

## 2.4 AS-SUWWANAH

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

# SURVEY OF PALESTINIAN NEIGHBORHOODS IN EAST JERUSALEM

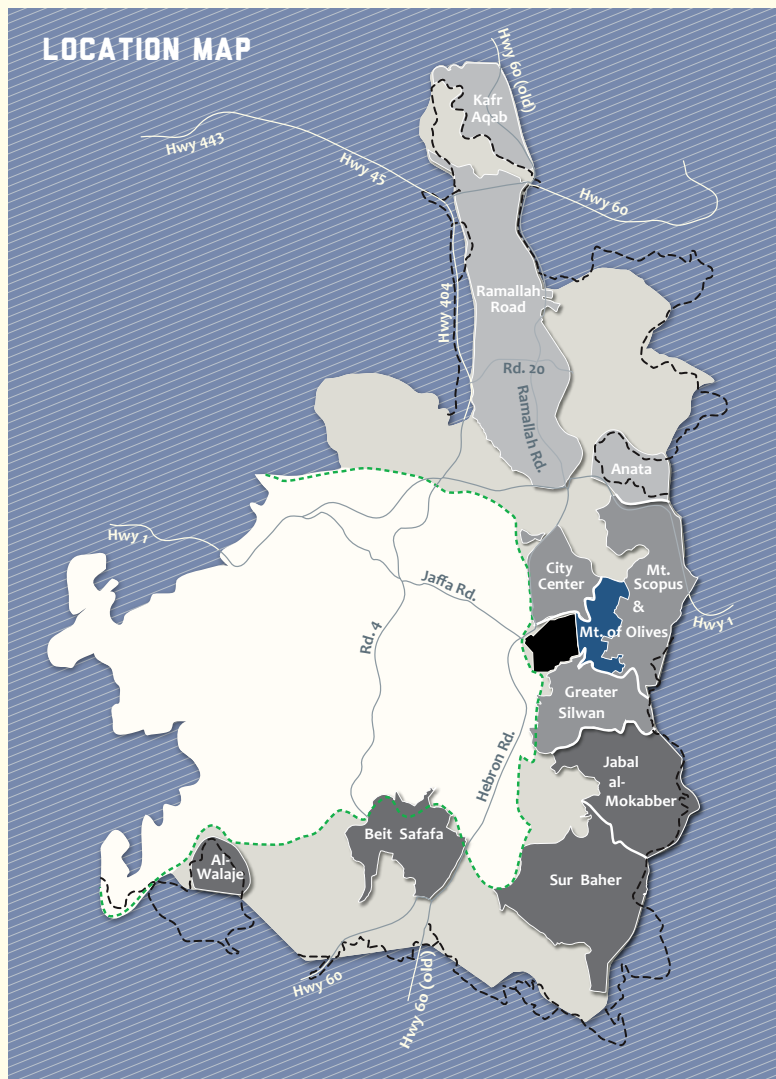
### ABOUT THE NEIGHBORHOOD

As-Suwwanah is the only residential neighborhood on the westward-facing slopes of Jabal az-Zaytoon (The Mount of Olives). Descending into Wadi an-Nar (the Qidron Valley), it borders to the west on Wadi aj-Joz, to the north on the Hebrew University Mount Scopus campus, and to the east on at-Tur and Brigham Young University (commonly known as the Mormon University). To the south, the neighborhood borders on an extensive strip of land that includes the Jewish cemetery on the Mount of Olives, a major Muslim cemetery, and several church compounds.

As-Suwwanah developed on agricultural lands belonging to the village of at-Tur, which, under Ottoman rule in the Holy Land, was considered part of Jerusalem's rural periphery. The British included both at-Tur and as-Suwwanah within the city's boundaries, however, unlike at-Tur, which appears on the Mandatory plans as a residential area, as-Suwwanah is designated on those plans as various types of open spaces. With no historical village center, the neighborhood developed from the late 19th century onwards in the midst of the olive groves

to the south of At-Tur Road, which ascends steeply toward the Mount of Olives.

At the beginning of the 1940s, the neighborhood was comprised of a cluster of about 25 houses. By the early 1970s, this had grown into a neighborhood of about 75 residential buildings. However, since the beginning of Israeli rule after 1967, this growth has been limited. In Plan no. 9 for the Visual Basin of the Old City (1976), residential land-use was restricted to the area south of At-Tur Road, and low construction density was stipulated. The land to the north of the road, on which 20 houses already existed, was zoned for hotels, recreation, and institutions. In the years since, only a few new residential structures have been built, all to the south of the road, and a number of city-wide institutions have been built, mostly to the north of the road. In comparison with other neighborhoods in East Jerusalem, as-Suwwanah's residents are well-off. Its proximity to the commercial areas of East Jerusalem's City Center and the tourist and medical facilities on the Mount of Olives, give it many advantages. However, the establishment of national parks around it poses a severe threat to its future development.



### FACTS

**Population** 3,000

**Area** 448 dunam

**Adjacent Area** 780 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 AS-SUWWANAH

### Housing Shortage

The main residential area in the neighborhood is located to the south of At-Tur Road. Even in this area, however, approved plans provide limited construction possibilities, and almost all of the areas zoned as residential are already built up. The only way to increase residential construction is to build upwards to four storeys (see: The Jerusalem 2000 Outline Plan) on buildings where this has not yet been done. To the north of At-Tur Road, the existing homes and some vacant land adjacent to them were originally granted a mixed zoning for residential use and tourism. Newer plans have rezoned the vacant land exclusively for hotels. The almost complete lack of construction opportunities in as-Suwwanah is a phenomenon that afflicts the adjacent Palestinian neighborhoods as well, creating a continuum of Palestinian neighborhoods with no potential for development.

### Declared National Parks

The development of the neighborhood is also limited by two declared national parks. Declaration is a powerful tool; it follows planning and is nearly impossible to cancel or change. The earliest of the declared national parks is the National Park Surrounding the Old

City Walls, which was declared in 1974. This park is not adjacent to as-Suwwanah, but it is a hub for the subsequent national parks. In 2000, the Tzurim Valley National Park was declared, its land stretching over the entire open area to the north of as-Suwwanah. The park is named after the type of stone that is found in the area (the Arabic name as-Suwwanah is also connected to these rocks). Whereas the National Park Surrounding the Old City Walls has recognized archeological and historical value (though not necessarily necessitating its width), the Tzurim Valley is of questionable historic significance. Located in the heart of the urban fabric of East Jerusalem, the Tzurim Valley National Park limits the development of as-Suwwanah and Wadi aj-Joz and forms a wedge in the urban continuity between the neighborhoods of East Jerusalem's City Center and those on the Mount of Olives. The park targets tourists and visitors from outside of the city, while disregarding the needs of the Palestinian neighborhoods on whose lands it sits. Moreover, a massive stone fence separates it from the adjacent residential areas.

### Planned National Parks

Three additional national parks around as-Suwwanah are in various planning stages, not yet approved or declared. If approved, they will significantly expand the area

of the national parks in the heart of the Palestinian neighborhoods of East Jerusalem while tightening the choke-hold around as-Suwwanah. Two of these parks will strengthen the weak link between the two declared parks (see above): the first is an area of about 40 dunam of Wadi aj-Joz land that includes the Rockefeller Archeological Museum and the adjacent public garden; the second and larger area (of about 470 dunam) confines as-Suwwanah to the south and includes the large swaths of church land, mostly open areas, on the slope descending westward from the Mount of Olives. On the latter site, construction and development activities are already being carried out by the Israel National Parks Authority, despite the fact that its formal planning has not begun. Plans for these two parks were first revealed in an early version of the Jerusalem 2000 Outline Plan. However, they do not appear on the official version of the outline plan which awaits deposition for public review. Another park, the Mount Scopus Slopes National Park, is planned to the east of as-Suwwanah, between at-Tur and al-Isawiyyah, on the eastward-facing slopes of Mount Scopus. The plan for this park is in advanced stages, and, although the residents' objections have yet to be heard, construction activity is already taking place on site.

### Israeli Military Academies

In blatant contrast to the severe construction limitations imposed on as-Suwwanah and the adjacent Palestinian neighborhoods, Plan # 51870 was drawn up, for the establishment of an Israeli military academy on the Mount of Olives, adjacent to the Mount Scopus Hebrew University Campus. This plan, which was deposited for public review in November 2012, proposes the establishment of a densely built compound (eight-storey buildings, most of which are to be dug into the ground) that will house several IDF officer-training schools. This compound is located in the northern part of as-Suwwanah, between the Mormon University and the Augusta Victoria German-Lutheran Church compound, on a site that was originally designated for building Israel's Supreme Court. The Israel Defense Ministry and the Jerusalem Municipality, who initiated the plan, claim that it sits on Israeli state land within the Mount Scopus enclave. This claim is imprecise, since the vast majority of the area of the new campus will actually be outside of the enclave. Local

landowners, as well as the Mormon University, have submitted objections to the plan. The District Committee hearing on the issue has been delayed several times and has yet to take place.

### The Jerusalem 2000 Outline Plan

The new outline plan for Jerusalem, which awaits deposition for public review, heralds no planning relief for as-Suwwanah. The plan perpetuates the reduced borders of the neighborhood, proposing no expansion. As-Suwwanah is included both within the boundaries of the Visual Basin of the Old City as well as the area set aside for preservation, for which special stipulations apply, primarily the limitation of construction to four storeys. This means the addition of two storeys on top of the two storeys stipulated in the approved plans. None of the national parks encircling as-Suwwanah (except for the National Park Surrounding the Old City Walls) appear on the plan.

### THE AL-IBRAHIMEYYAH SCHOOL

The establishment of the Tzurim Valley National Park by the Israel National Parks Authority (INPA) was met by resistance from the local landowners and the management of the al-Ibrahimeyyah School, a private K-thru-12 school and college. The longstanding and respected East Jerusalem educational institution has operated in as-Suwwanah, to the north of At-Tur Road, since before 1967. In the 1970s, a detailed plan (# 2177) was approved, formalizing the zoning of the land for a public building, while zoning the adjacent plot to the north of the school as open public area. The latter plot, which was developed only on the most basic level, is used by the school as well as the children of as-Suwwanah and the adjacent neighborhoods as a football field. In the neighborhood outline plan, which was prepared in the 1980s and approved in 1990, a large swath of land in the north of the neighborhood was zoned for a national park, and the football field remained zoned as open public area, without any change. However, in the plan that was prepared in anticipation of the declaration of the Tzurim Valley National Park in 2000, the area of the football field was included in the national park, as was another open public area adjacent to Wadi aj-Joz, despite the fact that, by law, the plans for the declared park should have been on an area already zoned as a national park. In the years following the declaration, the INPA dismantled the fence surrounding the football field and the school subsequently put it back up; this repeated itself over and over again. There was also an attempt by the INPA to prevent the parents of students from parking in the parking lot next to the school, claiming that it was designated for

visitors of the national park. The INPA's actions have been carried out in a threatening manner, sometimes by night, and have led to physical confrontations. Eventually, the landowners and directorship of the school appealed to the HCJ and, following the proceedings, an agreement was reached between the sides according to which the borders of the park would be corrected and the football field would not be included in the national park. Thus the status quo was maintained. The children continue to play football, the parents continue to use the parking lot, and tourists continue to pass by the school fence, on their way to the park. But the conflict still casts a shadow, as students, parents, and residents of as-Suwwanah are not made to feel welcome in the national park, which was not intended to serve them.



The Soccer Field, with Wadi aj-Joz in the background (photo Bimkom)



A Typical Street (photo Bimkom)



At-Tur Road (photo Bimkom)

## APPROVED PLANS IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD

Part of Outline Plan # 3092 for at-Tur and as-Suwwanah	346.0 dunam
Part of Local Outline Plan # 9 for the Visual Basin of the Old City	102.0 dunam
<b>Total planned area</b>	<b>448.0 dunam</b>
Unplanned area	0.0 dunam
<b>Total area of neighborhood</b>	<b>448.0 dunam</b>

Over the years, about a dozen additional plans for the neighborhood have been approved, some general and some detailed, with no added area for the neighborhood.

## ZONING STRUCTURE ACCORDING TO APPROVED PLANS ■ DESIGNATION VS. USE

Designation	Plans		Land Use
	dunam	%	
Residential*	118	26	Most of the area zoned for residential use in the neighborhood is located to the south of At-Tur Road. The designated areas correspond with actual residential construction, but the permitted building ratios do not correspond with the actual building density. The ratios permitted in the approved plans are more suitable for a rural-style neighborhood, whereas as-Suwwanah has developed over the years as an urban neighborhood, and the residents are in need of additional building possibilities.
Open Spaces	160	36	The largest open area in the neighborhood has been included within the Tzurim Valley National Park and developed for tourists and not for use by the residents of the neighborhood (see: Declared National Parks). Another large area, belonging to the Lutheran Church, across the street from the Augusta Victoria hospital, is zoned as open public area but is effectively completely cut off from the residential neighborhood by the site presently being planned for the IDF academies (see: Israeli Military Academies). Within the residential neighborhood are three additional plots zoned as open public area: a soccer field adjacent to the al-Ibrahimeyyah School (see inset), a shaded spot near the Mormon University, and an entrance to a residential cluster which was developed as a kind of neighborhood park. In the south of the neighborhood are four more areas zoned as open public area, which, along with adjacent areas zoned for public institutions, create a buffer strip between the neighborhood and the church land to the south of it.
Roads	68	15	The neighborhood has statutory roads that serve the residents, though in some cases these are not properly maintained. There are also planned roads and roads designated for expansion that run near the houses of the neighborhood and are therefore not implementable. A significant area to the south of the Mount Scopus Tunnel Road is designated for the widening of that road, at the expense of the Tzurim Valley National Park, while areas of the park that border on the neighborhood are preserved at all costs (see inset). The access road to the Mormon University, presently a dead-end street, is planned to connect to the main road of the Mount of Olives (Rabi'a al-'Adawiyya Road), across from the Augusta Victoria hospital. Implementation of this road would entail the uprooting of an existing olive grove.
Public Buildings and Institutions	98	22	The neighborhood has nine plots designated for public buildings and institutions. These include the al-Ibrahimeyyah School (see inset), the Mormon University, the IDF academies (whose construction has yet to be approved; see expansion), and church compounds. Recently, plans for the establishment of new institutions were approved on two of the plots: conversion and expansion of an old hotel adjacent to the al-Ibrahimeyyah School for use by the Red Crescent; and construction of a new structure for an academic medical center. Thus, most of the area zoned for public buildings has already been developed or is designated for municipal-wide or touristic purposes. Only one of the plots was designated in the neighborhood plans for the establishment of kindergartens, but it stands vacant, without detailed planning.
Other	4	1	Area for hotels, located in the heart of the area zoned for combined residential construction and tourism, to the north of At-Tur road.
<b>Total**</b>	<b>448</b>	<b>100</b>	

\* The most common residential zoning type in the neighborhood allows for a 50% building ratio with sparse construction of up to two storeys. In a number of detail plans, a 90% building ratio, with three storeys, was approved.

\*\* An additional 780 dunam include the Jewish cemetery on the Mount of Olives, the Muslim cemetery adjacent to the Old City Walls, and several church compounds in their vicinity.