

2.1 AL-ISAWIYYAH

Jerusalem Center - Mt. Scopus – Mt. of Olives Zone

SURVEY OF PALESTINIAN NEIGHBORHOODS IN EAST JERUSALEM

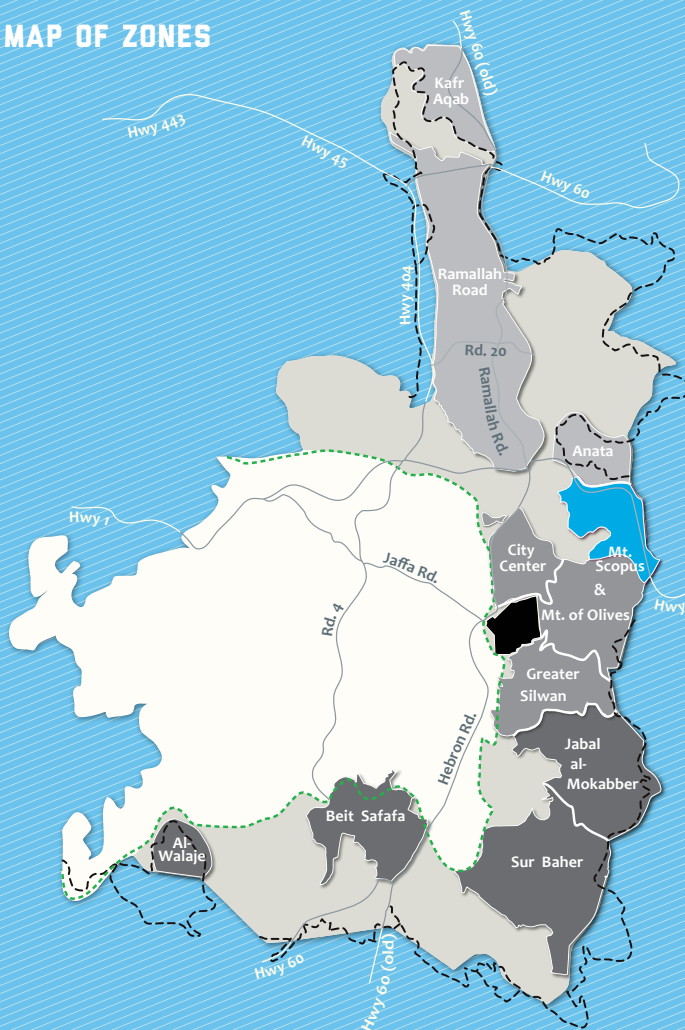
ABOUT THE NEIGHBORHOOD

Al-Isawiyyah is located on the eastern slope of Mount Scopus, adjacent to Hadassah Hospital. Cut off from the other Palestinian neighborhoods of East Jerusalem, al-Isawiyyah is trapped, and its development hindered, by Israeli institutions, neighborhoods, facilities, and roads: the Hebrew University campus, Hadassah Hospital, the post-1967 neighborhood of Givat Shapira (more commonly known as French Hill), National Highway 1, the Eastern Ring Road, the Jerusalem municipal boundary, and two military bases.

Al-Isawiyyah originated as a small village in the 16th century. A tradition linking the village to Jesus's travels in the region gave the village its name (Isa is the Arabic name of Jesus). A holy carob tree in the village is also connected to this tradition. Another tradition explains the name of the al-Arba'een Mosque ("Mosque of the Forty") in the center of the village: before the inhabitants of the village converted to Islam, it had only 40 inhabitants, and every time a baby was born, an adult would die. Only after they adopted the Muslim faith and built the mosque did the village begin to flourish.

Originally, the agricultural lands of al-Isawiyyah spanned some 10,000 dunam, from the top of the hill westward to al-Khan al-Ahmar (the Adumim Plain) in the east. Between 1948 and 1967, part of the village was included in the Israeli enclave of Mount Scopus, though only the land was controlled by Israel, while the residents came under UN jurisdiction and the rest of the village was under Jordanian rule. After the 1967 war, one quarter of the territory of the village (including all the built-up area) was included within the municipal line. Much of this area has already been expropriated from the residents, and, at present, two new planning projects (a national park and a landfill) threaten what remains of al-Isawiyyah's lands within the municipal boundary. As for the land outside of Jerusalem, the greatest threat is the so-called E1 plan, which aims to create Israeli territorial contiguity between Jerusalem and the Maale Adumim settlement. If all these plans are put into effect, al-Isawiyyah will remain a small, densely populated Palestinian enclave in the heart of the contiguous Israeli urban landscape, much of which is built on village lands.

MAP OF ZONES



FACTS

Population 15,500
Area 2,230 dunam



MAP LEGEND

East Jerusalem	Old City
Expropriated Land	Green Line
Northern Zones	Separation Barrier
Central Zones	Roads
Southern Zones	West Jerusalem

MAIN PROBLEMS IN AL-ISAWIYYAH

Shortage of Land for Construction

A very densely populated neighborhood, al-Isawiyyah is blocked from development on all sides. An inadequate amount of land zoned for construction, coupled by a high population-growth rate, has led to a severe housing shortage, giving residents no choice but to build without building permits. Today the built-up area of the neighborhood covers about 800 dunam. Despite the deviation from the development areas allotted in the neighborhood plan, population density in the neighborhood is high, reaching 20 people per gross dunam. For the sake of comparison, at the end of 2008 in the adjacent Israeli neighborhoods of French Hill and Tzameret HaBira, the population was 7,678 residents on an area of 982 dunam, with a density of about 8 people per dunam. At the end of 2011, average population density for all of Jerusalem was about 6.5 people per dunam.

Building-Height Restrictions

On a hill overshadowing al-Isawiyyah is an Israeli military base. When the neighborhood plan was being prepared, the IDF stipulated height limitations on construction over a large radius around the base's antennae. This area includes about a third of the planned area of the village as well as most of the valley and part of the hill. Following changes in use of the military facility, and as part of preparations of a residents' plan (see inset), there was an attempt to mitigate or cancel these restrictions, but without success. Operatively, so long as building rights in the neighborhood allowed only up to two storeys, this restriction had no particular significance. However, now that the planning authorities have allowed construction

of four and even six storeys (through detailed plans that comply with the Jerusalem 2000 Outline Plan, awaiting deposition), the meaning of this restriction is that in most of the area of the neighborhood it will not be possible to take advantage of the potential addition of floors, in order to ease the housing shortage.

Traffic Congestion

Al-Isawiyyah has four entrances, only two of which connect the neighborhood to the municipal road system. The other two entrances connect it directly to National Highway 1. Operatively, most of the traffic runs through the western entrance from the direction of French Hill. As a result, vehicular traffic funnels mostly into the neighborhood's neglected main street. A small loop road at the top of the hill is in relatively good physical condition, even having sidewalks on part of it. However, a special-education school on this street, serving students from all over East Jerusalem, creates congestion well beyond the street's capacity. Recently the municipality renovated another road (most of which is narrow and not statutory), thereby opening up the entrance adjacent to the Hebrew University campus, which had been blocked during the al-Aqsa Intifada. This is a narrow entrance that connects to narrow streets, and it only slightly relieves the congestion of the main road.

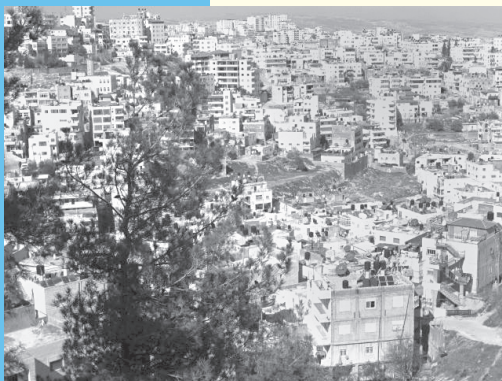
The Jerusalem 2000 Outline Plan

The new outline plan for Jerusalem, which awaits deposition for public review, proposes to expand the planned area of al-Isawiyyah only slightly beyond its built-up areas. The plan provides the residents of al-Isawiyyah a framework for the legalization of existing homes and for the densification of the neighborhood's fabric, through the addition

of floors and housing units. However, only very little vacant area for new construction was proposed, at the edge of the allotted expansion area. After residents and planners drew up Plan # 11500 (see inset), the planning authorities asked them to reduce the area of their plan and to adapt it to the polygon designated for the expansion of al-Isawiyyah in the Jerusalem 2000 Outline Plan, claiming that it was not possible to deviate from the plan. Meanwhile, the same planning committees deposited for public review a deviation from the outline plan on the same strip of land, for the establishment of a national park (see following).

The National Park

Al-Isawiyyah's natural land reserves are located to the south of the neighborhood's built-up area, at the base of the slope below the military base. This area is easily accessible from the village, constituting a potentially direct continuation of its built-up areas. Moreover, this is the only area not blocked to date by other Israeli development projects. Although this land has no special environmental value, the Jerusalem Municipality, in cooperation with the Israel National Parks Authority, has decided to develop it into a national park. The plan for the national park (known as the Mount Scopus Slopes National Park) covers about 750 dunam, stretching from the southern houses of al-Isawiyyah up to the northern houses of its neighbor, at-Tur, thus annulling the areas allotted in the Jerusalem 2000 Outline Plan for the expansion of these neighborhoods. The residents believe that the goal of the park is to limit the development of the two densely populated Palestinian neighborhoods. The plan for the national park was deposited for public review at the end of 2011, but an appeal



Views of the Village (photos Bimkom)

to the court demanding that the plan be translated into Arabic delayed the process. After nearly a year of court proceedings, the appeal has been denied. Residents of both neighborhoods submitted objections to the plan and have also appealed to the Supreme Court. Decisions are pending (2013).

Solid Waste Landfill

To the north of al-Isawiyyah runs Wadi Muqleq (the Og Valley), which includes lands owned by residents of al-Isawiyyah, Anata, and Shuafat. When drawing up their plan (see inset), the residents of al-Isawiyyah requested to build a small industrial zone on their lands in the valley and also considered building a high school there. Their request was not accepted. In 2008, the Jerusalem Municipality began to advance plans to place a solid waste landfill in the valley, as well as a plant for the treatment of dry waste and construction material. In November 2012 the plan for the landfill was deposited for public review. The plans indicate that the valley will be blocked by an artificial hill that may in the distant future be developed into a public park. The rain waters will be drained off the hill in two channels, one on the north side and the other on the south side of the hill. At the time of writing (2013), the owners of the land, as well as the people living in the wadi and adjacent to it, have submitted their objections to the plan, which has significant environmental and proprietary repercussions. Decisions are pending.



Makeshift Infrastructure (photo Bimkom)

RESIDENTS STRUGGLE FOR A SUITABLE PLAN

After the neighborhood plan (# 2316) exhausted its building potential, residents of al-Isawiyyah had little choice but to begin building residential structures without permits, in areas that are not zoned as residential and even in areas that have no planning whatsoever. In the wake of this spontaneous construction, many demolition orders were served, some of which have been carried out. In response, the residents, in cooperation with Bimkom – Planners for Planning Rights, decided to take their future into their hands and began, in early 2004, to advance a new detailed outline plan for the neighborhood (#11500). The plan was made in a cooperative endeavor by representatives of the residents, along with a professional planning staff. Likewise, the plan was coordinated with engineers of the Jerusalem Municipality and district planners in the Ministry of Interior, who welcomed the initiative and promised to help make it happen. The residents' plan got underway with high hopes. It proposed to double the area of the neighborhood, in order to legalize the spontaneous construction and provide land reserves for additional construction in the future. Likewise, the plan proposed to change the existing zoning in Plan # 2316, in order to reconcile the zoning with the actual construction in the area: built-up areas were zoned as residential; un-implementable roads were cancelled and alternative roads were proposed, usually based on existing roads. The new plan included an addition of large areas for public and educational structures. In addition, a new system of roads was proposed that included the regulation of the four entrances to the neighborhood and their connection to a ring road that would provide access to areas on the edges of the neighborhood and alleviate the traffic congestion on the internal roads. The plan attempted to resolve all of the planning problems in the neighborhood. But the obstacles were quick in coming. A year after the first draft of the plan was coordinated with the planning authorities, those same authorities began to promote the plan for the national park. The Jerusalem 2000 Outline Plan was approved for deposition without being updated in accordance with the areas for expansion agreed upon in the plan. And then came the plan for the landfill, which, if approved, will block the neighborhood off from the north as well. Given these circumstances, the residents decided to stop planning their neighborhood and handed the responsibility back to the municipality. At the end of 2010, the City Engineer committed to advance the plan for the neighborhood within smaller borders, but since then, nothing has been done. Almost a decade after beginning to promote the new plan, al-Isawiyyah has no updated outline plan and no planning horizon; spontaneous construction continues, new demolition orders are served, the physical infrastructure is becoming more and more run-down, and the residents feel suffocated.

APPROVED PLANS IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD

Outline Plan # 2316 for al-Isawiyyah	663.0 dunam
Outline Plans # 4902 and 5036 for gas stations	9.0 dunam
Part of Local Outline Plan # 62 for Jerusalem	59.5 dunam
Parts of Plans (4752, 14049) for the Mount Scopus Tunnel Road	154.0 dunam
Part of Outline Plan # 4585a for the Eastern Ring Road	154.0 dunam
Part of Outline Plan # 3116 for the National Highway No.1	104.2 dunam
Part of Outline Plan # 3203 for the Hebrew University	74.3 dunam
Parts of Outline Plans (3361, 1541a) for Givat Shapira (French Hill)	27.0 dunam
Total planned area	1,245.0 dunam
Unplanned area	985.0 dunam
Total area of neighborhood	2,230.0 dunam

In addition, six detail plans were approved, with no added area for the neighborhood.

ZONING STRUCTURE ACCORDING TO APPROVED PLANS ▪ DESIGNATION VS. USE

Designation	Plans		Land Use
	dunam	%	
Residential*	366	16	In about 90% of residentially zoned areas of the neighborhood, building rights are insufficient and do not correspond with existing construction. The neighborhood has dozens of 4-6-storey apartment houses, built without permits. Furthermore, the built-up areas cover about 800 dunam (more than double the residentially zoned areas) with more than 200 houses built on unplanned areas and on land zoned as open.
Open Spaces	313	14	More than half of the neighborhood's open areas are not designated for use by its residents; most of them are intended to become a national park (see elaboration). Some 150 dunam are included in the plans for the Mount Scopus Tunnel Road and some 60 dunam are zoned as a nature reserve under an old plan. In the neighborhood plan, the areas defined as open are located on the slope of the valley, in the center of the village, and on the edges of the hill. There are also three plots that are apparently designated to be small playgrounds. Effectively, the areas in the valley are built up intensively, the areas on the edge of the hill are partially built up, and the neighborhood does not have a single playground.
Public Buildings and Institutions	111	5	About half of the areas for public buildings and institutions in al-Isawiyyah are not zoned for use by its residents. About 42 dunam are included in the plan for the Hebrew University campus and about eight dunam are included in the plan for French Hill – both of which are vacant areas. The remaining areas (only about 50 dunam) are designated for the building of five schools (which were built without exhausting the land and building rights) and seven kindergarten compounds, only one of which was actually built. The elementary schools are operating beyond their capacity and the neighborhood has no high school. Many students attend private schools and high-school-aged girls sometimes forgo their studies because there is no high school for them in the neighborhood.
Local Roads	125	6	The roads that appear in the neighborhood plan, with the exception of the main road and two local ones, have not been developed. Some streets have been only partially developed and are in bad condition. The rest of the planned roads cannot be implemented because of the dense construction, while existing roads that are not included in the neighborhood plan (and therefore are not statutory) serve the residents on a daily basis and are in very bad shape, with no expectation for their future development.
Main Arteries and Highways	315	14	Al-Isawiyyah is surrounded by main traffic arteries. National Highway 1, connecting Jerusalem to both east and west, abuts the neighborhood to the north and east, effectively drawing its boundary. The highway merges with the future route of the Eastern Ring Road, which is being planned as another highway. An overlapping segment of the two roads, running adjacent to the eastern edge of al-Isawiyyah, has a 3-meter wall running down the middle of it, separating between Israelis and Palestinians.
Other	15	1	A cemetery, two gas stations, and an engineering facility.
Unplanned Areas	985	44	The neighborhood plan covers a very small area and leaves crucial areas unplanned. There are also two pockets in the heart of al-Isawiyyah to which the neighborhood plan does not apply, both of which are built up.
Total	2,230	100	

* The most common residential zoning type in al-Isawiyyah allows for a 50% building ratio, with up to two storeys. Exceptions to this are two compounds in the center of the village, where building rights consist of a 70% ratio, with 3 storeys.