A racialized space: social engineering in Jerusalem

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The Zionist project to remove or ‘transfer’ Palestinians from Palestine began but did not end in 1948; it continues right up to this very day. Since 1980, Jerusalem has been the central focus of the transfer process: the central hub of the project of coercively removing long-established Palestinian communities in order to make space for new Jewish arrivals. This paper examines the nature and mechanisms of this ongoing transfer from redrawing of boundaries and a system of checkpoints to the legal devices, complexities and manoeuvring employed to achieve the transfer of Palestinians, such as zoning, construction permits and even including documentation of the birth of a child. As the political, cultural and geographical core of the conflict between Zionism and the Palestinians, Jerusalem serves, in effect, as a kind of microcosm of the wider conflict.

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The Zionist project to remove or ‘transfer’ Palestinians from Palestine began but did not end in 1948; it continues right up to this very day. Since 1980, Jerusalem has been the central focus of the transfer process: the central hub of the project of coercively removing long-established Palestinian communities in order to make space for new Jewish arrivals. Jerusalem is also the political, cultural and geographical core of the conflict between Zionism and the Palestinians. And hence it provides an ideal site in which to understand the extent to which the separation of the two peoples (the necessary foundation for any imagined two-state solution) has been systematically undermined and made impossible by Israeli policy over several decades. Indeed, the idea that Israel has any interest in sharing (however unequally) the land of historic Palestine with the Palestinians crumbles in the face of what is happening in Jerusalem, which serves, in effect, as a kind of microcosm of the larger arena of the conflict. Not only does the city offer a microcosm – in that the spatial struggles that occur throughout the West Bank occur here on a smaller and more intensive scale – but for a two-state solution to even have a chance of success, Jerusalem would necessarily have to be shared between the two peoples. And the process that has been unfolding in Jerusalem has by design made such a sharing impossible. What we see in Jerusalem is not a logic of separation – least of all one premised on equality – but rather a methodically implemented policy of the erasure of one people and their replacement by another. This logic is put into practice at two levels: the geographical (involving the re-organization of social space) and the bureaucratic (involving the status and residency rights of individuals and families). I will address both.

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To understand Israel’s geographical re-organization of Jerusalem, it is necessary to understand that the city was divided during and after the war in 1948 during which Palestine was uprooted and Israel created. When the fighting ended, the western part of the city had fallen under Israeli control. The eastern part, along with the rest of the West Bank, had come under Jordanian control. At that time, what was called East Jerusalem amounted to the area of the Old City and a few outlying neighborhoods, totaling a little over 2 square miles. After the 1967 War, during which Israel captured East Jerusalem and the West Bank (as well as the Gaza Strip), the Israelis expanded the territorial dimensions of what they called Jerusalem by adding almost 27 square miles of West Bank land to the city’s municipal borders (Foundation for Middle East Peace, 1997; B’Tselem, 1995; Halper, 2002; Benvenisti, 1996). In 1980, they also claimed to annex this additional land to Israel. In fact, over 90% of the eastern part of what the official Israeli slogan refers to as ‘the eternal and undivided capital of the Jewish people’ actually consists of land thus added to Jerusalem after 1967 (B’Tselem 1995, 1998). According to international law, this land has exactly the same status as the West Bank: it is militarily occupied territory, not subject to unilateral annexation (e.g. Dugard 2007).

The land that Israel illegally added to Jerusalem was taken from 28 Palestinian villages in the West Bank and was, in most cases, the property of the people of those villages rather than of (Palestinian)Jerusalemites. In some cases, whole villages and their populations were annexed to Jerusalem. In most cases, however – and certainly wherever geographically possible – the Israeli planners drew the new, expanded municipal boundaries of Jerusalem up to the houses of outlying Palestinian towns and villages in such a way that the towns’ orchards, olive groves, and pastures were placed on one side of the boundary (inside Jerusalem), while the houses and people were placed on the other side (outside Jerusalem). According to Meron Benvenisti, the delineation of the city’s municipal borders after 1967 was explicitly designed to incorporate ‘a maximum of vacant space with a minimum of Arabs’ (Benvenisti 1996).

The Israeli attempt to incorporate Arab land without Arabs often produced anomalous results. The town of Nu’mān, for example, was annexed to municipal Jerusalem when the borders were redrawn in 1967, but its inhabitants were classified as residents of the West Bank (B’Tselem 2003). Over the years, they filed numerous appeals with the Israeli Ministry of the Interior to change their status to residents of Jerusalem, since their town had been absorbed within the expanded municipal borders. The Ministry consistently rejected these appeals. As a result, the residents of the village, who are technically residents of the West Bank, are considered by Israeli law to be ‘persons staying illegally in Jerusalem’, because that is where their houses were after the Israelis redrew the municipal borders. They have spent forty years living under constant threat of expulsion (the penalty they face according to Israeli regulations). They are also cut off from the infrastructure and services of Jerusalem. Access to educational, medical, and infrastructure services such as water tie the village to the West Bank – but, because the town itself is ‘inside’ Jerusalem, all these arrangements are illegal, and subject to interdiction.

The initial post-1967 expansion of Jerusalem was a matter of lines drawn on paper. Palestinian residents were able to cross these lines until the beginning of the so-called peace process in the mid-1990s, when Israel first institutionalized the separation of the different segments of the occupied territories from each other (and further subdivided each of the territories internally as well – breaking the West Bank
up into Areas A, B and C, and often isolating each Palestinian town or village from the rest of the territory) (Siedmann 2004; Hass 2005a, 2005b, 2005c, 2005d; Rappaport 2005). Henceforth, the Gaza Strip and the West Bank were cut off from each other, from Israel, and from East Jerusalem, which had until then been the focal point of Palestinian life. So, before the Oslo Accords, Palestinian farmers from ‘outside’ Jerusalem could still physically access their land ‘inside’ Jerusalem (unless the land had been expropriated and taken over by one or another of Israel’s Jewish colonies). Today, however, the Israelis have constructed 104 miles of the separation wall in and around East Jerusalem, physically cutting it off from the West Bank. What had once been a line on map is today a formidable physical obstacle.

According to a United Nations report published in July 2007, the wall’s route in and near Jerusalem runs deep into the West Bank to encompass the large Jewish settlements near the city, while excluding densely populated Palestinian areas which are currently inside the municipal boundary (UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UN OCHA) 2007). In addition, the wall runs through the middle of Palestinian communities in municipal Jerusalem, separating neighbors and families from one another. There are today only twelve gates allowing access to Jerusalem through the wall. Of these gates, only four are even theoretically accessible to West Bank residents, who must go through an exhaustive process to obtain a permit from the Israelis in order to enter Jerusalem. In point of fact, an entire generation of West Bank Palestinians has never seen Jerusalem and the sites holy to their religions (including the Church of the Holy Sepulchre and the Dome of the Rock).

Apart from everything else, Israel’s denying Palestinians access to their sites of worship is a violation of international law, as is denying them freedom of movement within and between the occupied territories in general. It is important to note that no such regulation on movement applies to Jewish colonists, who come and go quite freely between Israel, Jerusalem and the West Bank. For the lucky few Palestinians who do obtain permits, crossing the wall into Jerusalem can easily take a couple of hours in either direction. ‘A Palestinian pedestrian crossing the checkpoint to Jerusalem [at Qalandia] must first follow a passageway bordered by metal fences’, a recent UN report points out.

Upon entering the checkpoint, five turnstiles or revolving gates have to be crossed by each person before an identification check is made. Only one person can go through these electric gates at a time. From a hidden post, a soldier surveying the area from a television screen can stop the movement of the turnstiles at any time. When the ID check is made, a security scan of any belongings that are being carried is completed. There is, the report adds, no human contact between Palestinians and Israeli soldiers. ‘The soldiers are seated in booths, surrounded by reinforced glass. Communication between the soldiers and people crossing is carried out primarily by a speaker system or people are addressed in certain cases through the glass’ (UN OCHA 2006).

Until relatively recently – until the advent of the ‘peace process’ in the mid-1990s and the wall that so perfectly expressed its logic – Arab Jerusalem existed as part of a continuum with the Palestinian communities around it, in the way in which urban centers are tied to surrounding towns and the wider countryside everywhere. Not only do tens of thousands of Palestinians with Jerusalem residency papers work in Jerusalem but live in areas that have already fallen on the other side of the wall; many Jerusalem Palestinians also work in places in the West Bank, particularly Ramallah.
Today, however, Israel’s wall has cut off a quarter of Jerusalem’s Palestinian population from the city (UN OCHA 2007). According to the 2007 UN report, the wall’s route ‘runs deep into the West Bank to encircle the large [Jewish] settlements of Givat Ze’ev (pop. 11,000) and Ma’ale Adumim (pop. 28,000), which are currently outside the municipal boundary.’ The report goes on to note:

By contrast, densely populated Palestinian areas – Shu’fat Camp, Kafr Aqab, and Samiramees, with a total population of over 30,000, which are currently inside the municipal boundary, are separated from Jerusalem by the Barrier. Other villages to the north and east of the city, with populations of more than 84,000, are also excluded. In addition, the Barrier runs through the middle of Palestinian communities, separating neighbors and families from one another – this happens in Abu Dis, for example.

North of the city, but still inside the redrawn municipal limits, the wall and a bypass road completely encircle the 15,000 Palestinians living in four villages near Bir Nabala. They can only access the outside world through a tunnel.

Moreover, the wall has greatly worsened the economic prospects facing Palestinians in East Jerusalem which used to be the commercial heart of Palestinian life. Many Palestinian businesses in Jerusalem rely for their supplies, or their commercial survival, on open linkages with the West Bank hinterland. But the wall prevents normal movement of people and goods and has forced Palestinians to completely alter their economic habits. Bringing goods to market from the West Bank to East Jerusalem now involves in effect importing them across an international frontier into Israel – even though the actual international frontier is miles to the west of the wall. Crossing the new ‘frontier’ requires using the ‘back-to-back’ transport system and paying various import taxes. Most small shopkeepers can’t afford such expenses. Even if they could, many of their customers are no longer able to reach them. According to the 2007 UN report, for example, Palestinians in Abu Dis used to shop for fruits and vegetables in the markets of East Jerusalem (a stone’s throw away); they now must go all the way to Bethlehem. Similarly, Palestinians in the suburb of al-Ram now have to shop in Ramallah rather than Jerusalem. Almost three hundred shops there have been forced to close in recent years. The East Jerusalem unemployment rate is approaching 20%, compared with around 8% in Israel. The damage done by Israel’s wall has been just as bad, or worse, for Palestinian communities around Jerusalem now cut off by the wall, which used to depend on the patronage of Palestinians from Jerusalem. Over half the shops in the formerly prosperous al-Ram closed after the wall went up.

Meanwhile, hundreds of thousands of Palestinians in the Jerusalem suburbs and beyond, in the rest of the West Bank, depend on medical services offered by the six Palestinian hospitals in East Jerusalem, such as al-Makassed and Augusta Victoria, which have no equivalent in the West Bank. According to the UN, the number of West Bank and Gaza patients able to access medical facilities in East Jerusalem fell by half between 2002 and 2003, and has continued to decline since then. Al-Makassed Hospital reported a 50% drop in emergency room treatments after the wall went up around Jerusalem, from 33,000 in 2002 to 17,000 in 2005. The St. John Eye Hospital also reported a dramatic fall in treatments. Augusta Victoria Hospital, too, registered a one-third drop in its patient load once tightened Israeli controls over Palestinian access to East Jerusalem went into effect. Patients who cannot access these hospitals have no alternatives; without access to East Jerusalem, they simply do not receive the medical treatment they need. Furthermore, more than two-thirds of the hospital’s staff are West Bank residents; they must now apply for permits from the Israelis in order
to get to work, and since the number of permits that Israel issues varies randomly from month to month, key staff are sometimes unable to get to the hospital at all (UN OCHA 2006, 2007; B’Tselem 2004b).

At the same time, thousands of Palestinian students living in East Jerusalem attend classes in schools and colleges which now lie on the other side of the wall in Abu Dis. Every morning, these students face an unpleasant choice: they can try to find ways over, under, or around the wall separating Abu Dis from Jerusalem – or they can risk the traffic jams, roadblocks, and checkpoints studding the long roundabout route that would take them all the way around Jerusalem and halfway to Jericho before snaking its way back to Abu Dis, a stone’s throw from where they live in East Jerusalem. The wall has also shattered the normal pursuit of family life, separating cousins, nephews, uncles, aunts, grandparents, and – in one family out of every five living east of the wall – one parent or another from the rest of the family. All in all, according to the UN, a quarter of Jerusalem’s Palestinians will find themselves on the east side of the wall when it is finally completed.

However, Israel’s geographical re-organization of Jerusalem by such mechanisms as the wall is only one half of the project to Judaize and de-Arabize the city – to ‘de-Palestinize’ it, as John Dugard, the former Special Rapporteur on Human Rights in the Occupied Territories, put it (Dugard 2007). The other half of the project involves bureaucratic procedures structured by the recurring difference between Jews and non-Jews, and the replacement of the latter by the former. According to current or former Israeli officials of the municipality of Jerusalem, the distinction between establishing homes for Jews and denying them to non-Jews has been essential to city planning since 1967. ‘A cornerstone in the planning of Jerusalem is the demographic question’, noted Israel Kimchi, Director of Planning Policy for the Municipality of Jerusalem, in 1977:

> the city’s growth and the preservation of the demographic balance among its ethnic groups was a matter decided by the Government of Israel. That decision, concerning the city’s rate of growth, today serves as one of the criteria for the success of the process of Jerusalem’s consolidation as the capital of Israel. (B’Tselem 1995)

Amir Cheshin, former Israeli advisor on Arab affairs to the mayor of Jerusalem, explains:

> The planning and building laws in East Jerusalem rest on a policy that calls for placing obstacles in the way of planning in the Arab sector – this is done more to preserve the demographic balance between Jews and Arabs in the city, which is presently in a ratio of 72 percent Jews against 28 percent non-Jews. (B’Tselem 1995)

As the percentage of Jews to non-Jews (that is, Palestinians) began inevitably sliding away from the desired ratio, Israeli policy-makers struggled to devise ways to reverse the trend, with the 72-to-28 ratio firmly in mind as a desirable outcome.

Thus, for example, although Palestinians today comprise a third of Jerusalem’s population, they have access to far less than 10% of the land within the redefined city limits. Ninety per cent of the territory annexed to Jerusalem in 1967 – all of it Palestinian land – is today off-limits to Palestinian development because the land is either already built on by Jewish colonies or being held in reserve for their future expansion. (UN OCHA 2009) Even while doing everything possible to encourage and facilitate the Jewish colonization of East Jerusalem, the municipality does everything possible to prevent Palestinian construction in the city, routinely denying building and
construction permits to Palestinian residents of Jerusalem. Since 1967, over 100,000 housing units have been built for Jewish colonists in East Jerusalem, with active Israeli government sponsorship – all of it in flagrant violation of international law (and specifically the Fourth Geneva Convention’s prohibition on population transplantation). Over the same period, the municipality has granted only 9,000 permits for housing units for Jerusalem Palestinians.

One inevitable result of all the official bureaucratic limitations and controls on Palestinian growth and development in Jerusalem is a turn to what Israel considers to be ‘illegal’ construction. Thousands of housing units have been built without official permits by Palestinians since 1967. But this is done at considerable risk. Between 2004 and 2008 alone, over 400 Palestinian homes in Jerusalem were demolished by Israeli authorities.2 There are today around 9,000 Palestinian homes that have been built ‘illegally’ in Jerusalem, all of them subject to demolition.

But severe curtailment of Palestinian construction is only one of the bureaucratic methods Israel uses to limit the non-Jewish population of the city. Just as Israeli policy has led to the physical fragmentation of the occupied territories through the construction of walls and roads and the maintenance of roadblocks and checkpoints intended to restrict the movement of Palestinians while enabling the free movement of Jewish colonists in the West Bank, it has also redefined personal and family identity as well, according to a parallel (and mutually reinforcing) schema. Being classified as belonging to one or another of the external spaces divided up by Israel has a decisive influence on a Palestinian’s private and family life, and the nature, privacy and security of his or her home, even its vulnerability to demolition by the state. For a Palestinian living under Israeli rule, there is a tremendous difference between being classified as a Jerusalem resident and being classified as a West Banker, a Gazan, or a citizen of the state (and, similarly, among inhabitants of the West Bank themselves there are, for example, major differences among residents of the so-called seam zone between the 1949 Armistice Line and the wall; residents of the Jordan Valley; and residents of Nablus: each further subdivision of exterior space comes with its own peculiar forms of interior restriction).

Jerusalem residency does not carry the benefits of Israeli citizenship such as those enjoyed (to a limited extent) by Palestinian citizens of Israel, for example. But a Jerusalem identity card allows a Jerusalem Palestinian a degree of freedom of movement unthinkable for a West Banker or Gazan since the advent of the so-called ‘peace process’. So for a Palestinian, a Jerusalem identity card offers a kind of middle-ground between the second-class citizenship of Palestinian citizens of Israel (who, as non-Jews in the would-be Jewish state, face formidable forms of racially motivated discrimination, in violation of the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Racial Discrimination, to which Israel is a signatory3) and the more brutally restricted life of West Bankers, or the abject life of Gazans. It is, however, the Israelis, not the Palestinians, who decide what identity is conferred on which Palestinian, and they make the decision on the basis of criteria that have nothing to do with – or indeed fly in the face of – the particular or family circumstances of the individual person in question, but rather according to the division and control of external space on the basis of Israel’s own political and territorial claims and desires. It is for precisely this reason that Israel continues to control the official population registries of the West Bank and Gaza – demonstrating the lie of their supposed autonomy.

In keeping with these forms of regulation of Palestinian life, Israel’s quest to maintain a certain proportion of Jews to non-Jews in Jerusalem begins literally at birth. For
example, a Jewish baby born in Jerusalem (or for that matter in Israel or in Israeli colonies in the occupied territories) is automatically granted a birth certificate and a state identity number, which, like a US Social Security number, is one of the keys to life in Israel. On the other hand, a Palestinian baby born in Jerusalem is not automatically granted the same status as a Jewish baby. If one of the Palestinian infant’s parents is a resident of the West Bank rather than Jerusalem, the parents will be given a ‘Notification of Live Birth’, but neither an official birth certificate (a different document) nor an identity number. The parents can use the Notification of Live Birth to complete a secondary application for the child’s birth certificate, but they will still not be granted an identity number. ‘Parents going to the Ministry to obtain a birth certificate and record the child’s name in their identity cards are not always aware that the child does not have an identity number’, a joint B’Tselem and HaMoked report points out (also B’Tselem 2004a; Amnesty International 2004):

[Interior] Ministry clerks do not inform them that they must initiate the process of registering the child, but rather issue a birth certificate without an identity number for the child. Only parents who themselves note that the child does not have an identity number submit a request to register the child. (B’Tselem and HaMoked 1998)

If the Palestinian child’s parents notice that the number is missing, they can apply for a number as a tertiary procedure. However, any of these subsequent applications may require evidence that the family resides in Jerusalem and that Jerusalem is their ‘center of life’, which no Jewish family is ever asked to substantiate. If not all the required documents are available or in exact accordance with the stringent Israeli standard of proof, not only will the child not be granted an identity number, but the entire family could be expelled from Jerusalem.

This raises another issue. In the mid-1990s, thousands of Palestinians from Jerusalem were trapped by a new Israeli regulation designed to strip Jerusalem Palestinians of their Jerusalem residency papers if they are unable to prove that Jerusalem is and has always continuously been their ‘center of life’ (BADIL Resource Center for Palestinian Residency and Refugee Rights 1999; The Economist 2007; B’Tselem and HaMoked 1998). According to the State of Israel, Palestinians from Jerusalem who could not prove that the city had always continuously been their ‘center of life’ might permanently forfeit their right to live there. And since only those Palestinians with Jerusalem residency papers could enter Jerusalem – West Bankers are denied access unless they hold permits, which are extraordinarily difficult to obtain, and Gazans can only dream of such permits – they would not only be barred by the Israelis from living in the city in which they were born: they would be unable to visit Jerusalem ever again. This would apply to a Palestinian who had gone abroad for a few years to study at a foreign university; to a Palestinian who had found a job in the suburban West Bank; to a Palestinian who had married someone from the West Bank or Gaza; or to a Palestinian who had been forced to rent or buy an apartment in the West Bank because he found it impossible to rent, buy, or build a home in Jerusalem proper.

Israel’s bureaucratic control of Palestinian life was perfectly expressed in a new draconian law passed by the Israeli parliament in 2003, which now prohibits Palestinian residents of the occupied territories who are married to Israeli citizens or Jerusalem residents from acquiring Israeli citizenship or residency status – and thus bars them from living with their spouses and their children in Israel or Jerusalem. The law covers children as well as spouses: at the age of fourteen, the children of Jerusalem Palestinians...
whose birth was – for whatever reason, including the extreme difficulty of registering in East Jerusalem – registered in the West Bank have to apply for special military permits to go on living with their parents in Jerusalem. When they reach the age of majority, the children will have to leave their parents – or the parents will have to leave Jerusalem along with their children. The law does not affect Jewish residents of the occupied territories (i.e., colonists), or immigrant Jewish spouses of Israeli citizens, who are eligible for instant citizenship under the Law of Return, or, in fact, any Jews at all: it is only directed at Palestinian citizens of Israel and residents of Jerusalem and the occupied territories. Up to 24,000 Palestinian families are affected by the new Israeli law, which has threatened marriages and destroyed families by forcing them apart.

Of course, while one branch of the Israeli Ministry of the Interior revokes Jerusalem Palestinians’ right to live in the city of their birth and ancestry, another branch of the same ministry grants instant citizenships to Jews from anywhere in the world who can establish a claim to being Jewish (or at least a claim in keeping with the current rabbinical standards, which are debated in Israel from time to time). So, while Palestinians were being forced to leave Jerusalem in the 1990s, their places were being taken by Jewish immigrants, who had never before set eyes on the city, from Moldova and Russia – about a million of whom, Avigdor Lieberman among them, were granted entry to and citizenship in Israel, simply because they are Jewish.

In point of fact, after various legal challenges, some of the Palestinians whom Israel had stripped of their Jerusalem residency rights in the 1990s had them quietly restored after the new policy was suspended in 2000. However, the policy was, also quietly, reintroduced, and made more effective by the even more vigilant Israeli policing of entry into Jerusalem made possible through the construction of the wall. In 2006 alone, Israel stripped 1,363 Jerusalem Palestinians of their right to live in the city: a number six times greater than the previous year and the highest annual total ever. Between 1967 and 2006, Israel stripped a total of 8,269 Jerusalem Palestinians of their residency (The Economist, 2007).

Never has any Jewish Israeli – hundreds of thousands, indeed millions of whom reside in the West Bank, or have studied, worked, lived in or immigrated from – or back to other countries – been asked to establish where his or her center of life is, much less been asked to assemble an immaculate set of documents concerning rent, taxes, and water bills going back ten or twelve years. According to Israeli law, a Jew’s right to live in Jerusalem (or anywhere else in Israel or the occupied territories) arises from the simple fact of his being Jewish, even if he comes from Moldova – ‘this right is inherent in being a Jew’, as Israel’s first Prime Minister, David Ben-Gurion, expressed it when presenting the Law of Return to the Israeli Parliament in 1950 (Al-Haq and other human rights NGOs in Israel/Palestine 2007). Non-Jews do not enjoy the same right, even if they come from a Palestinian family that has lived in Jerusalem for generations – simply because they are not Jewish. Israel’s policies really are as crude – as vulgar – as that.

Removing Palestinians is, of course, only one side of the coin of Judaizing Jerusalem, of which the other is implanting a new Jewish population in East Jerusalem, in flagrant violation of international law. A succession of Israeli governments has ordered five major waves of expropriation in and around Jerusalem, taking land from its Palestinian owners and giving it over to areas of exclusively Jewish colonization. Today there are dozens of Jewish colonies in the West Bank and East Jerusalem – every single one of them (and not merely the ‘illegal outposts’ that one hears about from time to time) implanted in violation of international law – with a combined total
population of almost half a million people. Because they were geographically distributed in order to maximize Israel’s territorial claims – in order to make it as difficult as possible to ever withdraw them – they now blanket the entire territory. According to a UN report published in 2007, the population of Jewish colonists in the occupied territories is increasing at a rate three times that of Israel within its pre-1967 borders; it will double to a million in the next decade (UN OCHA 2007). This population is undoubtedly the most formidable ‘fact on the ground’ created by Israeli policy over the last four decades.

‘The Judaization of Jerusalem is a cynical exercise in social engineering’, according to John Dugard, the former UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights (Dugard 2007). In pursuit of its claim that Jerusalem is a Jewish city, Israel has revoked Palestinians’ rights to residency; it has forcibly ejected them from Jerusalem; it has denied their applications for family unification; it has refused to register the birth of their children; it has devised laws intended to compel their children to leave them and move to the West Bank at the age of eighteen; it has built a wall to force them to choose between jobs in the West Bank and homes in Jerusalem – or vice versa; and it has made it as difficult as possible for them to build homes on land in Jerusalem that their families have owned for countless generations.

What is at stake here, of course, is Israel’s desire to consolidate its claim that Jerusalem is, as the official Israeli government slogan has it, ‘the eternal and undivided capital of the Jewish people’. By its very nature, the process of consolidating the Jewish claim to Jerusalem excludes the Palestinian claim to the city, and puts an end to any thought that the city could be shared equally between two separate states. There can be no Palestine without Jerusalem. The irony, then, is that by so systematically and stubbornly making it impossible to share Jerusalem, Israel has made it impossible for there to be a separate Palestinian state, and it has made the one-state solution that much more likely – indeed, all but inevitable.

Notes
1. This paper is adapted from the discussion of Jerusalem in my Palestine Inside Out: An Everyday Occupation (2008).
3. See the NGO report Suggested Issues .... (2005); Al-Haq and other human rights NGOs in Israel/Palestine (2006); and Concluding Observations ... (2007).
5. Also see figures provided by B’Tselem on its website.

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