

Canada Complicit with Israel's Annexation of East Jerusalem

Canada fails to uphold international law or even apply its own domestic laws to oppose East Jerusalem's annexation, despite its official policy of condemnation.

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On August 20, 2023, the Israeli government launched a new 3.2-billion-shekel [five-year plan \(2024-2028\) to develop east Jerusalem](#).

Under pretexts of reducing social and economic disparities and increasing economic development in East Jerusalem, the Israeli government announcement also made it clear that over \$1 billion CAD equivalent investment is focused on strengthening *Israeli sovereignty* over the city.

The plan is an update of the previous 2-billion-shekel [five-year plan \(2018-2023\)](#). That plan had also focused on strengthening the policy of annexation and so-called integration of Palestinian Jerusalemites into Israeli society.

This new plan will be managed and implemented by the Ministry of Jerusalem Affairs and Jewish Tradition, with annual report-backs around Jerusalem Day. Even the choice of the annual reporting date is an affront. [Jerusalem Day](#) is the day that Israel marks the 1967 capture of East Jerusalem, celebrating with provocative [flag marches](#) through Palestinian neighbourhoods

Strengthening the Israeli Narrative

In announcing the plan, **Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu** indicated it shows that the Israeli government "attends to the needs of all citizens and residents of Israel and it is strengthening our policy to benefit a united and strong Jerusalem, *under Israeli sovereignty*."

In using the word “resident,” Netanyahu refers to those who hold Jerusalem residency but are not afforded Israeli citizenship.

Israeli **Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich**, referencing “Jerusalem, *our eternal capital*,” stated,

“I am pleased to lead the largest five-year plan for East Jerusalem as someone who believes in strengthening [Israeli] sovereignty over Jerusalem as a whole.”

The mayor of Jerusalem, **Moshe Lion**, said “the decision that was taken is a sovereign decision.”

The Israeli Minister of National Security, **Itamar Ben Gvir**, indicated that the Israeli government has allocated 120 million shekels for what he called “strengthening *security sovereignty in East Jerusalem*.”

He indicated this is “another important step in our relentless struggle to restore personal security in *Jerusalem, our capital*.”

A Plan to Oppress Palestinians

For Palestinians, this means the money will be aimed at increasing surveillance, militarization, police stations, and security personnel, together with more isolation and racial segregation.

This reality means “Israelization of all aspects of life and obliterating the Palestinian-Arab identity of the city of Jerusalem,” [says](#) the Civic Coalition for Palestinian Rights in Jerusalem.

They continued,

“there has always been a clear difference between East and West Jerusalem for the 56 years of occupation of East Jerusalem.”

Budgets, programs and services have been regularly dedicated to West Jerusalem and to the Israeli settlements. They serve the communities’ development and attract more settlers. On the other hand, Palestinian neighborhoods have been deliberately neglected over the decades of the city’s occupation since 1967.

Even though Palestinian residents of occupied East Jerusalem pay taxes to the municipality, the quality of the services they receive is much lower than those in West Jerusalem. Beyond this, the Israeli authorities regularly pursue forced evictions of Palestinian residents, seizing their lands under different pretexts, including so-called *public interest* and *development of the city* and law organization, construction, absentee property law and other laws.

Education, Transport, to Serve Israeli State

Education is a key factor in the annexation of the city of Jerusalem. One-third of the new five-year plan’s budget goes toward enforcing the Israeli education system and its curriculum in Palestinian schools in East Jerusalem.

Education is considered the main entrance to obliterating the Palestinian narrative, history

and national identity. The Israeli government is intensifying this effort under what they call “reducing the gap.”

Meanwhile, the plan’s funding for transportation infrastructure is not likely to focus on Palestinian communities. Rather, it will likely focus on linking Israeli settlements to each other, through a network of roads, trains, tunnels, bridges, and an air train. This will enable settlers’ movement into the city.

The Civic Coalition notes that “this plan aims, in fact, above all to satisfy the interests and protect the settlers and to increase the isolation and segregation of Arab neighbourhoods.”

Canada’s Silence

So far, Canada’s government officials have remained quiet on this new plan. But this is not surprising. Despite [Canada’s official policy](#) that it “does not recognize Israel’s unilateral annexation of East Jerusalem,” it is also evidently not concerned about changing facts on the ground. Canada maintains that “the status of Jerusalem can be resolved only as part of a general settlement of the Palestinian-Israeli dispute.”

This hands-off stance regarding Jerusalem is not new. In fact, Canada’s first vote [against a United Nations Resolution](#) associated with Palestine occurred on December 9, 1949. The resolution proposed a permanent international regime for the Jerusalem area and the protection of the Holy Places.

This trend regarding Jerusalem has remained quite consistent over the last 75 years. For example, in 1981, Canada abstained from a UN vote in regard to Israeli excavations in eastern Jerusalem. The resolution indicated that “the excavations and transformations of the landscape and of the historical, cultural and religious sites of Jerusalem constitute a flagrant violation of the principles of international law and the relevant provisions of the Geneva Convention.”

In 1987, Canada voted no to condemning “Israel’s decision to annex Jerusalem and to declare it as its ‘capital’ as well as the measures to alter its physical character, demographic composition, institutional structure, and status.” More recently, in 2016 and 2017, Canada abstained from UN votes on the [status of Jerusalem](#).

But interestingly in 2018, the year that the USA moved its embassy to Jerusalem, Canada [switched back to a no vote](#).

Canada’s Subsidies for Pro-Israel Charities

Canadian charities continue to provide funds to organizations such as [Elad/ir David](#) that use [bogus archaeology](#) and delegitimate excavations to advance a colonial narrative – those narratives attempt to erase ancient Palestinian, Muslim, and other non-Jewish heritage in Jerusalem.

There have been about a dozen or so [recent complaints](#) to the Canada Revenue Agency about the approximate \$100 million out-of-country tax-subsidized funds that have been sent to various pro-Israel charities. Those include several organizations that support the annexation and the so-called “unification” of Jerusalem.

Canada’s stance at the United Nations over the last three-quarters of a century, as with its

tolerance for Canadian taxpayers subsidizing Jerusalem's erasure, reveals its hypocrisy.

Despite a policy that condemns East Jerusalem's annexation, Canada seems to let the facts on the ground change without any response. Canada fails to uphold international law or even apply its own domestic laws such as the Income Tax Act. As a result, Canadians are inadvertently supporting this erasure of Palestine.

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Featured image: From left to right: Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, Jerusalem Affairs and Jewish Heritage Minister Meir Porush, Jerusalem Mayor Moshe Lion. Credit: [Koby Gideon / Municipality of Jerusalem](#)

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