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**Building Resilience in Area East
Jerusalem**

Introduction – Challenges to Development in East Jerusalem

Jerusalem is one of the most contested cities in the world today, with claims over its sovereignty ranging back centuries. Since the occupation of East Jerusalem (EJ) in 1967, Israel has sustained military and civil control of East Jerusalem. Although there was no “formal” annexation or claim of full sovereignty over EJ, it was effectively annexed by Israel in 1980 under the Jerusalem Law, which states “Jerusalem, complete and united, is the capital of Israel.”¹ This act has been universally condemned by international actors, and declared null and void by the United Nations (UN) Security Council Resolution 478. Despite international criticism, Jerusalem was placed under Israeli law, jurisdiction, and administration and remains so today.

Jerusalem possesses social, economic, political, and religious significance. Thus, in the pursuit to build this “united” and “undivided” capital of Israel, Israeli policies in East Jerusalem are designed to best suit Israeli security, political, and economic interests. Ongoing land annexation and settlement building continue to alter the demographic, physical, and cultural makeup of the city. Policies that discriminate against the Palestinian population are prevalent. These laws are constructed specifically to prevent Palestinian Jerusalemites from developing a united, safe, and flourishing community, with a strong identity, culture, and economy, grounded in social and community cohesion. Instead, a discriminatory permit and zoning system, inequitable citizenship law, limited municipal autonomy, the building of the Separation Barrier, and exclusionary urban plans, have combined to create an increasingly uninhabitable area of Jerusalem.

¹ Zahriyeh, Ehab, “Who owns Jerusalem?” *Al Jazeera*. 30th October 2014.
<<http://america.aljazeera.com/articles/2014/10/30/jerusalem-statusinternationalregime.html>>

Over the past three decades, the situation in EJ has severely deteriorated, raising concerns for key stakeholders who are at a loss for how best to address the ongoing occupation and structurally inequitable policies. An OCHA led fact-finding mission² reported that approximately 298,000 Palestinians live in Jerusalem. Out of these, tens of thousands have been isolated behind the 2002 Separation Barrier, in exceedingly disadvantaged situations, often caught in areas with no clear sovereignty and with little access to municipal services, either in Jerusalem or the West Bank. Many Palestinians feel forced to relocate to areas in the West Bank, given the systemic challenges facing them in accessing equitable housing, employment, education, health care and other social services. Furthermore, it has been noted that the Jerusalem authority only allocates approximately 10% of its budget to EJ,³ with the remainder going to West Jerusalem. There are huge socio-economic disparities between the two areas, to the extent that they could be classified into two quite different human development categories.⁴

Despite the extremely complex challenges of living in EJ - the daily and consistent interruptions to normal life, the ongoing violence, oppression, and humiliation, and constant erosion of the existing societal fabric - residents have remained rooted to the land. In this way, EJ Palestinians have already demonstrated their resiliency, and willingness to persevere in the face of considerable discrimination. We therefore seek to explore this resiliency, find ways to channel it towards a unified goal, and go one step further, to take resilience from merely coping and adapting to genuine transformation.

A Geography of Fear

The complex biased spatial-legal nexus in EJ has created what was termed the “geography of fear”⁵ in 2007, an expression that remains highly relevant almost ten years later. This geography of fear is characterised by a multitude of discriminatory policies: unending settlement-building, which seeks to change the demographic nature of the city; the demolition or confiscation of Palestinian homes through a combination of restrictive zoning and permit laws; the construction of the Separation Barrier, which constitutes a physical and psychological division between EJ communities and their counterparts in the West Bank; and finally, through unequal urban planning processes, which, *inter alia*, change traditionally Arab zones into Israeli ones, promote Israeli residency, and limit Palestinian permits for construction.

It is estimated that only 13% of East Jerusalem is zoned for Palestinian construction, much of which is already built-up, creating serious housing shortages for the growing local population. Despite this, it is reported that at least a third of the Palestinian residents of Jerusalem do not have the appropriate building permits, which are difficult to obtain, to build or rehabilitate their homes. It is estimated that at least 90,000 residents are at risk of displacement. The fragmentation and inequality created by this situation also has a multiplier effect by creating a Palestinian identity crisis through social disintegration, limited economic growth, the inhibition of Palestinian decision-making power, and untold psychological damage.

² East Jerusalem: Key Humanitarian Issues. OCHA. 2014. See: <http://www.ochaopt.org/content/east-jerusalem-key-humanitarian-concerns-august-2014>

³ Thrall, N. 2014. Rage in Jerusalem. *London Review of Books*. Available at: <<http://www.lrb.co.uk/v36/n23/nathan-thrall/rage-in-jerusalem>>.

⁴ Palestine is classified as ‘medium’ human development (including EJ), whereas Israel is classified as ‘very high’ human development. While the Human Development Index does not account for internal inequalities, this is telling of the development disparity between East and West.

⁵ Benvenisti, Meron. “Jerusalem, Past, Present and Future.” *Palestine-Israel Journal*. 40:1. 2007. <<http://www.pij.org/details.php?id=1050>>

Indeed, settlement expansion and citizenship law has not only fragmented existing communities and prevented other Palestinians from settling in Jerusalem, but has led to a Jewish population increase that now far outstrips the Palestinian population, suggestive of the Israeli will to simultaneously increase the Israeli population and displace the Palestinian population of EJ. This is made clear in Israeli master-plans, which envision Jerusalem in 2050 as an Israeli technological hub, which has a minimal Palestinian population. These strategies work simultaneously to complicate and obscure the ability to achieve the economic, political, social, and psychological well-being of Palestinians in EJ.



Discriminatory Legal System

This geography of fear is very much grounded in the discriminatory legal system. Palestinian residents of Jerusalem are not granted full Israeli citizenship, but are instead given the status of “permanent residents”. This is complicated by the prejudiced “centre of life” policy, which requires Palestinian residents, and not Israelis, to prove that their ambiguously defined “centre of life” remains Jerusalem at all times. Any extended period of time overseas, employment or education in another city, or marriage to a Palestinian from the West Bank endangers a Palestinians’ “centre of life” status, creating another constraint on the Palestinian population. Losing your “centre of life” status results in eviction from Jerusalem.

The Israeli government allows Jerusalem Palestinians to apply for Israeli citizenship, provided that they swear allegiance to Israel and denounce all other citizenships. Despite the fact that most Palestinians are unwilling to denounce their Palestinian citizenship, regardless of whether they would be able to access better legal rights and protections under Israeli law, greater numbers of Palestinians have been applying for Israeli citizenship in recent years, a trend that speaks to the carefully planned Israeli strategy of placing pressure on the Palestinian citizens of Jerusalem.⁶ Although an Israeli passport does afford greater

⁶ Barakat, Rimam. “Quietly, East Jerusalem Palestinians acquiring Israeli citizenship.” *+972 Magazine*. May 20th 2012. <<http://972mag.com/quietly-east-jerusalem-palestinians-are-becoming-israeli-citizens/46298>>

rights – freedom of movement, most significantly – it is also creating greater fragmentation in Palestinian identity and community in EJ. The proliferating effect of this is greater economic, political, and social strife and disadvantage.



Psychosocial Impact

The unequal, discriminatory, and violent status quo in Jerusalem has led to high levels of psychosocial concerns, trauma, unsafe coping mechanisms, social discord, and compounded instability in all areas. Furthermore, this has caused high levels of frustration at the limited opportunity and lack of freedom, particularly among young people, who feel they have limited or no control over their own futures.

The isolation of East Jerusalem caused by the Separation Barrier and closer proximity to the Israeli population has led to social fragmentation both within EJ communities, and between EJ and the rest of the occupied Palestinian territory. The legal and political opacity coupled with unclear national identity are leading causes of psychosocial concerns within the area.

Protracted exposure to trauma and violence has led to high levels of PTSD within EJ society, as well as poor mental health, and symptoms such as violent aggression. Together, these likely lead to unsafe coping mechanisms,⁷ including increasing drug and alcohol consumption, unprotected sexual activity, leading to HIV/AIDS and STDs, and the greater prevalence of violence. Drug use is of particular concern due to the inability of Palestinian law enforcement authorities to police this area. As a result, drugs classified as illegal in the State of Palestine are widely traded in Jerusalem and drug dealers are not prosecuted.⁸ The diversion of the population's attention, particularly young people, to unsafe coping methods is of particular concern to resilience-based programming.

Innovative and safe coping alternatives must be introduced to young people. Solutions must be provided that consider the psychosocial impact of socio-economic stagnation, identity confusion, loss of culture, instability and constant fear, poor social services, and internal tensions.

⁷ Massad, Salwa G et al. "Substance use among Palestinian youth in the West Bank, Palestine: a qualitative investigation." *BMC Public Health*. 16:800. Accessible at <<https://bmcpublihealth.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s12889-016-3472-4>>

⁸ Ibid

Transformative Resilience: A New Approach

After almost 50 years of occupation, conditions have only deteriorated. It is time therefore for key stakeholders to take a moment to rethink aid to EJ – *why is it not working and what can be done to remedy this?* Therefore, the rest of this paper will propose a new framework for aid, grounded in transformative resilience, which will inform future interventions to empower the people of EJ.

While resilience approaches are ubiquitous within aid programming today, *transformative* resilience seeks to go beyond helping populations cope or adapt to ongoing or recurrent shocks, but instead to transform themselves. This means that people return not only to their previous level of welfare, but transcend this to become empowered. Thus, becoming resilient will not only help to reduce the vulnerability of individuals, communities, and systems, but will take them a step further in proactively empowering those who are now resilient to move beyond mere coping and adapting, to transforming. This approach seeks to tackle not only the symptoms of protracted crisis, but the actual root causes of intersecting vulnerabilities. Most importantly, the resilience approach takes into account intersectionality, and seeks to reach the most vulnerable within a society, to ensure that no one is left behind and that existing unequal power structures are not propped up once again.



Areas of Intervention

Despite the aforementioned, complex, and interlinked challenges, “the Israeli government’s ceaseless efforts... at making EJ an integral part of Israel have so far been thwarted by Palestinian resilience and collective memory.”⁹ It is this existing resilience that we seek to harness to become transformative and improve the untenable situation for EJ residents.

⁹ Kamrava, Mehran. *The Impossibility of Palestine: History, Geography, and the Road Ahead*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2016.

The existing development (socio-economic deterioration; lack of political representation; inability for advancement; limited access to services; paucity of law enforcement, and so on) and humanitarian (forced demolitions; forced evictions; settler violence; psychosocial needs; and so on) combine to create a unique situation, which requires nuanced and considered thought. The concurrent development and humanitarian challenges must be tackled simultaneously and in a consistent manner, to confront the root causes of vulnerability rather than the symptoms.

National Identity and Community Cohesion

Palestinian Jerusalemites are greatly disadvantaged by their isolation from the rest of the occupied Palestinian territory. Spatial fragmentation and isolation has also manifested as national, community, and psychological fragmentation and separation from the rest of their Palestinian peers. This is worsened by the Separation Barrier, which also divided Jerusalem communities, to those within and outside of the Wall. Although international actors do consider EJ part of the West Bank, this disintegration of a sense of community is particularly damaging. While residents of EJ consider themselves Palestinian, they are also Jerusalemites, a facet that is similarly seen in other areas of the State of Palestine. This state of confused national identity has led to a breakdown in social and community cohesion, which is an important prerequisite for both a future independent state and a resilient one.

The inability of the Palestinian government to govern all areas of the State of Palestine has also led to a greater breakdown in social cohesion, where Palestinians in different areas of the State of Palestine are governed by different structures, with varying levels of sovereignty. Dissimilar structures of governance have also led to a differing rights situation in each area, which has led to internal discord and a lack of unity between areas. To those in Gaza and Area C of the West Bank, it seems that residents of EJ have greater rights than individuals in other areas, particularly in terms of freedom of movement. Yet, EJ residents face unique challenges not faced by other areas, particularly impacted by the absence of accountable governance, working for the rights of the Palestinian residents of EJ. The divisive nature of Israeli policy in each area is manifested in internal discord, the major cause of national disunity and lack of common national objectives and plans. This has been further worsened by the Israelization policy, which has been slowly eroding the Palestinian characteristic of EJ and Palestinian national identity.

On a ***practical level***, interventions thus must work towards increasing the links between EJ and the rest of the occupied Palestinian territory, to foster efforts to create one national Palestinian identity. Palestinian residents must themselves be empowered to advocate for their own rights, especially those who are already socially disadvantaged, such as women and youth. This is particularly important for equipping Palestinians with the tools necessary to transform their existing situation. Programming must focus on improving the rights situation of EJ residents, who are subject to extreme discrimination by the existing legal system, by improving access to justice and legal representation.

On a ***policy level***, international actors must lobby the Israeli government to radically alter its residency, zoning, and citizenship laws, to end the discriminatory “centre of life” policy, and to provide Palestinians with the same rights as Israeli residents of Jerusalem. Advocacy groups must continue to document human rights violations against Palestinian residents, including arbitrary arrests, administrative detention, forced evictions, forced demolitions, as well as those institutionalised into Israeli law. Documented violations can be utilised to lobby both the Israeli government and the international community to place pressure on Israel to be held accountable to its obligations under international law.

Cultural Rehabilitation

Closely linked to community cohesion, cultural rehabilitation is a significant part of fostering national identity, particularly in an area where Israeli policies seek to erode the Palestinian identity (physically, culturally, and psychologically). This also includes the Israeli limitations on religious rights and access to long-standing holy or cultural sites, most significantly Al-Aqsa Mosque. Palestinian cultural sites have long been under attack by the Israeli authorities, who have repeatedly shut down, demolished, or banned cultural structures.

On a **practical level**, cultural interventions, grounded in today's manifestation of *Sumud* as everyday acts of agency, emphasise a celebration of Palestinian life, perseverance, and steadfastness through the preservation of Palestinian art, culture, music and most importantly, identity. Community development through cultural rehabilitation must be a cornerstone of building national identity and community cohesion.



On a **policy level**, lobbying for increased access to cultural and religious sites is an important part of building national and cultural identity, which will help lead to greater community cohesion. Interventions that help support cultural programmes are essential. Not only do cultural programmes foster national spirit, but they also act as a form of resilience building against the trials of the occupation.

Cultural rehabilitation includes an examination of the education system in EJ. Depleted, underfunded, and chronically under-resourced, education in EJ leaves much to be desired. While the national Palestinian curriculum is generally taught, since 2011 there have been claims that the Israeli Municipality has been pressuring schools to adopt the Israeli-censored curriculum prepared by the Jerusalem Education Administration¹⁰ by promising increased funding. If this does go ahead in the majority of Palestinian schools, a distressing erosion of Palestinian identity, culture, and even language will take place, as Palestinian children are schooled in the Israeli way of life, rather than Palestinian.

¹⁰ Arafah, Nur. "Palestinian initiatives in East Jerusalem: Building "resilience" or "Sumud"?" August 2016.

This is why, **on a practical level**, interventions into EJ must also concentrate on the education system by providing short-term funding to schools. **On a policy level**, in the medium-term, international actors must lobby the Israeli authority to provide equitable funds and resources to Palestinian school, and to approve permits for the establishment of new educational institutions and rehabilitative construction to improve facilities. In the long-term, lobbying must also focus on allowing EJ schools to be under the remit of the Palestinian Government as a means of increasing links between Palestinian children and youth.

Economic Resilience and Social Development

The socio-economic situation in EJ is dire; with limited economic opportunity, potential for growth, and access to finance, in tandem with a restrictive construction and zoning permit system, there is widespread frustration and hopelessness. However, despite the challenging context, there remain areas still open to intervention that can help build economic resilience. The lack of economic opportunity is consistently cited as one of the main reasons for the overall disadvantage and marginalization of Palestinian communities. Currently, approximately 75% of Palestinian residents of EJ live under the poverty line.¹¹

Economic opportunity is underpinned by relevant social development interventions, specifically access to basic services. The inadequacies of governance in EJ have led to poor access to already low quality services. This is particularly so for those communities that reside behind the Separation Barrier. More specifically in areas like Kufr Aqab, Shufat, Dahyat e Salam etc., access to education and health is contracted to private parties. Israeli municipality workers do not enter these areas and rely on subcontractors to sustain waste management, infrastructure development, and other services. In contrast, Jewish Israeli neighbourhoods in Jerusalem continue to receive a range of services that are directly managed by the municipality and its workers. It is also well documented that the budget for Palestinian residents in Jerusalem is significantly lower than Israeli residents.

On a policy level, international actors must lobby the Jerusalem Ministry to provide Palestinian residents with equitable access to social services, approve permit requests for the building of health and educational establishments, and remind the Government of Israel of its obligations to provide for the citizens of an occupied state by the occupier under International Humanitarian Law (IHL).

On a practical level, to develop successful social interventions international actors must first conduct strenuous community mapping across Palestinian centres in East Jerusalem, in order to gain a clear understanding of current borders, services, and gaps.

In many cases, Palestinian residents have taken matters into their own hands and developed community response mechanisms to respond to infrastructural and service issues (including water and electricity shortages). These areas must be documented and potentially bolstered to empower Palestinian communities to become increasingly self-sufficient. The conception of 'autonomous innovation' is extremely relevant in designing interventions in EJ, where residents have repeatedly demonstrated their existing resilience. In these cases, "approaches to innovation that are inclusive, bottom-up and frugal or draw on the philosophy of *jugaad* (a Hindi term for cheap and simple solutions) are highly relevant."¹² This concept fortifies the framework of transformative resilience, by seeking solutions that

¹¹ Association for Civil Rights in Israel, "East Jerusalem 2015: Facts and Figures." 12 May 2015. Accessible at: <<http://www.acri.org.il/en/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/EJ-Facts-and-Figures-2015.pdf>>

¹² Bahadur, Aditya and Julian Doczi, "Unlocking resilience through autonomous innovation," ODI. January 2016. Accessible at: <<https://www.odi.org/publications/10059-unlocking-resilience-through-autonomous-innovation>>

are community- and grassroots-driven, and to institutionalise existing informal systems. These *jugaad* principles can be utilised to innovate and improve existing practice in all areas, but particularly in socio-economic development.

Building Economic Resilience

Building economic resilience relies on the development of Palestinian self-sufficiency and the reduction of dependence on the Israeli economy; finding new ways to circumvent the Israeli restrictions through autonomous innovation; and bolstering and investing in existing successful interventions.

Considering Jerusalem's worldwide religious and historical significance, tourism is a key area for intervention. With some 3.5 million tourists visiting Jerusalem every year, 88% of tourists stay in hotels in West Jerusalem, while only 12%¹³ stay in East Jerusalem. The number of active hotels in East Jerusalem decreased from 30 in 2012 to 24 in 2014.¹⁴ Israeli policies strategically limit Palestinian initiatives to increase tourism through measures such as: "the isolation of East Jerusalem; shortage of land available for Palestinian construction; the subsequently high cost of land; high taxes; weak physical and economic infrastructure; difficult licensing procedures for Palestinian tourist businesses; obstacles on the issuing of permits to build hotels or convert buildings to hotels; and investment of millions of dollars in the Israeli tourism market, leading to unequal competition between Palestinian and Israeli tourism industries."¹⁵

On a practical level, interventions are needed to better structure the tourism industry with a unified vision, and to invest in initiatives that are already demonstrating success. These interventions can focus on knowledge building for Palestinian actors; better structuring of the sector; increased marketing and visibility; targeting new markets; and encouraging the creation of new, innovative products. This approach is already being implemented by some international actors in EJ, but requires further resources to see a long-term change. **On a policy level**, international actors once again must advocate for the Palestinian right to fair tourism and trade and equitable access to the tourism market, which is currently limited by the permit system.

Beyond the tourism sector, livelihoods must be diversified to allow for Palestinian self-sufficiency from the Israeli occupation economy. EJ residents are further disadvantaged by the high cost of living and weak purchasing power, particularly those who work within the Palestinian labour market. Therefore, private sector development as a whole must be targeted in EJ. Currently, there is a paucity of verified data on the most widespread professions, particularly those with growth potential.

On a practical level, the first step to building economic resilience will be to thoroughly survey the labour market share of relevant sectors in EJ, in order to increase EJ's overall share of the Palestinian economy (currently at around only 7%).¹⁶ Once completed, a clearer vision can be formulated to target growth sectors in EJ and encourage private sector investment in these areas. **On a policy level**, it is extremely important to lobby the Israeli authorities, to allow for greater equitable development. This includes approving construction and zoning permits for new economic structures, increasing the overall budget to EJ residents in order to improve services and facilities, and reducing import-export taxes.

¹³ Choshen, M. and Korach, M. 2014. Jerusalem: facts and trends. *Jerusalem Institute for Israel Studies (JIIS)*.

¹⁴ PCBS. "Jerusalem Statistical Yearbook, 2015. Accessible at: <http://www.palestine-studies.org/sites/default/files/jq-articles/JQ%2062_Jerusalem%20Statistical.pdf>

¹⁵ Arafah, Nur. "Palestinian initiatives in East Jerusalem: Building "resilience" or "Sumud"?" August 2016.

¹⁶ UNCTAD, *Developments in the economy of the Occupied Palestinian Territory*, Report on assistance to the Palestinian people (6 July 2015).

Finally, one of the priority areas for investment and resources is youth development and empowerment. As in the rest of Palestine, youth comprise a large percentage of the overall population, and as an important part of the population for fostering long-term sustainable growth; they must be invested in to see change in Jerusalem. ***On a practical level***, on the supply side youth can be provided with better skilling, in order to help bridge the gap between education and the labour market. This can be in the form of life skills, development opportunities, mentorship, entrepreneurship, the establishment of business incubators, and encouraging the use of new technologies. On the demand side, private sector development must be the first priority and employers should be encouraged to invest in young people.

Psychosocial Support

High incidence of psychological and mental health concerns are pervasive in the State of Palestine, but particularly so in EJ where residents are exposed to higher levels of violence, instability and division. Psychosocial support is thus critical in EJ, to tackle both the short- and long-term adverse effects of trauma.

On a practical level, increased resources must be provided to integrated health services, which include psychosocial support to all residents of EJ. These should specifically target those groups that are often internally marginalized within the Palestinian society, including youth, women, and persons with disabilities. Geographically, residents who live in seam zones and are trapped on either side of the Barrier should also be targeted. Integrated health services would help remove the stigma around psychosocial support, and should focus on providing Palestinian citizens, especially youth, with alternative coping mechanisms that can help to discourage unhealthy coping mechanisms (such as alcohol and drugs).

On a policy level, international actors can lobby the Israeli authorities to approve the permits necessary for the construction of integrated health services that are easily accessible to, and affordable for, the general population.

Advocacy and Protection

Legal and political advocacy act as cornerstones to the transformative resilience approach. These interventions crosscut all previously explicated areas of intervention, and without which transformational change will remain impossible.

As part of this approach, a clear comprehensive advocacy strategy must be formulated, ascribing responsibility to major international actors that can advocate and lobby the government of Israel for major policy change. These strategies must focus on the legal and permit system, which institutionalises discriminatory measures. Most critically however is to ensure that the Palestinian population is consulted at every step, in order to safeguard local ownership of all required steps, prioritising those areas that are prioritised by EJ residents themselves.

Finally, protection measures must be incorporated into every strategic step, to ensure that measures taken to build the resiliency of Palestinians in Jerusalem are not immediately undone by the Israeli occupation.

Conclusion

The challenges facing Palestinians in East Jerusalem are widespread, interconnected, and complex. However, the transformative resilience approach provides a means to really confront the root causes of these vulnerabilities, by holistically targeting humanitarian and development needs. By utilising a combination of practical and policy-level interventions, resilience programming in East Jerusalem will be able to make both short- and long-term sustainable change. Incorporating principles of autonomous innovation allows for a new way of thinking that privileges bottom-up, community-driven, and flexible planning, accompanied by a long-term committed vision for the future, which takes into account the differing and sometimes competing vulnerabilities of the residents of East Jerusalem. There is still much work to be done to develop a unified aim, approach, and plan to achieve resilience in EJ, and INGOs, NGOs, private sector, donors, and the government must come together to develop a real plan to transformative resilience.