



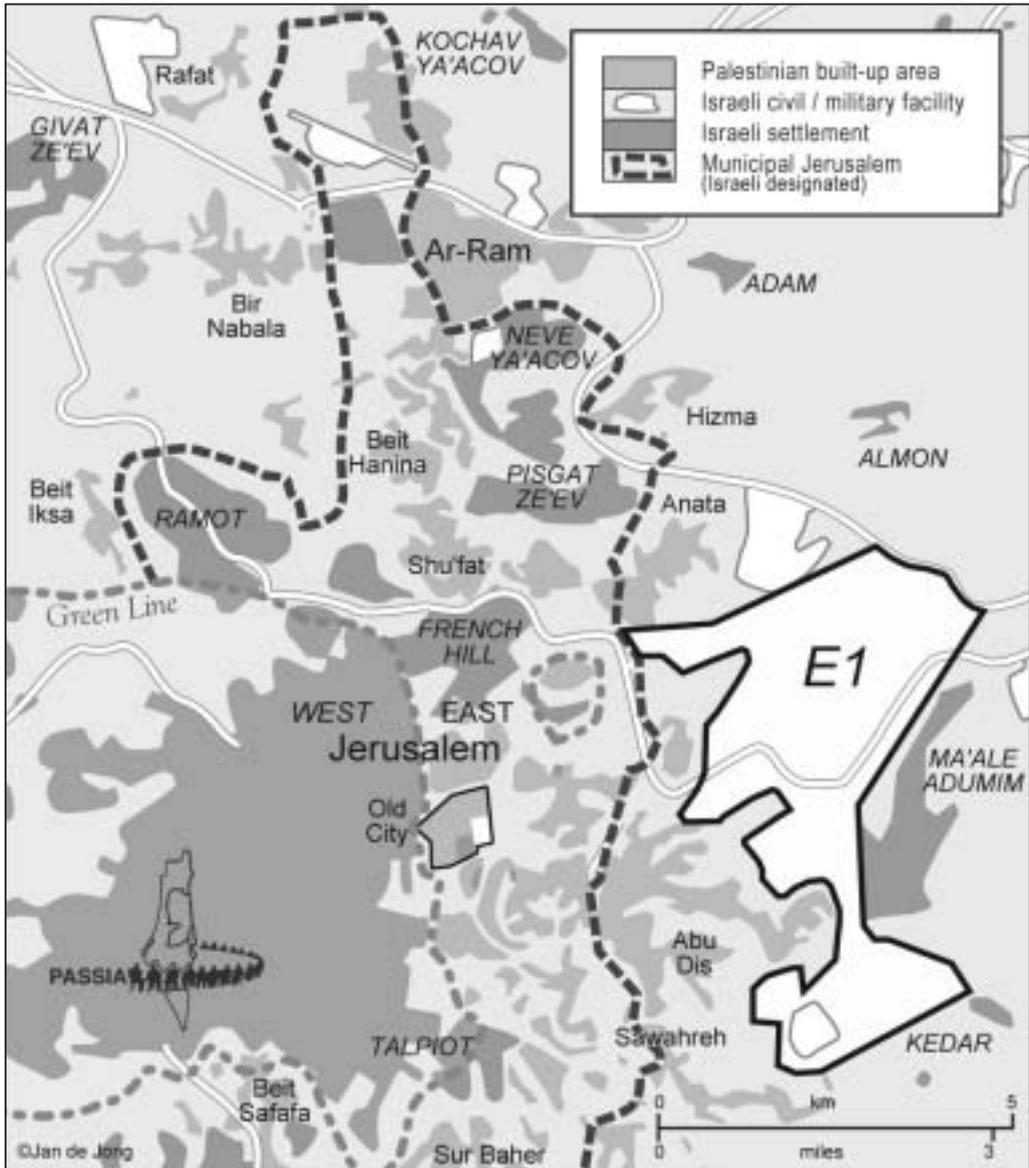
# The E-1 Plan and Other Jerusalem Disasters

## A Review of Israeli Settlements Underway

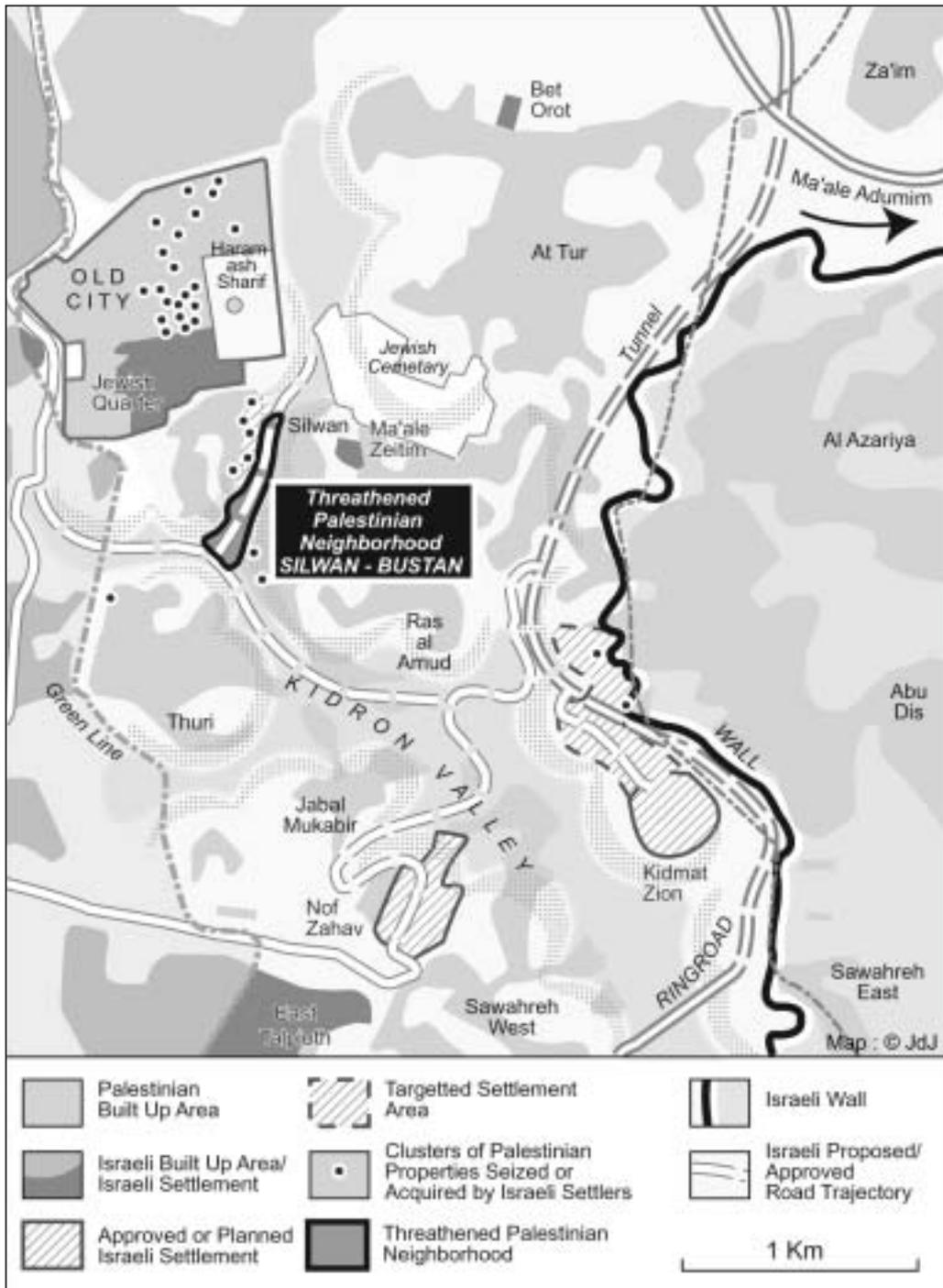
The Jerusalem-Jericho highway and the currently empty horizon to be filled by the E-1 plan.  
*Source: C. Seitz*

Jeff Halper, director of the Israeli Committee Against House Demolitions, has been talking about the E-1 plan, a development plan to fill Arab East Jerusalem with Jewish industry and housing, for over a decade. But no one paid much attention until this April when Israeli authorities boldly advertised plans to build. The United States indicated its disapproval and the plan was temporarily shelved; still the blueprints remain official policy at the Jerusalem municipality. Remembering the quiet growth of the settlement of Har Homa between Jerusalem and Bethlehem, few expect the construction to remain stalled.

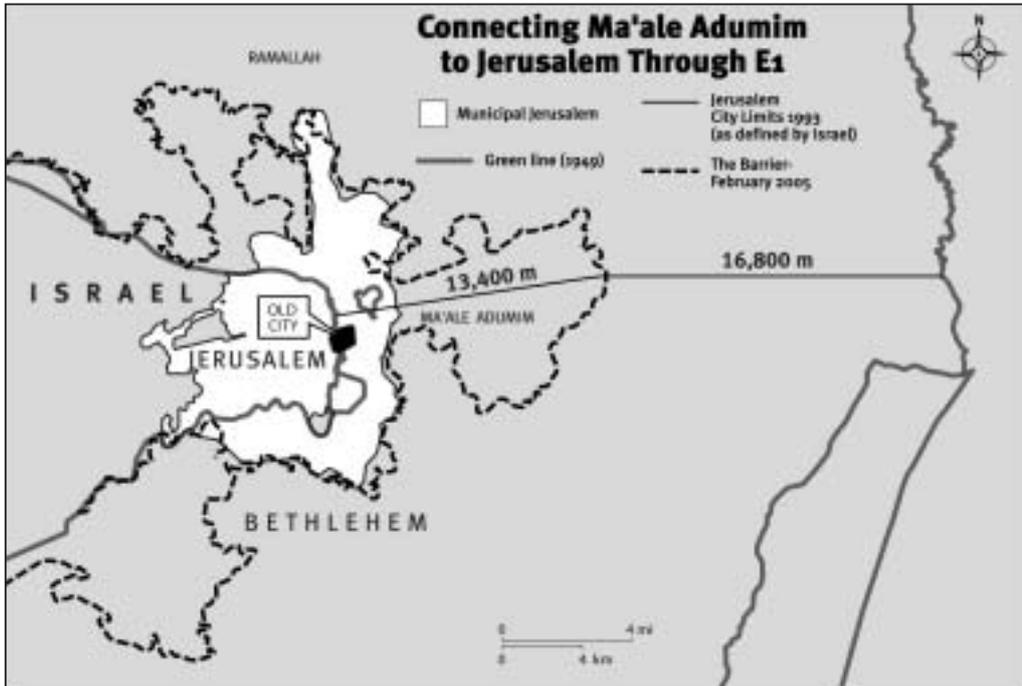
The E-1 plan, which covers 12 square kilometers, and sits adjacent to the massive settlement of Maale Adumim (53 square kilometers, bigger than the city of Tel Aviv), would close off the last open area available for Palestinian development in Jerusalem. It would additionally create a settlement barrier, making it nearly impossible for Palestinians from the northern West Bank to reach the southern West Bank unless a new road is built. Israel is offering to build that



Jerusalem Map. E1 Development Plan, 1998. Source: PASSIA.



New Israeli Settlement Expansion in and around the Old City of Jerusalem. *Source: ICAHD.*



Connecting Ma'ale Adumim to Jerusalem Through E1. *Source: ICAHD.*

highway in order to create Palestinian “transportation continuity”, a term coined by Prime Minister Ariel Sharon. But the greater effect will be to impose a physical and cultural Jewish Israeli landscape legally and physically opposed to Palestinian growth and development.

“Even if you can drive around,” explains Halper, “you might as well cut Jerusalem out of a Palestinian state.” Prior to the imposition of Israel’s system of permitting and closure restricting Palestinian access to Jerusalem since the early 90s, 40 percent of the Palestinian economy revolved around Jerusalem, according to the World Bank. But the gradual expansion of Maale Adumim and other Jerusalem settlements, the construction slated for E-1, and the barrier of concrete and barbed wire which Israel will complete this year, will irreversibly separate Palestinians from this city.

As case in point, Halper escorts journalists and diplomats to the top of a hill overlooking the settlement of Pisgat Zeev. From here, we can see the Palestinian town of Hizma, its lands appropriated and used to build Pisgat Zeev, and then the borders of Pisgat Zeev drawn to exclude Hizma residents. The town is surrounded on all sides: to the west are the 30,000 residents of Neve Yacouv, to the north is Adam and to the northeast is the newest settlement of Almon, advertised in loudmouthed billboards as a scenic bedroom community of Jerusalem.



An ancient olive tree plucked from its agricultural home and replanted within a Star of David symbol in front of the Maale Adumim police station. *Source: C. Seitz.*

“Palestinians will get a state, but a state that has no development potential whatsoever,” Halper predicts. “Imagine going to a prison in your country and asking to see a blueprint. By looking at it, it would appear that prisoners are in control of ninety-five percent of the territory. You can maintain total control of the population with only one to five percent of the territory, using bars, guard towers, fences, and weapons.”

The plans for E-1 are incongruously idyllic within that grim assessment. The final product will include an airport, five-star hotels and chalets ringing a man-made lake (remember: this is desert territory). It will be billed as the new tourist destination of the Middle East, attracting Europeans and wealthy Arabs. Currently, few structures stand on the zoned region. But in 2004, the municipality began to lay the infrastructure required for the massive project; reportedly the work was done “illegally”, without the approval of the appropriate authorities.

The E-1 plan must be viewed, however, in the context of a massive building push in and around East Jerusalem. Last December, Israel announced the construction of a new city on the lands of Walaja village, which forms the outer contour between municipal Jerusalem and the southern West Bank. The new settlement will house 55,000 people (they will be “conveniently” situated next to the city zoo and the mall) and will likely require the demolition of the entire village of Walaja.

Plans to demolish 88 homes in al-Bustan neighborhood, nestled in the valley of Silwan next to the Old City walls, were put on hold earlier this year after an international outcry, but the orders remain part of the larger Jerusalem planning scheme. Israeli officials justify the demolitions by arguing that many of the structures were built without the proper permits (a good number, however, predate these laws). But since Palestinians requesting building permits in this area are systematically declined, the legal façade hides a regime of discrimination.

City engineer Uri Shitreet further argues that the land is zoned as open public space, has been established as an archeological site, and therefore the Palestinian houses must be destroyed. “This area is the cradle from which the City of David sprang,” Shitreet told the *LA Times*. “Historically, this valley was an open space, a green space full of archeological treasures, and I consider it my professional duty to protect them.” The blueprints propose an archeological village in place of the Palestinian homes - here, archeology is being used to establish scenery that in turn further substantiates the claimed antiquity.<sup>1</sup> Ringing Bustan are at least 50 Palestinian homes already acquired by the radical settlement group Elad.

A spin through the neatly organized streets of Maale Adumim testifies how the smallest Israeli foothold can be used to reconstruct the landscape and even history itself. Smack dab in front of the police station, a gnarled olive tree decades older than the settlement has been planted in the heart of a landscaped Star-of-David. There is no doubt that this tree, like several others planted here, were uprooted in the process of dispossessing the Palestinians that had tended those trees into maturity. The contractors who bulldozed Palestinian land to make way for the cement wall sold hundreds of these trees on the black market. After Maale Adumim has been here a few more years, these ancient olive trees will become part of a new tale shoring up the legitimacy and mythical past of this growing Israeli settlement extending the boundaries of Jerusalem.

*Based on interviews conducted by Charmaine Seitz.*

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## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> To date, despite optimistic archeological finds and some proven forgeries, the Bible remains the only clear testimony of a Davidic or Solomonic kingdom.