



# THE IMPACT OF THE POPULAR RESISTANCE in E1 AREA



Support to Human Rights Defenders  
in Palestinian Territories and Israel



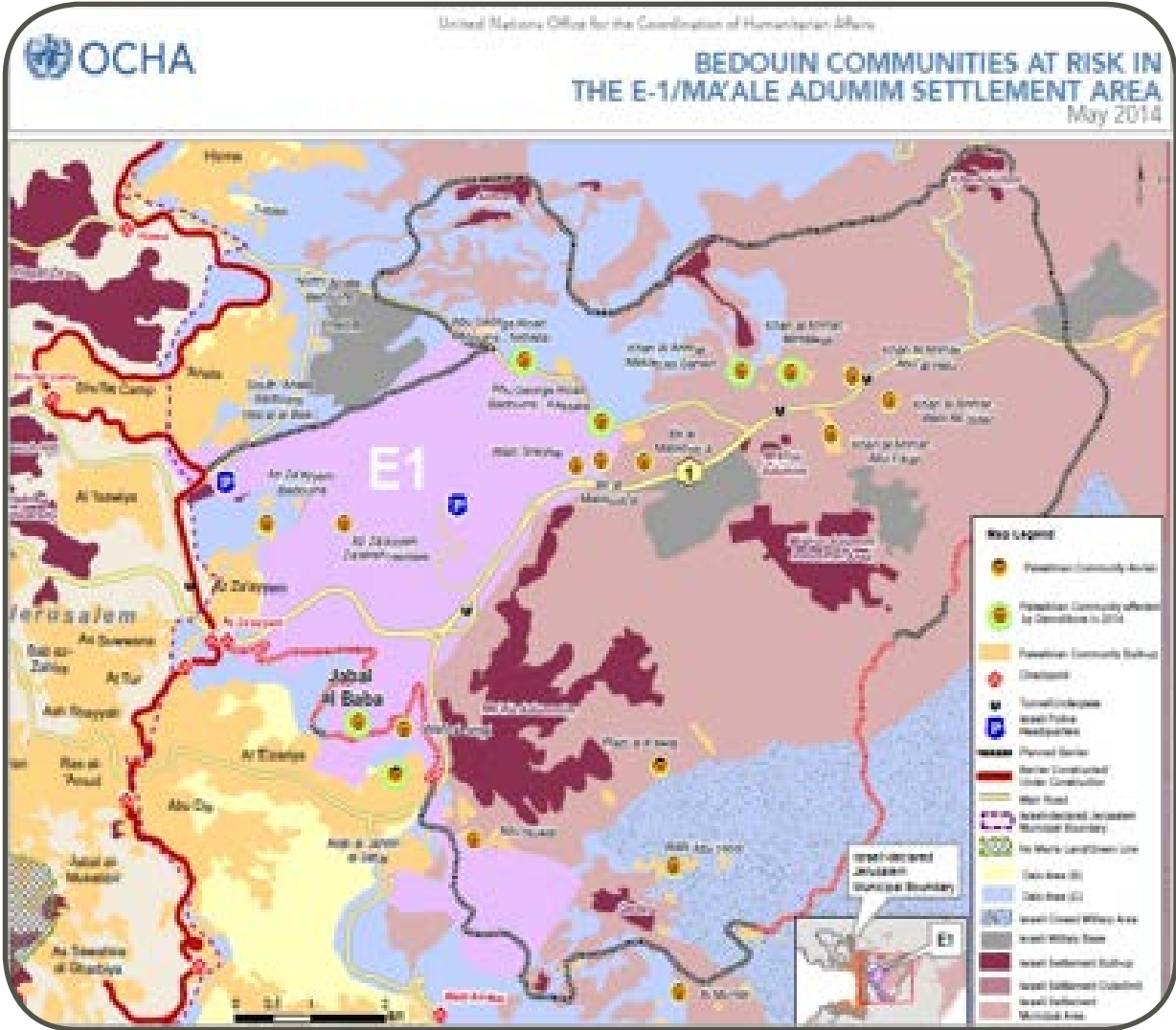




# **THE IMPACT OF THE POPULAR RESISTANCE in E1 AREA**

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## What is E1?



Ocha Map E1 Area

The UN General Assembly’s recognition of Palestine as a state with UN observer status (November 2012) unfroze one of the oldest and internationally contested Israeli building program in the occupied West Bank, known as E1 (East 1).

The plan aims to create a settlement urban continuity between the vast illegal settlement of Ma’ale Adumim (with a population of around 40,000) and East Jerusalem, grabbing also the area of the Dead Sea up to the Jordan boarder.

The implementation of E1 plan, which aims to seizure 12.5 km<sup>2</sup> of Palestinian lands, raises legal, social and humanitarian concerns. Firstly, if actualized, it will split in two the West Bank cutting off the contiguity between the north to the south and it will further seal the Palestinians in isolated “bantustans”.

Secondly it will affect the Palestinians inhabitants of East Jerusalem (around 290,000 people) isolating and disconnecting them from the West Bank: from this point of view the project seems to be an additional component of the so called policy of "Israelization of Jerusalem" which aims to alter the demography of the city in favour to its Israeli component and undermining the Palestinian presence in the occupied part of the city.

Finally the plan will also harm the Bedouin population living in the area. The Israeli Civil Administration is implementing a plan of forced displacement and relocation of around 20 Bedouin communities- more than 2,000 people- living currently in the corridor between the Israeli colony and East Jerusalem.

The Israeli Government is planning to concentrate the expelled population in the area of Abu Dis, where it is building "alternative" housing solutions.

The eviction of the Bedouins and their forced urbanization will affect their traditional way of life, based on a strong relation with the land, damage their tradition and destroy their culture and identity.

These Bedouins settled in the area after 1948, when they were forced to leave their land in Naqab region. Since the Israeli occupation of West Bank in 1967 they were forced to move several times to allow the expansion of the Israeli illegal settlements. They are mainly living in the so-called area C (under complete military and civil Israel control)<sup>1</sup>. According to the present situation, Area C, that represents 60% of West Bank, is mainly designated for the settlement expansion and military areas. The Palestinians do not have any possibility of a sustainable livelihood in the area as they are affected by the occupation policies (confiscation of land, limited access to land, resources and basic services, human rights violations, houses demolitions and forced displacement...).

The popular committees and the grassroots activists decided a series of new-style actions of active resistance with the idea of creating new Palestinian facts of the ground and claiming their rights on the Palestinian territory, occupied since 1967.

From the end of 2012 the popular committees started to think about central actions within E1 area, spreading their non violent method beyond geographical borders on the active villages against the wall and the settlements and extending their program on national level.

The activists has been able to identify strategically important sites for the actions, to built on them, to activate legal and political campaigns and to attract local and international media. The actions were also useful to prove that a peaceful and resilient resistance is possible.

Hereafter two big actions in the area are analysed.

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<sup>1</sup> The division of the West Bank into 3 areas (A,B,C) was temporarily and it was though to gradually transfer all the control to the Palestinian Authority

## Bab Al Shams



### Background

In november 2012, the United Nations declared Palestine as an observer member. In the same period Netanyahu approved the expansion of the settlements in the area E1 area to challenge the international decision and to establish more facts on the ground. This decision seemed to bury any negotiations and to make appear any viable situation more difficult than ever.

As answer to the Israeli creation of facts on the ground the popular committees replied with other facts on the ground. With this idea in their mind they decided to build a Palestinian village, in the heart of E1 area, on the east of Al Zayem village, where Israel was looking to evict Bedouins and to connect Ma'ale Adumin settlement with East Jerusalem.

The activists decided to call it “Bab al Shams” (the Gate of Sun), taking inspiration from a Lebanese novel with the same name. The book, written by Elias Khoury, depicts the Palestinian history through a love story between Younis and Nahila. . Younis leaves his wife to join the Palestinian resistance in Lebanon while Nahila remains steadfast in what remains of their village in the Galilee. Throughout the 1950s and 1960s, Younis smuggles through Lebanon and back to the Galilee to meet his wife in the “Bab Alshams” cave, where she gives birth to their children. Younis returns to the resistance in Lebanon as his wife remains in Bab Al Shams.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> <http://popularstruggle.org/content/palestinians-establish-new-village-bab-alshams-area-e1>

## **PREPARATION**

In order to prepare the activities and the construction of the village, from the beginning of December to January 2013, series of meeting between the popular committees took place in a secret way. Due to the long experience of the activists on the ground and the high security considerations, the organisers managed to keep secret the preparation even from the majority of participants to the activity. With hindsight, this turned out to be a key decision because the information did not leak and the activists were able to use in their favour the “surprise effect” to the Israeli army.

While the practical organization was going on, a group of activists prepared a legal campaign with the Palestinians owners of the lands in area E1. They collected all the documentation needed to appeal to the Court and to prove that the area was not state land. The campaign aimed to put an extra pressure on the Israel government and to force them to postpone the eviction of the people from the area.

## **ACTION**

At the beginning of January the activists announced on social media platforms a winter camp in Jericho and set the meeting point at the Red Crescent in Ramallah.

On that day it was snowing, making the activity almost impossible. Nevertheless more than 300 women, men, kids gathered together in Ramallah.

The organisers decided to postpone the activity while waiting for better meteorological conditions. The biggest challenge in that moment was how to keep people there and do not make them leave.

The people committed and they spent the night at the Red Crescent. The following day, January 10, around 4 a.m. the buses moved from Ramallah to E1 area. Meanwhile,, based on fake information that were announced on the social media, the IOF (Israeli Occupation Force) closed Jericho proving the weakness of information resources that the Israeli Army has. The people managed to reach and to install the tents on the hilltop without any bothering from the Israeli forces because they did not know. The Israelis noticed the things just around 9 a.m.

Thus, thanks to the team work of the participants, the Palestinian village, Bab al Shams, quickly grew up on the hill of East Jerusalem. In few hours the action gained international and national support. The activists created an elected local council, a clinic, a sport club, a media centre. And the village become a political pilgrimage place for all Palestinians coming both from West Bank and Israel. When the IOF discovered the village and its symbolical message of resistance, they try to evict it. But due to the legal campaign, through which the activists provided evidences that Bab al Shams was created on a private land the Israeli High Court granted a period a six-day delay of any eviction. The army went back to the Supreme court stating that the presence of people was a source of threat for the settlement of Male adummin. It was already Saturday, the 12. However, on Saturday Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu ordered directly the site to be evacuated immediately by police, stating that while the tents could stay but the activists had to leave. On the early morning on January 13 around 1000 IOF soldiers surrounded the village arresting everybody there and confiscating and raiding the village. More than 200 people were arrested.

## **Achievements:**

1. As a result of participating directly in the activities of Bab al Shams the surrounding villages around E1 area, such as al Azariya , Abu Dis and even East Jerusalem itself have become actively involved in the popular resistance. From that time the popular resistance has not been limited geographically to the active villages but it spread within all the regions where popular resistance can take place.

Following that moment, several central actions took place in the area (blocking bypass roads, occupying supermarket of settlements and installing other palestinian village in the area

2. Bab al shams gave the trust to the Palestinian communities to adopt the nonviolent popular resistance as a strategy to end the occupation

3. political parties, universities, civil society organizations became more active and interested in the participation in the popular resistance

4. local and international media extensively covered the work on the ground of the popular resistance.

Two months later the Palestinian activists came back to the area of Bab al Shams and build another headquarter of Bab al Shams calling it the Grandson of Younis, situated just in front of Male Adummin settlement. The name came again from the novel of Elias Huri, where Younis was the main character of the Gate of sun who left his family Galilee and become part of the Palestinian resistance . They managed to place a big Palestinian flag in front of the settlement. Again Younis became another example of the Palestinian rejection of the Israeli plan.

In conclusion Bab al Shmas can be considered as a positive trasformation point in the popular resistance. It was a great example to spread the values of nonviolence and to increase the resilience of the locals



# Jerusalem Gate

## Back ground



The struggle of Jerusalem Gate (Bawwabat al-Quds) aims to block the Israeli ongoing plan to create a relocation area for the Bedouin communities living in the E1 area.

Israel has been using several different tactics to increase the pressure on the Bedouin communities living in the E1 corridor, issuing eviction orders and confiscating the basic livelihoods structures. Israel contends, rhetorically, that the relocation is to improve Bedouin lives while it seems clear that the main purpose is to connect the settlements in the area with East Jerusalem.

The camp of Jerusalem Gate was set up on a the road that connects Ramallah to Bethlehem, on a hill in Khilet al Rahib close to the area of Abu Dis, on the area where the new township for the Bedouins is supposed to be built

The Campaign, gathered together Palestinian activists, representatives of the the Bedouin communities and international solidarity started on 3<sup>rd</sup> February 2015 and it lasted for a month.

The activists built two tents and one bloke room, the activists and the representatives of the Bedouin communities gathered together locals of the area of Jerusalem and all over West Bank. The same night the Israeli occupation forces evicted the activists from the area demolishing everything and taking all the materials in the place. Nevertheless the activists

continued to build and to stay in the place. The same day the activists build the tents again. The camp has been demolished 12 times by the Israeli Occupation Forces arresting and using, tear gas, rubber coated bullets, and stun grenades.

Israel decided to start the confiscation of the land, more than 5 bulldozers start working on the site at the beginning of March, announcing the area as closed military area with soldiers occupying it 24 hours per day. The activists continued their site nearby the place organizing daily actions against the confiscation of the land.



The month of the campaign come out with different lessons, the choice of the location revealed to be an important point: locals started to react against the Israeli plan in the area, though many farmers start to cultivate their land and plant trees in the area. It was extremely important experience for the locals of Abu Dis to share experiences with activists from West Bank and to come overcome the existing fear sharing the experience of popular resistance, that reflects on the actions that was organized in the area to see how they act in the demonstration, which surprised the Israeli army, who get angry to see this experience, so they arrested many of them who spend days, weeks, and months in Jail.

Beduins position as summarized by Abu Emad one of the responsible of the Beduins communities in the area, was very clear from the first day when he said “if we want to move from the area where we are now, they must return us to our original villages that we evicted from Naqav in 1948, it is not fair after 67 years of being refugees from place to place to evict us to a new area. This Israeli plan is refused no one from the Beduins will accept that”.



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