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# Eye on al-Aqsa

## Executive Summary

**A Report Documenting  
Israeli Infringements on al-Aqsa from 1/8/2013 to 1/8/2014**

Together We Safeguard al-Quds

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**Eye on al-Aqsa**  
**From 1/8/2013 to 1/8/2014**

**Executive Summary**

Al-Quds International Institution (QII) has been issuing its annual report *Eye on al-Aqsa* consistently since 2005. The report monitors the Israeli attacks on al-Aqsa Mosque and tracks the developments of the Israeli plans in this sense. This report, the eighth in this series, documents the attacks on al-Aqsa between 1/8/2013 and 1/8/2014 and addresses the Judaization process from four perspectives:

*First:* The development of the concept of the Jewish presence in al-Aqsa Mosque at the political, religious and legal levels.

*Second:* The development of the excavation, construction and expropriation works under and around the Mosque and in its vicinity during the period covered by the report. The details and targets of such works are based on the latest available information that shows the Occupation's endeavor to establish a Jewish city that would have the Mosque as its center.

*Third:* The imposition of actual Jewish presence inside al-Aqsa and the attempts at interfering with its management through monitoring break-ins and offensive statements of Israeli officials, extremist Jews and security forces. Additionally, the report examines the above acts and statements, showing the complementary roles between the different sides in achieving their common goal which is dividing al-Aqsa Mosque between Muslims and Jews in the shortest time possible. This report also monitors the continuous ban on renovating the Mosque facilities besides the restrictions on the movement of Waqf employees and preventing them from performing their duty. Moreover, the report presents the Occupation's control over access to the Mosque and its attempts at changing the rules of control over the gates and restrictions on prayers' access according to their area of residence and age.

*Fourth:* Monitoring the standing of the main parties concerned with al-Aqsa Mosque and their reactions to the developments taking place.

**I. The Evolution of the Idea of Jewish Presence in al-Aqsa Mosque**

**1. The Political Stance:**

The political rhetoric supportive of the division of al-Aqsa has focused on evoking the "successful" division of al-Ibrahimi Mosque in al-Khalil, emphasizing the possibility of restoring this scenario in al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem. In this context, political statements have been circulating to stress that succeeding to divide Al-Ibrahimi Mosque and control Muslims' entry to it is a precedent that can be simulated in al-Aqsa as expressed by a number of MKs, including Miri Regev and Tzipi Hotovely.

Political interaction with the idea of Jewish presence in al-Aqsa continued throughout the reporting period with relentless support by some MKs and ministers for incursions and temporal division of the Mosque hand-in-hand with the disclosure of financial support for "Temple Mount Organizations"

Yet, what was remarkable throughout the reporting period was the support by MK Hilik Bar from Labor Party (center-left) of a bill suggesting temporal division of al-Aqsa, thus breaking the "monopoly" by right wing parties of publicly supporting division of the Mosque. In May 2014, a bill signed by Hilik Bar and Miri Regev demanded temporal division of al-Aqsa and equality in the right to religious practice between Jews and Muslims similar to the scenario applied in al-Ibrahimi Mosque. Although Bar withdrew his support for the bill after criticism and warnings he received, his stance in the first place holds connotations about the involvement of all occupation components in the process of Judaizing al-Aqsa, even though some of that involvement seemed cautious.

Stemming from the belief that "Israel's sovereignty over Jerusalem remains incomplete if full sovereignty over the Temple Mount did not materialize," Deputy Speaker of the Knesset Moshe Feiglin (Likud) presented a proposal in February 2014 to end Jordanian sovereignty over al-Aqsa and place it under full Israeli sovereignty. However, the political milieu seemed discreet about this proposal that could lead to an outbreak in the relationship with Jordan in particular.

Netanyahu's office refused to adopt the proposal that calls for "imposing Israeli sovereignty over al-Aqsa Mosque and ending all types of discrimination based on religion, nationalism and sex" and stressing that Israel would maintain the status quo in the Mosque instead. Indeed, on 27/2/2014 following the debate in the Knesset regarding sovereignty on al-Aqsa, the Prime Minister's Office issued a statement declaring that Israel would not change the status quo in the Mosque. However, this reservation regarding placing al-Aqsa under Israeli sovereignty does not reflect reluctance concerning controlling the Mosque but rather caution regarding dragging things into what could threaten the "gains" made by the occupation in terms of achieving Jewish presence at the site.

In parallel, state's funding for organizations and groups that advocate the building of the "temple" was revealed through a report by Army Radio on 4/8/2013 asserting that the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Culture and Sport transferred around NIS 300 –700 thousand to the non-government organization known as The Temple Institute. The report also revealed that the state permits young women who choose to forego compulsory military service to perform national service as unpaid tour guides and instructors with the institute.

Political support for organizations advocating the building of the "temple" was also manifested through the participation of a number of politicians in an emergency conference held on 29/4/2014 under the title "Returning the Temple Mount." The conference was held by the "Liba Project for Jewish Freedom at the Temple Mount" in Begin Heritage Center in the western side of Jerusalem. Among the most prominent participants were MKs Moshe Feiglin, Miri Regev, Orit Strock and Shuli Moalem-Refaeli. Deputy Minister of Religious Affairs Eli Ben-Dahan also participated in the conference through a video message in which he said that his office was working on new regulations allowing Jews to pray at al-Aqsa and that he expected and trusted that "the prime minister and the Israeli government will adopt these regulations, give them legal standing, and allow any Jew who wants to ascend to the Temple Mount and pray there, to pray there."

However, despite political support for the concept of the temple and the pursuit of securing Jewish prayers at al-Aqsa, the American news website *The Jewish Voice* published in December 2013 a State Comptroller report on Israeli authorities conduct regarding digs performed by the Islamic *Waqf* (endowment) in 2007. The report was composed in 2008 after it was ordered by the State Control Committee in the Knesset which was seeking to examine the conduct of government authorities following construction work carried by the *Waqf* and aimed at the reparation of a power line. The classified report was critical of the government authorities' negligence when it came to overlooking the work of Islamic *Waqf* in the Mosque. Reacting to the report, former MK Aryeh Eldad, who was behind a bill suggesting temporal division of al-Aqsa in August 2012, said that "it was time to treat the Temple Mount like a holy site."



**2. The Legal Stance:**

Attempts in the Knesset to legalize Jewish presence in al-Aqsa have been intensified with the Supreme Court’s unwavering opinion that the Jews’ “right” to reach al-Aqsa is not absolute, but rather subject to security considerations estimated by Israeli police. In this regard, several projects were proposed in pursuit of temporally dividing the Mosque securing “Jews’ freedom to pray” in it, especially in the Interior Committee headed by Miri Regev of the Likud. However, these proposals were not recognized by the Knesset and some were withdrawn before they were discussed.

As per judicial edict, “Jews’ right to ascent to Temple Mount” is governed by security conditions subject to the assessment of the police apparatus yet there are attempts to legislate Jews’ prayers at the Mosque, divide it and place it under Israel’s full control as part of its “sovereignty over Jerusalem”

Amidst attempts to divide al-Aqsa and ensure Jewish uninterrupted presence there, the Knesset Interior Committee declared in March 2014 the formation of a subcommittee headed by MK David Tsur and tasked with monitoring the “implementation of the government’s decision to allow Jews on the Temple Mount for 3.5 hours per day.” The committee was also tasked with creating a climate suitable for the break-ins that coincide with Jewish occasions. Tsur committee submitted its report for discussion in June 2014 and it recommended maintaining the status quo in al-Aqsa, yet expanding the jurisdictions of the police chief in terms of controlling access to the Mosque and performing arrests.

In the light of this deficit in reaching a clear legal text allowing Jews to freely pray in al-Aqsa, some political circles in the Knesset are trying to circumvent the lack of text through examining the possibility of declaring the Mosque as a Jewish holy site, which means that Jews cannot, by any moral or legal means, be prevented from reaching it.

**3. The Religious Stance:**

Parallel to political and legal efforts to consecrate al-Aqsa break-ins, attempts have emerged to secure a formal religious cover for these violations to religiously legitimize them and push for increasing their occurrence. Thus, Deputy Minister of Religious Affairs Eli Ben-Dahan invited the Chief Rabbinate of Israel to issue a religious edict allowing Jews to visit al-Aqsa Mosque. However, the Chief Rabbinate elected on 24/7/2013 reiterated in a statement in December 2013 its adherence to the former Chief Rabbinate’s stance opposing Jews visiting Temple Mount for purity-related reasons. The chief rabbis wrote that “we once again warn that nothing has changed and this strict prohibition remains in effect for the entire area.” The statement pointed out that the reasons for the ban were purely religious, thus allowing room for the possibility of manipulating the

The Chief Rabbinate elected in July 2013 issued a declaration in December 2013 confirming its adherence to the religious edict opposition to Jews visiting the Temple Mount for purity-related reasons. Yet, so called Temple organizations proceeded with their support of breaking into the Mosque and calling for building the “temple”

edict in both political and legal terms. This comes in addition to a series of flexible religious edicts issued by a number of rabbis allowing Jews to visit the site yet without approaching the place thought to be the “Holy of the Holies.”

However, senior Haredi Sefardi Rabbi Meir Mazuz responded to a public question posted on his institution’s website that “Jews were legally permitted to enter the Temple Mount” but should restrict their movements there to non-problematic areas. Such edict contravenes mainstream Haredi consensus which used to be firmly against setting foot in the site.

A number of rabbis and yeshiva students petitioned to the Knesset in February 2014 enacting legislation that expands Israeli sovereignty over al-Aqsa Mosque only a few days before discussing Feiglin’s proposal in that same regard. A number of rabbis from the nationalist religious Current also sent a letter to Netanyahu in March 2014 calling for the construction of a synagogue in al-Aqsa. The message was signed by a number of rabbis who had never directed any public calls for Jews to visit al-Aqsa. Among these was Rabbi Shmuel Eliyahu, in addition to a number of Zionist rabbis like Dov Lior and Haim Cohen. The message called for the construction of a synagogue in al-Aqsa in places where a number of rabbis and Jewish historians confirmed that they fall outside the “temple” area so that they are not subject to the terms of purity.

In a development related to religiously paving the way for building the “temple,” Rabbi Chaim Richman, International Director of the Temple Institute, revealed that a red heifer was born in the United States. He maintained that this heifer might be the one stipulated by the Torah for the purpose of purification, without which the “temple” would not be built. In a video posted on the Temple Institute’s website, Richman said that the red heifer would be monitored to verify it meets the conditions of the one mentioned in the Torah. Richman also explained that if this were proven right, then “one of the major difficulties delaying the construction of the temple would be overcome.”

In parallel, the activity of “temple organizations” continued in terms of organizing rallies and launching repeated calls to storm al-Aqsa while demanding legislation to grant Jews the right to do so. In January 2014, these organizations extended a message to Israeli Minister of Tourism in pursuit of allowing Jews to storm the mosque. As part of a series of campaigns announced by these organizations to support the “temple,” an electronic campaign entitled “Save the Temple Mount” was launched in March 2014. Additionally, a conference was organized at the Begin Center in west Jerusalem on 28/04/2014 to discuss the Jewish presence in al-Aqsa, promote keeping all its doors open, and force police to allow the Jews to perform Talmudic rituals in it. Among the attendees of the conference were a number of Knesset members including Moshe Feiglin, Miri Regev and Shuli Moalem-Refaeli.

On 27/07/2014, the Temple Institute launched a campaign to raise \$100 thousand in order to draft plans for the “temple.” Rabbi Richman reiterated that the “temple would be built when the world wants us to build it, and it is going to be built in the place of the Dome of the Rock.” Besides this campaign, the institute released a promotional film entitled “Tisha B'Av 2014: The Children Are Ready III,” a third part of a series launched by the institute to consolidate the claims about building the “temple.” The film features a number of playing children who turn to a rabbi and take him by the hand to witness the building of the “temple” in the place of the Dome of the Rock in al-Aqsa Mosque.

**II. Excavations and Construction and confiscation beneath al-Aqsa**

**1. Excavations**

The occupation no more perceives increasing excavations beneath al-Aqsa as a priority after they have branched and spread in the western, southern and northern sides of the Mosque. The Israeli authorities have rather started working on restoring old sites and preparing them to receive visitors along with providing the infrastructure needed to transform the "Historic Jewish City" being built under al-Aqsa into the most visited shrine in the Occupation State.

During the reporting period, the occupation authorities finished preparations inside the “Hall of Ages” which would serve as the largest celebrations and meeting hall near al-Aqsa in addition laying the cornerstone for “Tiferet Yisrael” synagogue while proceeding with other Judaization projects targeting al-Aqsa

a. Western Side Excavations

The number of western side excavations is 25 where the occupation is working to connect these sites to form a network of religious and architectural sites that would be perceived as touristic attractions for the visitors of the “City of David.” During the reporting period, the occupation authorities equipped the “Herodian Hall” with visual tools and festive atmosphere to host Torah celebrations in addition to finishing preparations inside the “Hall of Ages” which would serve as the largest celebrations and meetings hall near al-Aqsa. The hall was officially inaugurated in presence of businessmen and army generals and government figures. Moreover, the occupation inaugurated new tunnels and halls under *Bab al-Mathara* and *Hammam al-Ayn*. The new halls are large halls and shrines connected to the network of tunnels the occupation is digging near and beneath al-Aqsa, especially at the western wall, and many light signboards have been placed in the area pointing to an alleged Hebrew history.



b. Southern Side Excavations

There are 17 excavation sites at the southern side of al-Aqsa through which the Occupation aims to rebuild an archeological Jewish city it claims to be the “City of David.” Elad settler organization oversees the excavations on this side where it has announced finishing around 55% of the “City of David” project. Notably, the landslides that occurred in Jerusalem homes have revealed the continuous diggings which reach 600 meters long and start from Silwan to the southern side of al-Aqsa.

During the reporting period, the Occupation authorities reached far depths in “Givati Parking Lot” adjacent to the southern side of the Old City where excavations in this site revealed Islamic and Abbasid ruins destroyed by the Occupation as it worked to finish excavations there. In addition, the occupation authorities continued diggings in the Umayyad Palaces.

c. Northern Side Excavations

Excavations in the northern side of the Mosque are limited as compared to the western and southern sides. Northern side excavations amount to five sites all of which are active.

## **2. Construction and Land Confiscation around al-Aqsa**

Construction and land expropriation around al-Aqsa are intended to promote Jewish existence in Jerusalem either by imposing the Jewish character around al-Aqsa or by using these buildings as centers for launching attacks and breakings into the Mosque as a cover for excavation works or for security purposes.

The reporting period witnessed development in work in Strauss House which is 50 meters only from the western side of al-Aqsa, where the “Company for the Reconstruction and Development of the Jewish Quarter in the Old City in Jerusalem” completed the interface of the project overlooking al-Buraq Wall.

In addition, Housing Minister Uri Ariel laid the cornerstone for “Tiferet Yisrael,” the highest and largest synagogue in the Old City located 200 meters to the west of al-Aqsa and covering an area of 1400 sq. meters. The reporting period also witnessed developments in “Beit Haliba” project and continued violations by Israeli antiquities employees in *Hawsh el-Shehabi* in the western side of al-Aqsa.

**III. Imposing Jewish Presence in al-Aqsa and Direct Interference in its Administration**

The reporting period witnessed continued attempts by the occupation authorities to consecrate Jewish presence in al-Aqsa through breaking into the Mosque by settlers, politicians and security figures in addition to rabbis and guides who present Talmudic narratives regarding the Mosque and the claimed “temple.”

Except for some days when police closed Bab al-Maghariba, settlers were allowed to break into al-Aqsa while statements from different figures reiterated support of the “temple” and the Jews’ “right” to pray at the Mosque while Occupation authorities continued to interfere in Waqf work

As in previous years, break-ins were employed by the Occupation to counter Islamic presence while the policy of controlling these break-ins through preventing them on some days or allowing them on national and religious holidays was meant to dedicate the temporal division of the Mosque sought to be legislated in the Knesset.

The offensive declarations by settlers and official figures reflected the attempts for integration between theory and application as break-ins need a law to gain “legitimacy” while legal provision would enhance these breakings and determine tracks that consecrate Jewish “right” and “presence” in the Mosque paving the way for controlling it completely.

The Occupation authorities also employed other means to restrain Muslim access to the Mosque. These tools included erecting barriers, imposing geographic and age constraints, searching and confiscating IDs, preventing access to the Mosque and attacking worshippers besides direct interference in the work of *Waqf* and preventing employees from doing their work.

1. Break-ins and Offensive Statements by Official Figures

On the political level, breaking into al-Aqsa by MK Moshe Feiglin (Likud) and Uri Ariel (Jewish Home) was significantly recurrent during the reporting period. In addition, both MKs topped the list of politicians launching offensive statements targeting the Mosque.

Generally speaking, offensive statements by Israeli officials reflect official support of the “temple” with keenness on break-ins as a way to practically support the official stance.

- a. On 19/2/2014, Moshe Feiglin broke into the Mosque after a 10-month ban and he commented afterwards saying that his “ascent is the beginning of the return of full Jewish sovereignty to the Temple Mount.”
- b. Feiglin presented a proposal that was debated in Knesset in February 2014 regarding placing al-Aqsa under full Israeli sovereignty. In an interview published on 13/5/2014, Feiglin said that it is a duty to “take the Muslim *Waqf* out of the Temple Mount and have only the Israeli police in charge.” Feiglin added that “We have to get back our full

sovereignty of the Temple Mount” because “Talking about a Jewish state while giving away our sovereignty over the Temple Mount is a contradiction.”

- c. On 4/9/2013, Uri Ariel broke into al-Aqsa on the eve of “Jewish New Year” and he said that he “plans to continue to go up [to the Mount] and strengthen the State of Israel’s sovereignty on the site” claiming that “The Temple Mount is ours, and it cannot be argued about or negotiated.” Ariel also broke into the Mosque on 16/3/2014 for “Purim” then he wrote on his Facebook page that “The reality in which rioters set the agenda on the Temple Mount and prevent Jews from going up there is unacceptable. I went up to the Temple Mount this morning, and plan to continue going up there in the future.”
- d. On 25/2/2014, MK Tzipi Hotovely said during a session held to debate sovereignty over al-Aqsa that “There is no Jerusalem without the Temple Mount.” She also demanded that the government open all gates for Jews at all times to pray freely.

## 2. Break-ins and Offensive Statements by Extremist Jews

The breakings into the Mosque by extremist Jews during the reporting period were not any different from those in recent years. Thus, al-Aqsa was open for Jews on almost daily basis and the police would “organize” their break-ins as per “security requirements” ultimately preventing them in case of looming danger and possibilities for “frictions” among the extremists and the *Murabitoun*. In addition, preventing Jews from breaking into the Mosque on some Islamic occasions, such as the last days of Ramadan until the end of *Eid al-Fitr* 2013, was meant to create a precedent to demand similar treatment on Jewish occasions. Thus, in November 2013, Miri Regev said that “special arrangements are made for Muslim prayer [at al-Aqsa] during Ramadan and similar arrangements must be made for Jewish visits on Jewish holidays.”

Major break-ins that took place during the reporting period could be summarized as follows:

- a. On 5/8/2013, a group of rabbis broke into the Mosque from *Bab al-Maghariba* alongside a group of around 65 settlers and Rabbi Yehuda Glick protected by police and private forces. The tour included explanations regarding the claimed “temple” and the possibility of building it on the ruins of al-Aqsa.
- b. On 22/9/2013, more than 400 settlers broke into the Mosque and performed Talmudic prayers and Jewish dances. They were accompanied by private forces to provide “protection” and by a number of rabbis including Yehuda Glick who provided explanations regarding the “temple.” In addition, thousands of Haredi Jews prayed at al-Buraq Wall while 150 settlers broke into al-Aqsa on 23/9/2013 celebrating the “Sukkot holiday.”
- c. On 1/6/2014, more than 300 settlers broke into the Mosque accompanied with Rabbi Glick who provided Talmudic explanations regarding the “temple” while on 3/6/2014 more than 260 settlers broke into the Mosque closely guarded for “Shavuot.”

3. Break-ins and Offensive Statements by Security Services

Besides the police and private forces that accompany extremists breaking into al-Aqsa, soldiers carried out independent breakings into the Mosque accompanied with guides who present Talmudic narrative regarding the Mosque and the “temple”. On 27/8/2013, around 60 soldiers in military uniform broke into the Mosque and were dispersed among two groups each of which was accompanied with a guide who provided explanations about the “temple.” In addition, around 40 officers and intelligence elements broke into the Mosque on 29/8/2013 within what has been known as tours of military explorations and guidance.

As for offensive statements, Maariv on 21/8/2013 quoted General Uzi Dayan, former head of Israel's National Security Council, saying that “visiting [al-Buraq Wall] is not enough, and the school children must visit the Temple Mount. Yes, even in the political/security reality, they can ascend and if we arranged matters in Hebron, we can do it here, with all the sensitivity.”

The blatant Israeli interference in the administration of the Mosque continued on three tracks: preventing restoration works and interfering in the work of the Islamic *Waqf*, restricting the movement of the *Waqf* staff, in addition to controlling access to the Mosque and restricting worshippers' movement. In general, measures by the Occupation demonstrated keenness on emptying the Mosque from Muslim worshippers and making it difficult for them to reach the Mosque while limiting their numbers citing security concerns and the fear of “riots” that might erupt in the Mosque. Notable during the reporting period was recurrent age restrictions on access to al-Aqsa on Fridays where thousands had to pray at the gates and in the alleyways leading to the Mosque, not excluding the four Fridays in Ramadan. In addition, the police stationed at al-Aqsa gates recurrently confiscated the IDs of worshippers before allowing them to enter the Mosque and then forced them to restore their documents from al-Kishle police station with the delay caused to provide their personal information. In parallel, occupation authorities proceeded with interference in *Waqf* work and attempting to foil them in the pretext that maintenance work would damage antiquities found in the place.

#### IV. Reactions to the Developments at al-Aqsa

During the reporting period, al-Aqsa was a regular host on the Knesset table while political leaders promoted its temporal division and the claimed “right” of the Jews to pray in their “holiest site.” In addition, the reality the police have been trying to consecrate was represented in “organizing” settlers’ breaking into the Mosque and the attempts to control Muslims’ access in such a way that renders division a matter of fact. Facing the aggressions against al-Aqsa, the Arab and Islamic stance remained far from influential as the Occupation escalated its measures targeting the Jerusalemites and the 1948 Palestinians who remain the forerunners in supporting and defending the Mosque.

Arab and Islamic official stances as witnessed during the reporting period were too short of an influential standing that could foil Israeli infringements on al-Aqsa while it seemed that the Jerusalemites and the 1948 Palestinians were leading the attempts to defend the Mosque and curb the Occupation’s schemes

As for field developments, security persecution continued to target resistance factions in the West Bank by the Israeli Occupation Forces as well as by the apparatuses of the Palestinian Authority (PA) through security cooperation, which prevented the factions from acting effectively. The Internal Security Service (Shabak) announced on 28/1/2014 and 31/3/2014 the arrest of two Jerusalem-based cells allegedly affiliated with Hamas and working to attract funds to conduct operations against the occupation, and enhance the strength of Hamas among Jerusalemites. In addition, further restrictions were imposed on Hamas following the developments witnessed in Egypt on 3/7/2013, besides the Movement’s commitment to comprehensive truce or comprehensive confrontation in Gaza after the war on Gaza in 2012, which equation tends to be outdated after the resistance tipped the balance in facing the aggression on Gaza in 2014.

Resistance factions sensed the imminent danger threatening al-Aqsa, thus they worked on mobilizing their popular base in the West Bank through supportive programs including, for example, launching popular campaign entitled “It is my Right to Pray in al-Aqsa,” to express rejection of the occupation measures preventing some worshippers from praying in the Mosque and excluding others. In Gaza several demonstrations and events were organized to express rejection of extremists’ breaking into al-Aqsa and the attempts to divide it in the Knesset. Such events included a festival held on 4/10/2013 and organized by Hamas under the title “Oh Aqsa!” which warned against the Judaization project imposed on Jerusalem and al-Aqsa.

As for political stances, resistance factions reiterated that the PA’s continuous involvement in negotiations with Israel was rather a cover for the Israeli infringements on al-Aqsa. They also accused the PA of monopolizing the Palestinian decision and of taking unilateral decisions ignoring all national calls to pursue a national project and abandon the failed negotiations.

Following the brutal crime committed by three settlers who killed the Jerusalemite child Mohammad Abu Khdeir on 2/7/2014 and the outbreak of clashes in Jerusalem between



Palestinians and the occupation forces and the consequent expansion of confrontations to the West Bank and the territories occupied in 1948, resistance factions announced that missiles would not be stopped as long as Israeli aggressions against Palestinians continued. Such declaration broke the equation which the occupation has tried to consecrate and which tried to separate Gaza from any developments taking place in the West Bank and Jerusalem as resistance factions in Gaza launched missiles towards Israeli cities and settlements in retaliation to the occupation crimes and alert sirens were heard in Jerusalem and neighboring settlements.

In the context of stances of Palestinian resistance factions, Khalid Meshaal, chief of Hamas political bureau, talked about the dangers facing al-Aqsa revealing the most important schemes targeting the Mosque. He also called for enhancing military capacities and achieving the Palestinian reconciliation to deter the occupation. Meshaal's stance was revealed during his participation via video conference in a workshop organized in Beirut on 9/10/2013 by al-Quds International Institution entitled "Jerusalem on the Agenda of Arab and Islamic Governments and Peoples."

No significant change was noticed in the PA's position which remained hostage to weakness and stalemate. Thus, the PA continued to condemn the escalated measures targeting the Mosque while warning against their consequences. It also agreed to return to negotiations thus forming an umbrella for the occupation to pass more Judaization projects in Jerusalem and al-Aqsa Mosque.

Although the PA had some strength cards that could pressure the Occupation while protecting Jerusalem and al-Aqsa, such as the resort to international organizations to prosecute the occupation for its crimes and the halt of security coordination, it chose the "easier" solution. Thus, it called on international sides and bodies, especially the Quartet, to stand up to their legal and political responsibility towards Jerusalem and al-Aqsa and to pursue necessary measures to stop infringements against the Mosque and to hold the perpetrators accountable. The PA also called on legal and humanitarian bodies, on the local, regional and international levels, to persecute whoever attacks the Mosque and to file legal cases against those who are responsible for aggressions and present them for trial. More so, it demanded that these bodies prepare legal files of those officials, settlers and organizations involved in the Judaization of al-Aqsa expressing readiness for cooperation in this sense and facilitating this national humanitarian mission.

As the Judaization measures and Israeli aggressions on al-Aqsa continued, Hebrew Channel 2 aired a report 10/2/2014 which featured then Endowment Minister Mahmoud al-Habbash saying that Jews would be welcome to pray at al-Buraq Wall yet only under Palestinian sovereignty. This position reflects the readiness of the PA to negotiate the fate of al-Aqsa and consent to share its administration with the occupation while stressing that it would happen under the eyes of the PA and its sovereignty.

As for the PA in Gaza and the Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC), they both stressed that the best solution for protecting Jerusalem and al-Aqsa would be through Palestinian unity to face the schemes of the occupation and foil them while working to mobilize the Arab and Islamic masses. Moreover, their statements threw responsibility at the international community and Arab and Islamic governments for Israel's aggressions on al-Aqsa.

The national unity government headed by Rami Hamdallah which was announced on 2/6/2014 following the reconciliation between Fatah and Hamas expressed positions that were not any different from those of other PA components. Warnings against the occupation plans targeting al-Aqsa and changing the Islamic facet of Jerusalem were recurrent in statements and declarations of the PLO delivered by Ahmad Qurei, member of the PLO Executive Committee.

With the escalated targeting of al-Aqsa in February 2014, representatives of all PLC committees staged a sit-in outside the Headquarters of the PLC in Ramallah, in a precedent since the division in 2005, to protest the Israeli calls for imposing Israeli sovereignty on al-Aqsa. They also demanded the political leadership to speed up the achievement of the reconciliation and embrace a unified national program that would serve the Palestinian issue which has become a hostage to the failed negotiations track and Israeli intransigence.

Amidst Israeli aggressions on the Mosque and the weak political stances facing them, the main obstacle that foiled the Occupation's dreams and schemes was the Jerusalemites and the 1948 Palestinians. Continuous visits, calls for performing *Ribat* at al-Aqsa in addition to organizing events which include continuous presence of worshippers at the Mosque were an effective tool for facing the Occupation's Judaization measures.

In April 2014, *al-Murabitoun* presented greatest example of resilience and determination defending al-Aqsa in face of calls by "temple organizations" to break into the Mosque for Passover. Ultimately, MK Moshe Feiglin to express his discontent with the performance of the police facing the worshippers while blaming politicians for failing to protect "the heart of Jerusalem."

On the Islamic level, there was no crucial role of Islamic countries in defending al-Aqsa against Israeli aggression. Arab countries, in addition to the League of Arab states and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (IOC), criticized the Israeli aggressions on al-Aqsa and issued statements of condemnation. They also called on the international community and its different organizations to stand up to their responsibility while some Arab countries were revealed to have secret relations with the occupation state according to statements by Israeli Foreign Minister Avigdor Liebermann.

The IOC adopted in December 2013 a resolution which stipulates for the adoption of a political and legal working plan comprising 13 points to urge the occupation to stop its violations and illegal measures in Jerusalem. According to the plan, a ministerial committee would be formed to exercise its mission as quickly as possible to convey the IOC's message that al-Aqsa is a red line

and the attempts to infringe on would not be tolerable. The plan also tasked the Arab Group in the New York to seek to convene a special Security Council session to discuss Israeli violations. On the legal level, the working plan did not exclude the possibility of resort to International Criminal Court (ICC) and other international forums to hold Israel accountable for its crimes and violations.

Following 12 years abruption, the Jerusalem Committee held its 20<sup>th</sup> session in January 2014 in Marrakesh where its final statement called IOC member states to urge world countries to modify their voting in international organizations in Jerusalem-related resolutions to comply with international law and consensus regarding the legal status of the city. The statement also called on the international community to stand up to their responsibility facing “the statements of some Israeli officials and their illegal claims regarding the annexation of Jerusalem and Islamic and Christian holy sites.”

In the emergency meeting of the Council of the Arab League on 26/2/2014, Deputy Secretary General Ahmad Bin Hilli said that current dangers facing al-Aqsa have exceeded all limits as extremist Jews break into the Mosque with blessing from government officials in an attempt to impose division as fact on the ground. Bin Hilli added that “Jerusalem is a political issue and any illegal Israeli measure is rejected and will be faced by the international and Islamic community.”

Jordanian stance, which is of special importance because of Jordan’s custodianship on holy sites, remained within certain limits. Thus, Jordan expressed condemnation against occupation practices, especially the restrictions imposed on worshippers in the month of Ramadan and preventing them occasionally from entering the Mosque. In this context, the government spokesman Mohammad al-Momni said that “closing al-Aqsa gates for Muslims in Ramadan is a dangerous precedent, which was stark violation of the sanctity of the month and would infuriate the Palestinians and the whole Arab and Muslim world.” In addition, the reporting period witnessed threats by official figures to re-consider the peace agreement signed between Jordan and Israel and to recall Israeli ambassador to Amman over Israeli increasing violations.

In April 2014, Amman hosted a conference entitled “The Road to Jerusalem’ with the participation of Muslim and Christian clerics, politicians and parliamentarians. The conference aimed at showing the religious importance of al-Aqsa Mosque and other Islamic and Christian holy sites and facing the Judaization narrative while mobilizing Arab and Islamic world to support Jerusalem. However, from these announced aims the conference brought about the issue of visiting al-Aqsa under the occupation to trigger controversy whether the visit was religiously accepted or not. The “compromise” was through an edict issued by the participating clerics and allowing the visit for two categories of Muslims: those hailing from Palestinian origins wherever they live and regardless of their nationality, and Muslims with nationalities from outside the Arab and Muslim world. Clerics decided to leave the door open for *Ijtihad* (diligence or independent reasoning) regarding the right of other Muslims to visit the Mosque.

On the popular level, the counter-revolutions and the Arab crack down on the currents of “Political Islam” had great impact on popular solidarity which deteriorated during the reporting period as compared to the post-Arab Spring years, and was mainly limited to some conferences and calls for media support.

The International Committee for the Global March to Jerusalem organized related events in around 80 countries in March 2014 under the slogan “The People of the World Want to Liberate Jerusalem.” These events expressed international refusal of the racist and Judaization measure the occupation is pursuing in Jerusalem. The Global March also launched an electronic campaign including a call for the Elders organization, established by Nilson Mandella in 2007 and comprising former presidents and influential political figures, to pressure the occupation to stop its racist measures targeting Jerusalem and its people.

On the international level, the US proceeded with its policy of bias to Israel when voting on UNESCO resolutions related to Jerusalem and al-Aqsa. Notable on the American level was the participation by two congressmen from the Republican Party in breaking into al-Aqsa in February 2014 with Chaim Richman, International Director of the Temple Institute, in a move that demonstrated support for settlers’ breakings into the Mosque.

As for Europe, European Union diplomats stationed in Ramallah and Jerusalem warned in a march 2014 internal report to Brussels against changing the status quo at the holy site and the growing tensions triggered by demands of right-wing groups which might spark violent reactions locally and around the world, in addition to the possibility of derailing the negotiations talks between the PA and Israel. At the same time, the report included implicit criticism of the “tendency by Muslim religious authorities and Palestinian politicians to deny the historic affiliation Jews have to the Temple Mount,” which means implicit support for Jewish claims concerning al-Aqsa.

## V. Recommendations

This report is the eighth in a series observing the Israeli violations against al-Aqsa issued successively since 1/1/2005. It builds on the accumulative reading of various developments witnessed during the reporting period, and traces the absence of the deterrence equation that has always been the first and foremost factor for defending al-Aqsa from Israeli aggression. It also stresses the absence of Arab and Islamic strategy for supporting the Jerusalemites and the Palestinians in the territories occupied in 1948. Pinpointing the ailment, the report addresses various parties concerned with the issue of Jerusalem and al-Aqsa with recommendations that form a roadmap for re-establishing this deterrence equation and a safety net for the Mosque from the Israeli violations and Judaization plans. This equation should ultimately delay the Zionist project and even foil it should efforts be unified and targeted towards the protection of the Mosque.

### A. *Recommendations for the Palestinian Resistance*

Palestinian resistance forces have proved that field presence is important for creating the deterrence equation which makes the occupation know that its aggressions on al-Aqsa are not without cost. In addition, resistance work has always built momentum and consecrated the issue of al-Aqsa in public awareness in Palestine and abroad reminding that the power of right needs material power to enhance and protect it. The resistance has also conveyed a message through countering the Israeli attack on Gaza in July-August 2014 that the Palestinians have enough elements of power that allow them to face the arrogance of the occupation and foil its schemes that aim at subjugating the Palestinian people and breaking their will. The resistance in Gaza presented genuine evidence that the will to restore rights is stronger than any restraint or blockade.

The resistance, which has proved its strong presence and impact in Gaza, is thus demanded to consecrate a national comprehensive stance that is tantamount to a code of honor preventing the concession of Jerusalem or al-Aqsa and urging their support. Resistance factions should also exercise pressure on the PA and the negotiations team to prevent the concession of Jerusalem and its holy sites and to prevent the acceptance of any agreement that allows the occupation to share al-Aqsa management. Resistance is also demanded to adopt al-Aqsa as a fixed provision in its political programs and a title that can be never missed in its media outlets, in addition to popular events that spread awareness and mobilize support and serious preparation for the liberation project which remains their essential moral responsibility.

Despite all challenges and obstacles that prevent continuous military work, resistance factions are still demanded to activate this aspect even at simplest forms, especially in the West Bank and Jerusalem, given its impact on the Zionist mentality. Ultimately, while resistance factions are restricted in Palestine they are able to assume greater role abroad, especially on the level of



spreading awareness and mobilizing the Palestinian masses. Notably, specific occasions should be determined to organize cultural and media campaigns in support of al-Aqsa.

### ***B. Recommendations for the PA and the PLO***

The PA returned to the negotiations table in late July 2013 despite the failure of this track that has led to Oslo and the exclusion of the PA from Jerusalem while allowing the occupation to tighten its grip on the city and proceed with its policy of creating facts on the ground. In addition, the address of the PA reveals fluctuation in its stances towards al-Aqsa as a pure Islamic holy site and a tendency towards contenting the occupation, or not upsetting it, through a language of appeasement that confuses surrender for peace.

The PA is demanded to reconsider its structure which is based on the Oslo Accords and to abandon security coordination which has only resulted in restricting the Palestinians and their right to resistance and facing the occupation plans. It is also called to activate the conciliation based on al-Shati Agreement signed in Gaza on 23/4/2014, and more importantly to benefit from the resistance experience in Gaza which has been able to go far in its demands based on the strength of the right it was defending. The PA is also demanded to embrace al-Aqsa as a priority that cannot be bargained and to support the different sectors in Jerusalem within a strategy that serves the liberation project rather than providing luxury or enhancing development under the occupation. The PA is also demanded to benefit from its status as a non-member observer state at the UN, which makes it necessary for the PA leadership to speed up the process of its accession to the ICC to prosecute the occupation figures.

The PA field role remains important as it has to lift any constraints restricting resistance work and allow Palestinians in the West Bank to express support and solidarity with Jerusalem and al-Aqsa. Moreover, it is demanded to reproduce a cohesive political and media address supportive of Jerusalem and al-Aqsa while paying careful attention for integration between this address and serious action on the ground.

### ***C. Recommendations for the Jordanian Government***

Jordan's role in confronting the assaults on al-Aqsa is essentially based on the fact that it is the exclusive representative of Islamic authority over the Mosque. This is so because of its guardianship over al-Aqsa and the Islamic Waqf in Jerusalem through the Department of Islamic Endowment in the city. Clearly this role is being targeted though attacking endowment employees or suggesting ending Jordanian sovereignty over the Mosque. Thus, the Jordanian government is invited to assume a firm stance against the Israeli assaults given that any assault on an endowment employee as an assault on any Jordanian employee and any assault on al-Aqsa as an assault on the Jordanian sovereignty.

The Jordanian government is also demanded to develop its political stance which seems to be restricted with the peace agreement signed with the occupation state. It should not rely on

“assurances” provided recently by Occupation PM Benjamin Netanyahu regarding maintaining the status quo following Zionist projects to end Jordan sovereignty over al-Aqsa. In addition, the Jordan parliament is demanded to assume an effective role through adopting al-Aqsa as a priority and monitoring the government’s political and field performance in this respect.

On top of that, popular constituents in Jordan are demanded to assume a strong and effective role through the organization of events supportive of al-Aqsa and rejecting Judaization projects in a way that shows solidarity with the Mosque in addition to exercising pressure on the government and the political level in general to prevent being dragged to appeasement of the occupation.

#### ***D. Recommendations to Arab and Islamic Governments***

The official stance towards al-Aqsa on the Arab and Islamic levels can in the least be described as weak and unable to face the size and momentum of the occupation’s Judaization project. Thus, at a time when the occupation and all its constituents support the Judaization project, Arab and Islamic governments seem to be not aware of what is being prepared for al-Aqsa and their stances, at the best, are condemnatory and threatening against the consequences of the occupation measures and aggressions. Despite the importance of the political stance which is in part expressed through rejection of the occupation measures, this stance could not be of importance if not intertwined with genuine steps on the ground where the occupation knows that its aggression is not without a cost. Consequently, Arab and Islamic countries are required to exercise pressure on the occupation through activating diplomatic and economic boycott where Israel cannot be rewarded for its practices with diplomatic relations or trade exchange. These governments are also demanded to support the rights and demands of the Palestinian people rather than attempting to appease the occupation through supporting the negotiations track without benefitting from the trump cards and elements of pressure they have. Equally important is the provision of financial support for protecting al-Aqsa through supporting the Jerusalemites and the Palestinians of the territories occupied in 1948 to support their resilience as they are the most capable to be present in the Mosque and defend it.

#### ***E. Recommendations for the Palestinian Masses***

The Palestinians are essentially responsible for protecting al-Aqsa given that they are mostly concerned with the issue. Restoring the Mosque needs continuous struggle and resilience facing the practices of the occupation which aims at breaking the will and stamina of the Palestinians. Firstly, the Jerusalemites and the 1948 Palestinians are the major defenders of al-Aqsa as they are closest to the Mosque geographically and the most capable of reaching it despite restrictions imposed on them by the Occupation authorities. Given the important role of convoys meant to visit al-Aqsa in providing *Murabitoun* and worshippers who face settlers’ breakings into al-Aqsa, Palestinians in the territories occupied in 1948 in particular, whose efforts are praised and appreciated, are called to increase these campaigns and to provide continuous presence in the Mosque as such presence can foil settlers’ storming into al-Aqsa. They are also invited to

innovate suitable tools to foil the occupation's attempts to restrain their movement and access to the Mosque.

The Jerusalemites for their part are called to defy the constraints imposed by the Occupation to alienate them from the Mosque by subjecting them to continuous persecution, arrest and investigation. The role assumed by the Jerusalemites is particularly effective in documenting and revealing the occupation's aggressions through benefiting from spaces provided by modern media and communication platforms.

Palestinians in the West Bank are called to express solidarity with al-Aqsa and to overcome the restrictions imposed by the PA through security coordination with the occupation. In this respect, demonstrations against the occupation practices is the minimal level of support in addition to continuous presence in the Mosque despite imposed constraints, which would provide the Mosque with worshippers and *Murabitoun* although in limited numbers.

Gaza has shown firm belief in the resistance as a tool to restore usurped rights as was demonstrated in the last war on the Strip in the summer of 2014. Gazans are called to address the issue of al-Aqsa on equal foot with the blockade and to consider the Israeli aggressions on the Mosque an assault on them and on their holy sites while embracing tools of solidarity and support.

The role of Palestinian refugees is as important as that of Palestinians at home where room for work and action is greater and the possibility for mobilization is more comprehensive. Refugees are demanded to adopt the issue of Jerusalem and al-Aqsa as equal to the issue of refugees and complementary to the right of return. Palestinians in Europe specifically are demanded to deal seriously with the issue of Jerusalem and al-Aqsa and to effectively work to reveal Israeli aggressions on the holy sites in order to create public opinion aware of the occupation's crimes. They also have to seek to impact the official level and put pressure on European governments to face these aggressions and persecute the perpetrators.

#### ***F. Recommendations for Arab and Islamic Peoples***

Arab and Islamic masses have played an important role in forming the situation of the Arab and Muslim world today. The millions that took out to the streets in different Arab countries have led to the downfall of political regimes although these were reproduced in some countries for reasons that are beyond the scope of this report. However, it was clear throughout the last three years that the Arab and Islamic peoples have been distracted away from the nation's crucial issues and were consumed in internal concerns and problems that distanced them from the aggressions of the Israeli occupation in Jerusalem and al-Aqsa.

Given the centrality of al-Aqsa in the Arab-Israeli conflict, Arab and Islamic masses are demanded to tackle this issue as a daily concern based on which they would determine their stances when voting for political figures, parties and programs.

Different parties and bodies are called to enhance their address to mobilize the masses in support of Jerusalem and al-Aqsa and to organize events especially on those occasions that have been landmarks in the history of Jerusalem, al-Aqsa and the whole Palestinian issue.

### ***G. Recommendations for International and Regional Bodies and Organizations***

Examining the role of the League of Arab States and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) shows that these two sides are working within a framework incapable of seriously addressing the Judaization project that targets al-Aqsa Mosque. Thus, despite revealing Israeli violations in final statements of periodic and urgent summits, tackling the solution seems still unripe and is not tantamount to the size of challenges and dangers. Accordingly, both the League of Arab States and the OIC are demanded to assume a firm position in harmony with the dangers facing al-Aqsa rather than waiting the Occupation to pursue practical steps. In addition, they are demanded to not provide any cover for any concessions regarding Jerusalem and al-Aqsa that might be provided under the guise of negotiations and compromises.

The two organizations are called for joint and effective work that could foil Israeli measures while activating the legal dimension of al-Aqsa issue based on relevant Security Council (SC) resolutions. They are also invited to activate their bureaus and bodies responsible for supporting Jerusalem and the holy sites especially the Jerusalem Committee affiliated with the OIC and Jerusalem and al-Aqsa funds and to exercise pressure on the United Nations (UN) to execute its resolutions related to Jerusalem, and to document the occupation crimes against Jerusalem and al-Aqsa.

The UN and the SC are also called to assume a firm and binding stance that incriminates the occupation and ensures that Jerusalem is an occupied city subject to the application of the Geneva Accords. In addition, they are called to lay mechanisms for the execution of their resolutions especially regarding sending commission of inquiry to investigate violations in the Old City in Jerusalem despite Israeli intransigence.

### ***H. Recommendations for Parties Concerned with Jerusalem***

The multiplicity of sides working for Jerusalem with lack of coordination leads in most cases to repetition of efforts and flaw in serving the different Jerusalem sectors. Accordingly, the bodies working for Jerusalem are required to coordinate their work and unify their efforts in a way that leads to genuine and tangible support according to the needs and requirements for their perseverance. Of high importance are the projects of *Masateb el-'Elm* and *Shadd el-Rihal* that guarantee continuous presence of worshipers and students in the Mosque and protect it against extremists' break-ins. Parties concerned with Jerusalem are also demanded to work on finding popular and official *Waqf* trusts that would create a long term support for Jerusalem and al-Aqsa in addition to forming a charitable alliance to support the Mosque and provide Jerusalem society with independence from Israeli economy.

### ***I. Recommendations for Religious Authorities***

Religious authorities, institutions and unions besides jurisprudential academies, are entrusted with a huge responsibility towards al-Aqsa. They are thus required to reiterate its sanctity and consider any assault on the Mosque as an infringement on the dignity of the whole nation. Religious authorities are also demanded to clear the misconceptions related to al-Aqsa including its physical details like its borders and its area which is considered religiously as 144 thousand square meters that embrace all what the Mosque's fences include (courtyards, domes, wells, etc...). Consecrating al-Aqsa as a central issue for Muslims and Arabs is a huge responsibility that is part of convictions and beliefs, while religious authorities have a major role in mobilizing the masses towards the support of al-Aqsa. In light of challenges and conditions, religious authorities are invited to issue an edict that prohibits concessions and negotiations regarding Jerusalem and al-Aqsa.

### ***J. Recommendations for Media Outlets and Media Persons***

It is important to highlight the importance of media in forming public opinion and directing it as was clear in the media coverage of Arab revolutions as well as in the media war parallel to the Israeli war on Gaza in the summer of 2014. Accordingly, media outlets are demanded to maintain al-Aqsa issue at the forefront of their coverage of developments in Arab and Islamic countries and to tackle it as a crucial issue of the nation that cannot be overlooked lest media become partner to the Judaization project.

Uncovering the occupation's crimes and its Judaization projects through the media has a major role in bringing attention to such projects thus creating an environment that helps to foil them. It is important for media to adopt a media strategy that embraces Jerusalem and al-Aqsa as a priority where it covers their developments continuously rather than on specific occasions. This is important to define the determinants that shape public opinion and steer it. Moreover, media persons and journalists are demanded to tackle the issue of al-Aqsa in their productions and to cover its different aspects whether on the level of the occupation practices or the tools to face them.

### ***K. Recommendations for the Youths***

The youths have great energies that allow them to play an important and effective role in support of Jerusalem and al-Aqsa. The most important things the youths can do are encouraging individual initiatives and benefitting from cyberspace and from social media platforms to reveal the crimes of the occupation. Nonetheless, the youth are called to not be restricted to virtual resistance as work on the ground remains the most significant factor in defending righteous issues and securing them.

### ***L. Recommendations for Legal Parties***

According to international law, Jerusalem is an occupied city and there have been many resolutions issued by international organizations and bodies stressing the illegality of the occupation measures in Jerusalem. Thus, legal parties are demanded to wage legal battle against the occupation and to consecrate the legal right of the nation to Jerusalem and its Mosque where



the role of Arab and Islamic Diaspora in the West is essential in this respect. The issue of Jerusalem is a winning case and those parties are thus demanded to launch awareness campaigns regarding the nation's right to Jerusalem and al-Aqsa, and the illegality of the occupation, its claims and measures.





