

PEACE NOW

# Eyes on Jerusalem



**How the Government Is  
Undermining the Prospects  
for a Two-State Solution**

**Jerusalem: Situation Report, 2023–2025**

## Key Findings

### Settlements around and within East Jerusalem neighborhoods:

- Advancement of plans for **33,519 new housing units for Israelis in East Jerusalem**, through the approval of plans for deposit or final validation.
- Planning of **four new settlements in East Jerusalem**, located within or on the edges of Palestinian neighborhoods: Givat HaShaked, Kidmat Zion, the Lower Aqueduct, and Kiryat Menachem Begin in Sheikh Jarrah. (Two additional settlements - Atarot and “Nahlat Shimon” - were advanced in January 2026.)
- Approval of the **E1 plan** and publication of tenders for its construction, alongside steps to seal off the entire Ma’ale Adumim area (the heart of the West Bank) from Palestinians, including through the construction of a new road.
- Promotion of **four new settlements in the outer ring surrounding East Jerusalem**: Nahal Heletz, Shdema, Mishmar Yehuda, and Adam West.
- Development of **road infrastructure** around East Jerusalem at a cost of **billions of shekels** for the service of the settlements.

### Settlements within Palestinian neighborhoods:

- **Eviction of 11 families (64 individuals)** from six homes in the Batan al-Hawa area of Silwan, followed by the entry of settlers into those properties. Dozens of additional families face imminent eviction.
- **Demolition of 37 homes** in the al-Bustan neighborhood of Silwan, as part of a process that threatens the destruction of the neighborhood in its entirety, leaving hundreds of residents displaced.
- Advancement of **tourism-oriented settlement projects in Jerusalem’s Historic Basin**, including land expropriations for the cable car project to the Old City/Silwan; the opening of a new visitors’ center on the outskirts of Jabal Mukaber and the zipline project; and the opening of a tunnel connecting Silwan to the Western Wall excavations, running beneath homes in Silwan and under the Old City walls.
- Approximately **100 million shekels annually** allocated to security for settlers within Palestinian neighborhoods in Jerusalem.

In accordance with a statutory requirement enacted by the Israeli government as part of its campaign against organizations critical of its policies in the occupied territories, Peace Now states that the primary source of its funding is foreign governmental entities, which are states friendly to Israel. Detailed information is published on the website of the Registrar of Non-Profit Organizations.

## Introduction

Jerusalem lies at the heart of the conflict. For both sides, it is a symbol, an object of longing, and the exclusive capital. Sensitivities in Jerusalem are acute, and any disruption there has the potential to ignite violence and undermine stability. Documents seized from Hamas indicate that violations of the status quo at the Temple Mount/Haram al-Sharif in Jerusalem were among the motivations for the October 7 attack, which the group termed “Al-Aqsa Flood.”

Yet while Jerusalem is the core of the conflict, it is in many respects also the key to its resolution. The establishment of a **Palestinian capital in Jerusalem’s Palestinian neighborhoods**, alongside an **Israeli capital in the city’s Jewish neighborhoods**, with special arrangements for the Old City and the holy sites, remains the cornerstone of a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

The current Israeli government’s objective is to prevent, at any cost, the possibility of a Palestinian state. To that end, it is acting to block the emergence of a Palestinian capital in Jerusalem through two primary strategies:

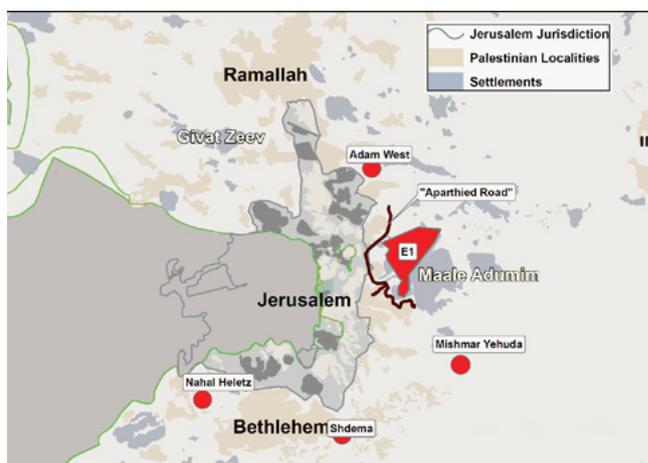
**Physical severance:** Creating a barrier between East Jerusalem and the Palestinian hinterland of the West Bank by means of settlements and Israeli neighborhoods encircling the city, both in an outer ring and an inner one.

**Judaization of East Jerusalem:** Weakening East Jerusalem as a viable and coherent Palestinian urban space by establishing settlements between and within Palestinian neighborhoods, dispossessing Palestinians of their land, restricting planning and construction, demolishing homes and promoting so-called “tourism settlements.”

Israeli control over East Jerusalem manifests itself across multiple domains, including the absence of adequate planning frameworks and systemic budgetary discrimination. Those issues have been extensively documented by organizations such as [Ir Amim](#), [Bimkom](#), and [Emek Shaveh](#). This report focuses specifically on settlement activity and on Israeli policy over the past three years of the current government, as it relates to the prevention of a political resolution to the conflict.

## Part I: Severing East Jerusalem from the Palestinian Hinterland

### A. The Outer Ring: Settlements Surrounding Jerusalem



The government is advancing the establishment of new settlements around Jerusalem with the explicit aim of isolating East Jerusalem from the rest of the West Bank and foreclosing the possibility of a Palestinian state with East Jerusalem as its capital. These initiatives include E1, Nahal Heletz (Bar Kokhba), Shdema, Mishmar Yehuda, and Adam West.

#### The New Settlement in E1, Between Ma'ale Adumim and East Jerusalem

In August 2025, the Higher Planning Council approved plans to construct 3,401 housing units in the E1 area. Shortly thereafter, in December 2025, the Ministry of Housing issued tenders for the construction of the settlement.

After years in which successive Israeli governments refrained from advancing the plan due to international - particularly American - pressure, the Netanyahu-Smotrich government decided to move forward with the project, widely regarded as particularly damaging to prospects for peace and to the viability of a two-state solution.

The E1 area is among the very few remaining land reserves for the development of East Jerusalem as the metropolitan core of the West Bank. Construction of a settlement in this area would bisect the West Bank, eliminate territorial contiguity for a future Palestinian state, and prevent the development of East Jerusalem as the capital of that state.

Immediately following approval of the E1 plan, the organizations Peace Now, Bimkom, and Ir Amim, together with Palestinian residents of the area, filed a petition with the District Court seeking its cancellation. The court declined to issue an interim injunction freezing the plan, allowing the state to continue advancing construction while the petition remains under review.



The Wadi Sneysel community against the backdrop of Ma'ale Adumim. The Palestinian community of Wadi Sneysel, located within the area designated for construction in E1, faces displacement to make way for the settlement.

development totaling 3 billion shekels for 7,600 housing units (including construction in E1), in exchange for the municipality's commitment to issue building permits on an expedited basis.



The "Apartheid Road" - the northern part which was opened to traffic between A-Za'ayem and Anata.

Alongside approval of the E1 plan, the government moved to deepen Israeli control over the surrounding area. In April 2025, final approval was granted for plans to build 3,500 housing units in Ma'ale Adumim (the "Desert Bird" neighborhood), expanding the settlement by approximately 30 percent. Tenders for construction were published shortly thereafter.

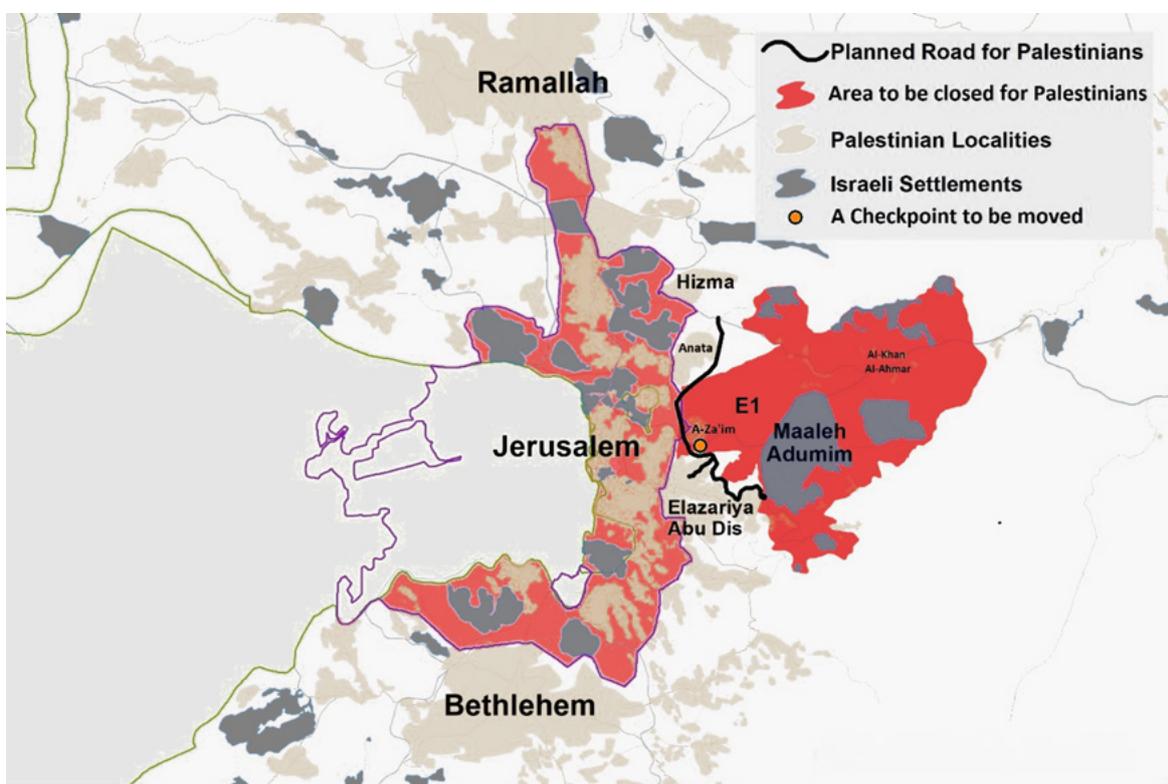
In September 2025, Prime Minister Netanyahu signed a "framework agreement" with the Municipality of Ma'ale Adumim to accelerate development. According to the municipality, the agreement commits the government to advance funding of infrastructure and

### **The "Apartheid Road": Closing the entire Area to Palestinians**

In parallel with the advancement of construction in E1, the government decided in March 2025 to allocate 335 million shekels for the construction of a road for Palestinians between al-Eizariya and al-Za'ayem. The road - previously called by Naftali Bennett "The Sovereignty Road" - is designed to divert Palestinian traffic moving between the northern and southern West Bank (in the Ma'ale Adumim area) onto a narrow, segregated route.

This move would enable the closure of the entire area - approximately three percent of the West Bank-to Palestinians, connect Ma'ale Adumim and E1 to Israel without checkpoints, and effectively integrate them de facto into the State of Israel. The closure would also sever dozens of Palestinian communities, such as Khan al-Ahmar, and in practice lead to their displacement from their land.

In January 2026, the government announced that construction of the road was expected to begin within approximately six weeks.



### **A New Settlement East of Jerusalem: Mishmar Yehuda**

In February 2023, the government decided to establish nine new settlements, including Mishmar Yehuda, located east of Jerusalem and Abu Dis. About a year later, a jurisdictional boundary enabling planning was set, and the Ministry of Housing began detailed planning work.

The target is a settlement of approximately 13,000 housing units, around 65,000 residents-intended primarily for the ultra-Orthodox and religious population.



Nahal Heletz Outpost, June 2025

## **A New Settlement South of Jerusalem: Nahal Heletz (Bar Kokhba)**

In June 2024, the government approved the establishment of five additional settlements, including Nahal Heletz, located south of Jerusalem adjacent to the homes of the village of Battir. Less than two weeks after the cabinet decision, the Central Command head signed an order defining the settlement's jurisdiction over a parcel claimed by the state to have been in Jewish ownership prior to 1948.

Subsequently, the Civil Administration published a new "blue line" designating additional state land as a reserve for the settlement.

The settlement is planned at the heart of a declared World Heritage Site, in violation of international conventions to which Israel is a signatory. As early as December 2023, an illegal agricultural outpost was established on the site; in February 2025, it expanded into a caravan neighborhood with the support of the Gush Etzion Regional Council. Residents of Battir report that since the outpost was established, settlers have prevented them from accessing their agricultural land.

The purpose of the settlement is to create territorial continuity between Jerusalem and the Gush Etzion bloc, while severing Bethlehem from five villages to its west-al-Walaja, Battir, Husan, Wadi Fukin, and Nahhalin-home to approximately 25,000 Palestinians.



## A New Settlement Northeast of Jerusalem: “Adam West”

In October 2025, plan no. 240/3 was submitted to the Higher Planning Council, proposing the construction of 2,970 housing units over approximately 500 dunams between the Palestinian towns of a-Ram and Hizma.

Although the area lies outside Jerusalem’s municipal boundaries, it functions in practice as a Jerusalem neighborhood, intended to be connected to the city and to serve as an integral extension of Neve Yaakov. Because expanding Jerusalem’s municipal boundary in this area would constitute formal annexation, the plan was designed to define the area as a “neighborhood” of the settlement Adam, rather than part of Jerusalem.

In practice, however, there is no feasible connection between the existing settlement of Adam and the proposed new settlement, as an intercity road and the separation barrier run between them.



When the separation barrier was constructed some 20 years ago, its route deviated eastward from Jerusalem's municipal boundary to include an additional hill east of Neve Yaakov. At the time, the organizations B'Tselem and Bimkom revealed that the real reason for this deviation was not security-related, but rather a preliminary plan - then still conceptual - to build a new Jerusalem neighborhood on the site. The government has now begun actively advancing that plan. A detailed outline plan has been prepared and may soon be brought before the Higher Planning Council for approval.

### **Roads Connecting Settlements - but Not Palestinians**

One of the central policy areas advanced by the Israeli government over the past three years has been infrastructure development in the West Bank, particularly road networks linking settlements to Jerusalem. Of the billions of shekels allocated for West Bank roads, a substantial portion has been directed toward routes that connect Jerusalem with Israeli settlements in the West Bank.

Rather than integrating Palestinian East Jerusalem into its Palestinian surroundings in the West Bank, the road network being built creates an artificial connection between Israeli Jerusalem and the West Bank, effectively bypassing Palestinian East Jerusalem and the Palestinian cities and towns around it.

## The Eastern Ring Road



Construction of the tunnel of the Eastern Ring Road

The Eastern Ring Road, with an estimated cost of 1.3 billion shekels is a clear example of this artificial linkage between the West Bank and Jerusalem. The road bypasses East Jerusalem from the Har Homa and Umm Tuba area in the south toward Ma'ale Adumim, running outside the separation barrier.

Its southern segment, from Har Homa to Jabal Mukaber and Ein al-Lozeh, opened in 2021. In 2024, construction began on the Sheikh Anbar Tunnel (1.6 km) beneath a-Tur. The road is intended for Israelis and residents of East Jerusalem only; West

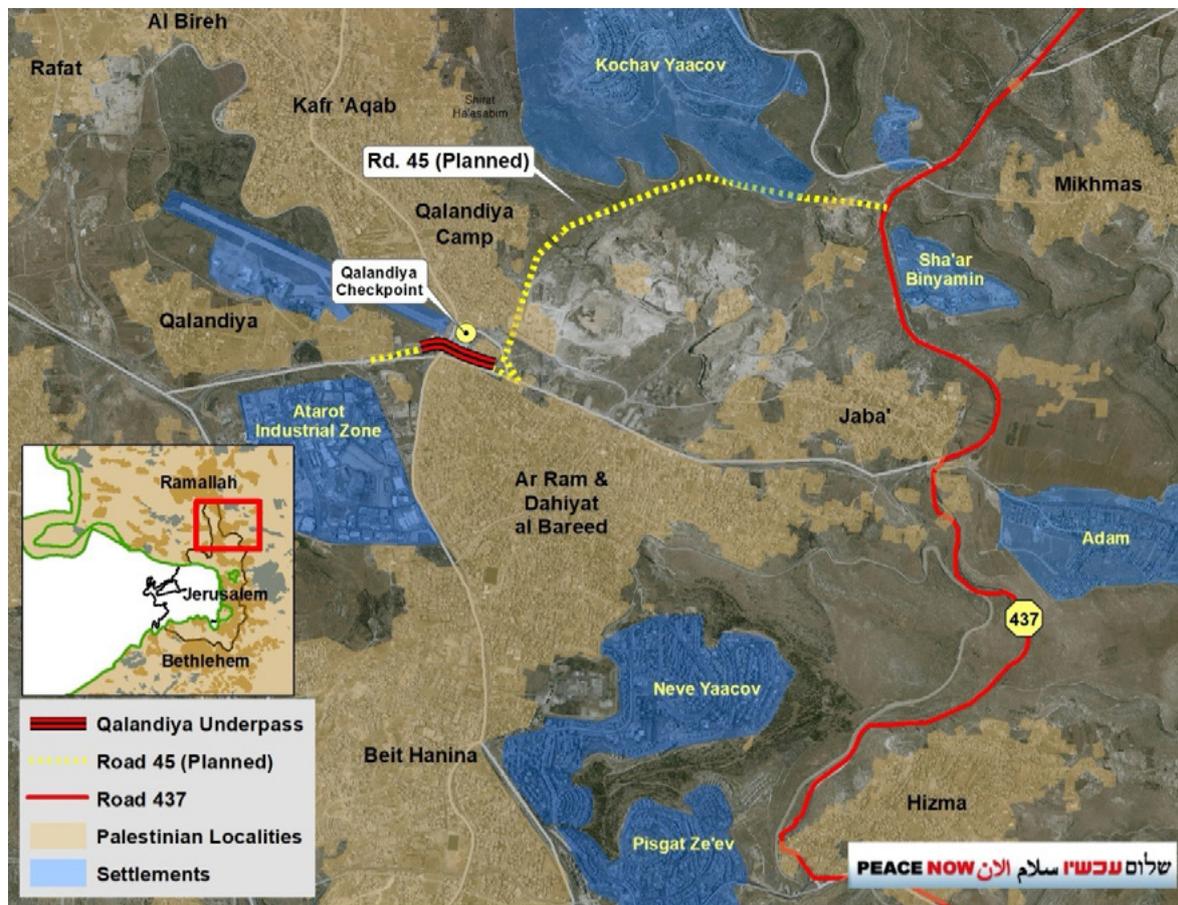
Bank Palestinians who are barred from entering Jerusalem cannot use it.

The road connects the Ma'ale Adumim bloc to southern Jerusalem neighborhoods and to settlements southeast of Bethlehem.

### Road 45 and the Qalandiya Underpass: A New Bypass South of Ramallah

In July 2025, a building permit was approved for a new road - known as the “Quarries Road”- from the Mikhmas area to the Qalandiya checkpoint, at a cost of 361 million shekels. The road will connect settlements northeast of Jerusalem and Ramallah directly to Israel, bypassing traffic congestion in Hizma and Pisgat Ze'ev.

It will link to a subterranean passage beneath the Qalandiya checkpoint - the Qalandiya Underpass - where a new checkpoint will be established, allowing settlers only to enter Israel.



## Upgrading Road 60: The Main Artery Linking Israeli Jerusalem to West Bank Settlements

Road 60, the central transportation artery of the West Bank, is undergoing extensive expansion and upgrading at a cost of billions of shekels. In the summer of 2024, the upgraded Tunnels Road south of Jerusalem opened at a cost of approximately 1 billion shekels. Work is now continuing further south at an additional cost of about 630 million shekels.



Upgrade of Road 60.

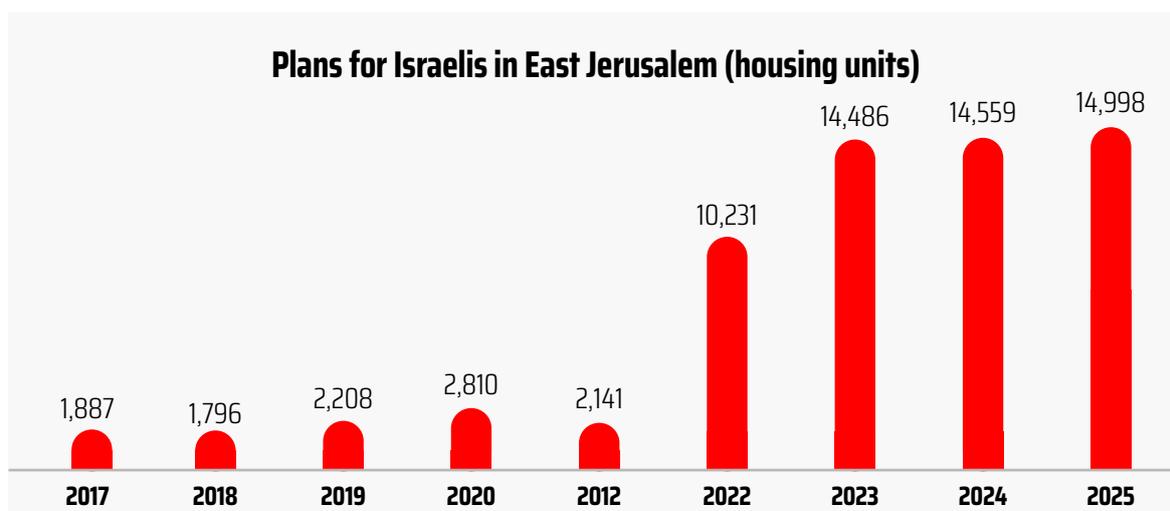
At the same time, roads north and east of Ramallah - Road 437 and the road leading to Sha'ar Binyamin - are being upgraded at a combined cost of approximately 760 million shekels.

## B. The Inner Ring: Expansion of Israeli Neighborhoods Beyond the Green Line in Jerusalem

Over the past three years, there has been a dramatic surge in the number of housing units planned in Israeli settlements in Jerusalem. This increase is driven primarily by the work of a special urban renewal committee, which has been advancing large scale demolition-and-reconstruction projects throughout the city, and by a policy of the District Planning Committee to approve high-rise construction along the route of the light rail - including in neighborhoods located beyond the Green Line (Gilo, Givat Hamatos, Pisgat Ze'ev, and Neve Yaakov).

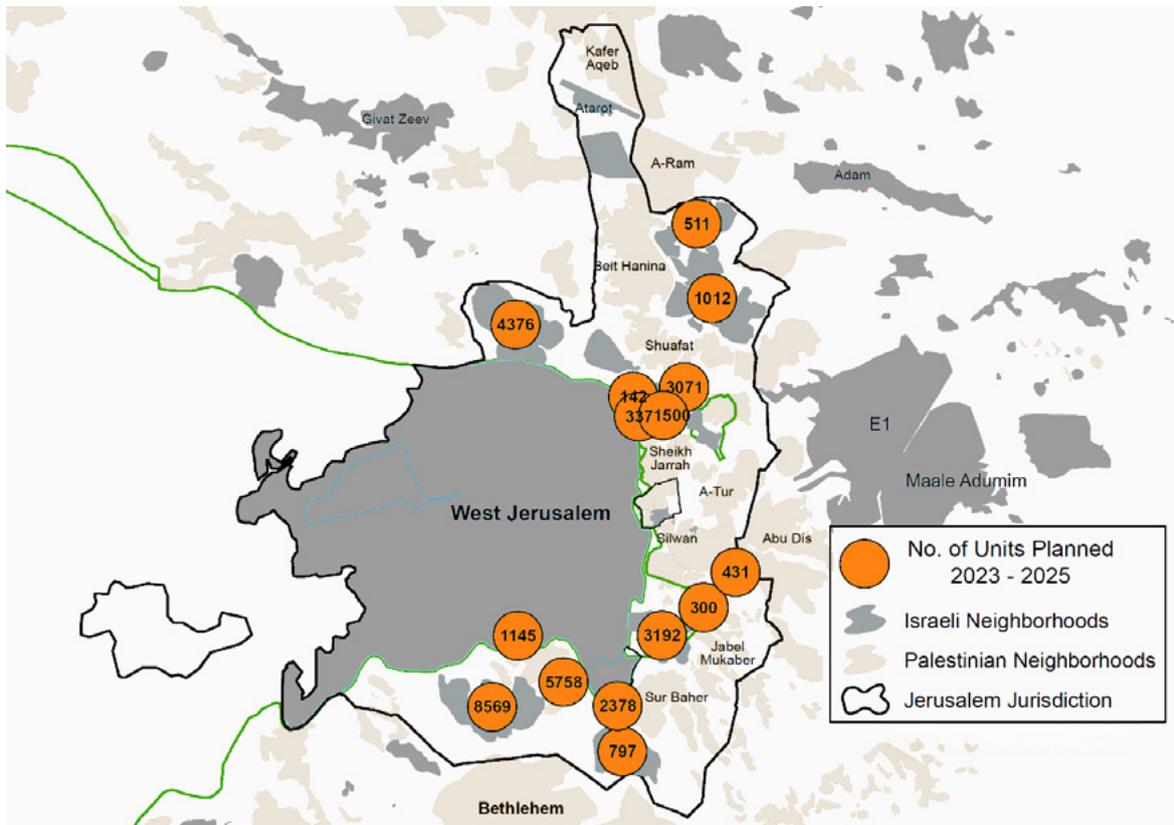
While planning policy encourages higher density within already built-up areas, authorities have also advanced plans to expand existing neighborhoods into new areas (such as in Gilo and Ramot) and to establish entirely new neighborhoods, often on the edges of - or within - Palestinian neighborhoods. In January 2026, additional settlements began to be promoted in Atarot and Sheikh Jarrah.

**During the three years of the current government, more than 33,000 housing units were advanced in neighborhoods beyond the Green Line in Jerusalem - an estimated 50 percent increase in the number of housing units for Israelis in East Jerusalem.** Today, approximately 230,000 Israelis live in East Jerusalem; the units advanced during this period are expected to add roughly 130,000 additional residents.



Source: Peace Now's annual tally of housing units that received approval for deposit or final validation by the District Planning and Building Committee.

<b>Neighborhood</b>	<b>Number of units approved for deposit or for validation, years 2023 - 2025</b>
<b>Lower Aquaduct (planned)</b>	2378
<b>Givat Hamatos (under construction)</b>	5758
<b>Givat HaShaked (planned)</b>	1145
<b>Gilo</b>	8569
<b>French Hill</b>	3071
<b>Har Homa</b>	797
<b>Ma'a lot Dafna</b>	337
<b>Neve Yaacov</b>	511
<b>Nof Zion</b>	300
<b>Pisgat Zeev</b>	1012
<b>Kidmat Zion (planned)</b>	384
<b>Ramot</b>	4376
<b>Ramat Eshkol</b>	142
<b>East Talpiyot</b>	3192
<b>Eastern Government Offices, Kiryat Begin (planned)</b>	1500



### Lower Aqueduct Neighborhood

In November 2023, shortly after the outbreak of the war, a plan was approved for the construction of 1,738 housing units in a new neighborhood, half of which lies beyond the Green Line and half within it. The Lower Aqueduct neighborhood occupies a strategic location, between Givat Hamatos and Har Homa, blocking the last remaining corridor connecting the Palestinian neighborhoods of Beit Safafa and Sharafat to the rest of East Jerusalem, and severing the urban continuity between Bethlehem and East Jerusalem.

In April 2024, the Ministry of Housing published a tender for the construction of 1,047 housing units, at record speed - just four months after the plan received final approval. Adjacent to Lower Aqueduct, an additional plan known as “Nofei Rachel” is being advanced, adjacent to homes in the Palestinian neighborhood of Umm Tuba, and comprising 650 housing units. In an unusual move, planning of the neighborhood was initiated by the General Custodian, who in recent years has begun promoting development on land in East Jerusalem which was in Jewish ownership prior to 1948.

“Nofei Rachel” is the fourth neighborhood advanced by the General Custodian unit within the Ministry of Justice in East Jerusalem in recent years. The three others include a new neighborhood planned within the Palestinian village of Umm Lison, the Givat HaShaked neighborhood adjacent to Beit Safafa, and Kidmat Zion adjacent to Abu Dis. Similarly, the Custodian intends to promote a construction plan in Sheikh Jarrah.

### **Kidmat Zion**

In October 2023, a plan was approved for deposit to establish a 384-unit settlement in the heart of the Palestinian neighborhood of Abu Dis. The plan, initiated by a private company reportedly linked to the settler organization Ateret Cohanim, is located on one of the area’s few remaining open spaces.

The Kidmat Zion settlement is slated to be built on land that was in Jewish ownership prior to 1948 and later transferred to entities associated with Ateret Cohanim. In 2004, several settler families moved into two houses at the edges of the planned site after purchasing rights from Palestinian residents, and erected additional structures. One of the plan’s objectives is to retroactively legalize these unauthorized settler buildings.

### **Nof Zion**

The settlement of Nof Zion was established in 2004 in the Palestinian neighborhood of Jabal Mukaber, on land purchased by Israeli developers. At present, Phase II of the project is under construction, adding more than 100 housing units.

The developers’ planned Phase III involves the construction of 140 housing units and 550 hotel rooms on land currently occupied by the Oz police station. The plan, titled “Nofei Zahav,” was approved for deposit in August 2023.

In November 2025, a licensing file was opened for the construction of a replacement police station nearby, and the Knesset Finance Committee approved a budget of 8 million shekels for the project, clearing the way for construction to begin in the coming months.

## **Eastern Government offices Compound in Sheikh Jarrah**

In December 2025, a plan was approved for deposit to establish a new residential neighborhood within the Eastern Government Compound in Sheikh Jarrah, near the national police headquarters. Several government offices built after 1967 currently stand on the site.

The plan calls for the construction of 1,500 housing units, alongside government office buildings, on land at the edge of the Palestinian neighborhood of Sheikh Jarrah, between Wadi al-Joz and Mount Scopus.

## **An Outpost in Sur Baher**

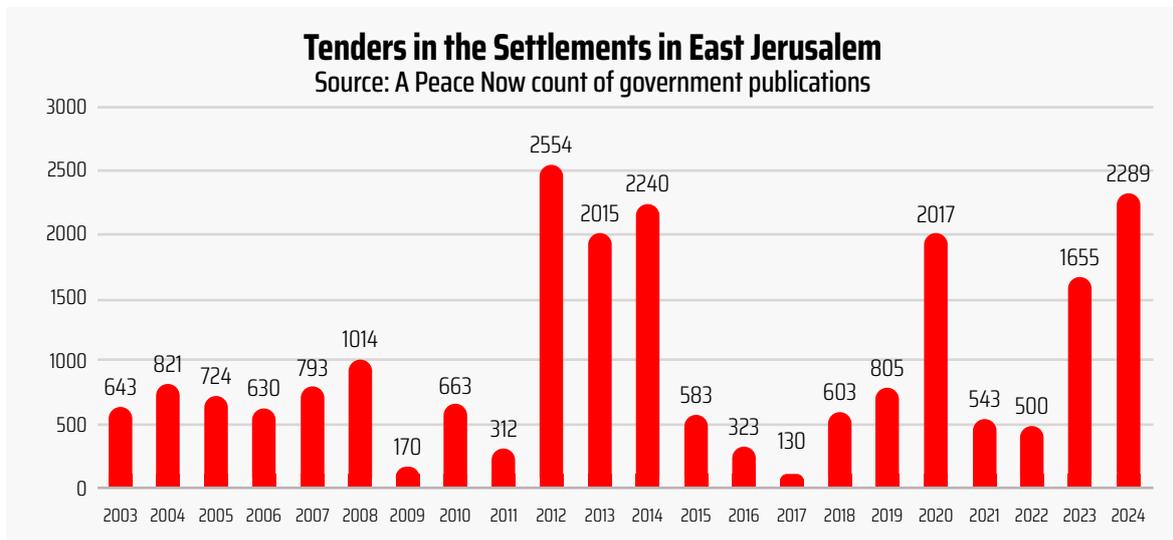
Another notable development occurred in December 2025, when settlers established an illegal outpost in Sur Baher, east of Har Homa in East Jerusalem. The settlers erected a fence around approximately 10 dunams of land and placed a container on the site - without permits or an approved building plan.

The move appears to be an initial step toward establishing a permanent Israeli settlement, with the settlers first seeking to mark territory and assert control over the land.

## Tenders

Alongside the advancement of planning initiatives, the government also published tenders for the construction of 4,144 housing units in Israeli neighborhoods in East Jerusalem, including Pisgat Ze'ev, Ramat Shlomo, the French Hill, Ramot, Gilo, and Lower Aqueduct.

One of the tenders, for approximately 200 housing units, is for the construction of a settlement within the Palestinian neighborhood of Beit Safafa.



\* In 2025 no new tenders were published in East Jerusalem.

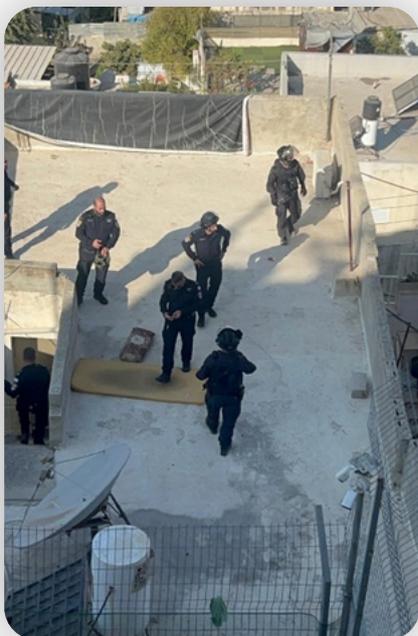
## Part II: Undermining Palestinian Jerusalem

Alongside the ring of settlements surrounding East Jerusalem - designed to sever it from the West Bank and its Palestinian hinterland - Israel has also worked to advance settlements and expand Israeli presence within Palestinian neighborhoods themselves, in order to prevent any future agreement in which Palestinian neighborhoods would form part of a Palestinian capital and Israeli neighborhoods part of an Israeli capital.

Settlement activity inside Palestinian neighborhoods began in the 1980s and 1990s, primarily through initiatives led by settler organizations such as Elad and Ateret Cohanim, which took control of homes and small compounds mainly in and around the Old City. Over time, this form of settlement has been supplemented by what is often referred to as “tourism settlement” - a process that has transformed the public space around the Old City from a mixed, Palestinian Muslim and Christian environment into one with dominant Israeli-Jewish characteristics. These efforts have received extensive government investment and support.

### A. Settlements Within Palestinian Neighborhoods

#### Eviction Battles in Batan al-Hawa, Silwan



Policemen on the roof of the Shweiki house during the eviction, 9/11/25

The Batan al-Hawa neighborhood in Silwan has become the focal point of a systematic effort by the settler organization Ateret Cohanim to evict Palestinian families, based on a discriminatory legal framework that allows Jews—but not Palestinians—to reclaim property owned prior to 1948.

Over the past two years, there has been a significant acceleration in both eviction proceedings and court rulings ordering the removal of Palestinian families. In the summer of 2024, settlers took over three buildings from which the Shahadeh, Abu Nab, and Gheith families were evicted. In November 2025, the Odeh and Shweiki families were evicted in December 2025, the Umm Nasser Rajabi families were displaced and on January 6, 2025, the home of the Khalil Basbous family was also evacuated.

In total, over the past two years, 64 residents from 11 families have lost their homes to settlers. In all cases, there is no dispute that the homes were lawfully purchased by the Palestinian residents; however, the courts ruled that ownership claims from a century ago take precedence over current ownership.

In addition, eviction proceedings against dozens of other families have continued to advance, and over the past year, final eviction rulings have been issued against many of them.

Since 2015, when the first Abu Nab families were evicted, settlers in Batan al-Hawa have taken control of 10 buildings, displacing more than 100 residents. Dozens of additional families remain at risk of eviction at various stages of legal proceedings.



## **Al-Bustan: Escalating Demolitions Toward the Destruction of the Entire Neighborhood**

The al-Bustan neighborhood lies in Silwan, in the valley approximately 300 meters south of the Al-Aqsa Mosque and the Haram al-Sharif/Temple Mount. In 2010, then-Jerusalem Mayor Nir Barkat began promoting the “King’s Garden” plan, which calls for the evacuation of al-Bustan and the establishment of a biblical-style orchard park meant to evoke the “King’s Garden” described in scripture.

The plan is based on a tradition identifying the biblical King Solomon’s Garden with the location of present-day al-Bustan. This identification, however, is not supported by archaeological findings or historical evidence, and most scholars place the biblical garden elsewhere.

To enable the construction of the tourist park, the government and the Jerusalem Municipality intend to demolish the entire al-Bustan neighborhood, home to approximately 1,000 Palestinians living in around 100 houses. Under a detailed zoning plan from 1977, al-Bustan is designated as open public space, preventing residents from obtaining building permits. Repeated attempts by residents to advance alternative planning proposals have been rejected by the planning authorities and the municipality.

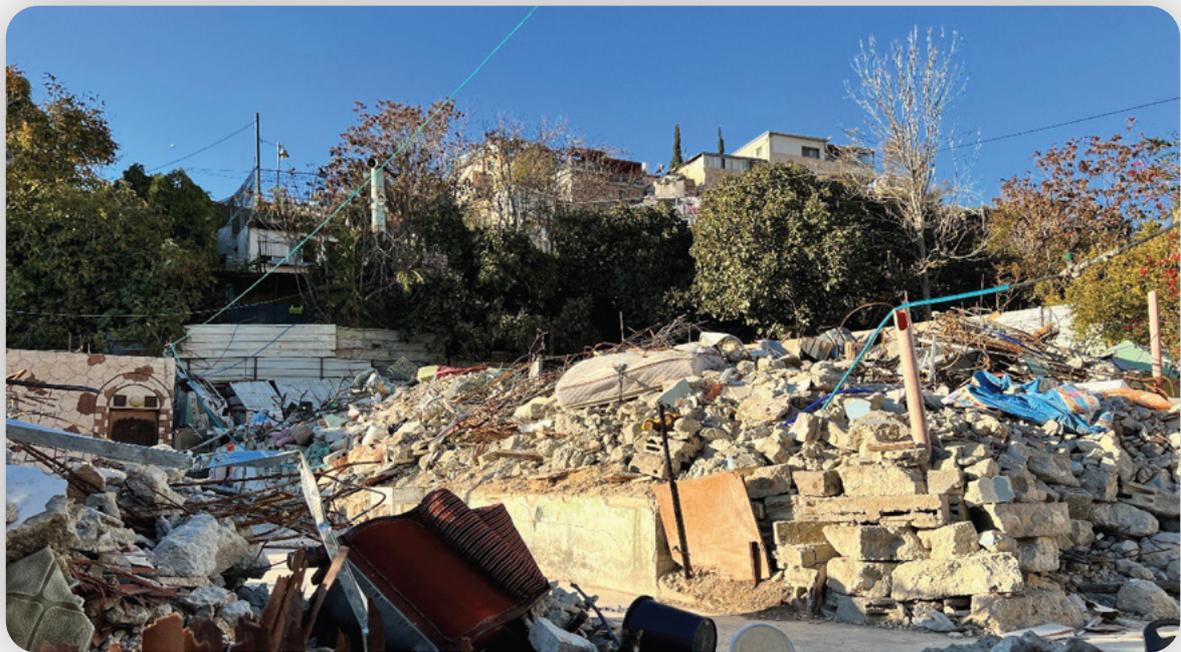
Between 2023 and 2025, authorities demolished approximately 37 homes in al-Bustan (23 in 2024 and 14 in 2025), leaving hundreds of residents displaced.

The King’s Garden plan is part of a broader government initiative to develop tourism and reshape public domain in and around the Old City. Its goal is to create a continuous chain of tourist sites linking the Old City to the archaeological site known as the City of David, via the King’s Garden in al-Bustan and onward to the Ben Hinnom Valley. Throughout this area, Palestinian construction and development are blocked, while tourism sites are operated by the settler organization Elad.

From the perspective of both the settlers and the government, al-Bustan is seen as a physical obstacle to completing this tourism corridor around the Old City.



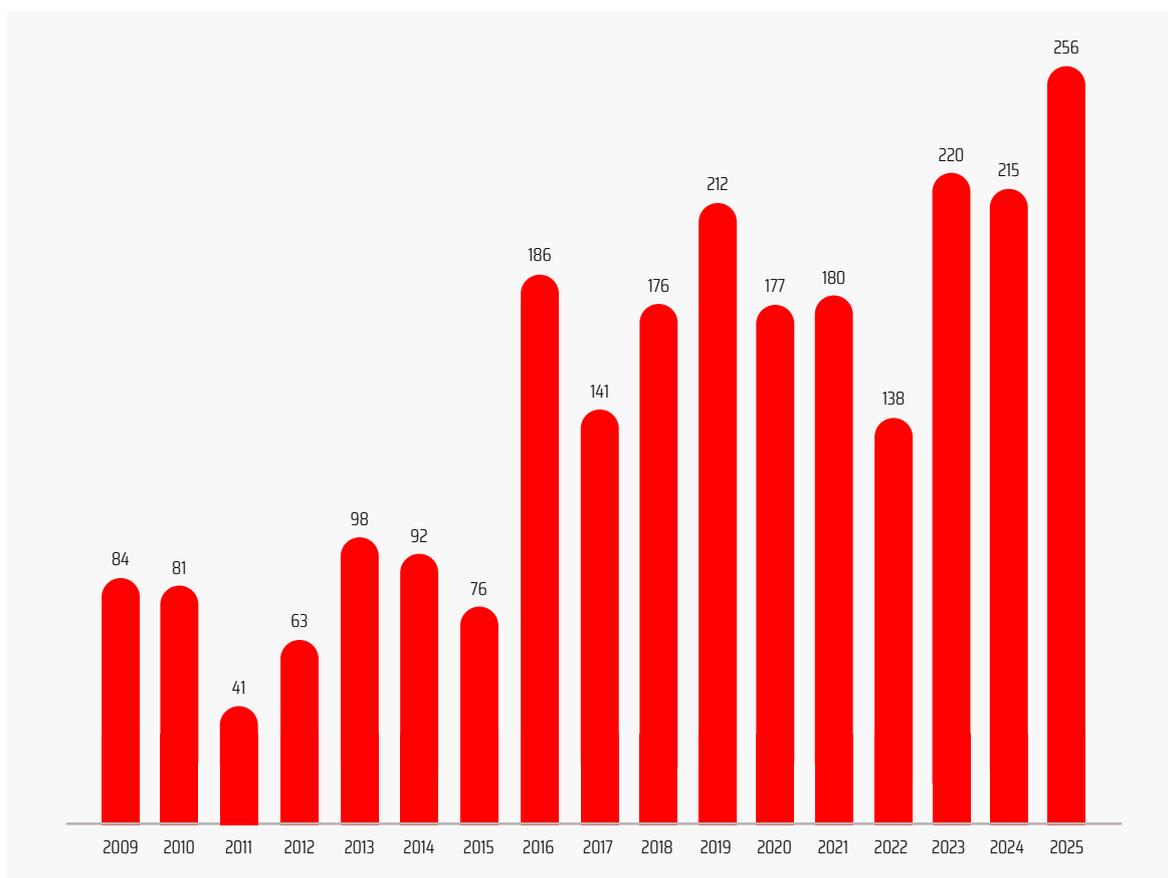
A map from the government's plan. "King's Garden" is the Bustan neighborhood.



Houses demolished in al-Bustan, December 2024

Under the current government, home demolitions in East Jerusalem have intensified sharply, alongside a freeze on planning for Palestinians. Over the past three years, nearly 700 Palestinian homes have been demolished in East Jerusalem.

Three different enforcement authorities operate in Jerusalem, each contributing to the demolitions: the Jerusalem Municipality, the National Land Enforcement Authority (operating under the Ministry of Interior) and the Land Protection Division of the Israel Land Authority, which the government transferred to the authority of Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir. One of the most prominent demolition cases in 2025 involved a four-story building housing 13 families, which was demolished despite residents being engaged in legalization proceedings with the Jerusalem Municipality.



Number of houses demolished in Palestinian neighborhoods in East Jerusalem by year. Source: [OCHA](#)

## B. Tourism Settlements: Transforming Jerusalem's Historic Basin

During the tenure of the current Netanyahu government, tourism development serving the settlement enterprise in East Jerusalem has continued - despite the war and the sharp decline in tourism.

### The Cable Car to the Old City/Silwan

In December 2023, the Jerusalem Municipality announced the expropriation of land for the construction of pillars to support a planned cable car to the Old City. The expropriations are designated for exploratory purposes—drilling and soil testing to determine pillar locations—and are limited to eight years. After that period, the precise land required for the pillars will be permanently expropriated.

According to the plan, 12 sites totaling approximately 10 dunams are slated for expropriation. While no residential buildings are located on these parcels, they are used as roads, courtyards, and similar communal spaces.

The cable car is one of the largest government-backed projects supporting settlement activity and Israeli control over Palestinian neighborhoods south of the Old City. Its purpose is to redirect tourist traffic from West Jerusalem (via Jaffa Gate) to East Jerusalem (via Silwan and the Dung Gate). See more about the cable car [here](#).



Illustration

## Elad's Zipline Project

In August 2024, the settler organization Elad inaugurated its zipline project. Stretching 730 meters, the zipline runs between the neighborhoods of Jabal Mukaber and Abu Tor, above the Peace Forest, linking two sites that Elad acquired through controversial means.

The project is a large-scale commercial attraction expected to draw thousands of visitors, benefiting Elad both financially and by increasing Israeli presence in a Palestinian area. Adjacent to the zipline, Elad recently opened a new visitors' center - "Beit Schatz" - constructed with more than 40 million shekels in government funding. Together, these projects consolidate Elad's control over a strategic zone along the seam between East and West Jerusalem, in Jabal Mukaber and Abu Tor.



The descent tower of Elad's zipline in the Peace Forest, with Abu Tor and Silwan in the background.

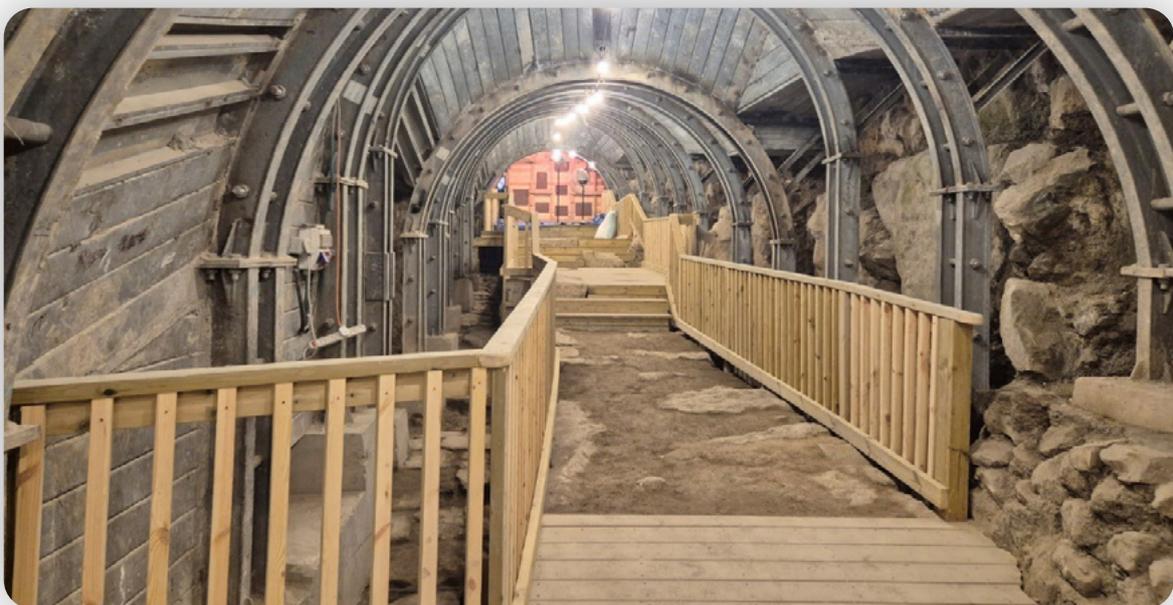
## The “Pilgrims’ Road” Tunnel From Silwan to the Haram al-Sharif/Temple Mount

In September 2025, a tunnel was inaugurated beneath homes in the Palestinian neighborhood of Silwan, connecting the area to the southern Western Wall excavations inside the Old City. The developers - [Elad](#) - have branded the tunnel the “Pilgrims’ Road,” emphasizing a hypothesis that it served Jewish pilgrims during the Second Temple period on their way to the Temple Mount.

The [inauguration ceremony](#) was attended by Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio.

The tunnel is an archaeological excavation approximately 600 meters long, carried out by the Israel Antiquities Authority for Elad, with government funding of around 50 million shekels. It exposes a Roman-period street (1st century CE), beginning at the southern edge of Wadi Hilweh in Silwan, running [beneath residential homes](#), passing under the Old City walls, and ending near the foundations of the Western Wall, part of the Haram al-Sharif/ Temple Mount compound, adjacent to Al-Aqsa Mosque.

In recent years, Israeli governments have invested more than one billion shekels in [tourism settlement](#) projects and in reshaping public space around the Old City, with the aim of “Israeli-izing” the area and relegating Palestinian presence to a secondary status. This strategy seeks to prevent Palestinian neighborhoods around the Old City from becoming part of a future Palestinian state, thereby undermining the possibility of a two-state agreement.



The “pilgrim’s road” tunnel in Silwan.

## More Than 100 Million Shekels a Year for Private Security for Settlers in East Jerusalem

The Israeli government funds close personal security for approximately 3,000 settlers living within Palestinian neighborhoods, at an annual cost of roughly 100 million shekels - equivalent to about 3,000 shekels per month per settler.

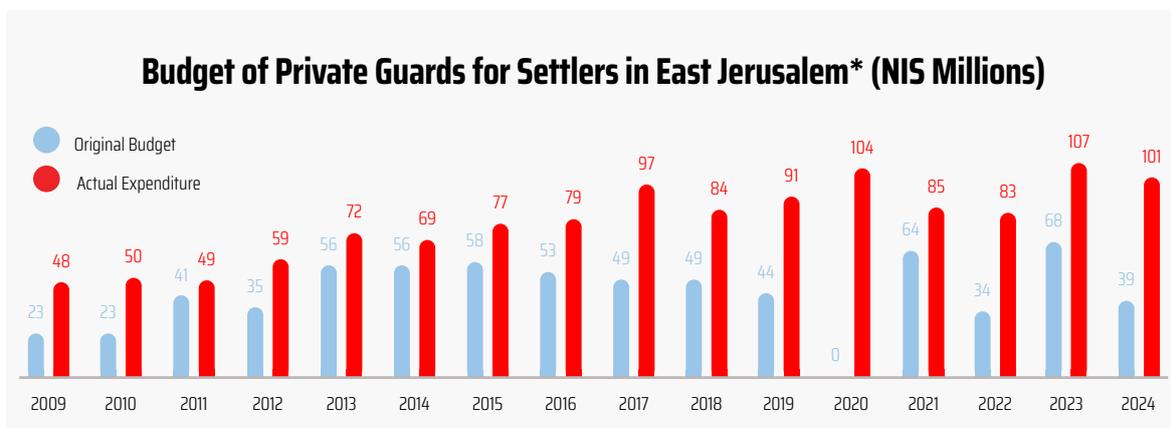
Private security guards staff permanent posts at most settler homes and escort children and families whenever they leave their homes - for work, school, extracurricular activities, or any other destination.

The security is financed through the Ministry of Housing, despite a government committee ruling that such security should be provided by the police, not private companies. Finance Ministry data show that in 2024, the cost of securing settler homes in these neighborhoods reached 101 million shekels, with a 2025 budget of 93.2 million shekels.



A private guard escorting a child in Silwan.

Each year, settlers take over additional homes and compounds in Palestinian neighborhoods, requiring the Ministry of Housing to fund security for new sites. As a result, the security budget continues to expand - without a formal political decision or directive, but rather in response to faits accomplis created by settlers on the ground.



Source: Ministry of Finance budget execution data.