

Palestinians Are Seeking Justice in Jerusalem - Not an Abusive Life-long Mate

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Several articles have been published about the “legal limbo” in which Palestinian Jerusalemites exist and proposals as to what Israel ought to do about this 50-year old travesty, among them being righting “the wrong” of denying Palestinian Arabs in East Jerusalem Israeli citizenship.

In my view, such articles both define the injustice done to Palestinians deceptively and are meant simply to normalize the idea of Palestinian Jerusalemites becoming Israeli citizens, in the same way I might normalize the [poll](#) that American Jews are increasingly losing their connection to Israel by writing about it, especially if I were to headline my article “Breaking Taboo”, as **Maayan Lubell** does, or make the title echo a classified ad for the lovelorn, or question “Jewish identity” by “layering it with complexity” – i.e., by tying it to Israel.

Lubell’s article ([Haaretz, Aug 5, 2015](#)) is titled “Breaking Taboo, East Jerusalem Palestinians Seek Israeli Citizenship: In East Jerusalem, which Israel captured during the 1967 war, issues of Palestinian identity are layered with complexity.” It begins with this:

“I declare I will be a loyal citizen of the state of Israel,” reads the oath that must be sworn by all naturalized Israeli citizens.

Increasingly, they are words being uttered by Palestinians. In East Jerusalem, which Israel captured from Jordan during the 1967 Middle East war and later annexed, a move not recognized internationally, issues of Palestinian identity are layered with complexity.



ATMs were shut down for Jerusalemites

(Source: Anadolu Agency / Mustafa Hassona)

While Israel regards the east of the city as part of Israel, the estimated 300,000 Palestinians that live there do not. They are not Israeli citizens, instead holding Israeli-issued blue IDs that grant them permanent resident status. While they can seek citizenship if they wish, the vast majority reject it, not wanting to renounce their own history or be seen to buy into Israel's 48-year occupation. And yet over the past decade, an increasing number of East Jerusalem Palestinians have gone through the lengthy process of becoming Israeli citizens, researchers and lawyers say.

So what is the reader to conclude from the "and yet" at the end of the quotation above? One way of looking at it is to see "the increasing number" of Palestinian Jerusalemites seeking Israeli citizenship as finally surrendering to the imperative of power and brutal facts on the ground, impelled by an otherwise unlivable life.

Another is to regard these Palestinians as traitors to the Palestinian cause, normalizing and legitimizing their enemy's power, as there is often the implication in references to Palestinians seeking Israeli citizenship that Jerusalemites, through their applications for such citizenship, are signaling approval for the Israeli state, when in fact they seem to be doing it for practical reasons- so they can acquire some basic rights that Israel otherwise denies them.

A third is to see it from the point of view of Palestinian cartographer **Khalil Tafakji** - as yet another defeat for the Palestinian Authority in the context of Oslo's so-called "peace process".

Tafakji is quoted in this Haaretz [report](#) as saying,

"If this continues, what will the Palestinians negotiate about? They want to negotiate on the land - they have already lost the land. They want to negotiate for the population and the population is being lost."

In other words the Palestinian view that Tafakji expresses is a lose-lose situation, not the win-win one espoused by another Haaretz article on the subject like the following.

Nir Hasson's article ([Haaretz, June 20, 2017](#)) also has clues as to the function of such articles in the Israeli "liberal" media and co-dependent publications like the New York Times. These are often embedded right in the title or subheading - in this case:

"50 Years After Six-Day War, East Jerusalem's Palestinians Remain Prisoners in Their City: Study shows how ambivalent Israeli policies and denial of the problem have created a status that doesn't exist anywhere else on earth: Native-born residents who are not citizens of the state in whose capital they live."

One glance at the word "capital" in the subheading frames it all for us, hasbara style. What may lull the suspicions of the unwary reader is that the piece does, in fact, highlight [the severe problems](#) created for Palestinians by Israeli policies of judaization in the expanded municipality of Jerusalem. But in the end, this kind of article is Israeli "self-criticism" of the

worst kind, meant to play games with one's head.

The subtext you may miss is that, similar to the past and ongoing judaization of Israel proper, the goal behind Israel's policies in Jerusalem is to create, expand and preserve the Zionist Jewish state.

Hasson describes Israeli policy in 1967 in East Jerusalem, when the population was 60,000, as follows:

The [Israeli] ministers assumed that, as in 1948, when a large number of Arabs likewise didn't get automatic citizenship, over time the East Jerusalemites would request citizenship - an option granted only to them and not to other West Bank residents - and integrate into Israeli society. The ministers did not take into account the strong ties these Arabs had to the West Bank and Jordan, and the unwillingness of Israeli society to absorb a large Palestinian population After the 1993 Oslo Accords, Israel recognized the ties East Jerusalemites had to the West Bank and allowed them to vote for the Palestinian parliament in Ramallah. This made their legal status even more complicated: permanent residents of the State of Israel with Jordanian travel papers and the right to vote in Palestinian Authority elections.

Notice the telling phrase in the above that is the blind spot of Zionism:

"The ministers did not take into account the strong ties these Arabs had to the West Bank and Jordan."

It totally disregards the strong ties of Palestinian Arabs to an Arab Jerusalem, to an Arab Palestine, ties Israel has not succeeded in breaking seventy years after its establishment on a territory of Palestine as a settler-colonial Zionist Jewish state against the wishes of its native inhabitants.

Hasson goes on to say:

Another expression of the relatively enlightened policy of the early years was a law, finally passed in 1973, that enabled East Jerusalemites to be compensated for property they abandoned in western Jerusalem during the 1948 War of Independence, similar to the rights of Jews to get back the property they had to abandon in East Jerusalem during that same war. In the end, the compensation offered was paltry and very few Palestinians tried to claim it. But the debates on the law at least demonstrated an effort to right the wrong.... In recent years there has been considerable talk about the "Israelization" of East Jerusalemites, as reflected in the labor market, the desire to study the Israeli curriculum, and the increased number of requests to get full Israeli citizenship.

Again, notice the Israeli-centric formulation and framing. Palestinians are described as having "abandoned" their property in West Jerusalem, when, in fact, they were denied their right of return to their property by Israel.

Palestinians "abandoned" their property; but the reference to Jews is a reference to their "rights."

Palestinians turned down "compensation" for no other reason than its paltry size, when, in

fact, the Palestinian view on this issue is as Canadian professor **Michael Lynk** describes it in [The Right to Compensation in International Law and the Displaced Palestinians](#).

“Palestinians advance the compensation issue as a right recognized in international law that would obligate Israel to return, or pay for, the refugee properties expropriated or destroyed in 1948 and afterwards. As well, they argue that Israel must pay damages for pain and suffering, and for its use of Palestinian properties over the past five decades.”

The dominance of Jewish companies in the labor market in East Jerusalem where many Palestinians are employed (See The Palestinian Economy in East Jerusalem: Enduring annexation, isolation and disintegration), the agonizing choice some Palestinians make in accepting a school curriculum for their children that denies Palestinian heritage and identity but allows them to get ahead at Israeli universities, and the application for Israeli citizenship (mostly denied by Israel) of a minority of Palestinians are all deceptively framed as “a desire” for “Israelization” and a path to “correcting the injustice”.

Quoting **Amnon Ramon** of the Jerusalem Institute for Israeli [not for Palestinian] Studies, Hasson’s article also details the problems that Israel faces as a result of the “limbo” residency arrangement imposed on Palestinian Arabs by the Israeli Government – a “hollow sovereignty”, contributing to “instability and violent outbursts, as well as the international community’s refusal to recognize Israel’s legitimacy in Jerusalem.”

But ostensibly, the article is concerned with Israel “righting a wrong” by removing the “legal limbo” under which Palestinian Jerusalemites live, claiming that such a path, will not only relieve Israel’s problems, but is also a path to “justice” – justice as defined by Israel, the oppressor, not by the Palestinians themselves, Israel’s victims.

This brings us to the immediate present. On June 25, 2017, the New York Times published a [piece](#) by **Isabel Kershner** titled “50 Years After War, East Jerusalem Palestinians Confront a Life Divided.”

Again, we have to ask: What is Kershner’s point in this one? Is it really a concern for Palestinians whose lives have been “divided” by Israel or is it another deflection from the illegitimate existence of Israel as a Zionist Jewish entity in Palestine?



Israelis destroyed a water pipe in Palestine

Even as Israelis mark the 50th anniversary of the reunification of Jerusalem in the June 1967 war, the Palestinians and most of the world consider the eastern half under occupation, and

the city remains deeply divided. But after five decades, dealing with Israel has become unavoidable for residents of East Jerusalem.

The deflection in the quotation above is blatant. Dealing with Israel did not “become unavoidable after five decades.” For Palestinian residents of East Jerusalem and all other Palestinian Arabs who want to visit or do business there and for Palestinian Arabs denied return to their property there, or those whose property was seized and/or demolished, dealing with Israel became unavoidable the minute Israel occupied and annexed East Jerusalem.

It is true Palestinian culture and day-to-day life has been under severe assault by Israel for a long time – since 1948 to be exact. The 50-year anniversary of Israel’s brutal occupation and annexation of East Jerusalem (see [Living Under Israeli Policies of Colonization in Jerusalem](#)) is an occasion to extol and marvel at Palestinian resilience and sumoud (an Arabic word meaning “steadfastness” that has entered the English language, just as the word “intifada” has). It is not an occasion to normalize and indirectly extol “the reunification of Jerusalem,” whose Palestinian Arab population now accounts for 18% of the Palestinian Arab population of Israel.

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