

East Jerusalem:

Historic Decision to Freeze Controversial National Park Plan

On September 10th, 2014, the appeals committee of the National Planning and Building Council instructed that the plan for a national park on the Eastern slopes of Mount Scopus be returned to the Jerusalem District Planning Committee for reconsideration. The council's decision directly links between the boundaries of the national park and the needs of the two adjacent Palestinian East Jerusalem neighborhoods, al-Isawiyyah and at-Tur – just as Bimkom together with the residents of al-Isawiyyah, as well as Ir Amim and the residents of at-Tur – have demanded all along.

Bimkom has long maintained that national parks in East Jerusalem serve the authorities as a planning means to restrict development and natural growth in Palestinian neighborhoods in East Jerusalem. In 2012, we published a report on the subject entitled [From Public to National: National Parks in East Jerusalem](#).

The plan for the national park, referred to as the Mt. Scopus Slopes National Park, was approved by the Jerusalem District Planning Committee in early 2013, making only a symbolic change to the plan as a result of the many objections filed. In response, 4 appeals were filed, among them an appeal by Bimkom together with the residents of al-Isawiyyah, arguing that the National Park Plan would eliminate the last remaining land reserves for the neighborhoods' development ([see English translation of the appeal](#)).

In its decision, the National Planning Council stated: *"With regard to the boundaries of the national park, the needs of the adjacent neighborhoods have not been sufficiently presented to us, including a clear examination of existing land reserves. This kind of examination is a necessary precondition prior to any decision regarding the boundaries of the park and it must be made on the basis of all the relevant considerations."*

This historical step offers a glimmer of hope for the improvement of the situation in al-Isawiyyah and at-Tur. The next milestone will be to convince the District Planning Committee to provide these neighborhoods with what they really need -- sufficient land for expansion.