

Jerusalem Chronology

(October - January 2004)

January 19

The barrier Israel is constructing in Jerusalem will divide from the city some 25,000 Palestinians who live in the northern regions of Jerusalem, found a report by the Jerusalem Center for Israel Studies. The report also predicts that the difficulties in travel and maintaining contacts in the city, as well as fear of having ones' identity card revoked, will force many of the estimated 40,000 Palestinians who carry Jerusalem IDs but live outside the city's borders to return to the city (Al Ayyam).

January 18

Israel announced that, after two years of refusing to recognize the selection of a Greek Orthodox patriarch in Jerusalem, it would acknowledge the choice of Irineos I. Israel had claimed that Irineos was the "candidate of the Palestinians"; in response, the Greek Orthodox Church had accused Israel of violating religious freedom. Israel took exception to the selection under a 1875 Ottoman law and later Jordanian legislation that allows political authorities in the Holy Land to oversee candidates for the position of patriarch (AFP).

January 13

Palestinians in Abu Dis got their first look at the concrete barrier Israel is constructing through Jerusalem when, in a matter of minutes, towering cranes lowered massive concrete slabs into place on the edge of

East Jerusalem. Palestinians at the scene shed tears as they watched the physical rendition of Israeli plans to separate the city from its environs, and divide once-unified neighborhoods (Reuters).

Using \$8 million donated by a wealthy American, Israeli developers plan to continue excavations under the Al Aqsa Mosque compound. Work in the area will be implemented in three stages, and conclude with the construction of a tunnel underneath what Jews refer to as the Western Wall, and Palestinians the Buraq Wall. A previous tunnel next to Al Aqsa excavated in secrecy and then opened in 1999 was the cause of a deadly outbreak of violence between Israelis and Palestinians (Yedioth Ahronot).

January 7

Israeli interior minister Abraham Poraz said the separation barrier in Jerusalem would not affect the legal status of Jerusalem residents on either side. The minister was responding to questions put by Dina Shibli, attorney for the Jerusalem Center for Social and Economic Rights. Poraz avoided answering Shibli's questions about the rights of Jerusalemites living on the West Bank side of the barrier and if they would be able to move freely to and from Jerusalem, saying that these matters were outside the interior ministry's jurisdiction (Al Quds).

Palestine's top swimmer, Raed Awisat, 16, is set for the Olympic Games in

Athens this summer. The Jerusalem teenager, who placed 67th of 137 swimmers in last August's World Championships in Barcelona, was crowned one-hundred-meter butterfly champion two months ago. Raed is one of three athletes who will represent Palestine at the Athens Olympics and the only athlete

from East Jerusalem. All of the athletes will be traveling at their own expense (Palestine Report).

January 2

Palestinian, Israeli and international women reiterated that the only way to peace between Palestinians and Israelis is through dialogue, not violence or building walls. Women for Peace met at the Notre Dame Hotel in Jerusalem in support of the Palestinian people under Israeli occupation. “Enough violence, occupation and enough of the separation wall,” said Israeli peace activist Yohana Lerman, “This only deepens the differences between the [two] peoples” (Al Quds).

January 5

The Israeli High Court ordered that the course of the barrier Israel is constructing in Jerusalem be altered in the town of Sur Baher in response to a case filed by attorney Gheith Nasser. The original route was to cut the town in half, with one region inside Jerusalem and the other “outside” the barrier. The plan would also have resulted in the uprooting of 134 dunams of olive groves belonging to the town residents. The court decision means Sur Baher will remain united on the Jerusalem side of the barrier (Al Quds).

Israeli settlers have removed four ancient mosaics from the site of a Gaza Strip settlement and carted them off to Jerusalem for display. The mosaics, pictured in the December 14 edition of Al Quds newspaper, depict scenes of a man stabbing a tiger, a lion devouring a bull, a man fighting a bear and a man riding a camel. Archeologists believe the mosaics date to the early Christian period (Al Quds).

December 13

Palestinians, Israelis, Palestinians from inside Israel and internationals tore down a mock wall at a demonstration against Israel’s new barrier at the Dahiet Al Barid checkpoint along the Jerusalem-Ramallah road. “We stand here today, 40 years after the building of the disgraceful Berlin wall, to stand up against a new wall, not in Berlin but in the occupied Palestinian territories,” said Ziad Salem, as he held high a sign reading: “No to the racist separation wall.” Salem then joined others in destroying a cardboard wall, which had been placed in the middle of the street (Palestine Report).

November 29

Israeli bulldozers, accompanied by Israeli police, uprooted approximately

200 olive trees in the Jabal Mukabbar area in East Jerusalem. The land is to be used for the construction of a settlement quarter to be called Nov Zahav (Jerusalem Media and Communications Centre).

November 16

Israeli officials announced 16 that a settlement project on Jabal Mukkaber in East Jerusalem is to include 550 housing units. The project, dubbed the “Golden View”, will overlook the Aqsa Mosque and Dome of the Rock. The first phase of the project is to be completed by 2005 with the construction of 110 housing units (Al Hayat Al Jadida).

November 1

The Jerusalem Old City Youth Society in cooperation with the Palestinian

National Theater held its first Ramadan Evening in the Qataneen Market marking the first days of the Muslim holy month.

The evening began with a parade from the Jerusalem Crescent Club throughout East Jerusalem and ending at Damascus Gate, where the scouts sang the Palestinian national anthem. The evening included religious songs and choirs from Haifa and Shafa Amr inside Israel.

October 28

Israeli chief of police Micki Levy gave the first detailed description to the press of the path of the separation barrier in Jerusalem. According to Levy's account, the barrier will be constructed three meters high, exactly in the center of the Jerusalem-Ramallah road, until joining with the Qalandiya checkpoint. Those regions close to Jerusalem, such as Al Ram and Dahyiet Al Barid will be effectively isolated from Jerusalem, and any West Banker living in these areas will only be able to reach Jerusalem via Qalandiya, taking a long circuitous road that skims the outskirts of Jericho (Al Quds).

October 15

Former Palestinian negotiator Yasser Abed Rabbo and former Israeli minister Yossi Beilin announced the signing of an unofficial peace accord, a "virtual" peace agreement that has become known as the "Geneva Accords". The details of the deal, drawn up at a resort hotel in Jordan, were vague at the time of announcement. The agreement is backed by 50 other Palestinians and Israelis and is aimed at renewing hopes for an official accord within the Palestinian and Israeli publics. The agreement engages the conflict's final status issues -Jerusalem, the refugees, settlements and land. According to the agreement, Palestinians will be able to establish their state on 97.5 percent of the West Bank, with a two percent land swap in place of Jewish settlement blocs that would be annexed to Israel. "Arab neighborhoods"

of East Jerusalem would be under Palestinian sovereignty, as would the Aqsa Mosque compound, with equal access to all. As such, some are touting the plan as an exchange: sovereignty over Jerusalem for concessions on the Palestinian right of return (Wire reports).

"Ein Karem...lest we forget", a documentary film produced by the Shuruq

Productions and Media Corporation, won third prize in the 11th Arab Festival for Radio and Television. Over 172 television and radio productions competed, including documentaries on the Palestinian situation. The film, which took five years to complete, documents the history of Ein Karem, a Palestinian village six kilometers west of Jerusalem, from which residents fled in 1948 in fear of Jewish terror attacks during the war. Most of its original inhabitants now live in Jordan. The documentary film captures each individual house still remaining and tracks the names of their original owners, using the original Arabic names for locations that are now part of Israel (Palestine Report).

October 1

Al Quds University officials set out on a major campaign protesting the planned route of Israel's barrier, which was to cut directly through the university campus. Students and staff held lectures and meetings on the campus grounds, and university president Sari Nusseibeh took his case directly to Washington officials. The wall was to cut across 65 dunams of university land, one-third of the campus grounds. It would have destroyed two fields, the garden and parking lot, and closed the university's main entrance. Eventually, Israel changed the route of the barrier after pressure from the United States administration and meetings with the university's lawyers (Palestine Report).