



Suppression of Peaceful Assemblies in Jerusalem

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Following the [announcement](#) of United States President Donald Trump on 6 December 2017 recognizing Jerusalem as the capital of Israel, Palestinians throughout the occupied Palestinian territory immediately [began protesting](#) the decision. The Israeli Occupying Forces (IOF) met protestors in the [Gaza Strip](#) and West Bank with excessive use of force, and imposed an array of measures to prevent Palestinians in East Jerusalem from peacefully assembling there. Owing to Israel's administrative fragmentation of the occupied territory, it has extended its domestic law and policing to East Jerusalem, enabling it to deepen its effective control and stifle Palestinian protest. More broadly, Israel carries out an array of administrative and punitive measures, such as residency revocations,¹ against Palestinians in Jerusalem, in an attempt to remove their presence from the city and quash any political resistance, including peaceful assemblies, to its unlawful colonisation there.

While media attention was focused on the Palestinian reaction on December 7th, one day after the announcement, the IOF effectively quashed Palestinian assembly. Methods used that day included: cordoning off the area around Damascus Gate with metal barriers; preventing Palestinians from entering the area of the steps leading to the Gate (with the exception of residents of the Old City); using pairs of IOF on large horses to disperse individuals gathering on the sidewalks; sending columns of soldiers marching throughout the Old City and charging directly into gathering crowds to disperse them at Damascus Gate; stationing soldiers in groups of four or more at watch points flanking the Damascus Gate steps and stationing snipers in the narrow windows above Damascus Gate.

¹ *Bill for the Entry into Israel Law (Amendment – Applicability to East Jerusalem's residents and resorting to the Interior Minister's judgment), 2017 [Hebrew year 5778] Amendment of Article 11.* Bill available at:

<http://m.knesset.gov.il/Activity/Legislation/Laws/Pages/LawBill.aspx?t=lawsuggestionssearch&lawitemid=2021253>.



Damascus Gate, photo taken on 7 December 2017, by Al-Haq.



IOF checking Palestinian residents' IDs at the entrance of Damascus Gate, photo taken on 7 December 2017, by Al-Haq.

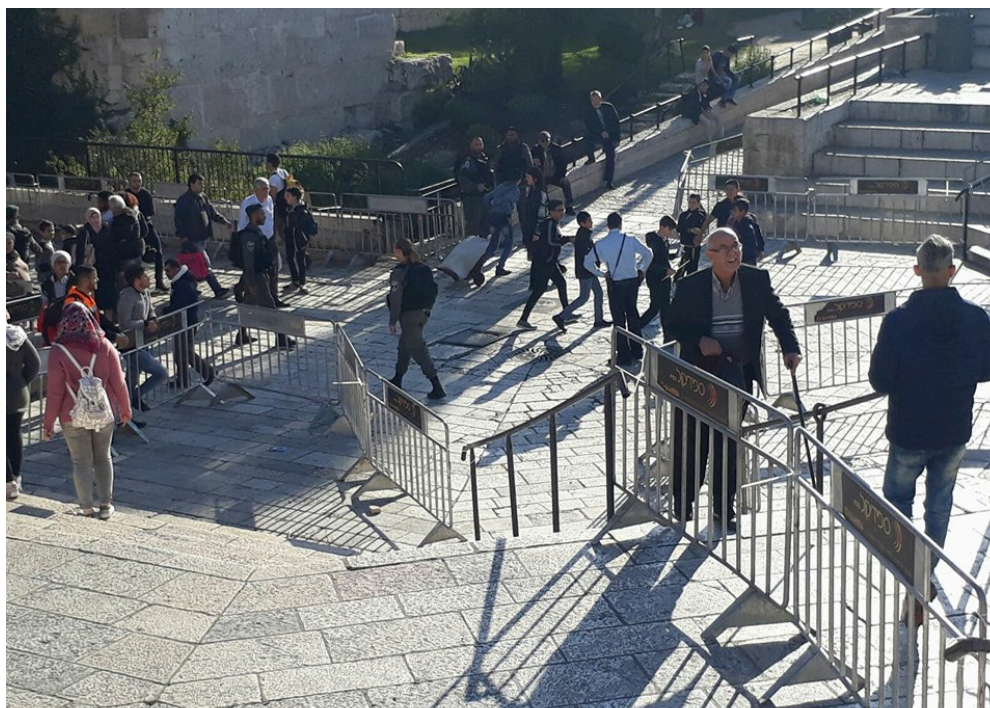
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تتمتع الحق بصفة استشارية لدى المجلس الاقتصادي والاجتماعي في الأمم المتحدة
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Al-Sultan Suleiman Street, photo taken on 7 December 2017, by Al-Haq.



More metal barriers installed in Damascus Gate, photo taken on 16 December 2017, by Al-Haq.



Although gatherings and protests in East Jerusalem have persisted since the 7th, they have been continued to be forcibly suppressed by the IOF. One individual who participated in demonstrations on a near daily basis, told Al-Haq:

On 13 December at around 5 pm, there was a gathering of people on the steps of the Damascus Gate against Trump's decision to declare Jerusalem as the capital of Israel. There was a series of daily events, including sitting on the steps, performing Maghrib prayers, joint dinners on the steps, and chanting Palestinian slogans. There were about 150 participants. About 15 minutes after finishing Maghrib prayers, they (the IOF) attacked us. They tried to force us to stand and to divide the assembly. They could not disperse everyone, and after about 30 minutes, they tried to disperse us again. Some of the IOF began hitting me with their legs, and I saw them hitting my friend, a resident of Jerusalem on his legs. I also saw them hitting two other friends of mine. I saw them push another woman until she fell to the ground, she was in her late 50s. They closed the entrances leading to the area, and would not allow people to enter except for residents of the Old City. The suppression of the assembly continued until Isha'a prayer, including by dispersing groups towards Al Musrara Street and others into the Old City. The IOF were using large horses to frighten the protestors.

It is worth mentioning that I was previously attacked by the IOF who were on large horses and used sticks during a protest that took place the preceding Saturday, 9 December. They used sound bombs, and violently suppressed the protest. I saw a number of demonstrators raising Palestinian flags on Salah Al Din Street; the IOF immediately attacked the media and those holding the flags.

Al-Haq spoke with another individual who also participated in the peaceful assembly on the steps of Damascus Gate on 13 December. He stated that the IOF began to violently disperse the protest:

There were about 50 members of the IOF... they started to push me, and told me to leave the area. Some of them started to beat me with sticks and with their hands, and one of them pushed me hard. I fell on to the metal barrier, and injured my left foot. They came back and began beating me and kicking me all over my body. They left me and returned to their military observation points. A



paramedic from the Red Crescent came to me, and after that one of my acquaintances took me in his car to Augusta Victoria hospital. A doctor examined me, gave me a pain reliever and took an x-ray.... It turned out that there was a fracture in my foot, and I cannot walk without using crutches. I cannot go to work and have to complete my treatment at Makasad. It also affects my personal life. My wife is not allowed to drive because she has a West Bank ID, and has a family unification permit. I cannot drive my two children to school, so we have to call my sister and have her take the kids.

On 14 December, dozens of Jerusalemites gathered in front of the steps of Damascus Gate to pray, and afterwards chant slogans to condemn Trump's announcement. The IOF immediately began to close the area surrounding the steps of the Gate, shutting the entry points with metal barriers, and barring Palestinians from entering the Old City, with the exception of those proving residency there. Shortly thereafter, the IOF began removing protestors that were peacefully gathered on the steps using force and hitting them. The IOF then arrested seven protestors,² males and females, under the pretext of participating in an illegal sit-in and for raising Palestinian flags, and took them to the police station on Salah Al Din. According to the Palestinian Red Crescent, 26 Palestinians were injured that day as a result of the IOF's forcible dispersal.

Over the past week, similar arbitrary measures were taken against protestors in the nearby area of Salah Al Din, where the IOF closed down shops, suppressed protests, fired tear gas and physically assaulted protestors holding peaceful assemblies and for raising Palestinian flags on the street.

² The protestors were released on Tuesday, 19 December 2017.

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Salah Al din Street, Jerusalem, photo taken on 16 December 2017, by Al-Haq.



Salah Al Din Street area, photo taken on 16 December 2017, by Al-Haq.



Following Friday prayer, on 15 December, the IOF suppressed a march, departing Al Aqsa from Al Wad street towards the direction of Damascus Gate. The IOF placed metal barriers inside the Old City and also dispersed protestors by beating them, using pepper spray, and ensuring that they exited from Bab Al Asbat and other areas to prevent them from reaching the area in front of Damascus Gate. Some of the protestors managed to cross the metal barriers and reach Damascus Gate. The IOF then forcibly removed Palestinian men, women and children there, using police dogs and beating several of them. Injuries from the day include bruising, suffocation and fainting from the indiscriminate use of spraying pepper spray. According to the Palestinian Red Crescent, there were eight individuals wounded in the vicinity of Damascus Gate that day.

Clashes in 'Anata, Jerusalem on the same day, resulted in the killing of [Basel Mustafa Ibrahim](#), 29. He died in the Palestine Medical Complex in Ramallah, where he was undergoing treatment after being shot in the chest. Altogether, clashes in Al-'Ezariyya and Abu Dis, resulted in four injuries from rubber bullets, 14 from tear gas, and five from injuries and burns, according to the Palestinian Red Crescent.

Al-Haq strongly condemns the excessive use of force used by Israel to violently suppress protests throughout the OPT, as well as all other means imposed on Palestinians, and those in East Jerusalem in particular, in order to obstruct the right to peaceful assembly. It must be underscored that Palestinians in East Jerusalem face extreme targeting by the Israeli authorities as part of a broader [coercive environment](#) to transfer Palestinians from the city.³ Palestinians are well aware of the potential repercussions from the IOF for exhibiting any form of dissent, ranging from the closure of cultural institutions to the arrest and heavy sentencing of Palestinian youth. The international community, including foreign media outlets, must recognize the full

³ The targeting of Palestinians in East Jerusalem includes a variety of collective punishment measures, ranging from access and movement restrictions to punitive residency revocations. See, for example: Al-Haq, "Collective Punishment in East Jerusalem" (17 May 2015), available at: <http://www.alhaq.org/documentation/weekly-focuses/916-collective-punishment-in-east-jerusalem>; see also Al-Haq, "Illegal collective punishment measures against women and children: The case of Nadia Abu Jamal and her family" (1 February 2017), available at: <http://www.alhaq.org/documentation/weekly-focuses/1100-illegal-collective-punishment-measures-against-women-and-children-the-case-of-nadia-abu-jamal-and-her-family>.



reality of Israel's occupation on the human rights of Palestinians, and third states must take action to ensure that Israel fulfills its duties as Occupying Power.

Last, Al-Haq condemns the continued measures taken by Israeli authorities to militarize the Damascus Gate area. Three observation points have been established over the past year, manned by the IOF. Moreover, over the past two weeks, Israeli authorities have been digging near the upper entrances leading to Damascus Gate. Accounts circulating among Palestinian residents of Jerusalem range from claiming that the IOF will build rooms in order to arrest and detain young Jerusalemites, to the building of towers for the IOF. Israel continues to use the pretext of security to further deepen its control over the area, undermine the movement of Palestinians, and also impose a sense of fear amongst visitors and tourists in order to damage the Palestinian economy in the Old City and ultimately force the transfer of Palestinians out of Jerusalem.



Diggings carried out on the upper stairs leading to Damascus Gate, photo taken on 16 December 2017, by Al-Haq.