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Jerusalem 2012: A Reading of the Developments and into the Prospective Trends

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Jerusalem 2012: A Reading of the Developments and into the Prospective Trends* Caging in Jerusalem and the Jerusalemites; Unleashing Settlement Activity

The year 2012 has folded up with a determinately increasing surge of Judaization activities in Jerusalem and al-Aqsa Mosque, as reflected in the high number of breakings into the Mosque and the unprecedented rates of settlement expansion. This report tracks the course of events and developments throughout the past year, and projects its readings into the upcoming future phase of the conflict in this city. The report identifies major developments that stamped the status of Jerusalem in 2012; the challenges faced at the levels of the city, its population and its holy sites; key features of the Arab and Islamic stances; and the international stances and developments in relation to Jerusalem. The report builds on the patterns of developments, in identifying dominant trends expected to persist or aggravate in 2013. It concludes with a set of recommendations that constitute a minimal requirement for upstanding the Judaization plot, while the latter is unearthing at rapidly increasing rates, reaching an ultimate.

The Confronting Parties, Who faces whom in Jerusalem?

The confrontation in Jerusalem today has shaped into a slow-paced war that has reflected in every excruciating level of detail in the daily lives of Jerusalem and the Jerusalemites. The Judaization plot is very well planned and organized, systematically attempting at imposing a Jewish character on the city, its population, religious character, culture, language, and architectural style, and at claiming it the capital of the Israeli state, yet more accurately, a Jewish capital for “the Jewish people” named Urshalim. Towards that end, the Israeli efforts unite. It is a goal supported by a full-fledged state apparatus, with consensus from various political and ideological Israeli sides/parties, and international support. Judaization campaigns in Jerusalem are highly supported as well by Zionists around the world, including Jewish and Christian Zionists, propping it up with large financial support.

The Judaization war in Jerusalem is currently ongoing. At one side is the Israeli Occupation state with a full-fledged apparatus of tools and resources, not hindered by any factor, except for the natural determination and endurance of the Jerusalemites and Palestinians in the 1948 occupied lands

On the opposite side are the Jerusalemites, clutching to their rights and lands with an unequalled endurance and determination, trying to protect and save -up to their best- their presence and society, their identity and holy sites, and their culture and language; their city. Yet, their endurance and withstanding is not systematic or organized, and is not directed or arranged within a leadership or a political framework; and excluding verbal allegations, the Jerusalemite struggle is not supported actually by any side, nor sponsored or supported to redirect from a natural inborn reaction to a systematic scheme of entrenchment and sustainment. The one exception in this context is the Palestinians of 1948 who do provide limited support taking into consideration their very delicate status as “Israeli citizens.”

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Nonetheless, the Jerusalemites' natural sustainment remains the forefront actor, if not the only actor, in protecting the city and its holy sites, and in saving its identity from Judaization.

In this following section, this report starts by reading the dynamics of the conflict between these two sides on the ground. It then moves to identify the major developments in the Judaization campaign, and their counterparts on the Palestinian-Arab-Islamic side, whereby the latter is the assumed responsible side for protecting and safeguarding the city. The report then spots out major trends and concludes with potential recommendations.

I. Conflict Dynamics on the Ground

Conflict dynamics could best be read and understood through the focal points at its axis: On the status and identity of al-Aqsa Mosque, in the daily life struggle, and through settlement intensification.

Al-Aqsa Mosque: Targeting the Islamic Exclusivity

As the Zionist dream of eradicating al-Aqsa Mosque and building the "Temple" fades out practically -regardless of the long years of occupation in the Mosque, Zionist circles have adopted a more tangible and practical target, which is separation. What they seek is essentially a complete division of the Mosque, equating between the Muslim and Jewish access to it; which can be realized through gradual steps.

The year 2012 witnessed major leaps in this sense seeking to contest the Islamic exclusivity to the Mosque, reaching a highly threatening level, unprecedented since the occupation of the Mosque. These are summarized in the following:

1. Making the separation concept public: Throughout the past years, Zionist circles supporting the "Temple" concept have opted for changing the status of the Mosque through accumulating legal precedents, in order to avoid having to go to the Knesset in public with a controversial law that infringes directly on the Mosque's status. However, this was no more the case after these circles, especially from the extremist right, sensed their growing influence within the Israeli society. Thus, on 9/8/2012, MK Aryeh Eldad, a leading right wing figure, drafted a bill suggesting the partitioning of al-Aqsa on time basis whereby Muslims and Jews would be exclusively allowed to enter the Mosque for performing prayers and religious celebrations. The Knesset speaker opted for postponing the discussion of this bill, for fear of its repercussions; yet, it was the first time Zionist circles reveal as clearly and publicly their separation intentions and attempts. With the election of a new Knesset in 2013, and the enhanced Israeli inclination towards extremism, this proposal is likely to be carried out during the next stage.

2. Unprecedented intensification of the Jewish imposition on al-Aqsa: Zionist circles supporting the temple concept have been keen on intensifying their presence in the Mosque, making it a daily routine and an ordinary imposture, in prelude to establishing an imposed "right" for equality of access with Muslims, and for separation under a claim of "avoiding friction." The Mosque has been subject to Israeli incursions and intensified military activity, not to mention religious Jews, following the lift of the ban on their access to the Mosque, stirred up with an intentional forgoing of Jewish religious prayers being

performed inside the Mosque. Additionally, the majority of “foreign tourists” visiting the Mosque are Diaspora Jews, and their tours inside the Mosque are accompanied by Israeli police. According to the figures of *Imarat al-Aqsa* Foundation, approximately 6,881 settlers broke into the Mosque in 2012, in addition to 3,950 Israeli soldiers in military uniforms and 284,906 foreign tourists. This estimates an average of at least 500 Jews/Zionists breaking in al-Aqsa on daily basis [assuming half the foreign tourists are Jews or Zionists and observations indicate they are higher].

3. Confiscating the identity of the surrounding: The absence of Jewish presence in the neighborhood of al-Aqsa and within Jerusalem’s Old City [*al-Baldah al-Qadimah*] has been a source of major concern for the Judaization campaign, whereby how can this city be the Jewish “Urshalim” and its historical heart does not include any one site or artifact foretelling this identity or at least foretelling a sound historical Jewish presence! Hence, Jews and Zionists have been racing with time to inaugurate the largest possible number of “historical” Jewish sites in the proximity of the Mosque, and more widely, in the proximity of the Old City, with emphasis on visible artifacts. In 2012, the construction of “Tiferet Yisrael” (Jewel of Israel) synagogue, located only 200 meters away from the Mosque, was adopted. In addition, a visitors’ center was inaugurated on the Armenian monastery parking in the western part of the Old City; while the “Kedem Compound,” a visitors’ center that also provides Torah teaching, is set to be inaugurated in *Silwan*. All these sites are above ground, highly visible sites, the construction of which had been until recently an intangible dream for the supporters of the “temple” concept.

4. Demolition of Bab al-Magharbeh Road [lit. Moroccan Gate Road]: The demolition of *al-Magharbeh* Hill represents the first step in “Kidim Yerushalayim” project, which aims at imposing major changes in the neighborhood of al-Aqsa Mosque, namely westwards, southwards, and eastwards. The hill has long been a thorn preventing the Israelis from many earlier planned plots to the west of the Mosque, ultimately in seeking to build the largest synagogue, “Light of Jerusalem,” on the historical site of *al-Madrasah al-Tankaziyyah* [ancient traditional school/study site]. The Israeli government tried to overcome this obstacle and demolish the hill in November 2011, yet it was prevented in the last moment by a swamping public anger reaction in its surrounding Arab countries. The Israeli municipality in Jerusalem is currently pressuring towards lifting this stale through slow paced demolition and rubble removal works, which started on 22/5/2012, awaiting a governmental green light to proceed with removing whatever has remained and build a railing bridge, ready to install at any moment.

5. Tunnels and Excavations in the context of al-Aqsa Judaization Plan: Al-Aqsa Judaization Plan is not limited to separation/division schemes and incursions, but it also includes diggings and works beneath the Mosque and in its surroundings, aiming at constructing a complete Jewish city underground, in an attempt to create a Jewish presence in the Old City. According to Eye on al-Aqsa Report released by al-Quds International Institution in September 2012, the number of excavation sites beneath and around the Mosque was estimated at 47 sites, located in the western, southern and northern sides of the Mosque.

6. Populace and Renovation: Before the Israeli escalating impositions, the major sustainment method was the presence in the Mosque round the day. Daily courtyard group study circles [*Masatib al-‘Ilm*] attended by Palestinians from Jerusalem and 1948 occupied lands [i.e. Israel] were a major shield for protecting al-Aqsa against Israeli

extremism. Thus, the Occupation authorities would ban the attendants of these circles and restrict access to those aged below 12, thus leaving school trips and elementary students the only shielding populace to face settlers' breakings into a Mosque sacred for more than 1.5 billion Muslims. Regardless, and in conclusion, the year 2012 again proved that the continuous presence and populace in the Mosque is the shield that -until date- the Occupation authorities were unable to break, and are still in search of how to neutralize it.

At the same time, and in spite of severe restrictions, al-Aqsa *Awqaf* authorities were able to inaugurate the renovated dome (*al-Silsilah* Dome) with Turkish support, and are currently working on the internal renovation of the Dome of the Rock, not obstructed by extremist Jewish demonstrations and threats claiming that these renovations "destroy the Temple ruins."

Mounting Pressures and Escalating Confrontation Options

Pressures on Jerusalemites are mounting because of the Israeli Occupation's policy of restriction and systematic indirect enforcement of "voluntary departure," deeply rooted in the Israeli policies towards the Jerusalemites. In 2012, these pressures were mostly demonstrated in the following:

The Occupation state practices various forms of pressure on the Jerusalemites, with the end goal of exhausting their stamina and forcing them towards displacement. Christians and Muslims suffer in this regards alike, and so do their holy sites

1. Increasing rates of poverty among Jerusalemites, whereby the rate of Jerusalemites below poverty line increased from 60% in 2008 to 69% in 2009, and 77% in 2010. 84% of children in Jerusalem are from families living below poverty line.
2. An impoverishment policy imposed by the Israeli Occupation municipality in Jerusalem on the Jerusalemites. According to 2012 figures, 75% of Jerusalemite heads of households are indebted to the municipality, whereby the latter has been intensifying its fines and taxes on the Jerusalemites and exhausting them with very high interest rates.
3. The closure of *Ras Khamis* checkpoint on 19/9/2012. This checkpoint connects the northern suburbs of Jerusalem with the parts inside the separation wall, while the completion of the wall construction, to become an "international" crossing, isolates at least 55,000 Jerusalemites living in the northern suburbs of the city. This bluntly means that this population will only have either of these two choices: to move inside the separation wall neighborhoods, already overcrowded; or to forget about their right in living in their city.
4. The Acquisition by extremist Jews of new real estate property in the depth of Arab neighborhoods, and thus the development of new friction and tension foci. This trend was further established in 2012, when the Israeli police evacuated houses in *al-Tour* area in the east, in *Beit Hanina* area in the north, and in *Jabal al-Mukabbir* area in the south, handing these house to settlers, thus setting new friction points besides the already inflammable ones in *Silwan*, *Ras al-'Amoud* and the Old City, and creating justifications for the heavy and continuous imposed presence of the Israeli police in Arab neighborhoods.

5. Add to all of the above is an escalating tide of hate crimes and brutal attacks, initiated by settlers against Jerusalemites. Recorded such incidents were more than 17 in 2012, the worst of which was the brutal attack against the youngster Jamal Joulani in the middle of a mall in western Jerusalem, at the hands of 40 Jewish youngsters who hit him on 16/8/2012 and left him half dead, while being watched helplessly by Jewish pedestrians and shoppers. Yet further, one of those who participated in the crime said in the court that he did not regret his crime and he wished him death.

6. Also add the continuing threat of breaking into the Mosque in any religious or national Jewish occasion/holiday, which escalated in the months of February, May, July, and October.

7. Christian holy sites were not saved from these Israeli violations and infringements in 2012. This was most obviously heightened with blocking the bank accounts of the Orthodox Church, one of the three communities holding the service in the Church of Resurrection (Church of the Holy Sepulcher). This freeze of accounts was ordered by Gihon water company on the background of accumulated water bills of millions of shekels value; knowing that holy sites have been exempt from paying water bills since the Ottoman era. In the same context, ‘price tag’ attacks continued to target churches and monasteries throughout 2012, in both eastern and western parts of Jerusalem.

8. Developments escalated again with the prisoners’ strike in May 2012, accompanied by public support and demonstrations, then the subsequent re-arrest in July 2012 of the Jerusalemite prisoner Samer al-Issawi who started an open hunger strike on 1/8/2012 and lies in a very critical health situation as of the date of publishing this report. The Israeli Occupation authorities have consequently besieged his hometown, *al-Issawiya*, and harassed his family then demolished his brother’s house on 1/1/2013.

9. The year 2012 has already started in escalation, with the kidnapping of Palestinian MP *Mohammed Totah* and former Minister *Khaled Abu ‘Arafah* from the ICRC headquarters in Jerusalem on 23/1/2012 and arresting them, whilst they are still in detention until date.

These developments and trends combined led to a major escalation of tension, and to a growing conviction among Jerusalemites that confrontation is indeed the only option in facing this brutal campaign and sustaining their identity and presence. Thus, public uprisings were witnessed in the city more than a time, the major one being on 30/3/2012 along with the occasion of “International Jerusalem Day” and Land Day, and one Jerusalemite martyred; and between 16-20/11 in protest against the Israeli aggression on Gaza. In addition, some focal points in the city have been in unrest almost at all times, most visible among these foci was *al-Issawiya* where 21 stone-cocktail confrontations were recorded, then *Silwan* (14), *Shu’fat* camp (12), the Old City (11), and *Qalandiya* checkpoint (10). The number of stone-cocktail confrontations in Jerusalem in 2012 totaled up to 78, added to 6 knife attacks, and 21 other attacks, leading to injuries amid the Occupation soldiers, either as a result of Molotov cocktails, or beating or burning.

At the margin, the months of June and July 2012 unfolded a confrontation of different type, where fires have been breaking in almost every corner in the city. The Israeli police revealed its belief that those fires were not accidental but rather for “national” reasons; and arrested several youths. June 24 was namely remarkable, with 15 fires breaking out in Jewish quarters in the city, and the Israeli police saying it had dealt with 124 fires in few weeks, some in the

proximity of the central military barracks in Jerusalem, and near Gilo settlement. This, however, was not one-sided as well, where fire broke out on 24/6 as well in Jerusalemite shops threatened by evacuation directly facing *Bab al-'Amoud*, thus damaging all its content.

Al-Bustan Neighborhood: A Fireball

Finally, due consideration should be given to the case of *al-Bustan* neighborhood. This neighborhood is the second but largest neighborhood targeted with mass displacement [*Sheikh Jarrah* neighborhood being the first], the nearest in location to the city center, and the most important on the agenda of extremist Jewish settlers. In 2009, the Israeli Occupation authorities took the decision to demolish 88 properties in the neighborhood. The neighborhood population took legal procedures in Israeli courts in objection, and maintained at the same time a public demonstration movement, and a tent that became a symbol of entrenchment visited by foreign activists, and often hosting Friday prayer. Such demonstration activity became a source of concern for the Occupation, who had then

Al-Bustan neighborhood in *Silwan* is a remarkable case of confrontation. The Occupation authorities intend to demolish a number of houses to construct a Talmudic park in that site. Yet, they have not succeeded until date in stopping the Jerusalemites living there from defending their rights to their homes and neighborhood.

employed various methods to weaken it. The Israeli Occupation municipality in Jerusalem attempt to sow sedition among the local populace, and then presented a settlement that sounded at first meditative. However, it turned out to be an attempt at deepening the division, since it entailed the demolition of 29 properties given that the inhabitants would share the remaining property. In addition, the Occupation Authorities have targeted specifically activists in this committee, as was the case for *Sheikh Moussa 'Oudeh*, who has been sentenced for three months in prison for throwing stones on the Israeli Occupation soldiers, and his son (12 years) who has been arrested for 12 times until the date of this publication.

All these attempts at weakening public activism in *al-Bustan* neighborhood, including what might have not been reported in the media, had not succeeded by the end of 2012. Ultimately, the Occupation's municipal authority resorted to threatening and intimidation where its officials stated that they would be perpetrating mass demolitions in September 2012 at the latest, in case the residents did not respond to the proposed settlement. In September 2012, this authority had resubmitted the case to the Knesset (10/9/2012), which in turn discussed the issue and announced that the special committee of the State Comptroller would be touring the neighborhood on 26/10/2012 to discuss the potential of subjecting it to the Israeli Building and Planning Law.

In light of this repeated threat, the Israeli municipal authorities sent its staff more than 15 times to *Silwan* [where *al-Bustan* is located] only in 2012 to disseminate demolition orders/notifications, or take photos or dimensions in preparation to demolitions, but it was not able to demolish one single property in the neighborhood during this year.

It is becoming clearer that the demolition of *al-Bustan* neighborhood is similar to a fireball exchanged by the various Occupation authorities: the municipality in Jerusalem, the government and the Knesset, without any one authority having the courage of decisively ending it, in fear of the potential reaction. The only guarantee for the persistence of such a

state at the end of the Occupation is the maintenance of unity among the neighborhood populace, and in their stance of public demonstration, and supporting the latter, yet indeed, promoting it as an example to be followed in facing the oppressive Occupation apparatus in the city.

II. Jerusalem amidst the Judaization Campaign

The Continuation of Political and Legal Upheaval of the “Temple” Concept

The concept of the “Temple” has been witnessing a continuous upheaval within Zionist political circles, with a growing supporters’ base, and more importantly the relocation for these supporters from being earlier a marginal group in Zionist politics in early 1990s to becoming a major influence in Israeli politics today, participating in governments, and gradually gaining more representation in Knesset elections. Moshe Feiglin, for example, stated on 27/11/2012 following the internal Likud elections that “this is the beginning of the road that will lead to the building of the Temple.”

Similarly, the “Temple” concept has gained momentum and become a granted concept on the level of the judiciary authority. In this context, the media uncovered news about a circular issued by the legal adviser to the Government, Yehuda Feinstein, where he declared that “the Temple Mount is an integral part of the state, and Israeli laws apply to it, particularly the law of building and regulation.” Feinstein sent his report in June 2012 to the Israeli Occupation governmental, municipal and police authorities, with the aim of stopping the renovations already taking place in al-Aqsa Mosque, and pressuring *Awqaf* to request approvals and authorizations from the Occupation authorities in its works.

On 4/10/2012, the Judge at Jerusalem Magistrate Court said that the Police should allow Jews to perform their prayers in al-Aqsa Mosque, in the context of a case related to preventing an Israeli settler from publicly performing religious rituals inside the Mosque.

The “Temple” at the Forefront of Public Awareness

In the midst of preparations for elections, Maariv newspaper published an opinion poll that showed that 71% of respondents support giving the Jews a “right” to perform prayers in al-Aqsa Mosque, whereby only 7% refused that, while the remaining respondents gave different answers. When asked about their opinion regarding construction in Maale Adumim settlement, 51% supported these settlement expansion works, and only 9% objected. Thus said, it is clear that we are witnessing an obvious trend of rising extremism on issues related to Jerusalem among the Israeli/Zionist public, which would give any coming Israeli government a mandate to intensify its Judaization campaigns.

Settlement and Extremism in Jerusalem: Covering up for the failure in Gaza

Following the Israeli offensive war on Gaza in November 2012 and its failure to achieve its goals, Netanyahu and his ministerial team resorted to further extremism concerning Jerusalem. This was demonstrated both in discourse and in actual policies carried out, in an attempt to restore the public opinion following the failure in Gaza.

Since the acceptance of Palestine as a non-member state in the United Nations General Assembly, and until the end of 2012, the Israeli Occupation Authorities announced the construction of approximately 5496 residential units in Jerusalem and the areas connecting Jerusalem with Maale Adumim. Additionally, some other political parties, such as the National Coalition party, conducted its preliminary elections in *Magharat al-Kittan* area, which is used today as a basis for excavation works in the northern areas of the Old City.

The year 2012 has generally witnessed the publication of tenders for the construction of 2386 residential units, compared to an annual average of 726 units over the past years; in addition to the approval of constructing 6932 other units, with the decree currently undergoing executive procedures. All these developments were accompanied with official statements, especially from Netanyahu, confirming that settlement expansion in Jerusalem was nonnegotiable, and that the government was determined to proceed with its plans regardless of any criticism or objection.

III. Jerusalem at the Palestinian, Arab and Islamic Levels

Jerusalem Global March: Jerusalem at the Public Forefront

With the beginning of 2012, calls were issued to join the Jerusalem Global March, set on the 30 of March (Land Day). These calls have succeeded indeed in restoring Jerusalem at the public forefront, even if temporarily, amid the unrest stirred by the Arab uprisings and their implications. The demonstrations and marches on 30/3 took place in many countries including Jordan, Egypt, Lebanon, Morocco, and some European countries, with the participation of delegations from various other different countries around the globe. This was also the case in Jerusalem and Gaza with martyrs in both areas. In Jerusalem namely, the march was a uniting cause in which the various parties and sides participated, which has become unfortunately not so common these days.

The Controversy regarding Visiting al-Aqsa: Moving Contradictions to the Domestic Arena

On 26/2, Jerusalem International Conference was held in Doha, in the hope of reviving this vital issue for the Arab and Muslim nations. Following several postponements for different reasons, mainly related to political developments and the Arab spring, the Conference was anticipated to be a potential venue for launching a support initiative for Jerusalem. However, analysts indicate that the hosting country, Qatar, had very limited options because of the Arab situation in general, not to mention the particular Palestinian situation.

Eventually, the conference turned out into a controversy on the issue of *Shadd al-Rihal* [a religious terminology for visiting al-Aqsa Mosque], which was raised in the opening session by Mahmoud Abbas, the head of the Palestinian Authority (PA). The controversy, however, was not new but has rather begun a few weeks earlier, when the Palestinian *Waqf* Minister, Mahmoud al-Habbash, stated on 28/1/2012 that *Shadd al-Rihal* was a religious and moral duty. Consequently, this invoked the response of the camp opposed to the visit under the Occupation for fear of developing such contexts into a form of “normalizing the Occupation.” Such position was best expressed by *Sheikh Youssef al-Qaradawi* on 28/2/2012, reasserting his objecting view, and calling against such activities under the Occupation, describing it as a form of “religiously banned normalization activity.” A tug of war has then staled between the

two sides, which confused the Palestinian, Arab and Islamic parties. On 2/3, Fatah denigrated *al-Qaradawi's* Fatwa [religious edict], and so did al-Habbash on 9/3 and Abbas on 18/3. Al-Habbash had set intensified visits to key Muslim religious authorities seeking an edict that would support his campaign. Yet, despite his visits to the Muslim World League on 18/3, and to Oman's Mufti on 5/4, and to *al-Azhar* on 18/4, he failed to get any such edict. Al-Habbash, however, did succeed in convincing some key Arab officials and figures of visiting al-Aqsa, with official support from Jordan. Thus, on 5/4, Ali al-Jafri, the Yemeni Muslim preacher visited al-Aqsa accompanied by Prince Hashem Bin al-Hussein. So did Egypt's Grand Mufti, Ali Jum'a, on 18/4, accompanied by Prince Ghazi Bin Muhammad. The Jordanian interior minister, Mohammed al-Ra'oud, and the head of the Jordanian General Security Services also visited al-Aqsa on 19/4 and 23/4 respectively. At the same time, al-Habbash claimed on 20/4 that preparations for new visits were underway while Abbas renewed the invitation on 25/4, and Jordan authorities worked to prevent objecting media from working within Jordan. These calls have also affected a limited group of Egyptian Copts who visited Jerusalem during Easter, but the Coptic Church soon decisively reiterated its opposing stance to such visits. Eventually, the issue appeared to have been a tempest in a teacup that soon calmed down in the following months, starting May 2012.

The issue of the visit was remarkable for many reasons, especially as it has coincided with the decision of the Occupation authorities to ban *Sheikh 'Ikrima Sabri*, al-Aqsa Mosque preacher, from entering the Mosque; and with the same authorities handing *Sheikh Ra'ed Salah* a similar order upon his arrival from the UK. This shows that this contradiction is essentially the same contradiction with the Occupation about the identity of the city, but being transferred to the internal Arab, Islamic and Palestinian arenas, with the ultimate goal of portraying those visiting Jerusalem as heroes being prevented from supporting its cause, while the same authority calling for this support is spending merely 0.002% of its budget on Jerusalem. This controversy has also been vibrant whilst the city was witnessing a series of bloody confrontations and breaking-in attempts against al-Aqsa Mosque, as if in complete contempt, if not to say defocusing the already weak support efforts.

Bottom line is that the intensified efforts that have been put into this issue aimed at changing a taken-for-granted belief and attitude among the wider Arab public, Muslims and Christians, of considering these visits an act of normalization with an illegitimate occupation. However, these attempts not only failed in achieving their goals but even ended with further stressing this objecting stance, and the need for better investing our already limited resources of support for Jerusalem and al-Aqsa in fruitful cooperative initiatives, rather than in issues that sow division.

M75 strengthens the Confrontation Option

On 16/11/2012, an unexpected visitor arrived at the city of Jerusalem. It was a locally developed rocket, M75, launched from Gaza Strip, landing in the southern settlements bloc of Gush Etzion. After the first visit, M75 repeated its visit more than once during the war against Gaza.

Indeed, this rocket had many important strategic implications, the most significant of which is that the Israeli Occupation state is openly exposed at its fullest depth to the resistance's locally

developed rockets that can be locally replicated and widely spread. Possibly, time should reveal more accurately the effect of these local rockets on the settlement expansion, but more important is that M75 has revived the option of resistance and confrontation again among Jerusalemites and restored its spirits.

Non-Member State Status in the United Nations: What Benefits for the Issue of Jerusalem?

Following the War on Gaza, the PA president succeeded in obtaining the recognition of Palestine as a non-member state in the UN. Many analysts talked about the positive impact of this recognition, and its consequent implications in the context of protecting Jerusalem and the holy sites. However, it was very rarely mentioned or recalled that Jerusalem and the holy sites have been already under the authority of a member state in the UN, that is Jordan, and these sites are on Jordan's record of threatened international heritage sites since the eighties of the past century. In other words, the suffering of Jerusalem has never been a lack of representation in the UN or its subsequent agencies. Yet, now that the recognition has been obtained, this non-member state status in the UN should be invested and activated, especially in international agencies. This should also reflect in attempts of hindering the Judaization activities with the option of filing issues such as settlement at the International Criminal Court in Rome, as it entails clear breaches of international law.

Issuing Statements: Saying Much, Doing Little

Any observer of the situation in Jerusalem would notice the high number of pouring statements. The department of Jerusalem affairs in the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) issued on average one statement every week, usually warning from the threatening separation/division of al-Aqsa Mosque. Hamas issued more than 20 statements on Jerusalem, the Jordanian leadership around 10 condemnation statements, the League of Arab States also issued around 10 statements, and so did the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, while the Egyptian authorities issued 4 condemnations at least, not to mention statements issued by other Palestinian factions.

These statements are mostly descriptive with a warning tone, but without calling for a clear recommendation or grounded action. The Palestinian factions, including both the resistance factions and those supporting negotiations, would call on the League of Arab States and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation to shoulder their responsibilities; the latter in turn would call on the international community and the Security Council to take action; and so would other states, where effectively the cycle ends here. And even when such parties call the international community for action no clear agenda is prepared or set for this action, as in drafting a resolution to the UN or organizing awareness campaigns and visits to influential international actors. This state unfortunately reflects a chronic state of helplessness towards the city, with the lack of any signs on its potential dissolution in the near future. However, a change in this situation could be possible if Arab and Islamic states efficiently invest their political and economic resources as winning cards, and/or if the power of the resistance is left unleashed in the West Bank, which would restore the balance of power with the Occupation.

IV. Stances of International Actors

Developments in the Stance of the United States

The year 2012 witnessed significant developments in the stance of the US towards Jerusalem, especially where it was the year of the presidential elections, thus opening up opportunities of Zionist pressures and extortions towards gaining additional concessions. In summing up, the following key developments are to be noted:

1. The religious freedoms report, published by the US State Department on 31/7/2012, criticized what it described as “[a] government policy since 1967, repeatedly upheld by the Supreme Court and routinely enforced by the police citing security concerns, [denying] all non-Muslims opportunities to worship at [al-Aqsa Mosque].” The report also criticized the policy of the Jordanian *Waqf* Ministry in “restricting the entry of non-Muslims to al-Aqsa Mosque and Dome of the Rock” where the report here specifically refers to *al-Qibali* Mosque by the term al-Aqsa Mosque. The report also criticized the ban on wearing non-Muslim religious symbols inside al-Aqsa Mosque. As such, it had invoked Arab and Islamic reactions, in turn invoking American clarifications claiming that this passage was only intended to describe the situation in al-Aqsa Mosque and not criticizing it or issuing any recommendations, forgoing that the mere inclusion of such a “description” in a report that critically observes religious freedoms worldwide could not but serve the intention of criticism.

This same report has surpassed the Israeli Occupation’s Governmental stances in this regard, justifying them in the context of “self-defense.”

Finally, most alarming in the report is neither criticism nor justification, but rather the fact that both criticism and justification are based on the Report’s assumption that the Mosque is a common religious site for all religions, and not an Islamic religious site.

2. Remarkable as well was issuing the Democratic electoral platform void of any mention of Jerusalem as a capital for Israel, and its later insertion at the request of President it in an attempt to absorb the angry reaction brought up by the absence of such a provision. The Republican Party’s platform in its turn included such reference to Jerusalem as the capital of Israel, which has become a necessary part of any electoral platform in the US.

3- Designating *al-Quds International Institution*, one of the largest networks working currently for supporting Jerusalem issue, on 4/10/2012. Such a decision would but drain the funding of this Institution which enjoys large public and official support in the Arab and Muslim worlds, and which has played a major role throughout the past years in reviving the issue of Jerusalem. Worth of mention here is that Israel has already classified the Institution as a terrorist body, which reflects close coordination between the American and Israeli Occupation authorities, and the abuse of “terrorism” concept in the US foreign policy.

The Russian Stance

The Russian stance as demonstrated in 2012 lacked coherence and consistency, not only in terms of the historical context of its evolution but also regarding the facts and developments on the ground in Jerusalem. On one hand, Russian President, Vladimir Putin, visited *al-Buraq*

Wall (i.e. Western Wall) on 26/6/2012 and wore a Jewish skullcap stating that “here we can see how the Jewish history is engraved in the stones of Jerusalem.” On another hand, condemnation and criticism of Israeli settlement policies seemed to be a routine practice among Russian officials. Thus, condemnatory statements were issued by the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, on the background of successive settlement expansion announcements in December 2012. Putin’s visit to *al-Buraq* Wall in the Eastern part of Jerusalem, together with his statement mentioned above on Jewish history, is considered a regression in the Russian stance. It goes without saying that the importance of the Russian stance is additionally rooted in the fact that Russia is a member of the international Quartet and the “peace process,” thus implying potential impartiality if to adopt the Jewish narration of Jerusalem and the holy sites.

The European Stance

European states have maintained a position of criticizing the Israeli settlement policy in Jerusalem. The year 2012 was not an exception in that, but on the contrary, the condemnation became clearer and severer towards the end of the year, when the Israeli government announced successive settlement expansion schemes “in retaliation” to the recognition of Palestine as a non-member state in the UN. Yet, condemnation is merely a “verbal expression” in the European states’ foreign policy, where the facts on the ground indicate support. The size of EU states imports from the illegal Israeli settlements in the West Bank including in East Jerusalem, has been estimated most recently by \$300 million annually, that is 15 folds the size of EU states imports from the Palestinians. At the same time, the EU has maintained its policy of confining aid for Jerusalem, giving the PA only €8 million for projects in Jerusalem, whereby it gives it hundreds of millions annually for projects in other areas.

Major Trends Expected in 2013

Based on the earlier discussion, the major trends expected in 2013 are as follows:

1. It is expected that the Israeli efforts will be fostered towards dividing al-Aqsa Mosque, especially following the formation of the new Knesset and the expected government line-up. These efforts are to be more aggressive and public, and in facing them, the Rabat in al-Aqsa Mosque [i.e. continuous presence, religious term] will remain the major option in protecting the identity of the Mosque, regardless of its confinement and the Israeli severe restrictions.
2. Reading the dynamics of the confrontation in the city reveals high potentials of explosiveness at any time. The possibilities of unrest and explosion shall be increasing with time, as pressures and grievances of the Jerusalemites increase, and as extremism among Israelis increases, calling for Jerusalem to be the capital of the Israeli Occupation’s state. One reason for not witnessing this explosion sooner is the high security measures imposed in the West Bank on the resistance, from the PA.
3. In addition to strengthening the strategic role of Gaza in light of the recent war, the reachability of M75 locally made rockets up to Jerusalem has brought wider horizons for the resistance option, reviving the high levels of public support it enjoys among the Palestinians in general. One form of such resistance is the establishment of virtual villages in response to the Judaization campaigns, as the case of *Bab Shams* and *al-Karama*. This

option remains currently with limited impact especially with the lack of potential for receiving the support from the West Bank because of the mentioned high security measures.

4. There is no indication on the possibility of witnessing a change in the state of chronic helplessness towards Jerusalem at the level of the Palestinian factions, the PA, the League of Arab States, the Arab countries, and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation. The floor in this dimension is to try to prevent any further concession in their relative stances.

Recommendations

1. Consolidating efforts in establishing an umbrella for fostering and strengthening the Arab and Islamic efforts in supporting the Jordanian position of taking care of the holy sites in Jerusalem, and facing the threats of revoking the Muslim exclusivity in al-Aqsa Mosque. The Jordanian stance should be strongly restored and supported as a representative of the Arab and Muslim worlds' determination to protect these sites.

2. Allocating due concern for the issue of *Tallat al-Magharbeh* at the UNESCO and possibly drafting a UN resolution in this context, investing all tools of diplomacy and policy available, in addition to public support, to stop the Occupation from its demolition works.

3. Adopting a strategy of supporting the endurance of the Jerusalemites, recognizing the centrality of Jerusalem in the Palestinian issue, and raising awareness about the ugly face of the inhumane Israeli Occupation. This should essentially include financial support from Arabs and Muslims towards that end, in vital development initiatives and projects (education, housing, social and economic support...).

4. Adopting a clear official stance against the division of the Mosque, and reasserting the exclusive Islamic right to its full area.

5. Re-assertion, by Muslim scholars and preachers, that al-Aqsa Mosque is not only *al-Qibali* Mosque, but also the whole area within the walls. Within that area, a tree is as sacred as a dome. This becomes existentially important in light of the division/separation threats.

6. Movements, parties and leaderships should devote specialized committees and institutions for the protection of Jerusalem and al-Aqsa Mosque, following up on its status and promoting public awareness and activism in this rightful issue.

7. Directing efforts towards the common goal, that is withstanding and failing the fierce Judaization campaigns, and avoiding all attempts of sowing partition in the local Palestinian arena or Arab and Muslim arena, because the confrontation sides are very clear, and on one side, there is the Israeli Occupation state with a full-fledged apparatus, so who is to be at the other side to protect and safeguard the identity of the city?