israeli Occupation Forces handed new military orders holding numbers 31/07/T and 02/07/S to confiscate 25 dunums from Beit Sahour and Bethlehem, for military purposes and for the expansion of the terminal.

Israeli Military Orders Issued in Sur Bahir & Umm Tuba Town

Israeli Occupation Authorities have issued a set of military orders to confiscate lands in Sur Bahir & Umm Tuba town for different military purposes. The following are some of the main orders issued:

1. Israeli military order no. 22/03/T: Issued on the 12th August 2003 to confiscate 173.4 dunums of lands from Sur Bahir & Umm Tuba, Ash Shayyah and As Sawahira al Gharbiya, for the construction of the Segregation Wall.
2. Israeli military order no. 23/03/T: Issued on the 24th August 2003 to confiscate 19 dunums from lands of Sur Bahir & Umm Tuba for the construction of the Segregation Wall.
3. Israeli military order no. 47/03/T: Issued on the 22nd July 2003 to confiscate 1.5 dunums from lands of Sur Bahir & Umm Tuba for military purposes.
4. Israeli military order no. 03/47/T (EXTENSION 3): Issued on the 9th of September 2014 for military uses where 66.7 dunums from lands of Sur Bahir & Umm Tuba were targeted. The order is an extension to a previously issued military order.
5. Israeli military order no. 03/49/T (AMENDMENT 3 & EXTENSION 4): Issued on the 9th of September 2014 for military uses where 104.3 dunums from lands of Sur Bahir & Umm Tuba and Bethlehem Governorate were targeted. The order is an extension to a previously issued military order.