

Al-Issawiyah

Introduction

Upon entering al-Issawiyah village, you will notice its walls, adorned with national slogans and graffiti that reflect the political identity of the Palestinian people: the Palestinian flag, factional banners, statements of support and commemorations of political prisoners and shuhada (martyrs), slogans of praise for al-Issawiyah and more. These many graffiti attest to the status of the village as one of the most active sites of confrontation against Occupation forces in occupied Jerusalem. Al-Issawiyah has distinguished itself for being among the first Jerusalemite villages to respond to political developments. During the first assault on Gaza (2008–2009), its residents were the first to protest, and against any assault on al-Aqsa Mosque, its youth are the first to resist.



Location and Area

Al-Issawiyah is located northeast of the Old City of occupied Jerusalem, midway between Shuafat to the north, Anata to the east and northeast, al-Tur and al-Zaim to the south, and al-Sheikh Jarrah and Wadi al-Joz to the west. It lies approximately three kilometers from the center of occupied Jerusalem and 731m above sea level.¹ al-Issawiyah's original area stretches over 10,417 donums.²

Origin and History

Al-Issawiyah's name is attributed to the name Issa (Jesus). According to researcher Nasser al-Din Abu Khdeir, there is mention of it in Ottoman archives without the definite article “al” (the) as “Issawiyah.” What is puzzling about the name is the absence of a Christian sanctuary, church, or any ancient religious building, which casts doubt on the people’s popular belief that Jesus had passed through al-Issawiyah. Perhaps the name is linked to the Ayyubid king al-Muazzam Issa bin al-Malik al-Adil Abu Bakr bin Ayoub (1180–1227).³

It is likely that the history of al-Issawiyah dates to the Roman era.

Population

In 1931, al-Issawiyah had a population of approximately 558 according to scholar Mustafa Murad al-Dabbagh. The number reached 1,163 people in 1961 according to statistics. Today, the population of al-Issawiyah is estimated at around 20,000 Palestinians,⁴ including newcomers as well as the original families of the village.

The original families of al-Issawiyah are divided into 9 main clans, to which the Awad clan was added last century. There are now 10 clans, namely: Elayyan, Abu Hummus, Darwish, and Mustafa (ancestors of the Mohammad and Hamdan families), Dari, Dirbas, Abu Ryalah, Muheisen, Obeid and Awad.⁵

¹ The Applied Research Institute – Jerusalem, Arij, “Isawiya Town Profile”, 2012.

² Al-Dabbagh, Mustafa Murad. “Our Country, Palestine.” *Palestine Remembered*. [العيسوية، محافظة القدس - بلادنا فلسطين، صفحة 101 - فلسطين في](#) [الذاكرة](#)

³ Abu Khdeir, Nasser al-Din. “Names of Palestinian Villages of Jerusalem: Linguistic and Semantic Study.” *The Association of Arab Universities Journal, Bab el-Wad*. December 6, 2016. [أسماء قرى القدس، دراسة لغوية دلالية](#)

⁴ According to a report published on *Sicha Mekomit* (December 30, 2019), <https://bit.ly/2Zk3X9a>

⁵ Hani al-Issawi, interview with the author, 7 January 2020.

Social and Economic Context

As in neighboring Jerusalem villages, historically, the people of al-Issawiyah relied on agriculture for their livelihoods, particularly on rainfed agriculture for the cultivation of olives, barley and wheat, the latter being mostly grown for subsistence. Today, these agricultural practices have been severely limited due to the Occupation's encroachment and uprooting of agriculture for the expansion of colonies, and due to the increase in population density, which requires people to build in small areas. Prior to urbanization, homes were concentrated within a specific area in the old center of al-Issawiyah.

With the absence of natural springs in al-Issawiyah, its people relied on digging and building several wells that served as important components of the village's social life. The women of the village congregated there regularly to fetch water for their households. Among the notable wells in the village was the Khallasat well in the old center, al-Tabl, adjacent to al-Arbain Mosque, and the nearby al-Tawil well, in addition to the wells that were named after the clans who dug them, such as Elayyan and Muheisen wells.

Al-Issawiyah is also divided into neighborhoods, often named after the largest resident family, such as the Elayyan, Muheisen and Obeid neighborhoods.⁶

Education

No schools were established in al-Issawiyah under British colonial rule. After the 1948 Nakba, two elementary schools were established: one for boys (founded in 1956), with nearly 220 students in 1967, and another for girls, with 59 students.⁷ Students who wished to continue their education attended high school and college in the city of Jerusalem.

Today, there are several schools in the village that are administered by the Occupation Municipality, namely al-Issawiyah Boys Elementary School, al-Issawiyah Boys Secondary School, Boys High School, al-Issawiyah Girls Elementary School, and the Girls Secondary and High school⁸. There is also one private school, Uhud School, which teaches students up to the 10th grade.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Al-Dabbagh, Mustafa Murad. "Our Country, Palestine," on *Palestine Remembered*. [العيسوية، محافظة القدس - بلادنا فلسطين، صفحة 101 - فلسطين في الذاكرة](#)

⁸ According to the Occupation Municipality website.

Landmarks

The Carob Tree: There is an old tree in the village known as Kharroubet Al-Ashra (the carob tree of ten), located in the south of the village near the slopes below the Hebrew University. It is distinguished by the stone terraces surrounding it. Two stories are told about the tree, the first being that ten of Salah al-Din al-Ayubi's men rested in its shade during their campaign to liberate Jerusalem from the Crusaders. The second story claims that the ten men had in fact been the disciples of Jesus.⁹ According to popular Palestinian village tradition, the Carob tree was illuminated with sesame oil lamps, especially on Islamic celebrations. The women, accompanied by their children, would pray for rain following afternoon prayers, invoking the memory of the people buried near the tree.

There are five mosques in al-Issawiyah: Uhud, al-Sabirin (also called al-Murabitin), al-Tobah, al-Shuhada, in addition to the main mosque, al-Arbain (literally "the forty"), located in the center of the village and renovated in 2001. According to a popular tale told about the origins of al-Arbain Mosque's name, the population of the village had been merely 40 in the days before their conversion to Islam. For every newborn at the time, the story goes, one adult would die. But after embracing Islam and building the mosque, the deaths halted, and the village population began to grow.¹⁰

The Golden Minaret of al-Arbain Mosque: Located in the south of the village by the Hebrew University, the 72-meter minaret towers above al-Arbain Mosque. The people of the village built the minaret in March of 2017,¹¹ coinciding with a proposed law in the Israeli Knesset to restrict the Muslim calls to prayer. The idea was born out of a desire to bring attention to the village and present one of its landmarks in stark opposition to nearby colonial landmarks such as the Hebrew University and Hadassah Hospital on Jabal al-Masharef (Mount Scopus). It was also a means to confront Occupation policies aimed at stifling Arab-Islamic identity in Palestine more broadly.

History of Resistance

The location of al-Issawiyah has placed it at the heart of a long struggle over Jerusalem and against the Zionist movement. The village has been in continual confrontation with the enemy. During the Palestinian Great Revolt (1936–1939), there was a faction in the village led by Ahmed

⁹ Mohammed Abu Mahmoud Darwish, "al-Ashra Carob Tree," Kharroubetna (blog), 2008, [شجرة خروب العشرة من عمر قرية العيسوية ما بين 800-700 عام](#)

¹⁰ Al-Issawiyah Neighborhood Card issued by Bimkom Association: (Planners for Planning Rights).

¹¹ Al Jazeera, "Inauguration of the Tallest Minaret in Jerusalem," March 19, 2017.

Ali al-Issawi¹² (fellow of Bahjat Abu Gharbieh),¹³ which, in cooperation with the villages of al-Ezariyah, al-Tur and Sur Baher, participated in targeting convoys of the British Palestine Potash Company as they crossed the eastern side of Jerusalem en route from the Dead Sea towards the port of Haifa. Weapons training of Palestinian resistance fighters took place in eastern al-Issawiyah.

Among the incidents that took place during that period (1937–1938) was one in which resistance fighters Sobhi Abu Ghreibeh and Dawoud al-Alami, under the supervision of Abdul-Qader Idkeidek, killed two Hebrew University guards after having observed them walking on a dirt road leading to Jewish neighborhoods. When the guards reached the north-eastern corner of Karm al-Mufti in al-Sheikh Jarrah, Sobhi and Dawoud shot them and seized their weapons.¹⁴

The Hebrew University and Hadassah Hospital buildings occupy a strategic location in Jerusalem atop Jabal al-Masharef (Mount Scopus), overlooking the city and al-Issawiyah. Zionist forces regularly used these buildings for military purposes, including explosives manufacture and weapons storage.¹⁵ They also used them as military bases from which to conduct night raids on Jerusalem and surrounding villages, including al-Issawiyah. Although both institutions were a massive threat to the future of resistance in Jerusalem, they were far too fortified to be attacked directly. Resistance fighters could only cut off the stronghold's transportation lines to Jewish neighborhoods. Despite the repeated attacks on Zionist transports, the area was vital to the Zionists, and they insisted on using it regardless of the continuous losses they incurred.¹⁶

In terms of attempts by the resistance to control the Zionist stronghold at the Hebrew University and Hadassah Hospital complex, Bahjat Abu Gharbieh recalls a meeting held in late-September 1948 between Khaled al-Husseini, commander of al-Jihad al-Muqaddas (Army of

¹² The resistance fighter Ahmad al-Issawi was born in al-Issawiyah in 1909. He completed his studies at the Terra Santa school in Jerusalem and participated in the establishment of the Ibrahimiyyah College in 1934. Al-Issawi joined the resistance against British colonial rule and the Zionist Movement and established the Islamic Scout Group, which formed the core of the militant movement in the Great Palestinian Revolt (1936–1939). Due to his role in the resistance, he was arrested at the end of 1936, and released after six months. Al-Issawi immediately resumed the struggle with his companions in the Army of the Holy War. He was entrusted with the task of leading the militant factions in the villages of eastern Jerusalem. He was pursued and exiled by the British, returning to Palestine in 1948 to rejoin the resistance. After the Nakba, he worked at the Arab Bank and was a member of al-Aqsa Reconstruction Committee until he passed away in Jerusalem in 2001.

¹³ Bahjat Abu Gharbieh was born in Khan Younis in 1916 and was known as the chief of Palestinian resistance fighters. He was a member of the Army of the Holy War. He recorded his memoirs of the struggle until 1949 in a book published by the Institute for Palestine Studies and titled *In the Midst of the Struggle: The Memoirs of Bahjat Abu Gharbieh, 1916–1949*. Ahmad al-Issawi and Bahjat Abu Gharbieh were teaching colleagues at the Ibrahimiyyah College.

¹⁴ Abu Gharbieh, Bahjat. *In the Midst of the Struggle: The Memoirs of Bahjat Abu Gharbieh, 1916–1949*. Beirut: Institute for Palestine Studies, 1993, 103.

¹⁵ *Ibid.* 103.

¹⁶ *Ibid.* 163.

the Holy War), and the leaders of the *saraya* (al-Jihad companies). Al-Husseini discussed the status of al-Jihad al-Muqaddas, which had become more organized and capable of purchasing weapons. Abu Gharbieh seized the opportunity and suggested a strategically significant military operation. Everyone present supported his proposal, and the decision was made to occupy the Hadassah and Hebrew University complex. "If our attack is successful and we take control of the complex, we will plant a car bomb in every building. If the Arab Legion demands that we evacuate the site, we will refuse. If we are fired on with rifles and machine guns, we will still refuse. If we are targeted with 25-pound mortars, we will evacuate immediately and ignite the fuses to the car bombs as we retreat in order to destroy that perilous den," Abu Gharbieh wrote. On a reconnaissance patrol led by Abu Gharbieh from Wadi al-Joz to the Hebrew University, upon approaching the campus entrance, an Arab Legion unit located in Dar al-Mufti building in al-Sheikh Jarrah spotted their movement. The Arab Legion unit likely mistook them for Zionists and fired a few warning shots that were met with machine-gun fire from the Zionists on the opposite side. Caught in the crossfire, and with the enemy alerted, Abu Gharbieh's patrol was forced to retreat. On the next day, Abu Gharbieh headed to al-Jihad al-Muqaddas headquarters to inform Commander Khaled al-Husseini of what had happened. Al-Husseini told him that they had canceled their plan because the Arab Legion brigade commander, who was British, had summoned and informed him of his knowledge of the operation. He had threatened him with mortar fire if they were to move ahead with the operation.¹⁷

In mid-1948, the people of al-Issawiyah were forced to move to the land and caves situated east of the village, but they soon returned in response to the calls of several village notables, including resistance fighter Ahmad al-Issawi. With their quick return, the people of the village showed sufficient human presence before the United Nations truce monitors, thus saving their village from being included in the list of uprooted villages of Jerusalem.¹⁸

On July 7, 1948, an internationally mediated agreement was reached between the Arabs and the Zionists,¹⁹ stipulating that the area of Hadassah and the Hebrew University, located behind Arab lines in Jerusalem, in addition to the neighboring village of al-Issawiyah, would be considered a demilitarized zone, which would be allowed to receive water and other supplies from the Arab

¹⁷ Abu Gharbiyeh, Bahjat. *In the Midst of the Struggle: The Memoirs of Bahjat Abu Gharbieh, 1916-1949*. Beirut: Institute for Palestine Studies, 1993, 343.

¹⁸ Hani al-Issawi from al-Issawiyah, in an interview with the author, March 2018.

¹⁹ Several years after the Nakba, in March 1953, Azmi al-Nashahibi, chairman of the Jordan delegation to the Mixed Armistice Commission, submitted to the heads of the consular bodies in Jerusalem, and to the chief international observer a memorandum in which he listed the violations committed by the Zionists against the July 1948 agreement. There had been 51 violations, including 15 instances of Zionists opening fire on the residents of al-Issawiyah using automatic weapons, killing two Palestinians. Aref al-Aref, *The Nakba: The Nakba of Jerusalem and the Lost Paradise, 1947-1949*, vol. 2 (Institute for Palestine Studies, 2013), 33.

area. This was a result of British pressure on the Arabs to fulfill the wishes of the Zionists.²⁰ Regarding the signed agreement, historian Aref al-Aref notes that its provisions focused on the demilitarization of the area, in addition to limiting the number of Arab and Zionist policemen, and the conditioning of al-Issawiyah's population increase due to influx on the unanimous consent of both parties.²¹

Following their return to the village, the people of al-Issawiyah faced a tangled situation as they found themselves torn between Jordan and Zionist colonialism between 1948 and 1967. Al-Issawiyah remained under Jordanian administrative rule and the supervision of UN forces. Meanwhile, the Zionist colonial power itself did not exert its sovereignty over the village, nor did its census data account for the Palestinian population.²² The people of al-Issawiyah faced repeated Zionist attacks and restrictions on their daily lives and agricultural activity. Examples of these attacks include accounts of Zionists attacking youth, children and women on their way to fetch water from the village wells.²³

During the 1967 Naksa, and preceding the occupation of al-Issawiyah, the Israeli army used the Hebrew University buildings to attack the village, and the campus itself was the launching ground for the eventual assault to occupy the village. The village lands were ultimately annexed to the Occupation Municipality in Jerusalem.

The people of the village remained for a few nights on the outskirts of the village in the "Hyena Dens" area, which extends to al-Khan al-Ahmar, until the elders sent word that they should return. The Israeli army called out on the village loudspeakers: "You cows, return with the cows." One of the scenes recalled by people who witnessed the Naksa was of the men of al-Issawiyah being gathered in a square and an Israeli army officer demanding that they surrender their weapons, saying, "If you are men, hand over your weapons. Whoever does not, when we find his weapon during our search, we will kill him with it." In an effort to intimidate the people in the square, "the officer would select a person and take him to an alley, then gunshots would be heard. This continued for five hours, and so, dozens of people handed over their weapons, but some insisted on keeping them."²⁴

²⁰ Abu Gharbiyeh, Bahjat. *In the Midst of the Struggle: The Memoirs of Bahjat Abu Gharbieh, 1916-1949*. Beirut: Institute for Palestine Studies, 1993, 335.

²¹ Aref al-Aref, *The Nakba: The Nakba of Jerusalem and the Lost Paradise, 1947-1949*, vol. Second (Institute for Palestine Studies, 2013), 31.

²² Qawasmi, Hanadi, "Al-Issawiyah: Bidhom Yrabuna, Mustahil!" *Metras*, June 30, 2019, <https://bit.ly/2FPZa4N>

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ Al-Jundi, Aseel, "Jerusalemites Who Have Tasted the Bitterness of Occupation Narrate Details of the Naksa", published in Arabic on *al-jazeera.net*, June 4, 2018. <https://bit.ly/2T272aA>

Colonial Landmarks Near al-Issawiyah

The Hebrew University of Jerusalem: located on the slopes of Jabal al-Masharef (Mount Scopus) and overlooking al-Issawiyah village from the south, the university is a complex manifestation of colonialism. The idea behind its establishment dates back to the first Zionist Congress in 1897, based on the recommendation of the participants to build a university in Palestine that teaches in Hebrew and attracts Jewish researchers and students from all over the world, in a bid to establish Zionist academic institutions in Palestine.²⁵ Its founding and establishment process took many years, beginning with the general idea of establishing a Jewish higher education institute in the 19th century, to resolutions by several Zionist Congresses in support of the idea, and ultimately, the approval by the Zionist Congress of the executive plans and the laying of the foundation stone in 1918. Following the establishment of its Jewish Studies, Chemistry, and Microbiology faculties, the university was inaugurated in 1925, with Herbert Samuel, the British High Commissioner, as well as Arthur Balfour and leaders of the Zionist movement in attendance.²⁶

Since its founding, the Hebrew University has always played a military role. It was home to laboratories for the development of weapons, explosives and incendiary devices that were used in the 1948 war, to name one example. Throughout the Zionist colonial project in Palestine, and as a Zionist institution, it has served as a base for targeting Palestinian villages and neighborhoods, in addition to having a research role in support of colonial control and military action.

²⁵ Jawalet Al-Sabbar, "Taqrir Jawalet Al-Sabbal Al-Awwal: Jabal Al-Masharef (The First Report of Jawalet Alsabbar: Mount Scopus)," *Bab El-Wad*, May 18, 2018, <https://bit.ly/2LcX5RB>

²⁶ Mustafa, Mohanad, *Israeli Universities and Academia: Knowledge, Politics and Economics* (Ramallah: Palestinian Forum for Israeli Studies (MADAR), 2014).



Literature about the history of the university during the 1948 Nakba notes that in February of that year, following the bombing of Ben Yehuda Street, and after the launch of the Zionist attack on Wadi al-Joz from the Hebrew University and Hadassah Hospital, Abd al-Qadir al-Husseini held a press conference at Bab al-Sahirah (Herod's Gate), to which many Arab and foreign journalists were invited. Al-Husseini informed them that the Zionists had been using the university and the hospital as military bases for launching attacks on Palestinian neighborhoods. Through the press, he warned the Zionists to stop using these institutions for military purposes, lest he be forced to target them with explosives. The conference attracted great attention and led to Zionist and international warnings indicating the seriousness of the threat and the likelihood of its materialization. The conference had an impact on morale, as it took place in the heart of Jerusalem. For a while thereafter, the Zionists were compelled to halt using the hospital and the university as a launching ground for their attacks.²⁷

²⁷ Abu Gharbiyeh, Bahjat. *In the Midst of the Struggle: The Memoirs of Bahjat Abu Gharbieh, 1916-1949*. Beirut: Institute for Palestine Studies, 1993, 196.

Because of its proximity to the university, al-Issawiyah has been the target of Zionist assault. Post-1967, much of its land was confiscated for the purpose of expanding the Hebrew University campus. Since the second Intifada, the village's southwestern entrance, adjacent to the university, has been shut off with concrete blocks. In addition to its role in isolating and suffocating the village, the university plays another role that falls under what is termed "soft power," embodied in the Occupation's attempts to assimilate Jerusalemites by offering Hebrew language courses on campus, among other activities.

Adjacent to the Hebrew University is the second Zionist institution located within al-Issawiyah.

Hadassah Hospital: The Hadassah organization was founded in March 1921 by an American Zionist Women's organization headed by Henrietta Szold in New York. Szold made efforts to "increase the participation of women in Zionist service and as volunteers in the health sector in the Land of Israel." The organization had two main objectives: to train nurses and raise the standard of health among colonists in Palestine, and to spread Zionist ideology in the United States. The organization also contributed to financing the immigration of colonists to Palestine. In 1934, the foundation stone was laid for the construction of Hadassah Hospital, which would ultimately be completed in 1938.²⁸ During and following the Nakba, the hospital was used for military purposes. Zionist combatants would disguise themselves as nurses and doctors to avoid being targeted by resistance fighters when passing through Palestinian neighborhoods and villages on their way to and from the military complex on the slopes of Jabal al-Masharef.

The British Military Cemetery: located west of Jabal al-Masharef and near the Hadassah Hospital, the British Military Cemetery was used for the burial of British soldiers in World War I (1914–1918).²⁹ Following the Nakba, it was reported that in December 1952, the Jordanian government demanded to inspect the Zionist-held buildings on the Mount of Olives. Accompanied by a Zionist officer, the British general William Riley inspected the buildings. According to a report submitted to the UN Secretary-General, Riley's search covered every building in the area except for the British Military Cemetery, as it had been planted with mines.

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²⁸ Jawalet Al-Sabbar, "Taqrir Jawalet Al-Sabbal Al-Awwal: Jabal Al-Masharef (The First Report of Jawalet Alsabbar: Mount Scopus)," *Bab El-Wad*, May 18, 2018, <https://bit.ly/2LcX5RB>

²⁹ The cemetery is mentioned on the Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC) website [Cemetery Details](#)

³⁰ Aref al-Aref, *The Nakba: The Nakba of Jerusalem and the Lost Paradise, 1947-1949*, vol. 2 (Institute for Palestine Studies, 2013) 34.

Colonization

After the 1967 Naksa, the entire village was annexed, with a quarter of its lands brought under the jurisdiction of the Occupation Municipality in Jerusalem. The occupation of the village was followed by the confiscation of grain fields for the construction of the French Hill Colony. Over the years, many lands have been confiscated from the people of al-Issawiyah for colonial construction projects, thus shrinking the residential areas for its people. This has also prevented the growth of agriculture and has transformed the lifestyle and economic prospects of the villagers, many of whom have been compelled to turn from farming to laboring in Zionist colonial projects.³¹

Like other Jerusalem villages and neighborhoods occupied in 1967, al-Issawiyah lacked any structure plan. As a result, the village witnessed chaotic construction, with a densely packed population confined within limited geographic borders and surrounded by colonies. This has compelled many of its people to escape these conditions by leaving the village.

In 2020, the Occupation Municipality approved a structure plan that includes a zoning and judicial system that allows for retroactively issuing building permits for most of the structures in al-Issawiyah that had been built without permits. However, the plan does not provide for expansion of the area of the village, and thus does not meet the future construction needs of its people. According to one Zionist organization, “the plan dictates a narrow border to the neighborhood with a much more limited than necessary area.”³² The approval of the plan may be part of a broader “soft power” occupation policy that attempts to win over and assimilate the people of al-Issawiyah, under the assumption that the people’s distraction with such a plan may curtail the intensity of their confrontation with the Occupation.

The Occupation’s policy of building colonies and military bases is on full display in al-Issawiyah. The village is besieged by a series of colonies established on its lands and dubbed the Ring Colonies, namely: the French Hill (Giv’at Shapira); Tzameret Habira, both built in 1968 immediately after the Naksa on almost 600 donums confiscated from al-Issawiyah; Mishur Adumim (1974), and Ma’ale Adumim (1975) on the eastern side of al-Issawiyah, built on 250 donums confiscated from the village.³³

³¹ Hani al-Issawi, in an interview conducted by the author, January 7, 2020.

³² Hasson, Nir, “Jerusalem Approves Plan That Would Legalize Homes in Palestinian Neighborhood,” *Haaretz*, October 6, 2020), <https://bit.ly/3i5Aifg>

³³ The Applied Research Institute – Jerusalem, Arij, “Isawiya Town Profile”, 2012. [دليل بلدة العيسوية](#)

Two military bases also sit on al-Issawiyah land: Ofrit military base in the southeast, established in 1967 and run by the Occupation's Intelligence Corps (Aman), and Mitsodat Adumim base in the east, established in 2016 as the headquarters of the Adumim Brigade of the Occupation's Border Police.³⁴

Plans for a “National Park” in al-Tur and al-Issawiyah

In late-2011, the Local Planning and Building Committee of the Occupation Municipality in Jerusalem approved the establishment of the Mount Scopus Slopes National Park, in an area stretching over more than 743 donums, mostly owned by Palestinians. The boundaries of the “park” would stretch from the north and west on al-Issawiyah land, from the south on al-Tur land, specifically the Augusta Victoria area, and from the east along Highway 1 to Ma’ale Adumim colony. Seven million shekels have been allocated for its establishment, with the Committee justifying its approval by claiming that these lands are archaeologically and environmentally significant, in addition to being a scenic location.³⁵

With this approval, there has been an increase in home demolitions and bulldozing by the Occupation Municipality, particularly in al-Issawiyah. Many residential buildings and light structures have been demolished to make way for this “park.” The people of al-Issawiyah and al-Tur assert that the main purpose of this project has nothing to do with a desire to preserve nature and flora; the scheme is in line with the Occupation authorities’ employment of all their tools for political ends, in this case to prevent the expansion of the two villages and to sever their link, especially that this land is all that is available for them to expand.³⁶

The plan for the “national park,” was put on hold by the occupation authorities in 2012, and it remains frozen until the time of publishing this research (April 2021).

Epilogue: The Village Today

Al-Issawiyah reflects a community struggle against the occupation that has been ongoing since the British and the Zionists entered Palestine. Al-Issawiyah innovates the tools of its struggle,

³⁴ The Jerusalem Institute for Policy Research, “The Arab Neighborhoods in East Jerusalem: al-Issawiyah,” [العيساوية](#)

³⁵ Al-Issawiyah Neighborhood Card issued by Bimkom Association: (Planners for Planning Rights).

³⁶ Jawalet Al-Sabbar, “Taqrir Jawalet Al-Sabbal Al-Awwal: Jabal Al-Masharef (The First Report of Jawalet Alsabbar: Mount Scopus),” *Bab El-Wad*, May 18, 2018, <https://bit.ly/2LcX5RB>

and absolutely rejects normalization of the Occupation. Its people have targeted military bases, colonies and structures erected on their land, and they do not shy from confronting Occupation police forces attempting to pass through their lands.

This state of persistent resistance is met with collective punishment, including organized harassment campaigns launched by Occupation Municipality staff, police, intelligence services, the Nature and Parks Authority, and the Tax Authority. These campaigns usually take place after a wave of protests and resistance against the Occupation, with the aim of “discipline” and deterrence. They include mass detentions, sometimes 50 to 60 youths per night, in addition to the issuing of home demolition orders, and the demolition of industrial and agricultural structures, especially on the eastern side of al-Issawiyah.

One such campaign took place in June and July of 2019, during which Mohammed Samir Obeid (20 years old) was killed. This campaign received wide media coverage and was dubbed “Campaign No. 700” by the Occupation police. Hebrew media provided extensive reporting, which was broadcast concurrently with the events.³⁷

Among the most prominent tools of control and deterrence employed by the Occupation against al-Issawiyah is the closure of its entrances several times per year. The Occupation police close the eastern and western entrances in the early hours of the day or evening, intermittently barring cars from leaving or entering, without any security-related pretexts, simply as a deterrent and punitive measure.

As for the southern entrance to the village, near the Hebrew University parking lot, it has been shut off to the people of al-Issawiyah, as previously mentioned, with concrete blocks since 2009. An Occupation Police patrol unit is often present there, inspecting the identification cards of people going to and from the village.

The Occupation Municipality’s refusal to grant construction permits to Palestinians of al-Issawiyah, along with a rise in population has led to a difficult housing crisis, forcing the people to build without permits. The Occupation targets al-Issawiyah — as well as the rest of occupied Jerusalem’s neighborhoods — through demolition campaigns, under the pretext of

³⁷ The report prepared by the Occupation Police can be viewed on their Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=1407393076053794>

unlicensed construction. In 2016 alone, nearly 60 buildings were demolished in al-Issawiyah, making it the most highly targeted area.³⁸

On the other hand, as part of its “soft policy,”³⁹ or “carrot and stick” policy as it is called, the Occupation, through its various institutions, attempts to assimilate the people of al-Issawiyah within their colonial surroundings and to form a “personal” relationship with them, so that they no longer feel alienated. It is within this framework that we can interpret the pervasive Hebrew language courses on offer at the Hebrew University campus for children and women, especially those of al-Issawiyah. Equally stark is the marketing of the Hebrew University as an academic option for al-Issawiyah’s high school students, and the organization of school tours of Hadassah hospital.

As for economic life in al-Issawiyah today, there are some local shops in the area, including pizza and dessert shops that cater to Palestinian students at the Hebrew University, who also rent flats in al-Issawiyah due to the convenience of its location.

³⁸ Arab48, “Al-Issawiyah Fi Muwajaht al-Musadara wa al-Istitan (Al-Issawiyah Facing Confiscation and Colonialism)”, 17 March 2017, <https://bit.ly/2MFzM7V>

³⁹ “Al-Quwwa al-Naimah: Adat al-Ihtilat Li Kasb Qoloub al-Maqdisiyyin wa Oqoulihm (Soft Power: The Occupation’s Tool to Win the Hearts and Minds of Jerusalemites), *The New Arab*, 9 April 2015, <https://bit.ly/2RT4x8f>