

## PLO NEGOTIATIONS AFFAIRS DEPARTMENT

# CARVING UP THE PALESTINIAN CAPITAL: THE ISRAELI RING ROAD AROUND OCCUPIED EAST JERUSALEM

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*"We'll make a pastrami sandwich of them. We'll insert a strip of Jewish settlements in between the Palestinians, and then another strip of Jewish settlements right across the West Bank, so that in 25 years, neither the United Nations, nor the U.S.A, nobody, will be able to tear it apart."*

-Ariel Sharon to Winston S. Churchill III in 1973

### FACT SHEET:

While ring roads around urban areas are a common feature of urban development schemes to facilitate the movement of traffic around population centers, the **Ring Road** Israel is currently building in Jerusalem is intended to reinforce Israeli settlements and consolidate Israeli control over the occupied Palestinian parts of the city. Indeed, much of the Ring Road in East Jerusalem follows the line of Israel's Wall and connects Israeli settlements in and around occupied East Jerusalem with West Jerusalem.

Just like the Wall that physically and functionally separates East Jerusalem from the remainder of the occupied West Bank, the Ring Road with its extensions will effectively sever Palestinian neighborhoods within East Jerusalem from each other, completely disrupting the fabric of life of more than 250,000 Palestinians in Metropolitan Palestinian Jerusalem and threatening their prospects for urban growth and economic development, as well as the contiguity and viability of the future Palestinian State. Approximately 35% of the Palestinian economy is dependent on Metropolitan East Jerusalem which extends from Bethlehem to Ramallah, through East Jerusalem. Without East Jerusalem, including the Old City, there can be no economically or politically viable Palestinian state.

As shown on the attached Map, the Ring Road project that is being currently constructed by Israel is comprised of two main sections, an eastern road and a western road, along with three extensions, the Train Road in the south, Road #9 in the center, and Road #20 in the north. Road #20, which is currently under construction, will cut through the Palestinian village of Beit Hanina and continue eastward between Pisgat Ze'ev and Hizma, where it will connect to the eastern Ring Road and the newly built settler bypass road around Anata and Az-Zaim. The

northern section of the Ring Road was changed due to the building of the Wall around the Qalandiya airport; instead of using Road #45 as originally planned, for the time being the Israeli Municipality has decided to use Road #20.

All sections of the Ring Road are now completed, with the exception of part of the Eastern Ring Road running from the Palestinian neighborhood of Az-Zaim, At-Tor, Ras al-Amud, Al-Eizariya, Abu Dis, As-Sawahira Al-Gharbiya, Al-Qunbar, and Sheikh Sa'ad to Sur Bahir. This section of the road is 11.5 kilometers long and because it goes through several densely populated Palestinian neighborhoods, it will require the construction of three tunnels and five bridges. In order to complete this massive project, Israel intends to confiscate more than 1,237 dunums of privately owned Palestinian land and demolish several Palestinian houses.

As with most Israeli construction in the occupied Palestinian territory, the Israeli Government seeks, with the Ring Road, to establish the infrastructure which will enable massive expansion of its settlements, with little or no regard for its impact on Palestinian communities and the future viability of a Palestinian state.

In the south, and in preparation for the projected increase in settler traffic due to ongoing construction and the tendering of new housing units in **Har Homa settlement**, the Israeli Jerusalem Municipality has built a southern extension of the Eastern Ring Road that branches off Road #60 just north of Mar Elias Monastery, thus creating a convenient connection for the future settlers of Givat Ha'Arba and Har Homa settlements. Moreover, in order to increase settlement links with Jerusalem and the Ring Road in the south, Israel recently completed construction of the **Zatara/Beit Sahour bypass road**. This road, which is built on confiscated agricultural lands of Ras Al-wad, Za'atra and Beit Sahour, will connect Tekoa and other nearby settlements with Har Homa and the Eastern Ring Road through the Mazmuriya checkpoint terminal.

In the East, the Eastern Ring Road intersects with Roads #1, #45, and #9, thus assuring Israeli control over all key junctions for roads connecting the northern West Bank to the southern West Bank. More importantly, the Eastern Ring Road will allow Israeli settlers from **Ma'aleh Adumim and other nearby settlements** to access West Jerusalem more easily from the east, north and south, thus making it more attractive for more settlers to move to these settlements. In addition, the Eastern Ring Road will facilitate the building and eventual population of the 400 new housing units planned for the new settlement of **Kidmat Zion** in the area of Abu Dis west of the Wall.

In the north, two large settlement areas are expected to benefit from the Eastern Ring Road: the **Giv'on settlements**, north-west of Jerusalem, and the **Binyamin settlements**, north-east of Jerusalem. These two settlement areas will also be connected to each other, and to Pisgat Ze'ev, via road #20, which is currently under construction and which cuts the Palestinian town of Beit Hannina. Furthermore, the Anata by-pass road will connect these settlement areas with the Adumim settlement area. Consequently, this extensive new roads network will connect settlement areas with each other and with West Jerusalem while dividing and fragmenting Palestinian neighborhoods and the urban contiguity of East Jerusalem, thus making a future Palestinian capital in the city all but impossible.

In conclusion, with the planned Eastern Ring Road, hundreds of *dunams* of Palestinian private property will be confiscated and several Palestinian houses will be demolished for the purpose of connecting the settlement areas around occupied East Jerusalem with each other and with Israel while effectively severing Palestinian neighborhoods within East Jerusalem from each other and, together with the Wall, the Ring Road will sever East Jerusalem from the rest of the West Bank.