

Stop the Construction of a new Israeli settlement in the Old City of Jerusalem Campaign for Protecting a World Heritage Site



On July 25, 2005, the Local Planning Committee of the Israeli Jerusalem Municipality had approved an ideologically motivated town planning schema that will allow the construction of a new Jewish settlement in the northeastern corner in a highly sensitive profile of the Old City of Jerusalem. The settlement consists of 30 apartments, a community center and a huge golden domed synagogue. We urge you to protest against this violation of world treaties, conventions and status-quo. Your protest of stopping this construction is based on the following arguments;

1. The old city of Jerusalem is listed on the World Heritage List since 1982, the criteria for the selection was based on paragraph C,a (ii) (iii) (vi) of the Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage (1972). which reads: “ A monument, group of buildings or site which is nominated for inclusion in the World Heritage list will be considered to be of outstanding universal value for the purpose of the Convention when the committee finds that it meets one or more of the following criteria and the test of authenticity. Each property nominated should therefore: (ii) exhibit an important interchange of human values, over a span of time or within a cultural area of the world, on developments in architectural or technology, monumental arts, town-planning or landscape design; or (iii) bear unique or at least exceptional testimony to a cultural tradition or to a civilization which is living or which has disappeared; or (vi) be directly or tangibly associated with events or living traditions, with ideas, or with beliefs, with artistic and literary works of outstanding universal significance (the Committee considers that this criterion should justify inclusion in the List only in exceptional circumstances

and in conjunction with other criteria cultural or natural). Therefore, the construction of this scale will harm and damage the historical character of the old city and will change the cultural landscape of it, including building in the plot of land which was free of constructions since centuries.

2. Moreover, the old city of Jerusalem was listed on the List of World Heritage in Danger since 1982. (See the Report of the 6th session of the Committee). Hence it is a sensitive site, and any intervention done on it i.e. construction of buildings on the site, should be taken into serious consideration.
3. The construction will cover, from inside, a beautiful panoramic view of the sixteenth century wall of the city.
4. The Israeli Antiquities Authority considers the site an archaeological one, and it has previously opposed any construction on it.
5. The old city is already, due to the different Israeli policies, over crowded with more than 37,000 inhabitants, living on less than one square kilometer (more than half of it is used as markets, public and holy places). In the Muslim Quarter, in which the settlement is planned, the density of population is 80 people per 1000m²
6. The inhabitants of the old city are in acute need of open spaces, parks and playgrounds for the children. This open space was, till recently, even by the Israeli Municipality of Jerusalem as a public area.

There is a very good chance to stop this irrational project, and to ask the Israeli Authorities to convert the land in the northeastern corner of the old city into an archaeological-historical park, where the inhabitants and the tourists of the city will enjoy the fascinating history of Jerusalem. We, those who are concerned of protecting the World Cultural and Natural Heritage, in addition to those who love the city of Jerusalem, for any reason, have to raise our voices loudly.



