

East Jerusalem: Facts and Figures 2017

Association for Civil Rights in
Israel

Editors' note: On 24 May 2017, designated Jerusalem Day by Israeli authorities, the Association for Civil Rights in Israel (ACRI) released the following report, "highlighting the continuous neglect, oppression, and poverty in East Jerusalem." This report, available online at www.acri.org.il/en/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/Facts-and-Figures-2017.pdf (and in the original Hebrew, with full footnotes, at www.acri.org.il/he/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/East-Jerusalem-facts-and-figures-2017.pdf). The report here has been lightly edited for style and clarity.

Residents and Residency

According to the Central Bureau of Statistics, 323,700 Palestinian residents live in Jerusalem, constituting 37 percent of the total population of the city. Some estimates suggest that the number of Palestinian residents is actually higher. Palestinian Jerusalemites have the status of permanent residents of the State of Israel. In 2016, the Interior Ministry revoked the residency status of 95 Palestinians in Jerusalem, including 41 women and 11 children. Since 1967, Israel has revoked the residency status of 14,595 Palestinians in Jerusalem. In addition, the Interior Ministry has in recent years begun to revoke or to threaten to revoke the residency status of East Jerusalemites who commit terror attacks and of their relatives. The number of residents of East Jerusalem applying for Israeli citizenship has increased in recent years, while the number of such applications approved has fallen. Residents who wish to become citizens face extremely long waiting times and unreasonable bureaucratic obstacles at the Interior Ministry office in Wadi Jawz.

Separation Barrier

Some 140,000 residents currently live in Jerusalem neighborhoods separated from the city by the separation barrier. Of these, the authorities estimate that approximately 80,000 residents live in Shu'fat refugee camp and the three adjacent neighborhoods (Ras Khamis, Ras Shahada, and Dahiyat al-Salam), while some 60,000 live in Kafr 'Aqab, to the north of Qalandiya checkpoint. Some of the residents of these neighborhoods are Palestinians from the West Bank, but their number is unknown.

In addition to these large neighborhoods on the other side of the separation barrier, several thousand Palestinians live in various convoluted "enclaves" created by the separation barrier along the municipal

boundary of Jerusalem. In some places the barrier separates residents of Jerusalem from other parts of the city, such as on the edge of the neighborhood of Jabal Mukabbir (the Shaykh Sa‘d and Sawahira area). Elsewhere, the barrier separates Palestinian residents of the West Bank from the main part of the West Bank, trapping them on the “Jerusalem” side of the barrier, as, for example, in the Wadi Hummus area. All the areas and enclaves created by the separation barrier suffer from a lack of basic infrastructures and services, and difficulties in crossing the checkpoints.

Poverty

Seventy-six percent of the residents of East Jerusalem and 83.4 percent 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 percent, and 30 percent among children.

Welfare

Welfare services in East Jerusalem are crucial given the extremely high poverty rate. Yet the welfare services maintain only four offices in East Jerusalem, which are expected to provide services for 37 percent of the population of the city and which serve 36,029 clients. By comparison, the Israeli-Jewish population, which constitutes 63 percent of the city’s population, is served by 19 welfare offices, which serve 57,472 clients. Out of a total of 403 staff positions for social workers in Jerusalem, 106 (approximately one-fourth) are allocated to East Jerusalem. The government’s five-year plan for East Jerusalem (plan no. 1775) from June 2014 promised an extra 30 staff positions for East Jerusalem’s welfare services. To date, 18 new positions have been filled. The Welfare Ministry has announced that, on the instructions of the Finance Ministry, no additional budgets will be available in 2017–2018 for additional positions.

Each social worker in East Jerusalem handles an average of 339 cases, compared to an average of 194 cases in the rest of the city. One of the results of this situation is that waiting times for Palestinian families in order to receive welfare attention are particularly high. Welfare services in East Jerusalem assist 11,451 families, and have a waiting list of 598 additional families. The number of residents and social workers across the rest of city is much higher, and the waiting list there consists of 627 families. Eight thousand nine hundred and seventy-three children from East Jerusalem are defined as children at risk by the welfare services.

Education

A total of 109,481 Palestinian school students study in Jerusalem. Of these, only 41 percent attend recognized public schools managed directly by the Jerusalem municipality; the number of schools is simply not enough for the size of the population. Another 41 percent of the students attend recognized but unofficial schools, which receive partial funding from the Ministry of Education, while the remaining 18 percent attend private schools. East Jerusalem has a total of 88 public schools, 97 recognized but unofficial schools, and 79 private schools.

In 2017, 1,633 Palestinian students applied to the Jerusalem municipality to move

from recognized but unofficial schools to official public schools. Of these, 1,209 were accepted and 424 rejected. The High Court had ruled that from 2016, the authorities will be required to cover the tuition fees for students from East Jerusalem who wish to move to public schools but for whom no places are available.

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. In 2016, just 44 new classrooms were added at public schools in East Jerusalem. Over the next three years, 339 additional new classrooms are due to be constructed. In the five year period between 2011 – when the principled court ruling was granted regarding the shortage of classrooms and the registration of students in East Jerusalem – and 2016, 247 classrooms were constructed and a further 218 classrooms were rented. In the current school year, 857 substandard classrooms are in use at public schools and preschools. These amount for almost half the total of 1,815 classrooms in the official education system in East Jerusalem.

Of students in the public and the recognized but unofficial schools, 33 percent do not complete 12 years of education. In 2017, the budget for the prevention of dropout in East Jerusalem is NIS 4.1 million, compared to NIS 3 million in 2015. The Jerusalem municipality estimates that NIS 15 million is required in order to properly address the problem of dropout in East Jerusalem. The precise number of Palestinian children in Jerusalem who do not attend school is unknown. According to Interior Ministry figures, 127,198 Palestinian children between the ages of 3 and 18 live in Jerusalem, of whom 109,481 were registered in the current school year in all the different types of schools. This leaves a gap of 17,717 students about whom the system has no information. (A small proportion of this figure is made up of children aged 3–4 years who attend private day care and accordingly do not appear in the municipal system.)

The education system in East Jerusalem also suffers from chronic understaffing. Of 150 staff positions for school psychologists in Jerusalem, only 20 work in East Jerusalem. There is a total of 57 staff positions for educational counselors for the 185 official and recognized but unofficial schools in East Jerusalem. There has been an improvement in recent years – in 2011 there were only 21 educational counselors. While 17 attendance officers work in the west of the city, responsible for coping with students at risk of dropout, in East Jerusalem there are just four staff positions, of which just one is actually filled – despite the fact that dropout rates are the highest.

Planning, Building, and Demolition

Over 20,000 housing units have been built without permits in the neighborhoods of East Jerusalem; the precise figure is unknown. The scope of construction without permits has increased dramatically over the past decade, particularly the construction of high-rise buildings in the neighborhoods beyond the separation barrier. For over a decade, the local and district planning authorities have not advanced even a single outline plan in the Palestinian neighborhoods. Even the neighborhood outline plans initiated by the municipality itself are left unattended. Despite declarations by Mayor Nir Barkat that he intends to adopt a different policy to that of his predecessors, in practice under

his leadership the authorities are perpetuating half a century of failings in planning, development, and regulation in East Jerusalem.

Alongside the ongoing planning freeze, there has been a sharp rise in the demolition of homes in East Jerusalem on the grounds of construction without permit. In 2016, 88 homes were demolished, leaving 295 people without a roof over their heads. This is the largest number of home demolitions for over a decade. In addition, between January 2016 and February 2017 the authorities demolished in East Jerusalem 59 structures (that are not residential homes) including shops and agriculture construction. In 2017, three homes were demolished in al-Walaja, a village in the south of Jerusalem that was disconnected from the city by the separation barrier. Part of the village lands lie within the city limits. This is one of the few times since the barrier was constructed over a decade ago that the authorities have demolished homes in neighborhoods beyond the barrier built without permits. It is impossible to secure building permits from the Jerusalem municipality in these neighborhoods.

Israel has also resumed its policy of punitive house demolitions, whereby the military demolishes or seals the homes of people who carry out attacks or assist attackers. In 2017, the military sealed the home of the Kunbar family from Jabal Mukabbir, after a member of the family carried out an attack at the promenade in Armon Hanatziv in which four soldiers were killed. Between July 2014 and March 2017, six homes were demolished in East Jerusalem and a further five homes were sealed. In addition, 18 homes in Jerusalem were surveyed ahead of demolition, though no demolition orders have been issued to date.

Water and Sewage

The number of residents of East Jerusalem who appear in the records of HaGihon Water and Sewage Corporation is 192,281. Accordingly, only 59 percent of the residents of East Jerusalem are connected legally and properly to the water grid. The problem of substandard water and sewage connections was created due to the ongoing failure to ensure the proper planning of the Palestinian neighborhoods and to enable development, expansion, and infrastructures consistent with the growth in population. The neighborhoods adjacent to Shu'fat refugee camp provide the most extreme example of this problem: since 1967, the authorities have not approved a single outline plan for these neighborhoods and, accordingly, the existing water lines are sufficient for only 10 percent of the total population living in the area today. In 2015–2016, HaGihon laid 9 kilometers of sewage lines in the east of the city, and repaired 6 kilometers. The company plans to lay a further 15 kilometers in East Jerusalem over the course of 2017.

Transportation and Infrastructures

Since 2010, the Ministry of Transport has initiated 34 projects for transportation infrastructure in East Jerusalem. The estimated scope of investments in these projects in 2010–2019 is over one billion shekels (NIS 1,115,900,000). The projects include bypasses and ring roads, roads serving public transportation, the repair of roads in the vicinity of schools, and so forth. In 2020, a new five-year plan is due to be introduced for transportation infrastructures in East Jerusalem. The five-year plan that began in 2012 will end in 2017.

The investments over the past decade have not succeeded in closing the gaps created over five decades. Many roads in East Jerusalem are still full of potholes and bumps, there is a shortage of railings and sidewalks, and the existing road network is unfit for the amount of transportation that goes through it. A petition submitted to the High Court demanded that the Ministry of Transport implement in East Jerusalem the standards adopted in 2003, which require that public transportation be accessible to people with disabilities. The petition revealed that the state of road infrastructures in East Jerusalem severely impedes the mobility of people with disabilities and even limits the use of buses that are wheelchair accessible.

Infant Healthcare

The Jerusalem municipality has opened 6 clinics for infant healthcare (*Tipat Halav*) in the Palestinian neighborhoods of Jerusalem, compared to 27 in the Israeli neighborhoods. An additional seventh clinic is due to open in the al-Sal‘a area adjacent to Ras al-‘Amud. Three clinics in Israeli neighborhoods also serve residents of the nearby Palestinian neighborhoods. In Kafr ‘Aqab, beyond the separation barrier, an infant healthcare clinic is operated by a Health Ministry franchisee rather than by the municipality.

Postal Services

Nine post office branches and agencies operate in the Palestinian neighborhoods of Jerusalem, compared to 34 branches in the Israeli neighborhoods. Following a petition submitted by ACRI, new post office agencies are due to open in three neighborhoods: Ras al-‘Amud, Bayt Safafa, and at the checkpoint by Shu‘fat refugee camp. Five postal workers deliver mail in East Jerusalem, compared to 88 workers in the other neighborhoods of the city. In most of the Palestinian neighborhoods, mail is delivered to central distribution centers (structures containing hundreds of mailboxes). Only five of the 22 neighborhoods of East Jerusalem receive the home delivery of mail. Following the post services petition, hundreds of street names have been given for the first time and thousands of homes have been numbered. In 2017 the installment of street signs was completed in Kafr ‘Aqab, beyond the separation barrier. Over the coming months, the Jerusalem municipality is expected to install street signs in Silwan and around the Shu‘fat refugee camp, thereby completing the installment of street signs in all of East Jerusalem.