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The Future of Jerusalem

Amid Political and Regional Changes:

A Forward-Looking Analysis

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Palestinian Civil Society contributes actively to Shaping
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The Future of Jerusalem Amid Political and Regional Changes: A Prospective Analysis

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Introduction

Jerusalem represents a central axis in the Arab-Israeli conflict due to its unique religious, historical, and political significance. Over the decades, the city has remained a focal point of contention between Palestinians and Israelis. While Israel seeks to consolidate its control through settlement expansion and Judaization policies, Palestinians strive to preserve its Arab, Islamic, and Christian identity and establish it as the capital of their future state.

Amid the current political and regional dynamics, Jerusalem faces unprecedented challenges that significantly impact its future and identity. Several factors shape its future, including regional geopolitical conflicts, shifts in the positions of major global powers, particularly the changes introduced by the new U.S. administration, the ramifications of the ongoing genocide in the Gaza Strip, and internal challenges stemming from Israel's right-wing policies toward the Palestinian population. This paper aims to explore the future of Jerusalem by analyzing the current reality and potential scenarios. Additionally, it seeks to propose policy alternatives that support the city's resilience, safeguard its identity, and strengthen its presence in the international political landscape.

First: Analysis of Existing Policies in Jerusalem

Israeli Policies

Since the occupation of East Jerusalem in 1967, Israel has implemented policies aimed at consolidating its control over the city. These policies revolve around expanding settlements, imposing strict restrictions on Palestinians, and geographically isolating Jerusalem from its Palestinian surroundings.¹ Israel enforces these strategies through long-term plans backed by substantial budgets, such as the five-year plan approved by the Israeli government in 2023, with a budget of 3.2 billion shekels.²

¹ [1] "The Eastern Jerusalem Land Settlement Project 2018-2025: Israeli Government Decision 3790," Palestinian Center for Israeli Studies (Madar), <https://www.madarcenter.org/reports/position-assessment/9129-eastern-jerusalem-land-settlement-project-2018-2025>.

² [2] "Approved by the Government: The Five-Year Plan for the Development of East Jerusalem with a Budget of Approximately 3.2 billion Shekels," Israeli Prime Minister's Office, August 20, 2023, <https://www.gov.il/en/pages/event-joint-jeru200823>.

Regarding Al-Aqsa Mosque, Israeli occupation authorities have recently escalated efforts to alter the status quo by facilitating unprecedented incursions by extremist settler groups, during which they perform Talmudic rituals. Simultaneously, Israeli police continue to impose severe restrictions on Palestinian worshippers' access to the mosque³.

Israel has also intensified its settlement expansion projects in occupied Jerusalem in an attempt to impose a new reality under the so-called "Greater Jerusalem" plan, aimed at isolating the city from its Palestinian surroundings and reinforcing Israeli control. In the south, Israeli authorities have expanded settlement projects by establishing new settlements such as "Givat Hamatos" and "Givat HaShaked", while expanding existing ones like "Har Homa" and "Gilo". In the north, Israel is proceeding with the construction of a massive settlement on the lands of Jerusalem International Airport (Qalandiya). Additionally, existing settlements such as "Ramat Shlomo," "Ramot," "Neve Yaakov," "French Hill," and "Pisgat Ze'ev" are being expanded to increase the settler population and enforce demographic change in favor of the settlers. Meanwhile, in the east, Israeli authorities are advancing the controversial E1 settlement project, which represents a final step in the Greater Jerusalem plan.⁴

Furthermore, Israeli authorities are demolishing the only industrial zone in the city, located in Wadi al-Joz, to establish the "Silicon Wadi" settlement project under the guise of advancing the high-tech sector. This project aims to demolish more than 200 commercial and industrial facilities, replacing them with buildings to be occupied by Israeli companies⁵. Simultaneously,

³ [3] Wasfi Muhammad Al-Kilani, "Visiting Al-Aqsa Mosque: Between Resisting Displacement and Boycotting Normalization," Al-Maqdisiya, Issue 11 (2021), Al-Quds University - Center for Jerusalem Studies, <https://dspace.alquds.edu/items/7430c5a9-53c0-46de-9475-97b4ef119cf2>.

⁴ [4] Firas Ali Al-Qawasmi, "Zionist Settlement Projects in Jerusalem Governorate," Al-Maqdisiya, Issue 10 (June 2021): Al-Quds University - Center for Jerusalem Studies, <https://dspace.alquds.edu/server/api/core/bitstreams/9945bcd6-a853-4ae5-b068-c2180a80c892/content>.

⁵ [5] Ahmad Izz al-Din Asad, "From Palestinian Wadi al-Joz to Israeli Silicon Valley: Colonization, Normalization, and Propaganda," Institute for Palestine Studies, December 28, 2020, <https://www.palestine-studies.org/ar/node/1650867>.

Israel is developing aerial cable cars and a suspension bridge in Silwan to increase settler movement toward the Old City and enforce demographic changes⁶. Another significant measure is the “Regularization Law”, which the Israeli government has been implementing in East Jerusalem since 2019. This law serves as a legal instrument to consolidate Israeli control over Palestinian properties under various pretexts. Its enforcement has raised concerns about being used as a tool for further land confiscation and reallocation for settlement projects, which could result in a significant demographic shift in favor of settlers⁷. Israel also continues to pursue a policy of forced displacement against Palestinians in Jerusalem by escalating home demolitions, with the goal of imposing a Jewish majority in the city. Recent years have witnessed a surge in self-demolitions, where Palestinian residents are forced to demolish their own homes to avoid hefty fines.⁸

In an unprecedented move, in October 2024, the Israeli Knesset officially passed a law prohibiting the opening of consulates or official diplomatic missions in Jerusalem unless they are accredited by Israel. This decision followed the recognition of Palestine by several European countries⁹. In May 2024, Israel also barred the Spanish Consulate General in Jerusalem from providing services to Palestinians in the West Bank, in retaliation for Madrid’s recognition of Palestine¹⁰. This law is part of an effort to impose a new diplomatic reality, effectively eliminating the role of foreign consulates in serving Palestinians and restricting diplomatic engagement in Jerusalem to Israeli institutions only.

⁶ [6] “Major Violations of Israeli Occupation in Jerusalem Governorate in 2022,” Jerusalem Governorate, 2022.

⁷ [7] Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies, “Judaising Jerusalem: A Reading of the Government Plan,” accessed February 19, 2025, <https://caus.org.lb/judaising-jerusalem-government-plan-3790/>.

⁸ [8] United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) Report, December 2019, <https://www.ochaopt.org/content/2019-12>.

[9] Israeli Knesset, “Bill to Prevent Countries from Opening Consulates in Jerusalem,” October 30, 2024, https://main.knesset.gov.il/News/PressReleases/Pages/press30102024_2.aspx.

¹⁰ [10] Anadolu Agency, “Israel Prevents Spain’s Consulate in Jerusalem from Providing Services to Palestinians,” October 30, 2024, accessed February 19, 2025, <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/israel/israel-prevents-spain-consulate-jerusalem-providing-services-palestinians/3231579>.

Additionally, in late October 2024, the Knesset passed a law permanently banning the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) from operating in East Jerusalem. Another law revoked the special privileges UNRWA had enjoyed since 1967¹¹. In a further escalation, Israel's Land Authority ordered UNRWA to evacuate its offices in East Jerusalem¹², including its headquarters in Sheikh Jarrah, following a declaration of Israeli ownership over the properties. This unprecedented move has severe implications for Palestinian refugees in Jerusalem, putting UNRWA's properties at risk of confiscation or closure.¹³

Israel's attempts to impose its curriculum on schools in East Jerusalem date back to 1967 but have intensified in recent years through intimidation and pressure on school administrations to adopt the altered curriculum. Despite these pressures, the overwhelming majority of Palestinian students and their families reject these efforts due to their threat to Palestinian national identity. Beyond curricula, Israeli authorities allocate significant financial incentives to persuade some schools to adopt the Israeli curriculum, reflecting the extent of oppression targeting Palestinian education in Jerusalem.¹⁴

Israeli policies in East Jerusalem reflect a long-term strategic approach aimed at establishing full control over the city and minimizing Palestinian presence. Amid these measures, the suffering of Palestinians in East Jerusalem continues to deepen, necessitating urgent international intervention to halt ongoing violations against them.

Palestinian Policies

According to Dr. Saeed Yaqeen, Deputy Minister of Jerusalem Affairs, in a personal interview, the work of Palestinian official bodies specialized in

¹¹ [11] Adalah – The Legal Center for Arab Minority Rights in Israel, “Knesset Approves Racist Laws to Close UNRWA,” accessed February 19, 2025, <https://www.adalah.org/en/content/view/11184>.

¹² [12] “Israel Requests UNRWA to Evacuate its Headquarters,” Al Jazeera, May 30, 2024, <https://www.aljazeera.net/news/2024/5/30/israel-requests-unrwa-evacuate-headquarters>.

¹³ [13] Adalah, previous source mentioned.

¹⁴ [14] Ahmad Jamil Azm and others, Jerusalem: Ethnic Cleansing and Methods of Resistance, edited by Ayat Hamdan (Doha: Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies, 2024).

Jerusalem faces fundamental challenges related to limited financial resources and the restrictions imposed by the occupation. These constraints limit their scope of intervention to providing humanitarian aid and supporting the resilience of residents, without the ability to implement comprehensive development strategies. The majority of the budget allocated for Jerusalem, already insufficient compared to the city's vast needs, is directed toward emergency assistance for families affected by home demolitions and forced evictions. As a result, the role of Palestinian institutions remains confined to emergency interventions without the capacity to bring about structural change in the city's reality.¹⁵

Palestinian interventions primarily focus on providing legal and humanitarian assistance to strengthen the resilience of Jerusalemites. In this context, legal support is offered to Palestinian residents facing lawsuits in Israeli courts, particularly in cases related to urban planning, home demolitions, settlement expansion, evictions, and taxation. However, the effectiveness of these legal interventions in altering court rulings remains limited, as Israeli judicial policies tend to favor settlement projects over Palestinian rights. In addition to legal support, limited financial aid is provided to Jerusalemites seeking to obtain building permits—an extremely costly process due to the exorbitant fees imposed by the Israeli municipality. Consequently, these financial aids do not bring about a substantial change in the city's construction crisis. Moreover, significant challenges persist due to Israel's restrictions on Palestinian construction and its refusal to approve many urban development plans.¹⁶

Alongside legal and engineering support, Palestinian official bodies provide financial assistance to citizens affected by home demolitions, granting them temporary financial aid to rent alternative housing for one year. However, this remains a short-term solution that fails to address the root of the problem, as Jerusalemites continue to face the threat of forced displacement from the city. While such support alleviates the immediate burden on affected families, it does not offer sustainable solutions to the worsening housing crisis. Additionally, Palestinian authorities focus on

¹⁵ [15] Personal interview with Dr. Said Yaqin, Deputy Minister of Jerusalem Affairs, conducted by Mahmoud Arikat, Ministry of Jerusalem Affairs, February 18, 2025.

¹⁶ [16] Yaqin, personal interview.

supporting Jerusalem-based institutions, particularly in the health, education, and cultural sectors, in an effort to maintain their presence amid Israeli pressures. However, the lack of funding and the difficulties in transferring financial resources to Jerusalem limit the effectiveness of this support, leaving many Jerusalem-based institutions struggling with financial crises that threaten their survival.¹⁷

Given these challenges, Palestinian official interventions remain restricted to legal, engineering, and humanitarian support, lacking the financial and operational capacity to develop and implement long-term development strategies. Israel's prohibition of any official Palestinian activity in Jerusalem prevents the direct execution of development projects. Furthermore, Jerusalem-based institutions receiving financial support from the Palestinian Authority face the risk of closure and legal prosecution by Israeli authorities, further limiting their ability to provide sustained assistance. The absence of sufficient financial resources also prevents Palestinian entities from launching large-scale housing projects in the city, leaving residents to face ongoing Israeli policies of Judaization without effective developmental support.¹⁸

If this reality persists, Jerusalem will increasingly rely on external support due to the absence of independent Palestinian financing mechanisms capable of addressing the imposed challenges. This situation underscores the complexity of the political and economic landscape in Jerusalem, where Palestinian official institutions face structural challenges that prevent them from playing a leading role in development efforts and in promoting economic and social stability in the city.

Arab Interventions in Jerusalem

Dr. Saeed Yaqeen, Deputy Minister of Jerusalem Affairs, highlighted a significant decline in Arab interventions aimed at financing development projects that strengthen Palestinian resilience in Jerusalem. Following the Second Intifada, some Arab interventions focused on funding strategic projects with a clear developmental impact, such as housing initiatives for teachers and doctors. These projects not only provided housing but also

¹⁷ [17] Yaqin, personal interview.

¹⁸ [18] Yaqin, personal interview.

contributed to the stability of these essential professional groups, positively affecting key service sectors in the city¹⁹. However, the current reality indicates the absence of such large-scale projects, with Arab interventions now limited to minor support for local institutions, home renovations, or emergency aid such as food baskets. While these interventions help alleviate immediate living burdens, they do not constitute a sustainable development response that addresses the structural economic and social challenges facing Jerusalemites.²⁰

Beyond the quantitative decline in funding, Arab intervention in Jerusalem also suffers from political and administrative challenges that hinder sustainable developmental impact. Arab funding is often subject to political considerations that influence resource allocation. Many donors hesitate to invest in long-term projects in Jerusalem due to political complexities related to Israel's stance on foreign funding or governance policies that obstruct the efficient and transparent flow of funds. Additionally, there is a clear reluctance among Arab states and institutions to finance large-scale projects in Jerusalem due to external pressures that may affect their funding decisions. This has resulted in limited support for small-scale initiatives that fail to meet the city's actual needs. The absence of a unified Arab coordination mechanism for funding Jerusalem projects further exacerbates the fragmentation of efforts, reducing their strategic impact²¹.

The lack of Arab funding for strategic projects in Jerusalem creates a developmental vacuum that worsens the city's economic and social fragility while limiting the community's ability to resist systematic Judaization policies. Rethinking Arab funding policies for Jerusalem is now a pressing necessity to overcome the political and administrative barriers that obstruct investment in development projects. This shift is essential for enhancing Palestinian resilience and preserving the city's identity.

¹⁹ [19] Yaqin, personal interview.

²⁰ [20] United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), *The Palestinian Economy in East Jerusalem: Resilience Against Annexation, Isolation, and Fragmentation*, 2013.

²¹ [21] Yaqin, personal interview.

Second: General Policy Alternatives for the Future of Jerusalem

Based on the current analysis and potential scenarios, four main policy alternatives can be proposed. These alternatives incorporate political, legal, grassroots, and diplomatic tools to address the challenges facing Jerusalem. They will be assessed later based on efficiency, sustainability, justice, benefits, and weaknesses.

Alternative 1: Strengthening Popular Resistance and Palestinian Presence in Jerusalem

Enhancing popular resistance and maintaining a strong Palestinian presence in Jerusalem is one of the most crucial alternatives in confronting Israeli policies aimed at Judaizing the city. The significance of this approach lies in its ability to redefine Jerusalem as a space for daily engagement for all segments of Palestinian society. It provides Jerusalemites with practical tools to defend their existence and identity against settlement expansion and forced displacement, especially amid escalating Israeli projects targeting the city's demographic, cultural, and religious structure.

As Israeli restrictions increase, popular resistance becomes a means to rebalance the situation on the ground by intensifying Palestinian presence and imposing realities that disrupt settlement plans and raise the cost of their continuation.

Implementing this alternative requires a comprehensive vision that goes beyond spontaneous reactions by launching social and economic initiatives that provide material and moral support to Jerusalemites, helping them withstand daily pressures intended to force their displacement. Al-Murabitun (those stationed) at Al-Aqsa Mosque play a central role in this strategy, as their permanent presence in its courtyards serves as the first line of defense against attempts to impose temporal and spatial division.

Additionally, civil confrontation of settlement expansion requires practical measures such as rebuilding demolished homes and documenting Israeli

violations for international legal and media exposure, increasing global pressure on the occupation. Strengthening cultural and awareness-raising activities in Jerusalem also helps fortify national identity and reinforces the city's central importance in Palestinian and Arab consciousness.

Despite its direct impact, sustaining popular resistance faces severe challenges, including continuous Israeli escalation through mass arrests, systematic home demolitions, movement restrictions, and economic sanctions aimed at dismantling any emerging resistance structures. These policies make popular resistance an expensive option, necessitating ongoing financial and organizational support, legal protection for participants, and the establishment of a social safety network to mitigate the effects of Israeli targeting.

From a justice perspective, this alternative is the most authentic expression of the Palestinian right to resist occupation through peaceful and legal means, allowing all social groups to engage in defending the city. However, the occupation seeks to delegitimize this form of resistance by labeling it as “incitement” and using legal mechanisms to criminalize its participants, increasing the legal and security risks for activists and Jerusalemites in general.

On a strategic level, popular resistance restores Jerusalem to the political and media agenda at local, Arab, and international levels. It forces the occupation to allocate extensive security and logistical resources to counter the ongoing movement, thereby disrupting settlement plans and delaying their implementation. Additionally, it fosters renewed public awareness, breathing new life into the Jerusalem cause and giving its residents a greater sense of grassroots support.

Nevertheless, significant weaknesses remain, as Israeli repression could lead to waves of arrests, extrajudicial killings, and collective punishment measures that affect daily life in the city. Moreover, the absence of official Palestinian support or declining Arab and international backing could leave popular resistance exposed, making its sustainability dependent on integration with other alternatives that provide financial, diplomatic, and media backing.

Under various scenarios, the continued dominance of Israeli policies makes popular resistance a highly risky option, placing Jerusalemites in open confrontation with the occupation's machinery without protective guarantees. However, if this resistance successfully creates a state of attrition, it could delay some Judaization projects. If Palestinian grassroots movements escalate across the occupied territories, this alternative could become part of a broader wave of resistance, intensifying the struggle but also provoking harsher Israeli security and legal responses.

Should regional and international actors intervene in the crisis, the popular resistance movement could attract external solidarity, albeit primarily through legal and media advocacy. Meanwhile, if political negotiations are revived, this alternative could serve as leverage to improve Palestinian bargaining conditions.

Given these factors, a long-term popular resistance strategy in Jerusalem is essential—one that moves beyond sporadic responses to sustained organization, integrating grassroots actions with legal, media, and political coverage. This requires the establishment of permanent support funds for Jerusalemites, legal protection networks for activists, and the activation of international advocacy efforts to counter Israeli narratives and expose its suppression of popular resistance.

Despite increasing risks, popular resistance remains a key tool in protecting Jerusalem, yet it requires real safeguarding strategies to ensure its longevity and evolution. Turning it from seasonal waves into a daily struggle can effectively disrupt and exhaust Judaization efforts.

Alternative Two: Activating the International Legal and Diplomatic Track

This alternative revolves around leveraging legal and diplomatic tools available in international forums to curb the Israeli settlement project in Jerusalem and enhance international recognition of Palestinian rights in the city as the capital of the State of Palestine. The significance of this approach has increased due to the Palestinian inability to impose sustainable ground realities that would force Israel to retreat from its Judaization plans. This makes resorting to international law and

multilateral diplomacy a necessary option to undermine the legitimacy of the occupation and bring the Palestinian cause—particularly the Jerusalem issue—back into global focus.

The effectiveness of this alternative lies in developing a comprehensive legal strategy that includes filing cases against Israel at the International Criminal Court (ICC) and pushing for the enforcement of relevant UN resolutions on Jerusalem. It also involves expanding pressure within the European Union to impose sanctions on companies involved in settlement projects and pursuing legal action against Israel in national courts of certain European countries that apply universal jurisdiction. Additionally, this approach entails strengthening Palestinian engagement with international organizations to consolidate recognition of Jerusalem as Palestine’s capital and politically and legally isolate the occupation.

Although this alternative provides a long-term framework for action, its success remains contingent on several complex factors, most notably the United States’ unwavering support for Israel. Washington has the ability to obstruct any meaningful legal process through its veto power in the UN Security Council or by exerting pressure on international institutions. Furthermore, legal procedures are inherently slow and complex, often requiring years of persistent effort before yielding tangible results. This presents serious challenges to sustaining this approach without a clear Palestinian political will and substantial regional support.

From a justice perspective, this alternative aligns with international law and human rights principles by holding Israel accountable for its grave violations, documenting them, and prosecuting them before relevant judicial bodies. However, it faces the challenge of a double standard in the international system, which often favors Israel, limiting the chances of achieving full justice. This necessitates parallel strategies to counterbalance this systemic bias.

In terms of benefits, this alternative would weaken Israel’s international legitimacy, strengthen the Palestinian narrative, and expand the circle of countries opposing settlement and Judaization policies. It may also lead to

limited economic sanctions on companies operating in settlements. However, it is also fraught with fundamental weaknesses, primarily Israel's refusal to recognize the ICC's jurisdiction or comply with any of its rulings, as well as the broader lack of international political will to enforce these legal mechanisms effectively.

The significance of this alternative increases when analyzed within possible future scenarios. If Israeli dominance over the city remains absolute, this approach could serve as a means to politically and legally unsettle the occupation, though it alone would not be sufficient to halt its plans. If popular resistance escalates, the legal track could complement it by documenting Israeli crimes, though Israel might exploit such escalation to justify further repression. Conversely, if effective regional or international intervention occurs, this approach would provide legal instruments to amplify pressure on Israel. In a scenario where political negotiations resume, this alternative could serve as a bargaining chip to improve Palestinian negotiation conditions. However, it remains vulnerable to Israeli efforts to use renewed talks as a smokescreen for continued Judaization.

Therefore, this alternative is essential in countering Judaization, yet it is insufficient on its own. It must be integrated into a comprehensive strategy that combines legal action, diplomacy, popular resistance, and economic pressure. To maximize its impact, efforts should be directed toward building a broad diplomatic alliance, strengthening the presence of Palestinian and international human rights institutions, and ensuring professional and continuous documentation of violations. The success of this alternative also depends on the availability of a clear Palestinian political vision capable of managing this process effectively and using it to reinforce Palestinian resilience in Jerusalem. Moreover, long-term mechanisms must be developed to ensure that this legal and diplomatic track becomes a cornerstone of the national strategy.

Alternative Three: Activating the Arab and Islamic Role in Supporting Jerusalem

This alternative is based on the recognition of the importance of mobilizing the Arab and Islamic role in the battle to defend Jerusalem by leveraging political and economic resources to counter Israeli Judaization policies. The core idea of this approach is to bring Jerusalem out of the margins and place it at the heart of joint Arab and Islamic action. This alternative gains further significance in light of the declining official Arab and Islamic engagement in the Palestinian issue overall, coupled with the rise of normalization with Israel. This makes the revival of Jerusalem as a unifying cause a real test of how serious Arab and Islamic states are in confronting the threats facing the city.

The implementation mechanisms of this alternative revolve around mobilizing financial and political support from Arab and Islamic countries by pressuring them to fulfill their historical commitments to Jerusalem. This includes establishing dedicated financial funds to support housing, education, and services in the city, as well as expanding Jerusalem's political presence in regional and international forums through official decisions and statements from the Arab League and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC). The alternative also emphasizes the necessity of utilizing Jordan's role as the custodian of Islamic and Christian holy sites in Jerusalem, working to strengthen this custodianship politically, legally, and diplomatically to safeguard the status quo against Israeli attempts to alter it. At the same time, the alternative underscores the importance of expanding media and awareness campaigns in the Arab and Islamic world to generate grassroots pressure on governments and revive public opinion in favor of supporting Jerusalemites and breaking the prevailing indifference toward developments in the city.

Although this alternative possesses significant potential due to the political and economic capabilities of Arab and Islamic states, its effectiveness remains dependent on the existence of genuine political will. The absence of coordination, internal divisions, and the preoccupation of many states with their national priorities, in addition to the increasing wave of normalization with Israel, may weaken this alternative's ability to achieve tangible impact. A key challenge is sustainability, as many Arab and Islamic initiatives concerning Jerusalem have been reactive and emotional,

quickly fading due to the lack of long-term strategic planning. This makes the continuity of support dependent on the establishment of institutional mechanisms capable of preserving and expanding these efforts over time.

From a justice perspective, this alternative reflects a commitment to protecting the legitimate Palestinian rights in Jerusalem and contributes to defending the Arab and Islamic presence in the city while safeguarding its religious and cultural heritage. It supports the protection of holy sites and prevents their Judaization. However, this approach remains vulnerable to political instrumentalization, as certain parties may exploit the Jerusalem issue to boost their influence or improve their public image without making a genuine commitment to supporting Jerusalemites' resilience.

In terms of benefits, this alternative offers multiple opportunities to enhance the steadfastness of the Palestinian population through housing and education projects, mitigate the effects of Israeli policies through diplomatic pressure in international institutions, and activate popular mobilization in Arab and Islamic societies. This could help reduce Jerusalem's isolation and increase the cost of Israel's Judaization efforts. However, these benefits may diminish if initiatives remain symbolic without being translated into sustainable, practical measures.

The importance of this alternative increases when analyzed within potential future scenarios. If Israeli dominance over the city continues unchallenged, Arab and Islamic support could help slow down Israeli settlement projects by providing Jerusalemites with means of resilience. However, it may face significant obstacles due to the reluctance of some states to engage in an open confrontation with Israel. In a scenario where popular resistance escalates, this alternative could play a supportive role through financial, media, and political backing, though it alone would not be sufficient to shift the balance of power. This alternative reaches its peak effectiveness in the event of a coordinated regional and international intervention, where it becomes part of a broader effort to pressure Israel and impose additional costs on its occupation. If the political negotiation process is revived, Arab and Islamic backing for Jerusalem could serve as leverage to improve Palestinian negotiating conditions, particularly if Arab

states tie their support for the peace process to real guarantees for the protection of Jerusalem and a halt to settlement expansion. However, the lack of Arab consensus could limit this influence.

Accordingly, the success of this alternative requires restoring Arab and Islamic unity on Jerusalem as a central issue by transforming temporary and reactive support into institutionalized and sustainable backing. This should be based on practical programs that strengthen the resilience of Jerusalem's Palestinian population and secure their presence in the city. Achieving this goal necessitates strengthening coordination among Arab and Islamic capitals, establishing permanent monitoring mechanisms to ensure the fulfillment of financial and political commitments toward Jerusalem, and ensuring that this alternative is shielded from narrow political calculations. In the long run, this approach must be developed as a comprehensive strategic option that places Jerusalem at the core of joint Arab and Islamic action, providing a lasting safety net against Israel's attempts to impose new realities on the ground.

Alternative Four: Building a Long-Term Strategy for Restoring Demographic Balance

This alternative focuses on confronting Israeli policies aimed at reducing the Palestinian presence in Jerusalem by adopting a comprehensive strategy that reinforces Palestinian demographic resilience in the city, as part of the battle to defend Jerusalem's Arab and Islamic identity. With the escalation of Judaization and forced displacement policies, maintaining demographic balance has become the first line of defense in securing the Palestinians' position in their city. This alternative is not limited to halting the hemorrhage of forced migration; it also seeks to motivate Palestinians to remain and consolidate their presence through economic, social, and educational tools.

Implementing this alternative requires a series of practical interventions, beginning with providing financial and housing incentives that help Jerusalemites cope with increasing living costs and exorbitant taxes, and extending to supporting housing projects in the heart of East Jerusalem, thereby preventing Israeli settlement expansion from emptying Palestinian neighborhoods. Additionally, offering loans and grants specifically for

purchasing land and property within the city is essential to enhance Palestinian land ownership—an objective that in turn demands legal protection measures to ensure that such ownership is not confiscated by the occupation. The crucial role of Palestinian education in Jerusalem must also be emphasized, as it serves as a tool to safeguard national identity against efforts to impose Israeli curricula, while strengthening Palestinian economic activity forms the backbone of all these efforts.

Although this alternative is one of the most effective long-term strategies in consolidating the Palestinian presence, its implementation faces cumulative challenges—most notably, the legal and administrative restrictions imposed by the occupation on Palestinian construction, policies regarding identity revocation, home demolitions, and heavy taxation that pressure Jerusalemites toward forced migration. Therefore, ensuring the sustainability of this approach requires securing permanent funding sources and developing legal mechanisms that protect the Palestinian right to housing and property ownership, in addition to politically fortifying the project through robust Arab and Islamic support.

From a justice perspective, this alternative embodies the right of Palestinians to remain in their historic city and confront racial discrimination policies targeting their presence. It reinforces the preservation of Jerusalem’s national and cultural identity and upholds the natural rights to housing, education, and employment against the settlement project. Nonetheless, the approach remains contingent on establishing a protective legal environment that prevents the occupation from isolating Jerusalemites and subjecting them to measures designed to undermine their presence.

Regarding benefits, the success of this alternative would mean preserving a Palestinian human mass capable of thwarting plans aimed at creating a Jewish demographic majority in the city, while also reinforcing Palestinian presence in the public sphere through robust housing, educational, and economic projects that foster resilience. It would also contribute to establishing a relatively independent Jerusalem economy, reducing reliance on the Israeli market, and supporting economic autonomy as a

form of resistance. However, these major benefits are conditional on overcoming the financial, political, and legal obstacles that hinder the implementation of this strategy.

Considering potential scenarios, it is clear that continued absolute Israeli dominance would render the application of this alternative a daily struggle against occupation authorities, who would work to obstruct every housing project or economic initiative. Nevertheless, they might fail if the strategy is framed through strong civil society institutions and flexible endowment funds. In the event of escalated popular resistance, this alternative could indirectly bolster support by providing an economic and social infrastructure that withstands the consequences of the confrontation. Under an active regional and international intervention scenario, this alternative might evolve into a strategic lever that attracts financial and political backing, especially if linked to diplomatic initiatives that legally and economically protect the Palestinian presence. Finally, in the event of a return to the political process, this alternative could serve as a powerful bargaining chip, as enhancing the Palestinian presence would impose new conditions on any future agreement and prevent the imposition of superficial solutions that ignore the rights of the indigenous population.

Accordingly, activating this alternative requires establishing a permanent Arab and Islamic support fund to finance housing, education, and economic development projects, and developing international advocacy tools to counter Israeli measures aimed at dismantling the Palestinian presence. It must also be integrated into a comprehensive national vision for the future of Jerusalem—one that balances immediate resilience needs with the strategic long-term fortification of the city—thereby transforming the restoration of demographic balance into a national project rather than a series of seasonal initiatives or temporary reactions to occupation policies.

Third: Final Recommendations

Confronting Israeli policies in Jerusalem requires adopting a multi-track strategy that integrates various alternatives and strengthens their respective advantages, while overcoming the limitations inherent in each option when pursued in isolation. To achieve this, work priorities must be arranged

according to a phased timeline that ensures practical and sustainable implementation, with roles distributed among the official Palestinian authorities, civil society organizations, Arab and Islamic states, and international partners.

In the short term, there is an urgent need to intensify popular resistance on the ground, as it is the fastest option to disrupt Judaization projects. This effort demands direct logistical support for Jerusalemites through the provision of emergency relief funds and essential resilience tools. Here, the responsibility falls on Palestinian civil society, alongside the Palestinian Authority—which is expected to provide the political cover for this movement—and on activating the Jordanian role in safeguarding the current status of the holy sites.

In the medium term, expanding legal and diplomatic pressure becomes a central priority, by bringing cases before the International Criminal Court and reinvigorating initiatives at the United Nations and the European Union. This track requires coordinated Palestinian diplomatic efforts and an effective network of Arab and international alliances capable of countering the American veto. These endeavors also need a robust Arab and Islamic media push to bring Jerusalem back to the forefront of the public agenda.

In the long term, building a strategy to restore demographic balance is an indispensable strategic objective. This can be achieved by establishing a permanent Arab and Islamic support fund to finance housing, education, and economic development projects in Jerusalem. In this regard, Arab and Islamic states bear the responsibility for funding and patronage, while Palestinian institutions undertake field-level implementation.

The success of these recommendations depends on the establishment of clear coordination mechanisms among the involved parties, linking funding with sustainable work plans that ensure the continuity of projects and protect them from political blackmail or the fluctuations of regional crises. Achieving maximum effectiveness from these alternatives requires an integrated approach, wherein each track supports the others, based on a unified national vision that recognizes that saving Jerusalem is an

accumulative battle demanding political patience and long-term investment.

Fourth: Conclusion

Today, Jerusalem is undergoing an exceptional phase of Judaization and systematic settlement expansion, driven by an extremist right-wing Israeli government that, backed by unwavering American support, Arab division, and Palestinian weakness, has found an opportunity to expedite the imposition of irreversible facts on the ground. This government operates according to a clear project aimed at completely closing the political horizon and emptying the city of its Palestinian residents through a composite set of policies combining forced displacement, economic strangulation, and systematic demolitions, while reshaping the city's demographic and geographical character to serve the Zionist narrative.

Nevertheless, the diversity of the proposed strategic alternatives still offers a real opportunity to limit and slow down this project, provided they are employed within an integrated national plan that acknowledges the interconnection of political, demographic, legal, and economic dimensions, and that relies on coordinated Palestinian, Arab, and international efforts. Neither popular resistance alone can stop Judaization amid escalating Israeli repression, nor is the legal and diplomatic track sufficient in the face of international inaction, nor is the Arab and Islamic role guaranteed to be effective amid growing normalization, nor can the demographic balance strategy succeed without legal protection and sustainable funding.

Thus, the real bet must be on establishing a balanced operational framework that combines grassroots mobilization, political pressure, economic empowerment, and enhanced international legal presence, while ensuring the necessary financial and political support infrastructure for sustaining this effort over the long term. This requires abandoning short-term, reactive measures and moving toward a strategic vision that redefines the battle for Jerusalem as a fight for the very destiny of the entire Palestinian cause.

Any delay in adopting practical, well-studied policies to confront Judaization—coupled with the absence of a sustainable plan that accounts

for the dynamics of escalation and de-escalation—will give the occupation enough time to entrench irreversible facts that will be difficult to reverse later. Either the Palestinians and their allies succeed in gradually reshaping the balance of power in Jerusalem, or the city will remain hostage to an extended settlement project, ultimately imposing a new equation of surrender that makes it nearly impossible to speak of a future capital for a Palestinian state.

The battle for Jerusalem—with its religious, historical, and political dimensions—has transcended being merely a localized conflict over an occupied city. Today, it is a battle to affirm presence, identity, and rights. It is a struggle that demands political courage, strategic imagination, and the ability to turn pressure into opportunity and temporary defeat into a motivation to resume the struggle with new conditions and more effective, sustainable tools.

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