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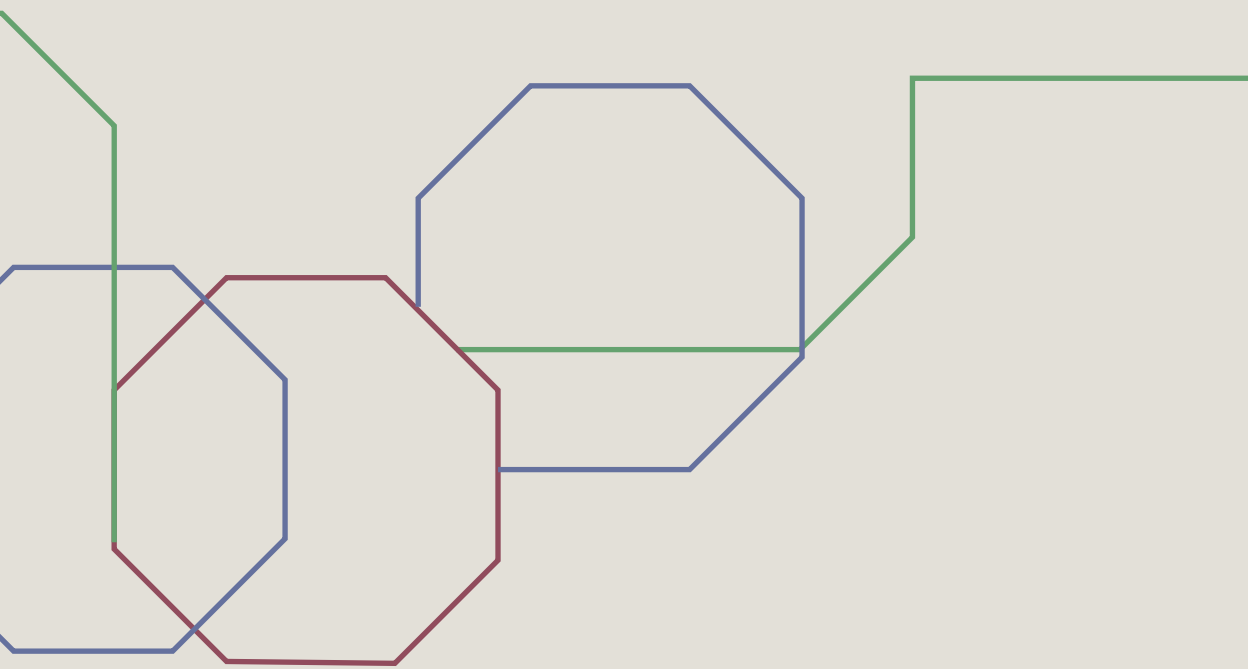
Eye on Al-Aqsa

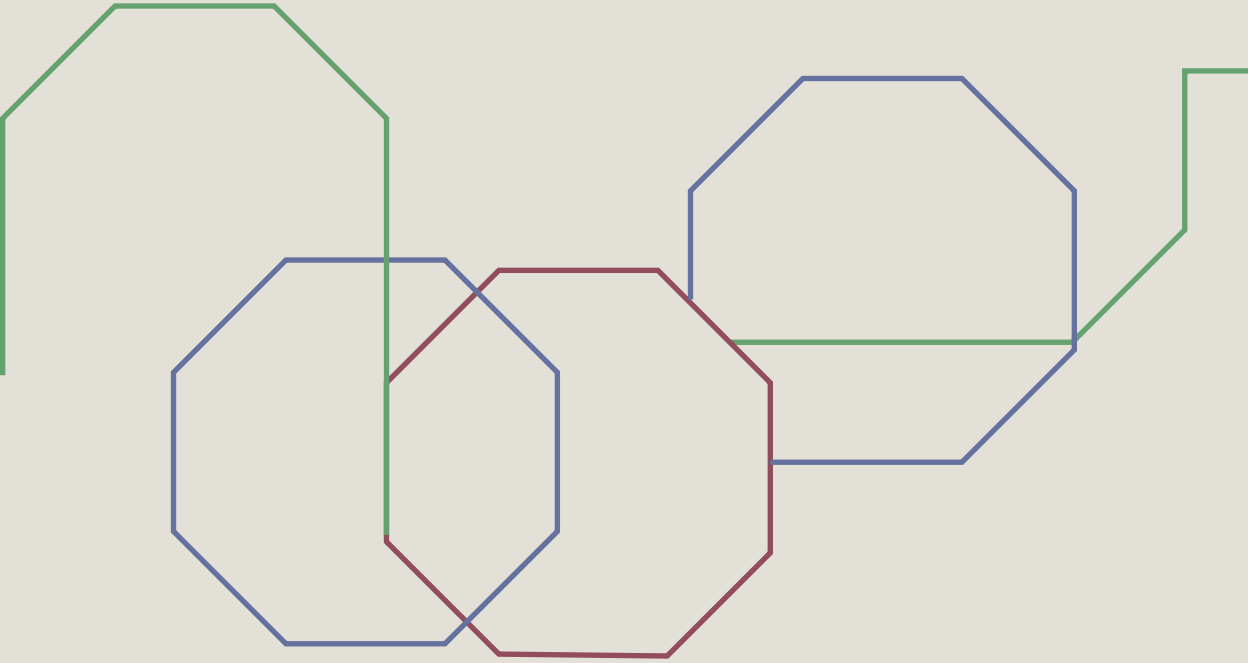
A Report Monitoring the Israeli
Aggression on al-Aqsa
from 1/8/2022 to 1/8/2023

Main Findings



Al-Quds International Institution
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EYE ON AL-AQSA
Main Findings

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Chapter 1: The Development of the Idea of the Jewish Presence in al-Aqsa

- The historic rise of Religious Zionism reached its peak with the formation of Netanyahu's sixth government in December 2022 when it won 16 ministerial seats out of 32, and 29 seats in the Knesset.
- During its rise, Religious Zionism crystallized the concept of religious replacement to add it to the aspects of replacement at the level of geography and population, and al-Aqsa Mosque was at the heart of this religious replacement.
- The multiplicity and expansion of "Temple Groups" led to the establishment of the "Union of Temple Organizations" in 2012 comprising 24 organizations. Today, the number is 42 organizations, and a new coalition called the "Third Temple Coalition" was formed.
- Religious Zionism crystallized three interim goals throughout its targeting of al-Aqsa: temporal division, spatial division and the moral establishment of the temple.
- With the formation of the sixth Netanyahu government, "Temple Groups" renewed their aspiration to work on three fronts: the temporal and spatial division and the moral establishment of the temple. A letter of ten demands was addressed to the Minister of National Security Itamar Ben-Gvir who has so far embraced these demands as the theoretical basis for his behavior.
- The most prominent demands by "Temple Groups" for Ben-Gvir: increasing the hours of raiding al-Aqsa, allowing raids from all gates, increasing the number of intruders in one group and allowing them to stay for a long time without the escort of the Israeli police, establishing a religious school inside al-Aqsa, allocating space in the Mosque for Jews throughout the year, changing the rules for police dealing with

biblical prayers and allowing the introduction of all biblical tools into al-Aqsa Mosque.

- For the second year in a row, the “shofar” was blown repeatedly in al-Aqsa Mosque on the “Hebrew New Year” without any documentation, which confirms a dangerous and unfortunate fact that the Jordanian Endowments have lost their ability to exercise their role in the eastern side of al-Aqsa.
- During the Hebrew “Sukkot,” plant offerings were brought into the Mosque under the eyes of the Israeli police for the first time since the occupation of the Mosque, and the Israeli intruders deliberately left the offerings behind to convey a message to the Muslim worshipers that they were not forced to remove them.
- Murabitin initiative to impose seclusion (I’tikaf) in Ramadan thwarted attempt by “Temple Groups” to impose an unprecedented intrusion in concurrence with “Passover.”
- Storming al-Aqsa on the Hebrew anniversary of the occupation of Jerusalem retreated due to the Battle of I’tikaf. However, “Temple Groups” regained momentum on the so-called “temple destruction” when they recorded, in terms of the intensity of the storming and display of biblical rituals, the worst storming of al-Aqsa since its occupation.
- The Hijri-Hebrew correspondence will change starting from 16/9/2023 to place two marginal Hebrew occasions opposed to two Islamic occasions: “Hebrew Purim” with the middle of Ramadan, and “The Feast of Weeks” (Shavuot) with the first ten days of Dhu al-Hijjah.
- The month of Ramadan will remain a likely title for the confrontation in al-Aqsa for the next three years due to the intersection of the Hebrew “Purim” with days 11, 14 and 15 of Ramadan.
- The pro-Temple bloc now controls 24% of the Knesset, 40% of the size of the ruling coalition and 50% of the government portfolios.

- The influence of “Temple Groups” was evident in several events, most notably: the message of the ten demands, the three raids by Ben- Gvir in which he amended the rules for how the police dealt with intruders, and the ministerial meeting in the tunnels of the Western Wall of al-Aqsa followed by the renewed presence of the “Temple Lobby” in the Knesset.
- The Israeli police tried to prevent I’tikaf to confirm that they are the ones in charge of practically managing al-Aqsa Mosque and determine for followers of each religion when to enter al-Aqsa.
- The Battle of I’tikaf in April 2023 marked the seventh Israeli retreat in al-Aqsa Mosque and Jerusalem since 2013 despite the rise of Religious Zionism and the escalation of aggression against al-Aqsa.
- Tracking the stages of the aggression leaves no room for doubt that the Israeli police are the actual vanguard of the Judaization of al-Aqsa and the most proactive party to change the existing situation there.
- On 27/7/2023, the rules for raiding were changed to allow the entry of 100 intruders in one group, the presence of three simultaneous groups of intruders and police tolerance of public biblical rituals that began gradually over the years.
- The announcement of preventing the Reconstruction Committee employees from working on 2/7/2023 constitutes the third episode in undermining the reconstruction mission as it is one of the central missions of the Jordanian Endowments, after banning new projects in 2010 and banning maintenance work in 2017.
- The current year witnessed a return to the attempt to legislate a law to divide al-Aqsa, which was announced by Knesset Member Amit Halevi (Likud) proposing the allocation of 70% of the Mosque’s area - including the Dome of the Rock - to Jews.
- “Temple Groups” still seek to rehabilitate the class of “temple priests.” To this end, they insisted, for the ninth consecutive year, on simulating



the “rite of sacrifice” and encouraged priests to perform the “priestly blessing” in al-Aqsa in front of cameras dressed in white attire to distinguish themselves.

- “Temple Groups” are trying to break the rabbinical ban on Jews entering al-Aqsa by presenting their candidates for the official rabbinical elections scheduled for the end of 2023.
- On 15/9/2022, “Temple Groups” announced the import of five red cows from the US, to fulfill the biblical conditions for performing the red heifer ritual. This announcement is the fifth in a 36-year search for this heifer.
- Should the heifer ritual be completed, the number of al-Aqsa intruders will increase four folds, which could increase the average number of intruders to 800 on daily basis and 9000 on major holidays, thus raising annual number of intruders to 200 thousand. This potential threat must be viewed as a priority and preempted with tools to intensify mobilization and defend the identity of al-Aqsa Mosque.

Chapter 2: Judaization Projects in and around al-Aqsa

- The occupation distributes Judaization projects on three circles:
 - ◆ **The first circle:** Al-Aqsa Mosque with all its components and annexes.
 - ◆ **The second circle:** The surrounding area of al-Aqsa Mosque and the Old City.
 - ◆ **The third Circle:** The belt of Jerusalemite neighborhoods surrounding al-Aqsa and the Old City.
- ***A suspension bridge in Wadi al-Rababa:*** In November 2022, the occupation municipality began work on building a suspension bridge to connect the southern side of Wadi al-Rababa and the northern side of Mount Zion, at a cost of 20 million shekels (about \$5.6 million). The bridge is 200 meters long, 35 meters high and 4.5 meters wide. In late July 2023, the occupation authorities announced the official opening of the bridge.

- ***Seizing “Al-Hamra Land” in Silwan, south of al-Aqsa:*** On 27/12/2022, settlers seized “Al-Hamra Land” and began to fence it. The land is owned by the Greek Orthodox Church, and it is about 300 meters away from the western wall of Jerusalem. The arms of the occupation announced that they would open the so-called “Shiloch Pool” for visitors as part of a path that ends at the western wall of al-Aqsa.
- ***Electronic gates at the entrance to Ein Silwan:*** On 22/1/2023, settlers from “Elad” settler association, accompanied by members of the so-called Nature Authority, stormed Silwan and installed two electronic gates to be used as a passage for tourists and settlers from Ein Silwan to the tunnels. The occupation forces prevented citizens and a delegation from the Islamic Endowments from reaching the area to check the Judaization work there.
- ***“A Farm in the Valley”... A tourist Judaization attraction:*** “Elad” settler association launched the “Farm in the Valley” project to attract thousands of settlers to Jerusalem, and the association pledged to provide “a special agricultural experience, similar to the experiences of ancient farmers.” The project includes tours for settlers and students from Jewish religious schools, and workshops on “squeezing grapes, harvesting olives and stone carving.”
- ***Continued bulldozing in al-Yusufiya Cemetery:*** On 1/9/2022, the occupation authorities renewed excavation and bulldozing work in al-Yusufiya Cemetery next to Bab al-Asbat, north of Bab al-Rahma Cemetery, with strict protection from the occupation police. The occupation authorities are targeting the cemetery with several Judaization projects, including establishing a park on part of it to prevent the creation of new graves for Muslims there.
- ***The occupation is proceeding with the cable car and preparing to issue tenders for its construction:*** The left-wing Israeli organization “Emek Shaveh” issued a report in May 2023 which said that the Israeli government was moving forward with the cable car project connecting



the western and eastern parts of Jerusalem. The report pointed out that the cable car line was scheduled to end in the “Kedem complex” which is run by settlers from “Elad” association.

- ***Intentions to establish a metro system in Jerusalem:*** In January 2023, the occupation’s Directorate of Planning Administration announced its intentions to construct a metro system in the occupied city to connect it to several Israeli cities and towns. The project aims to separate Jerusalem from its Palestinian surroundings, connect it to the settlements and major occupied cities and transfer the largest number of settlers from the western part of the city to the vicinity of al-Aqsa.
- ***A new Judaizing plan to establish a “café and an observation deck” over al-Buraq Wall:*** The occupation municipality and the “Western Wall Heritage Fund” are planning to establish “a café and observation deck” on an area of 300 square meters above al-Tankaziyah School, al-Buraq Wall and the buildings overlooking al-Aqsa Mosque. The place will be open around the clock for settlers and Jews who refrain from storming al-Aqsa for ideological and religious reasons.
- ***The occupation continues to Judaize al-Buraq Square and build a platform for “Reform” Jews:*** The occupation continues to target al-Buraq Square and the western wall of al-Aqsa Mosque. Its arms continued with excavations south of Bab al-Maghareba Bridge with the aim of establishing a place for Jewish women and “Reform” Jews to perform their rituals. On the western side of the Square, the occupation launched new, deep excavations within “Beit Haliba” project. The occupation is expected to connect “Beit Haliba” to “Beit Strauss” project located a few meters away from al-Buraq Wall.
- ***Excavations under and around al-Aqsa:*** The most prominent excavations during the reporting period are:
 - ◆ **On the southern side:** The occupation continued to dig a tunnel extending from Silwan, south of al-Aqsa, penetrating the southern wall of the Old City, and heading to al-Buraq Square. In addition to

digging two tunnels in 2023, one of which extends from Ein Silwan complex south of al-Aqsa towards Bab al-Maghareba and al-Buraq Square, and the other, work on which is still ongoing, starts from Ein al-Azraa area southeast of the Mosque towards the Umayyad Palaces. The report also monitored the continuation of excavations in the so-called “City of David” and “Ophel Hill.”

- ◆ **On the western side:** Jerusalemite researchers reported that excavation work in the tunnel network on the western side was accelerating. In February 2023, a new tunnel was unveiled under the western wall of al-Aqsa. Recent photos showed the western foundations of al-Aqsa Mosque exposed by excavation work.
- ◆ **On the northern side:** The occupation expanded the area of excavations between Bab al-Amud and Bab al-Sahira, and continued to change the features of Bab al-Amud area, the main entrance to al-Aqsa from the northern side of the Old City.

Chapter 3: Imposing Jewish Presence in al-Aqsa

- The number of political raids of al-Aqsa Mosque reached 16 compared to 3 in the previous report. Ministers Itamar Ben-Gvir and Yitzhak Wasserlauf, and a number of Knesset members participated in these raids.
- Minister of National Security, Itamar Ben-Gvir is considered the most current Israeli political figure involved in the storming of al-Aqsa Mosque, as he stormed it 6 times in the monitoring period.
- In addition to Ben-Gvir, other official figures raided al-Aqsa during the monitoring period, including Minister of the Negev and the Galilee Yitzhak Wasserlauf who stormed al-Aqsa three times, in addition to Knesset members Yom Tov Kalfon, Ariel Kellner, Amit Halevi, Dan Ilouz, Sharren Haskel, Nissim Vaturi and Zvika Vogel.
- The number of Jews who stormed al-Aqsa Mosque, from 1/8/2022 to 1/8/2023, reached about 58,533 intruders, including Jewish settlers,

students, and security forces, which is higher than the number of intruders in the previous report by around 7,816.

- Several weeks before “temple destruction,” “Temple Groups” launched their preparations to mobilize the largest number of intruders under the title “Stop crying and start building.” On 7/8/2022, 2,201 settlers stormed al-Aqsa, with the participation of dozens of extremists dressed in white attire.
- The Hebrew “Passover” was the most prominent season of aggression against al-Aqsa during the reporting period, during which the number of settlers who stormed al-Aqsa reached about 3430, and these incursions witnessed the participation of current members of the Knesset, leaders of “Temple Groups” in addition to a number of rabbis.
- During the monitoring period, the security incursions of al-Aqsa established a number of extremely dangerous roles, namely:
 - ◆ Ensuring more protection for the settlers’ performance of public Jewish rituals and preventing Muslims from obstructing the performance of these prayers.
 - ◆ Working to empty al-Aqsa of the Murabitin, and using repression and arrest to achieve this goal.
 - ◆ Securing the incursions course and preventing Muslim presence there.
 - ◆ Repeated targeting of the eastern area of al-Aqsa, by storming Bab al-Rahma prayer hall and trying to empty its contents, and cutting the electricity and sound wires more than once.
- On 28/8/2022, the occupation forces allowed a group of settlers to storm al-Aqsa from Bab al-Asbat (Lions Gate). This was an attempt to impose more control on the gates of the Mosque, and turn these violations into fait accompli.
- The Israeli security forces established their role in suppressing the Murabtin and preparing the conditions in the Mosque for “quiet” raids

through preventing I'tikaf in Ramadan. On 26/3/2022, the Israeli forces stormed al-Aqsa and attacked the Murabitin in al-Qibli prayer hall and expelled them. Late on the night of 5/4/2023, the occupation forces stormed al-Aqsa and brutally assaulted worshipers, injuring dozens of Palestinians and arresting about 450 others, in an attempt to end I'tikaf.

- The occupation forces continued their attempts to silence the call to prayer from al-Aqsa Mosque. On 24/4/2023, the occupation police cut off the sound of the evening call to prayer (azan) in al-Aqsa Mosque, in concurrence with celebrations in al-Buraq Square.
- Al-Aqsa raids witness heavy participation by foreign tourists who enter al-Aqsa through al-Maghareba Gate under the protection of the occupation forces while its extremist arms provide them with guided tours in the Mosque's courtyards, discussing the "Temple" and the Jewish right to it.
- The occupation authorities continued to prevent the construction and restoration of al-Aqsa. On 25/9/2022, they prevented the Reconstruction Committee crews from completing the restoration of Yusuf Agha Dome in al-Aqsa courtyards. On 30/11/2022, the committee's employees were prevented from completing installation work of a number of windows in al-Qibli prayer hall. On 2/7/2023, the occupation forces prevented the committee's employees from working completely throughout al-Aqsa, and the ban continued until the end of the reporting period.
- The occupation authorities target al-Aqsa guards and officials of the Islamic Endowments Department alike. The report documented repeated targeting of the Deputy Director General of the Islamic Endowments Department Najeh Bkeirat. On 11/9/2022, the occupation authorities issued a decision to deport him from al-Aqsa for 6 months, and on 12/7/2023, the occupation forces arrested Bkeirat from his home and forced him to implement the deportation order.
- The number of those deported from al-Aqsa Mosque reached about 696, and the deportation decisions included worshipers, endowment

employees and Jerusalemite figures. April 2023 witnessed the highest number of deportees reaching 463.

Chapter 4: Arab, Islamic and International Stances regarding Aggression on al-Aqsa

First: The Palestinian level

- Palestinian discourse generally showed adherence to Jerusalem, the holy sites, and al-Aqsa Mosque, and a rejection of the occupation's aggression and plans to Judaize al-Aqsa.
- The Palestinian discourse emphasized the necessity of rejecting internal Palestinian disputes, and the importance of escalating resistance and confrontation with the occupation, in defense of Jerusalem, al-Aqsa and the holy sites.

a. The Palestinian factions:

- The Palestinian resistance factions confirmed that "Al-Aqsa is a red line."
- The factions called for escalation of resistance and confrontation with the occupation in all battlefields in defense of Jerusalem, al-Aqsa and the holy sites.
- The period covered by the report witnessed a noticeable increase in the forms of popular and armed Palestinian resistance against the occupation.
- The Palestinian forces and factions confirmed their rejection of security coordination with the occupation and called on the Palestinian Authority (PA) leadership and its security services to stop it.
- The factions stressed that the PA's participation in al-Aqaba security summit was a crime and a dangerous national transgression.
- Hamas movement warned that "any change in the status quo in al-Aqsa

Mosque will turn the area into an earthquake,” stressing that it “will not allow Jerusalem or al-Aqsa to be harmed,” and that normalization with Israel harms Palestine, Jerusalem and al-Aqsa.

- The Fatah movement confirmed that it will not allow al-Aqsa Mosque to be divided temporally or spatially.
- The Palestinian Islamic Jihad movement affirmed that “Jerusalem is the title of our identity, our religion, and our history, and we must fight to liberate it.”

b. The PA and the Palestine Liberation Organization:

- The Palestinian leadership stressed that it will continue to take all legal measures provided by “international legitimacy” to implement all necessary and appropriate steps facing the actions of the Israeli government.
- The Palestinian leadership announced its rejection of Israel’s systematic practices to change the character and identity of Jerusalem.
- The PA called on the American administration to reopen the American consulate in Jerusalem to preserve the two-state solution, and to cancel the plan for the American embassy complex planned to be established in Jerusalem.
- Palestinian security services continued to coordinate with the Israeli authorities despite the continuation of the occupation’s crimes against the Palestinian people and aggression targeting Jerusalem and al-Aqsa.

c. Jerusalemites and Palestinians from the 1948 occupied territories

- The angry Palestinian popular reactions, whether in Jerusalem or in the 1948 Palestinian occupied territories, did not stop in defense of al-Aqsa.
- Several initiatives were launched to defend al-Aqsa including “Qanadeel al-Rahma” (Mercy Lamps) where Palestinians recited parts of the Holy Quran in Bab al-Rahma prayer hall to consecrate Islamic presence and defend the prayer hall facing Israeli aggression.

Second: Jordan

- The increase in Israeli attacks on al-Aqsa and the holy places in Jerusalem means further violation of the Hashemite custodianship and a termination of the Jordanian role.
- Israeli right-wing leaders seek to end the legitimacy of the Hashemite custodianship in Jerusalem through attempts to impose spatial and temporal division of al-Aqsa and to change the status quo in the Mosque.
- Official Jordanian position condemned successive Israeli aggression against al-Aqsa, and stressed the necessity of respecting the historical and legal status quo in the Mosque.

Third: The Official Arab and Islamic level

- The Arab and Islamic regimes declare their adherence to the rights of the Palestinian people while their practices show that they have no choice but to issue statements that are ineffective and devoid of content.
- The League of Arab States and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation maintained the performance of the regimes, and their action regarding Israel's aggression targeting Jerusalem and al-Aqsa did not deviate from the discourse of condemnation and warning.
- The Gulf Cooperation Council condemned al-Aqsa raids and the attacks on worshippers.
- Turkey's relationship with Israel is still of great importance to both sides despite the escalatory steps from time to time due to the ongoing Israeli attacks at al-Aqsa. Military, trade and economic cooperation between the two sides is deep, and some relatively temporary tensions are not expected to put an end to those relations.

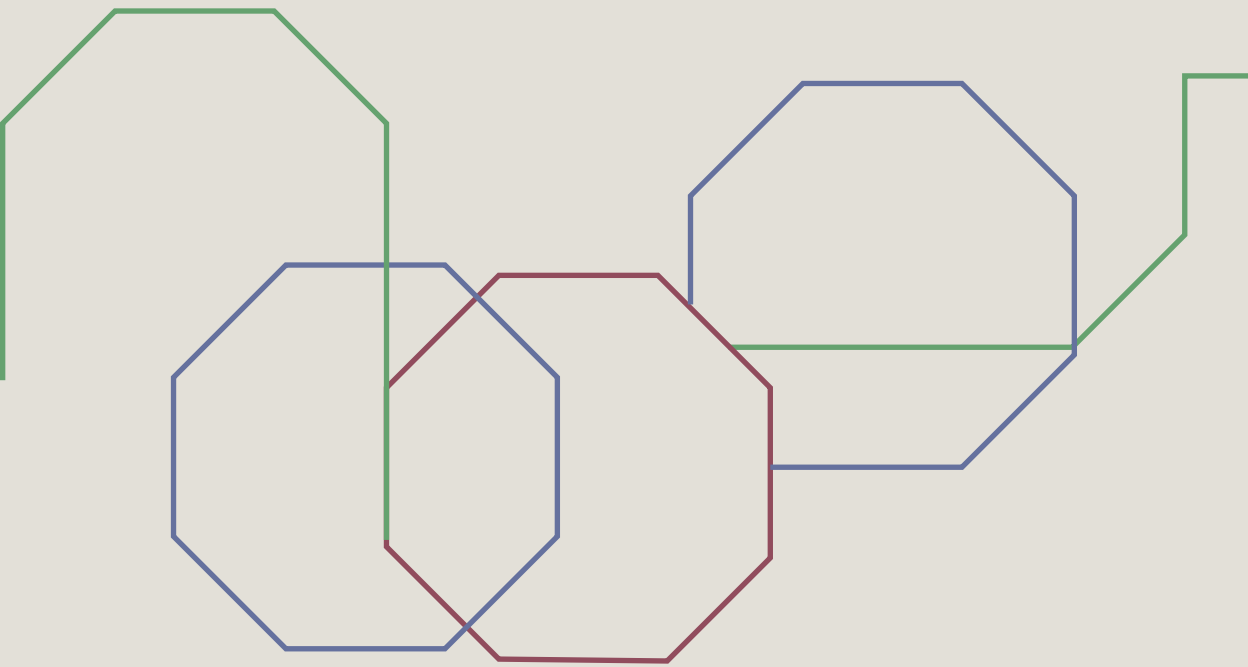
Fourth: The Official International Position

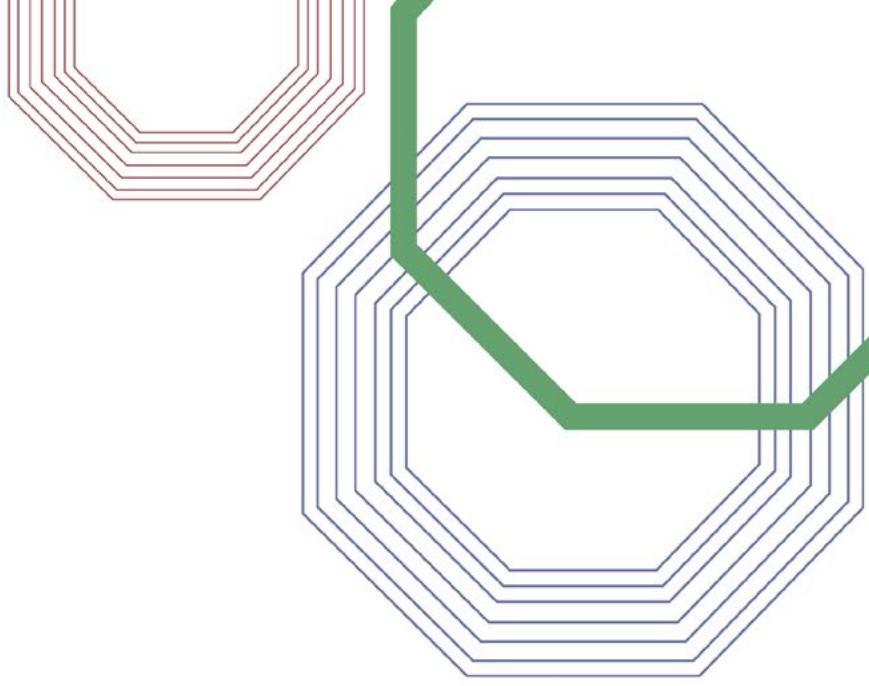
- The Palestinians no longer have any confidence in the international community to intervene to stop Israel's attacks on the Palestinian people and their holy sites.
- There is no clear international measure to deter Israel in light of the inability to implement international resolutions, especially related to Israel.
- The UN Security Council failed to achieve the minimum Palestinian demands and failed to issue a statement condemning Israel's attacks on al-Aqsa.
- The European Union called for respecting the status quo of the holy sites in Jerusalem.
- The US stressed the importance of maintaining the status quo in al-Aqsa Mosque, and it called on all parties to refrain from unilateral actions.

Fifth: The Popular Level

- Arab and Islamic popular interaction with the Palestinian issue declined, in general, after livelihood issues represented the main drivers for protests.
- The development of events in Jerusalem and al-Aqsa revived Arab and Islamic feelings and public sentiment sympathetic to the Palestinian cause and Jerusalem due to their symbolism, albeit in a weak way.







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