

Land Registration = Land Confiscation

Analysis of land registration in East Jerusalem, 2018–2024

July 2025

In recent years, Settlement of Land Title (SOLT) procedures, conducted by the state of Israel in East Jerusalem, have served as another effective tool of dispossession and displacement, targeting Palestinian residents' homes and lands. In this new research, Bimkom – Planning and Human Rights, analyzes final land registration data (the outcome of SOLT) from the period 2018–2024. Our analysis reveals the extent to which SOLT, initially promoted under the guise of reducing socio-economic gaps in East Jerusalem, serves in fact to increase discrimination against the city's Palestinian residents while deepening the settlement enterprise in occupied East Jerusalem.

Introduction

Upon the annexation of East Jerusalem (EJ) in June 1967, Israel suspended all previous SOLT procedures (land registration) "for political and practical reasons".¹ Accordingly, uncompleted procedures, begun by the Jordanians, were not finalized, and new ones were not initiated. To make land available for building new Israeli neighborhoods–settlements in the annexed area, Israel expropriated land on a large scale,² rather than going through the complex and time-consuming SOLT procedures. At the time, this enabled Israel to avoid national and international criticism for registering land defined as occupied under international law.

Control and ownership of land stand at the heart of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict. In the occupied Palestinian territory including EJ, Israeli moves to alter land status and nationalize property, using various legal instruments including SOLT, are opposed by Palestinians and constitute a violation of international law. At the level of the individual, however, freezing land registration harms private landowners by preventing them from protecting their property rights.³ SOLT processes can therefore only be considered legitimate when fairness and equality before the law can be ensured, a condition not met in East Jerusalem.

Israel's suspension of SOLT froze land status in EJ at the stage of registration, or lack thereof, as of June 1967. As table 1 shows, prior to the 2018 SOLT renewal, most lands were thus categorized as "unregistered land"—approximately 73% of EJ land after deducting the land expropriated for construction of Israeli settlement–neighborhoods. Some 11% remained at the status of "land under registration process," meaning land where registration began but was never completed, while the remaining 16% had been fully registered in the land registry, known as the "Tabu," prior to 1967.

¹ HCJ 660/00 *Suleiman Hijazi v. Director of the Land Registration and Settlement Department – Ministry of Justice* (Nevo, 28.5.2002)

² A process known as "Minister of Finance expropriations," carried out for public purposes under the Land (Acquisition for Public Purposes) Ordinance, 1943. See also: Sandberg, H. (2004). Jerusalem: Land Title Settlement and Expropriation. *Journal of Israeli History*, 23(2), 216–231.

³ Levin–Shnor, R. "Privatization, Separation, and Discrimination – Abandoning the Land Rights Settlement Procedures in East Jerusalem." *Iyunei Mishpat* 34 (2011), pp. 183–238.

Table 1:⁴ East Jerusalem Land Distribution Prior to 2018 SOLT Renewal (in dunams)⁵

Total annexed area		72,000	
Area expropriated for Israeli neighborhood-settlements	23,000	Area remaining after expropriations	49,000 100%
		Registered land	8,000 16%
		Land in process of registration	5,000 11%
		Unregistered land	36,000 73%

After five decades of frozen land registration procedures, Israel renewed SOLT in 2018 as part of its five-year plan (2018–2023) to “reduce economic and social disparities and promote economic development in East Jerusalem (Government Decision 3790).” SOLT is often regarded as an important tool for securing land tenure, formalizing urban development, increasing land values, and accelerating economic development, all as part of a strategy to reduce disparities.

However, our analysis reveals that these objectives are misleading. Our in-depth examination of the renewed SOLT processes to date shows that the primary beneficiary is the settlement enterprise in East Jerusalem. In fact, only one percent (1%) of the land where SOLT was completed between 2018–2024 has been registered in the names of private Palestinian landowners. Not only does SOLT fail to serve Palestinian landowners, it also virtually halts planning and development prospects for Palestinians in the city, as we documented in [“Planning in East Jerusalem Completely Halted by New Protocol”](#) (Bimkom and Ir Amim, December 2024).

The information presented herein is based on detailed analysis of official land registry (Tabu) documents for the blocs fully registered either within Palestinian neighborhoods or in adjacent open areas. About half the blocs registered under the renewed SOLT process are located within existing Israeli neighborhoods-settlements or in areas designated for urban infrastructure. While these blocs are not included in the detailed analysis below, they were sampled to verify the purpose and ownership of land therein.

⁴ The numbers were updated compared to our previously published documents, and are now based on precise GIS evaluation.

⁵ Dunam is an Ottoman land measurement used across the Middle East. Four dunams equal approximately one acre.

SOLT in practice

According to our [SOLT monitoring site](#), created in partnership with [Ir Amim](#), Israel commenced land registration on a total area of close to 8,000 dunams, divided into some 232 blocs that are subdivided into hundreds of parcels. This area constitutes about one-fifth of the land that had not been fully registered in the land registry prior to 2018. By the end of 2024, procedures had been completed in 44 of the 232 blocs, covering a total of approximately 2,000 dunams – nearly 5% of the formerly unregistered land. Three additional blocs were completed in the first half of 2025, but are not included in the analysis.

The analysis presented below is based on finalized ownership registration and hence does not include blocs which are still undergoing the process. A significant portion of these blocs is in the Palestinian built-up area of Beit Hanina, where Jordan commenced SOLT without managing to complete the process. Some 20 more blocs are located in Silwan, where the settler organization Elad has been working to forcibly displace Palestinian residents and take over their homes. These blocs include all the buildings already housing settlers, as well as homes of Palestinian residents who have lived there for many years. SOLT procedures are also underway in several additional populated locations across East Jerusalem. In all cases where homes exist, the outcome of the procedures is uncertain, and there is concern they will be used to annul land rights of Palestinians and expel them from their homes.

In the first part of this research, we analyze the newly registered areas according to land ownership types, demonstrating that most of the land was registered to state institutions or to Jewish owners (whether individuals or companies), and only a negligible portion to Palestinian landowners. In the second part, we examine the spatial consequences of this registration against the backdrop of planning processes occurring in tandem. Cross-referencing SOLT data with planning data demonstrates that lands registered under SOLT will not serve the city's Palestinian residents. The third section examines a case-study of SOLT in Umm Tuba, where land on which Palestinians live in homes built **with building permits** was registered to the Jewish National Fund (JNF). The case of Umm Tuba is clear evidence of Israel's assault on Palestinian land and housing rights using SOLT.

1. Types of ownership registered in the current SOLT procedure

According to the data, a little less than half (42%), of the area registered by Israel thus far is located either within existing Israeli neighborhood-settlements or is designated for city-wide infrastructure (see Table 2); in most cases, registration was a technical completion of previous land expropriation. The other half of the area completed under SOLT (58%) is located within Palestinian neighborhoods or in adjacent open areas; these are the potential lands for development and improvement of Palestinian neighborhoods and are thus our primary focus.

In the Palestinian neighborhoods and in open areas relevant for their development, an overwhelming amount, about 767 dunams, was registered as institutional land, in the name of one of the state organs, the Jewish National Fund (JNF) or the Jerusalem Municipality. This amounts to nearly 40% of the entire area registered to date under SOLT. Approximately 95 dunams (5%) were registered in the name of Jewish owners, whether private individuals or commercial companies (see below). Another 71 dunams were registered in the name of churches. **Only some 20 dunams, amounting to just 1% of the land, were registered under the names of private Palestinian landowners.**

The possibility of registering land under Jewish (individual or corporate) ownership derives from the mechanism of the General Custodian (GC), who, under Article 5a of the Legal and Administrative Matters Law (1970) was entrusted with properties allegedly belonging to Jews before 1948 and therefore classified by Jordan as "enemy property." The GC is instructed by law to manage these assets until they are returned to their original owners, requested by their legal heirs, or transferred to the state. It is important to note that this discriminatory law allows Jewish owners to reclaim properties that remained beyond enemy lines after 1948, while preventing Palestinians from doing so.

As part of the current SOLT procedures, approximately 180 dunams were registered with a management clause in the name of the GC; ownership of these lands was registered mostly under private Jewish owners (individuals or companies), some to institutional owners, and a substantial amount to unknown owners. Altogether, these comprise about 10% of the total registered area. Furthermore, as we demonstrate in the second section below, the GC began initiating development plans in East Jerusalem, at times in cooperation with state institutions and at others with private Jewish landowners. The GC has thus become a central player in the development of Israeli settlements.

Another player in SOLT is the Custodian of Absentee Property (CAP), who has far-reaching authority to confiscate property owned by those who are declared absentees.⁶ Lands grabbed through the CAP are often registered to the state through the Israel Development Authority; the custodian's activity is therefore not always visible or known. However, the threat of activating the Absentee Property Law is one of the primary considerations deterring Palestinians from participating in SOLT (if and when they know it is occurring). Our data shows that an entire bloc within the new settlement of Givat HaMatos was seized in this fashion. Furthermore, the CAP's activity directly impacts planning processes, as it has been granted de facto veto power over the promotion of plans on unregistered land.⁷

⁶ For more information on the CAP's activity, see: [The Grand Land Theft](#), Bimkom & Ir Amim, June, 2023.

⁷ See: [Planning in East Jerusalem Completely Halted by New Protocol](#), Bimkom & Ir Amim, December 2024

Table 2: Land Registration by Type of Ownership (in dunams)

Total area registered under current SOLT Procedures		1,984	100%
Existing Israeli neighborhood -settlements*	257 13%	Infrastructure ** 570 29 %	Total land in Palestinian neighborhoods / adjacent open areas 1,157 58%
		Ownership type	area %
		State land***	460 23%
		Jewish National Fund (JNF)	265 13%
		Jerusalem Municipality	42 2%
		Jewish ownership (individual/corporate)	95 5%
		Churches	71 4%
		Private Palestinian ownership	20 1%
		Disputed land (unknown/ in conflict/ unclear)	204 10%

Notes to the table:

*Includes blocs in French Hill and Neve Yaakov.

** Includes: Yigal Yadin Road, Kidron Valley sewage treatment plant, park & ride lot in Gilo, and the Jewish cemetery on the Mount of Olives.

*** Includes land registered directly to the State, the Israel Development Authority, the Israel Land Authority, and the Custodian of Absentee Property (referred to herein as "state institutions").

2. Spatial implications of finalized land registration

When cross-referencing the newly registered lands with current or planned land uses, the picture becomes even clearer. Almost all SOLT procedures were carried out in areas and for projects not expected to benefit the city's Palestinian residents. Not only were most lands registered in the names of institutional entities and/or Jewish owners or companies associated with the settlement enterprise, there is also significant overlap between the registered lands and establishment of new East Jerusalem settlements. By contrast, the amount of registered land anticipated to cater for Palestinian public or private uses is extremely limited

2.A. Planning and building new settlements

Planning processes for new settlements are being promoted (or have already been approved) in parallel to SOLT, on roughly 813 dunams, or 70%, of the area registered within Palestinian neighborhoods and their environs (see Table 3).

Some of these settlements are planned through official initiatives, either governmental or municipal, and include:

- The site of the former airport in Atarot, where around 9,000 housing units are planned;

- Givat HaMatos, with approximately 7,300 planned housing units, some of which are already under construction;
- The planned Givat HaShaked settlement, expected to house 1,100 units;
- The NofZahav complex, where 140 housing units (and 550 hotel rooms) are planned—on state land, but by a private company.

Other new settlements are being promoted through private initiatives by companies linked to the settlement enterprise, on land that was partly registered as private (individuals or companies) and partly as state and/or municipal land, for “public” use. These include:

- A 15-dunam complex in the heart of Umm Laysoon, where approximately 450 units are planned;
- The Nofei Rachel complex in Umm Tuba, with 650 planned housing units. In two adjacent blocs, 39 additional dunams were registered under the JNF, even though some of that land already contains Palestinian-owned homes built with Israeli-issued permits (see detailed case study in Part 3);
- The Kidmat Zion complex in As-Sawahrah, where 390 units are planned. While there is no overlap between the registered land and the plan, the land was registered under “unknown owners” with a management clause to the GC.

In all plans promoted by private companies (except Nof Zion, which is on state land), as well as the Givat HaShaked plan, which is an institutional one, it is the General Custodian who conceived, initiated, and pushed forward establishment of these settlements.

In addition, some 25 dunams were registered in areas mostly built and already held by settler organizations. These include:

- Approximately 5 dunams in the Musrara neighborhood;
- Around 11 dunams in Sheikh Jarrah (Shepherd Hotel), where there are 20 built but uninhabited housing units;
- The Umm Haroun complex in Sheikh Jarrah, where some 40 Palestinian families currently live and an urban renewal plan dubbed Nahalat Shimon is being promoted, which includes 320 housing units alongside commercial and public uses.

As shown in **table 3** and its accompanying map, there are over 19,000 settlement housing units being planned on land where SOLT has been completed, most of them through State initiatives. These plans are promoted on approximately 800 dunams of land, with over 80% of the land registered in the name of state institutions. The Palestinian residents of East Jerusalem will not benefit from these housing units, despite on -the-record claims of impartiality by the planning committees. Even if a few Palestinians manage to live in these units, they will be the exception that proves the rule.

Table 3: New Settlements Promoted on Land Registered via SOLT

<i>Settlement name</i>	<i>Land registered (dunams)</i>	<i>Institutional ownership (dunams)</i>	<i>Initiative</i>	<i>Planned housing units</i>	<i>Map ref.</i>
<i>Givat HaMatos*</i>	62	53	Jerusalem Municipality	7,310 Partially under construction	2
<i>Atarot</i>	498	451	Housing Ministry	9,000	8
<i>Givat HaShaked*</i>	58	34	Jerusalem Development Authority & GC	1,115	1
<i>Nahalat Shimon*</i>	10	3	JDC & GC	320	7
<i>Nof Zahav**</i>	74	74	Kailas Investments	140 (+ 550 hotel rooms)	5
<i>Umm Lysoon</i>	16	2	Topodia Co. & GC	450	4
<i>Nofei Rachel</i>	67	40	Nofei Rachel Co. & GC	650	3
<i>Kidmat Tzion</i>	12	0	Bahurim Co. & GC	390	6
<i>Total</i>	813	672		19,375	

Notes to table:

*The land settled in these blocs represents only part of the settlement's overall plan. The number of units refers to the entire settlement.

** State-owned land leased to a private settler-affiliated company. The land is a remnant of the large Armon HaNatziv expropriation of 1970, which had not been previously registered.

2.B. Areas registered for Palestinian owners or uses

As noted above, only a marginal percentage of the total area registered is land that serves or may serve Jerusalem's Palestinian residents, and an even smaller portion has been registered in the name of private Palestinian owners.

Land registration for the benefit of private Palestinian owners was finalized for only about 20 dunams, representing a mere 1% of the total settled land. This includes a single bloc of approximately 17 dunams in the center of Sur Baher, which contains existing homes. Of this, 12 dunams were registered in the names of private owners, while the remainder were registered to the Jerusalem Municipality for public uses, based on an approved plan. The overall data indicates this is a single case and clearly an exception to the rule. Note that adjacent to this bloc, additional plots where many homes stand are undergoing SOLT, placing

their owners under threat of dispossession. Furthermore, small parcels and even parts of parcels were registered in the names of private Palestinian owners in Beit Safafa and in the Umm Haroun complex in Sheikh Jarrah. Together, these amount to just a few dunams.

In addition, around 70 dunams already held and used by church bodies were registered as church land. These include a large church complex in Ash-Shayyah, and a new residential complex in northern Beit Hanina, known as the Lana Project, where some 400 housing units were built on church land. This project includes approximately 18 dunams of public-use land registered to the Jerusalem Municipality.

Lastly, land in al-Isawiyyah and Beit Hanina was registered via SOLT, mostly for public use. A 10 dunam bloc in al-Isawiyyah, where the neighborhood's central school complex is located, was registered to the Jerusalem Municipality. In Beit Hanina, two blocs of open land were registered to the state; on one of them a playground currently exists, while the second is designated for future planning, so its use has not yet been determined.

3. Case study: Land registration in Umm Tuba and the planned Nofei Rachel settlement

The case of SOLT in Umm Tuba warrants detailed attention because one of its registered blocs includes homes built by Palestinian residents who received building permits from the Jerusalem Municipality after 1967. These residents only discovered their land had been registered after SOLT process was completed. They had no idea the process was underway and were not given the legally mandated opportunity to present their ownership documents.

In this area, a total of three blocs were registered. One is an open tract of land of about 29 dunams, which was mostly registered in the name of Nofei Rachel –a private company under Jewish ownership–and in the names of other private Jewish owners, while managed by the GC. Some parcels remain classified as "in dispute" even after completion of SOLT. On this bloc, a plan is being promoted for the new Nofei Rachel settlement, with approximately 650 housing units. Adjacent to this bloc, two additional blocs were registered almost entirely to the JNF, totaling about 39 dunams. The proximity of these blocs to the Nofei Rachel project suggests an intention to expand the settlement onto these lands.

One of the blocs registered to JNF contains Palestinian-owned homes, most of which were constructed with building permits. The residents of this compound filed a court petition in 2024, showing they have documents proving their land ownership, documents that were also used to obtain the building permits. The residents explained how they were not informed of SOLT and were thus unable to present their ownership claims as part of this process. Moreover, on **June 11, 2025**, the residents received notices about upcoming **eviction orders**, even though their case is still pending with the courts.

The misconduct of the Settlement Clerk in the case described above effectively prevented Palestinian residents from participating in a procedure relevant to the land they live on. This demonstrates bad faith in SOLT implementation and blatantly contradicts the Land Ordinance that clearly demands transparency and fairness in SOLT processes. This provides additional evidence that land registration is intended to dispossess Palestinian residents of their lands and forcibly displace them from Jerusalem.

Conclusion

As shown herein, most of the lands where the current East Jerusalem SOLT procedures have been completed were registered to Israeli institutional entities or Jewish owners, while only a negligible minority was registered to Palestinian owners. Even more troubling is the fact that most of the registered land is designated for construction of new settlements. As history demonstrates, even if a few Palestinians manage to overcome the economic, social, and political segregation barriers and live in these settlements, they will remain exceptions that prove the rule: settlements are intended exclusively for Israelis, as exemplified by the available type of schools and places of worship.

A further disturbing trend emerges: the erasure of land rights of Palestinians who have lived on their land for decades. Losing their land through SOLT will inevitably lead to dispossession and displacement. For Umm Tuba residents, the threat of eviction has suddenly become a looming reality.

It is also important to remember that SOLT procedures are occurring within a legal framework in which Palestinian landowners are structurally disadvantaged in their ability to prove and formalize ownership through the Israeli legal system, as seen in previous SOLT procedures in the Galilee,⁸ and Israel's ongoing refusal to recognize the property rights of its Bedouin citizens in the Negev.⁹

The combination of minimal land registration for Palestinians and extensive registration of land for new settlements demonstrates that SOLT in Jerusalem does not serve or benefit the city's Palestinian residents. Rather, it serves the ongoing settlement project aimed at the

⁸ Kedar, A., 2000. The legal transformation of ethnic geography: Israeli law and the Palestinian landholder 1948–1967. *NYUJ Int'l L. & Pol.*, 33, p.923; Forman, G. and Kedar, A., 2004. From Arab land to 'Israel Lands': the legal dispossession of the Palestinians displaced by Israel in the wake of 1948. *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, 22(6), pp.809–830.

⁹ Kedar, A., Amara, A. and Yiftachel, O., 2018. Emptied lands: A legal geography of Bedouin rights in the Negev. In *Emptied Lands*. Stanford University Press.

dispossession and displacement of Palestinians. These trends are expected to intensify, given that SOLT procedures are advancing in many additional blocs across East Jerusalem.

Based on the above, Bimkom recommends advocacy to:

- Halt the fundamentally biased SOLT procedures (under Justice Ministry auspices) in East Jerusalem;
- Prevent evictions resulting from SOLT since Israel conducts the process in bad faith;
- Stop the planning and building of new settlements (under Interior Ministry auspices) since it only deepens the national conflict and impedes the possibility of a sustainable resolution in Jerusalem;
- Promote fair and beneficial planning processes for Jerusalem's Palestinian neighborhoods, in addition to investing resources in truly reducing the disparities that have accumulated over 58 years of occupation, discrimination, and neglect.

The land registration process in East Jerusalem, ostensibly launched to reduce economic and social gaps between East and West Jerusalem, does not advance economic development of Palestinian neighborhoods, and does not provide residents protection of their land rights. In fact, in most cases the process does exactly the opposite, serving as another tool to dispossess Palestinian landowners and pave the way for the establishment of more settlements in the heart of, and around, Jerusalem's Palestinian neighborhoods.

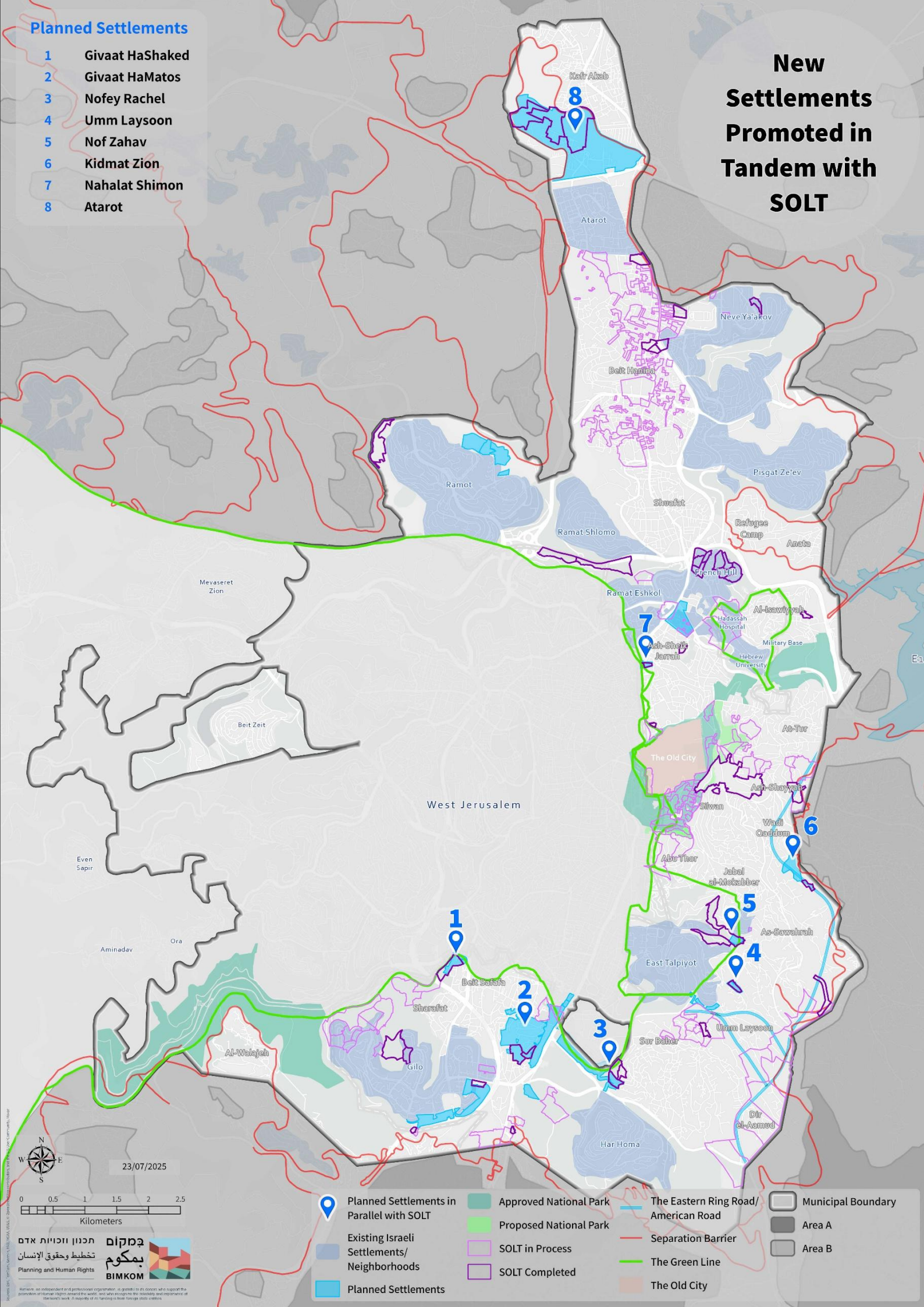
Closing Remark

As we finalized this research, the Israeli government announced that it intends to also resume settlement of land title (SOLT) processes in the West Bank. This can be seen as part of the broader policy to promote annexation. While both SOLT and annexation contradict international law and should therefore be repudiated altogether, the way in which SOLT is being implemented in East Jerusalem stands as a stark warning. The fact that almost no Palestinians have benefited from SOLT, along with the fact that SOLT has largely proceeded in places intended for new settlements, clearly demonstrates that SOLT is not being carried out for the benefit of the local population. Rather, the opposite is true :SOLT is being used as another mechanism to strip Palestinian of their property and annul their land rights. Learning from Jerusalem thus indicates that Israel will most likely use the SOLT process to further its land grab efforts in the West Bank, while depriving Palestinians of their basic rights.

Planned Settlements

- 1 Givaat HaShaked
- 2 Givaat HaMatos
- 3 Nofey Rachel
- 4 Umm Laysoon
- 5 Nof Zahav
- 6 Kidmat Zion
- 7 Nahalat Shimon
- 8 Atarot

New Settlements Promoted in Tandem with SOLT



תכנון וזכויות אדם
 تخطيط وحقوق الإنسان
 Planning and Human Rights
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	Planned Settlements in Parallel with SOLT		Approved National Park		The Eastern Ring Road/American Road		Municipal Boundary
	Existing Israeli Settlements/Neighborhoods		Proposed National Park		Separation Barrier		Area A
	Planned Settlements		SOLT in Process		The Green Line		Area B
			SOLT Completed		The Old City		

Source: BIMKOM, Planning and Human Rights, 2025. BIMKOM is a non-profit organization that provides free of charge planning and human rights services to the Palestinian community in the West Bank.