

Jerusalem: Demographic, Political and Religious Issues in Need of Answers

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Jerusalem

(These are only reference points for the purpose of facilitating the discussions that would follow through a Skype or Messenger talk.)

<http://www.acri.org.il/en/2017/05/24/east-jerusalem-facts-and-figures-2017/>

On Jerusalem Day 2017, as Israel marks 50 years to the “reunification of Jerusalem,” ACRI The Association for Civil Rights in Israel presents its Facts and Figures 2017, highlighting the continuous neglect, oppression, and poverty in East Jerusalem.

Below are some of ACRI’s findings from the report, which paint a concerning picture of the human rights situation in East Jerusalem:

According to the Central Bureau of Statistics, 323,700 Palestinian residents live in Jerusalem, constituting 37% of the total population of the city. Some estimates suggest that the number of Palestinian residents is actually higher.

76% of the residents of East Jerusalem and 83.4% of the children live below the poverty line, according to the poverty report of the National Insurance Institute. The poverty rate average in Israel is 21.7%, and 30% among children.

There is a shortage of around 2,000 classrooms in the official public education system in East Jerusalem, according to the Municipality’s estimate. The cost of constructing these classrooms is two billion shekels.

The number of residents of East Jerusalem who appear in the records of HaGihon Water and Sewage Corporation is 192,281. Accordingly, only 59% of the residents of East Jerusalem are connected legally and properly to the water grid.

http://www.jerusalemstitute.org.il/.upload/yearbook/2017/shnaton_C1017.pdf

In 2015, the total population of Jerusalem was 865,720 according to the Yearbook of Jerusalem. Of these, Jews were 528,700 or roughly 61.1% of the total population; Palestinian Muslims made up 36% of the population with 311,130 inhabitants and indigenous Palestinian Christians were 12,420 or 1.4% and 3,200 expatriate Christians. Jerusalem is a city where the believers of the three monotheistic religions intermingle and run elbow with each other. Each has their separate holy places and their occasions and holy days. One of the problems facing Jerusalem is the attempt by extremist religious elements among the Jewish people to change the Status Quo in the Aqsa Mosque. When in July two Arab Israelis killed three Israeli policemen in an attack within the compound of Al Haram Al Sharif, there was an attempt by the Israeli government to change the status quo by placing electronic gates at the entrance gates of the Mosque together with other monitoring devices and cameras. This was absolutely rejected by the

Palestinians and a nonviolent sit in and prayers took place outside the Mosque environs to the extent that at one point there were over 30,000 Muslims and Christian Palestinians present in protest. With the intervention of King Abdullah of Jordan, who is the guardian of all holy places for Muslims and Christians in the city of Jerusalem and that of President Mahmoud Abbas the Israeli government had to desist from its position on electronic gates and devices and to pull them down.

<https://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/other-ecumenical-bodies/1994-memorandum-of-their-beatitudes-the-patriarchs-and-of-the-heads-of-christian-communities-in-jerusalem>

1994 Memorandum of Their Beatitudes the Patriarchs and of the heads of Christian communities in Jerusalem 14 November 1994

On Monday, 14 November 1994, the heads of the Christian communities in Jerusalem met in solemn conclave to discuss the status of the Holy City and the situation of the Christians there, at the conclusion of which, they issued the following declaration:

Jerusalem, Holy City

Jerusalem is a city holy for the people of the three monotheistic religions: Judaism, Christianity and Islam. Its unique nature of sanctity endows it with a special vocation: calling for reconciliation and harmony among people, whether citizens, pilgrims or visitors. And because of its symbolic and emotive value, Jerusalem has been a rallying cry for different revived nationalistic and fundamentalist stirrings in the region and elsewhere. And, unfortunately, the city has become a source of conflict and disharmony. It is at the heart of the Israeli-Palestinian and Israeli-Arab disputes. While the mystical call of the city attracts believers, its present unenviable situation scandalizes many.

Present Positions

When the different sides involved now speak of Jerusalem, they often assume exclusivist positions. Their claims are very divergent, indeed conflicting. The Israeli position is that Jerusalem should remain the unified and eternal capital of the State of Israel under the absolute sovereignty of Israel alone. The Palestinians, on the other hand, insist Jerusalem should become the capital of a future State of Palestine; although they do not lay claim to the entire modern city, but envisage only the eastern, Arab part.

The Continuing Presence of a Christian Community

For Christianity, Jerusalem is the place of roots, ever-living and nourishing. In Jerusalem is born every Christian. To be in Jerusalem is for every Christian to be at home.

For almost two thousand years, through so many hardships and the succession of so many powers, the local Church with its faithful has always been actively present in Jerusalem. Across the centuries, the local Church has witnessed the life and work, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ in the same Holy Places and its faithful have been receiving other brothers and sisters in the faith, as pilgrims, resident or in transit, inviting them to be reimmersed into the refreshing, ever-living ecclesiastical sources. That

continuing presence of a living Christian community is inseparable from the historical sites. Through the "living stones," the holy archaeological sites take on "life."

Conclusion

Jerusalem is a symbol and a promise of the presence of God, of fraternity and peace for humankind, in particular the children of Abraham: Jews, Christians and Muslims.

We call upon all parties concerned to comprehend and accept the nature and deep significance of Jerusalem, City of God. None can appropriate it in exclusivist ways. We invite each party to go beyond all exclusivist visions or actions, and without discrimination, to consider the religious and national aspirations of others in order to give back to Jerusalem its true universal character and to make of the city a holy place of reconciliation for humankind.

http://www.knesset.gov.il/laws/special/eng/basic10_eng.htm Text of the Basic Law on Jerusalem

Israeli Position on Jerusalem

In 1980, the Israeli Knesset approved a Basic Law, which is a foundational statute in the country's unwritten constitution. This 1980 law is entitled "Basic Law: Jerusalem, Capital of Israel." The law establishes Jerusalem as the country's official capital. The Basic Law has four clauses. First, that "Jerusalem, complete and united, is the capital of Israel." Second, that "Jerusalem is the seat of the President of the State, the Knesset, the Government and the Supreme Court." The third clause deals with protection of "Holy Places" and the fourth clause deals with administrative matters.

Palestinian Position on Jerusalem

The Palestinians claim Jerusalem (al-Quds) as the capital of a future Palestinian state. In the Palestine Liberation Organization's Palestinian Declaration of Independence of 1988, Jerusalem is stated to be the capital of the State of Palestine. In 2000 the Palestinian Authority passed a law designating East Jerusalem as such, and in 2002 this law was ratified by President Arafat. [6] [7] According to the Palestinian Authority Ministry of Information, the official Palestinian position on Jerusalem includes four points: [8]

- That East Jerusalem is occupied territory according to United Nations Security Council Resolution 242, and is part of the territory over which a Palestinian state, when established, shall exercise sovereignty (against UN General Assembly Resolution 181).
- According to previously signed agreements with Israel, the status of "Jerusalem" (and not specifically East Jerusalem) is subject to permanent status negotiations.
- Jerusalem should be an open city that is freely accessible, and should remain undivided regardless of the resolution of the question of sovereignty.
- A Palestinian state would be committed to freedom of worship for all and take all measures to protect and safeguard sites of religious significance.

The Position of the United Nations

The position of the United Nations on the question of Jerusalem is contained in General Assembly resolution 181 and subsequent resolutions of the General Assembly and the Security Council concerning this question. A total of six UN Security Council resolutions on Israel have denounced or declared invalid Israel's attempts to unify the city, though none of them have been Chapter VII resolutions.

The UN Security Council, in UNSC resolution 478, declared that the 1980 Jerusalem Law declaring unified Jerusalem, including annexed East Jerusalem, as Israel's "eternal and indivisible" capital was "null and void and must be rescinded forthwith" (14-0-1, with United States abstaining). The resolution advised member states to withdraw their diplomatic representation from the city as a punitive measure.

The Position of the EU

European Union position

It is the EU's position that a fair solution should be found to the complex issue of Jerusalem, in the context of the two-state solution set out in the roadmap, taking into account the political and religious concerns of all parties.

"The EU opposes measures which would prejudge the outcome of permanent status negotiations on Jerusalem, basing its policy on the principles set out in UN Security Council Resolution 242, notably the impossibility of acquisition of territory by force.

The EU is concerned that Israeli policies are reducing the possibility of reaching a final status agreement on Jerusalem and are in violation of both Israel's Roadmap obligations and international law.

The EU has also called for the reopening of Palestinian institutions in East Jerusalem, in accordance with the Road Map, in particular the Orient House and the Chamber of Commerce, and has called on the Israeli government to cease all discriminatory treatment of Palestinians in East Jerusalem, especially concerning work permits, access to education and health services, building permits, house demolitions, taxation and expenditure."

The Position of the United States

The **United States Jerusalem Embassy Act**, passed by Congress in 1995, states that "Jerusalem should be recognized as the capital of the State of Israel; and the United States Embassy in Israel should be established in Jerusalem no later than May 31, 1999". Since then, the relocation of the embassy from Tel Aviv is being suspended by the President semi-annually, each time stating that "[the] Administration remains committed to beginning the process of moving our embassy to Jerusalem". As a result of the Embassy Act, official U.S. documents and web sites refer to Jerusalem as the capital of Israel.

The Position of the United Kingdom

The UK believes that the city's status has yet to be determined, and maintains that it should be settled in an overall agreement between the parties concerned, but considers that the city should not again be

divided. The Declaration of Principles and the Interim Agreement, signed by Israel and the PLO on 13 September 1993 and 28 September 1995 respectively, left the issue of the status of Jerusalem to be decided in the 'permanent status' negotiations between the two parties.

Can there be Peace without the Peace of Jerusalem?

We need to work in order to promote Jerusalem as the Capital of the two peoples; Israeli and Palestinian and as the inclusivist holy city for the three religions; Judaism, Christianity and Islam.

Without the Peace of Jerusalem there can be no peace for both of our Peoples in this troubled part of the Middle East region.