

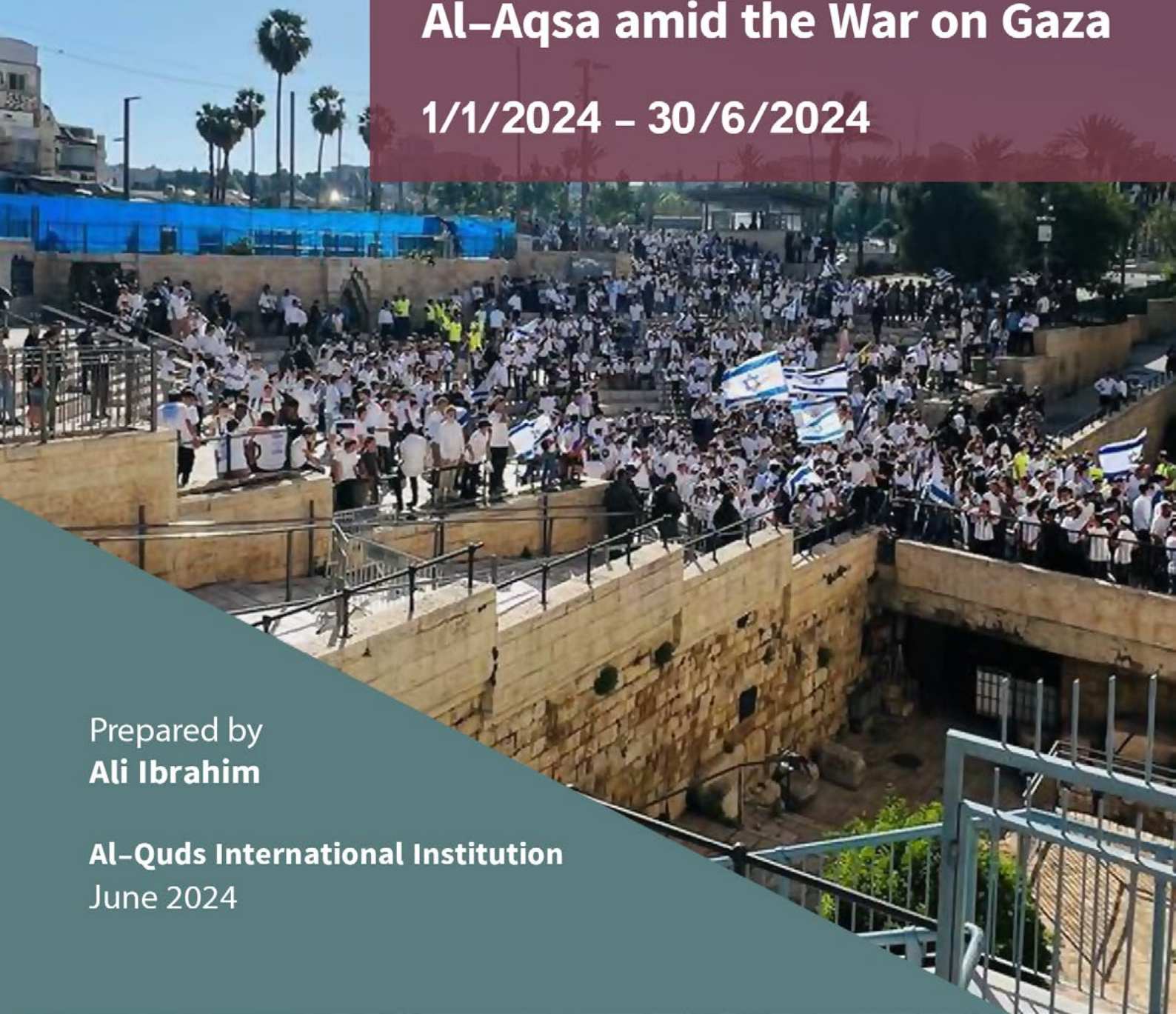


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The Jerusalem Scene

Escalation of Aggression
against Jerusalem and
Al-Aqsa amid the War on Gaza

1/1/2024 – 30/6/2024



Prepared by
Ali Ibrahim

Al-Quds International Institution
June 2024

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Introduction

In the context of shedding light on the developments in occupied Jerusalem in the first six months of 2024, “The Jerusalem Scene” presents a brief and intensive overview of the course of events in occupied Jerusalem between 1/1/2024 and 30/6/2024, within the most prominent tracks of Judaization pursued by Israel, including aggression targeting Al-Aqsa Mosque and the holy sites, demographic Judaization and settlement, in addition to the developments of confrontation and resistance against the occupation and its schemes.

The Judaization of Jerusalem

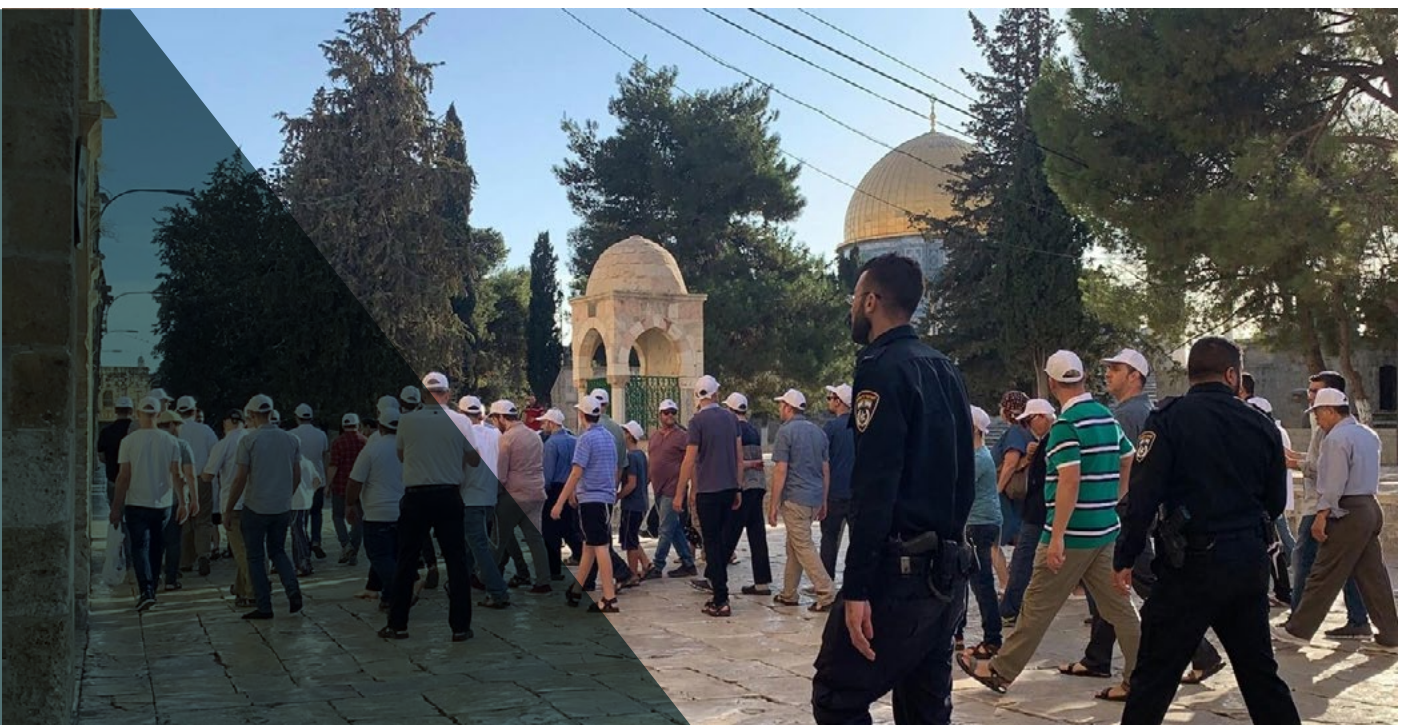
Most important in this context are the restrictions imposed by the Israeli occupation forces at Al-Aqsa gates and in the alleys of the Old City, the escalation of aggression against the Mosque in Hebrew holidays, the continued demolition of Palestinian homes and facilities, targeting Palestinian neighborhoods and approving settlement projects.

► Aggression on Al-Aqsa Mosque

- Since Operation Al-Aqsa Flood on 7/10/2023, the Israeli occupation forces imposed strict measures at Al-Aqsa gates and in the alleys of the Old City, which led to a significant decline in the number of worshipers in the Mosque. The past months witnessed continued Israeli attempts to intensify the number of settlers breaking into Al-Aqsa, especially in concurrence with the Hebrew “Passover” and Israeli national occasions.
- Between 1/1/2024 and 30/6/2024, about 24,806 settlers, Jewish students and occupation security personnel stormed Al-Aqsa Mosque. The table below shows the monthly number of settlers breaking into Al-Aqsa Mosque:

Month	Number of settlers who broke into Al-Aqsa	Remarks
January 2024	3296	Including the wife of the Israeli security minister.
February 2024	3112	Including security personnel.
March 2024	3262	Including 330 settlers who broke into the Mosque on “Purim.”
April 2024	5670	4340 settlers broke into the Mosque on “Passover.”
May 2024	4276	526 settlers on the anniversary of the establishment of Israel.
June 2024	5190	1600 settlers broke into Al-Aqsa on the anniversary of the occupation of Jerusalem on the Hebrew calendar.
Total	24,806 settlers	

- On 17/4/2024, Hebrew media revealed that the extremist National Security Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir included in his ministry's plans changing the status quo in Al-Aqsa. According to the plan, the ministry will work to introduce more technological tools in the vicinity of Al-Aqsa, and put them at the disposal of the occupation police. Among the most prominent goals of the Ministry of National Security in 2024 are strengthening Israeli rule in Al-Aqsa, providing basic rights and preventing discrimination and racism in the mosque.
- For the third year in a row, "Temple Groups" announced a reward for those who can bring "Passover" offerings to Al-Aqsa. The "Returning to the Temple Mount" organization announced a reward program for those who can bring "Passover" offerings to Al-Aqsa, reaching 50,000 shekels (about \$13 thousand), in addition to other rewards for those who can take a picture of the "sacrifice" or participate in the ritual, ranging between 200 and 2500 shekels (\$30 - \$660).
- The "Passover" week witnessed the most prominent aggression against Al-Aqsa in the first half of 2024. Around 4340 settlers stormed Al-Aqsa Mosque between 23/4 and 29/4/2024, indicating a 26% increase compared to the "Passover" in 2023.
- Not only did "Temple Groups" call on their supporters to bring "Passover offerings" to Al-Aqsa but they also worked to showcase the involvement of settlers in these rituals. On 22/4/2024, the day before the start of "Passover," the "Return to the Temple



Mount” group organized a march from the settlement of “Kochav Ya’akov” to occupied Jerusalem. On the same day, settlers tried to bring “animal sacrifices” to the Mosque, and the occupation police announced the arrest of 13 settlers involved in attempts to bring animals into Al-Aqsa.

- In concurrence with the “anniversary of the founding of Israel” (which the occupation calls “Independence Day”) on 14/5/2024, 526 settlers stormed Al-Aqsa, and a number of them waved the Israeli flag and performed Jewish rituals on the eastern side of the Mosque. The occupation forces imposed restrictions on Palestinians on this day, closed a few gates of the Old City, and beat a number of young men in the vicinity of the Old City and at its gates.
- On 22/5/2024, 431 settlers, including Jewish students, stormed Al-Aqsa, in conjunction with the so-called “Second Passover.” Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir participated in this storming, and said in a recorded video message, “We must control this most important place ever.” This was the fourth time Ben-Gvir stormed Al-Aqsa since he assumed his position in the Israeli government, and the first since Operation Al-Aqsa Flood.
- “Jerusalem Day” (the occupation of the eastern part of Jerusalem in the Hebrew calendar) is one of the most prominent occasions used by the occupation arms to escalate aggression against Jerusalem and Al-Aqsa. Extremist organizations began to prepare for it by launching a countdown for the occasion, and “Beyadenu,” one of the extremist “temple groups,” published posts on social media inviting settlers to participate in storming Al-Aqsa carrying the Israeli flag, and announced a program that included storming Al-Aqsa and performing Jewish prayers in it.
- On 5/6/2024, in concurrence with the so-called “Jerusalem Day,” about 1600 settlers stormed Al-Aqsa, while some raised the Israeli flags in the mosque and performed collective biblical prayers in the eastern courtyards of Al-Aqsa, including full prostration. This incursion witnessed the participation of extremist Rabbi Michael Pua who stormed Al-Aqsa wearing the “Tefillin” and religious prayer clothes, then performed biblical prayer and gave a guided tour, accompanied by former Knesset member Moshe Feiglin.
- Also on “Jerusalem Day,” settlers organized the annual “March of Flags” in which thousands participated under the protection of the occupation forces. Settlers arrived

from the western part of Jerusalem to Bab al-Amud Square, then headed to the Old City from Bab al-Sahira, waving Israeli flags and launching insults against the holy sites, Jerusalemites and Arabs. They attacked Jerusalemites and journalists, and a number of them appeared carrying weapons.

- On 15/6/2024, coinciding on the Day of Arafa, the Israeli forces imposed strict measures at Al-Aqsa gates and prevented young men from entering Al-Aqsa. An Israeli electric vehicle was documented roaming Al-Aqsa on this day raising the Israeli flag. On 16/6/2024, coinciding with the first day of Eid al-Adha, the occupation forces imposed strict measures at the gates of the Mosque and in the alleys of the Old City. The occupation forces prevented young men from entering Al-Aqsa, and only 40,000 worshippers reached the Mosque to perform Eid prayers.
- According to Palestinian sources, the occupation authorities issued 235 expulsion orders from Al-Aqsa Mosque, Jerusalem and the Old City during the reporting period.

Month	Number of decisions
January 2024	21
February 2024	42
March 2024	88
April 2024	62
May 2024	17
June 2024	5
Total	235

► Targeting Christians and Attacking Churches

- On 3/2/2024, settlers attacked Father Nicodemus Schnabel, General Superior of the Benedictine Monks in the Holy Land, and a video clip showed the settlers spitting on the cleric, and directing insults against Christianity and Prophet Issa.

- The occupation authorities prevented thousands of Palestinian Christians in the occupied West Bank from celebrating Palm Sunday on 24/3/2024, by preventing them from reaching occupied Jerusalem under the pretext of security measures.
- On 23/4/2024, Jerusalemite parents were surprised by the announcement of a decision by the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate to close Mar Mitri school next year, under the pretext of the financial crisis suffered by the school. The Patriarchate demanded that all parents pay the amounts owed to it, and work to register their children in other schools. According to the Union of Jerusalem School Parents' Committees, the closure of the school will lead to the displacement of more than 350 students from primary to secondary grades, and it plays into the hands of the Israeli plans to control schools in east Jerusalem.



► Demographic Judaization

◇ The Demolition of Jerusalemites' Homes and Structures

- According to data from the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), between 1/1/2024 and 10/6/2024, Israeli authorities demolished about 92 houses and facilities in occupied Jerusalem, which led to the displacement of about 208 Palestinians, and affected dozens of others.
- The occupation authorities carried out 5 punitive demolitions in occupied Jerusalem in the first half of 2024, which led to the displacement of 21 Palestinians, including 6 children.



◇ Settlement Construction

- Settlement construction is a constant policy pursued by successive occupation governments in parallel to the demolition of Palestinian homes, in an attempt to directly change the demographic balance of occupied Jerusalem. Hebrew media revealed that the occupation authorities have escalated settlement construction since the beginning of the war on the Gaza Strip. During the months of the war, Israel promoted plans to expand settlements in the eastern part of Jerusalem, including

2,500 new units in each of the settlements of “Givat Shaked,” “Lower Aqueduct” and “Kidmat Zion.”

Below are the most prominent settlement projects in the first half of 2024:

- In early January, the occupation municipality approved the establishment of a waste dump in a valley near Palestinian homes, located on 109 dunums, between Al-Issawiya, Anata and Ras Shehadeh in the eastern part of occupied Jerusalem. The plan dates to 2012, but Jerusalemites objected to its implementation, and through legal struggle they were able to reduce its area from 520 dunums to 109 dunums. However, they could not force the occupation municipality to cancel the project completely. The project will cause damage to the surrounding environment, especially with the presence of about 70 Jerusalem residential facilities near the dump.
- On 7/1/2024, Jerusalem sources revealed that the occupation municipality agreed to demolish a settlement commercial complex in the settlement of “Talpiot”, built on the lands of the Talbiya neighborhood in the western part of occupied Jerusalem, to replace it with two residential and commercial towers which will include about 264 new settlement units, in addition to green spaces, shops and various service places for the settlers to benefit from.
- On 10/2/2024, Hebrew media revealed that the “Planning and Construction Committee” in the occupation municipality approved a “giant” plan to build 1709 new settlement units in the settlement of “Kiryat Menachem.” The plan will be built within 4 projects on the lands of the displaced villages of Malha and Ein Karem, southwest of occupied Jerusalem.
- On 12/2/2024, the so-called “Custodian of Absentee Property,” in partnership with a real estate company owned by extremist settlers, announced a project to build a settlement neighborhood called “Nofei Rachel” which includes more than 650 new settlement units, located near Palestinian homes in the village of Um Tuba, southeast of occupied Jerusalem.
- On 16/2/2024, Palestinian sources revealed that the occupation municipality had previously signed an agreement with the “Jewish National Fund” which stipulates the transformation of lands in Beit Hanina and Hizma into a settlement forest of one thousand dunums.

- On 29/2/2024, the occupation authorities seized 2640 dunums of land in Abu Dis and Al-Eizariya, to create a geographical connection between the settlements of “Kedar” and “Maaleh Adumim” in the context of isolating the Bedouin communities. This decision comes as the occupation authorities proceed with the construction of a settlement road near Al-Quds University, despite the case filed by the residents before the occupation courts.
- On 5/3/2024, Hebrew sources revealed that the “Supreme Planning Council” in the “Israeli Civil Administration” approved a plan to build about 3,000 new settlement units in a number of settlements south and east of Jerusalem. According to the plan, 2052 settlement units will be built in “Maaleh Adumim,” 604 settlement units in “Efrat” settlement located between Bethlehem and Hebron (Al-Khalil), and 330 units in “Kedar” settlement built on the lands of Al-Sawahra.
- On 12/5/2024, the occupation court approved the construction of a large police complex on the Lupines Hill (Turmus Hill) in occupied Jerusalem, in a strategic location overlooking Al-Aqsa Mosque. The Israeli “Planning and Building Committee” approved the construction plan two years ago, but implementation was frozen due to objections which the court eventually rejected. In addition to the importance of the site, the planned complex will allow the expansion of the “Armon Hanatziv” settlement built on the lands of Jabal al-Mukaber, and strengthen settlement in



that area.

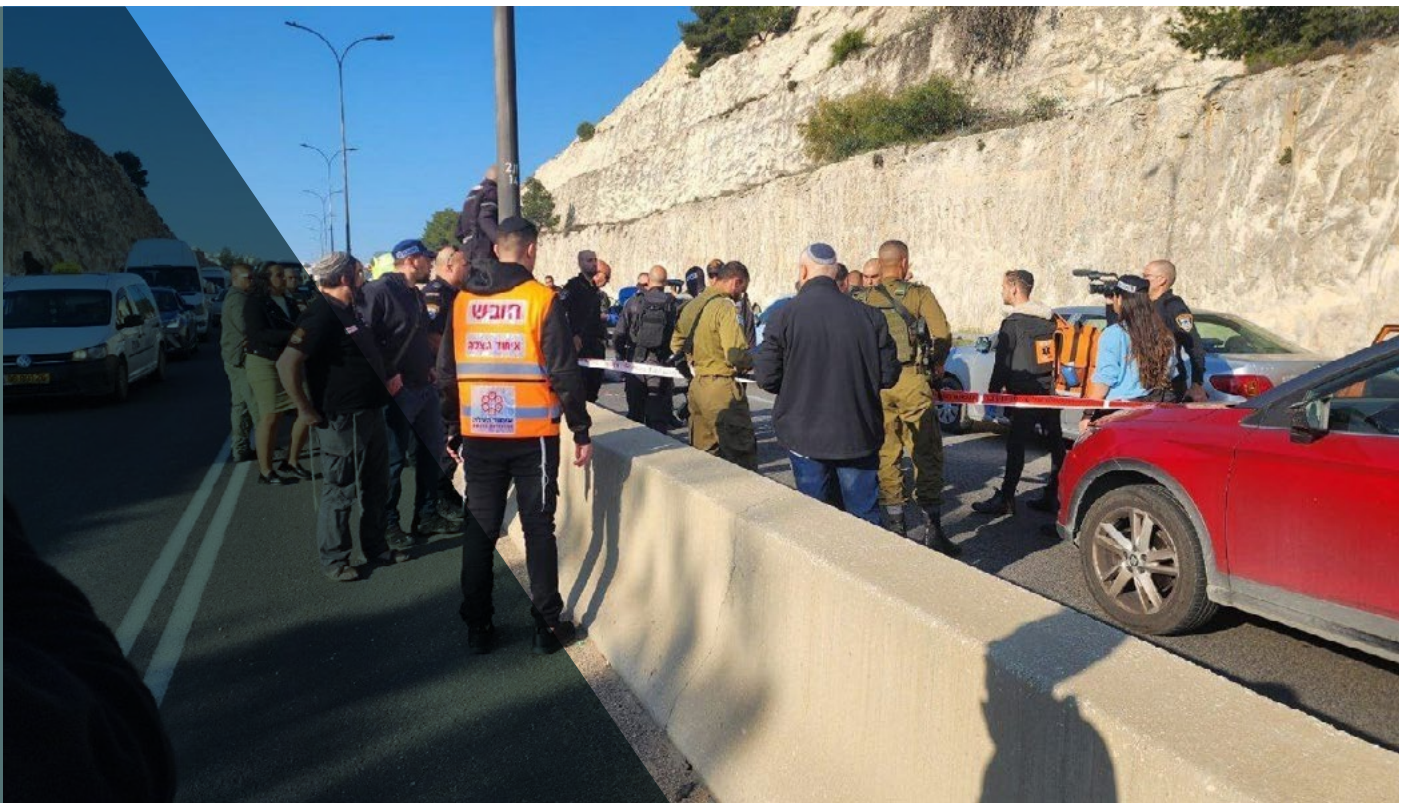
- On 29/5/2024, the occupation municipality in Jerusalem and private Israeli companies began building a huge settlement project at the western entrance to the city, near one of the mountains of Ein Karem. The project will include work offices, hotels, shops, residences, public and recreational areas, transportation stations and huge parking lots, in addition to the construction of 20 huge towers.
- On 30/5/2024, the occupation authorities demanded the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees (UNRWA) to evacuate its headquarters in the Sheikh Jarrah neighborhood, and allowed the agency a month to vacate the headquarters, under the pretext of “using the land without the approval of the Israel Lands Department.” UNRWA was also demanded to pay 27 million shekels (about \$7.2 million) as late rent, in addition to paying annual fees. On 29/5/2024, the Knesset approved a bill by preliminary reading to eliminate the immunity and privileges granted to UNRWA. The bill included removing the immunities and privileges enjoyed by UNRWA, namely immunity from prosecution, immunity for archives and offices, exemption or reduction from tax and property tax, exemption from prohibiting import or export in addition to exemption from income tax.
- On 9/6/2024, Palestinian sources revealed that the occupation municipality had previously approved a major settlement plan in “French Hill” settlement, north of Jerusalem. The new project includes about 1000 new settlement units, and according to the plan, 8 settlement buildings will be demolished to be replaced with settlement towers in addition to service buildings and green spaces.

The Course of Confrontation in Occupied Jerusalem

In the context of confrontation and resistance, Jerusalem witnessed dozens of individual operations, including shooting, throwing stones and confronting settlers.

- The most prominent operations included:
 - ▶ On 17/2/2024, Fadi Jamjoum from Shufat refugee camp carried out a shooting operation at the bus station in “Kiryat Malachi” settlement in southern occupied Palestine, killing two settlers and wounding 4 others.

- ▶ On 22/2/2024, 3 Palestinians carried out a shooting attack near Al-Zaim checkpoint in occupied Jerusalem killing an Israeli security officer and wounding 7 settlers. Two fighters were martyred while the third was shot and arrested by the occupation forces.
- ▶ On 29/2/2024, Muhammad Yousef Diab Manasra from Qalandia refugee camp carried out a shooting attack at a petrol station near “Eli” settlement south of Nablus, killing two settlers.
- ▶ On 22/4/2024, resistance fighters carried out a car-ramming attack in occupied Jerusalem, wounding 3 settlers.





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