

THE BEDOUIN COMMUNITIES OF EASTERN JERUSALEM: A NEW LOCUS OF POWER IN THE POST-OSLO BATTLE FOR PALESTINE?

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The Bedouin Communities of Eastern Jerusalem: A New Locus of Power in the Post-Oslo Battle for Palestine?

This article investigates the precarious position of Palestinian Bedouin communities of Eastern Jerusalem in the post-Oslo geopolitical and legal context of the battle for Palestine. The humanitarian vulnerabilities and precarious nature of life for these communities (and further afield) is the result of Israel's on-going attempts to forcibly transfer Bedouin groups in areas slated for settlement expansion and annexation. The Israeli quest for a 'Greater Jerusalem' makes Bedouin in Eastern Jerusalem particularly at risk. Repeated land grabs driven by the Israeli settler-colonial project in Palestine have intensified post-Oslo. Lands inhabited by Bedouin communities in Eastern Jerusalem constitutes a new locus of power to resist attempts to erase Palestinians from the Greater Jerusalem area, including through international courts.

Cet article analyse la position précaire des communautés bédouines palestiniennes de Jérusalem-Est dans le contexte géopolitique et juridique postérieur à la signature des accords d'Oslo. La vulnérabilité de ces populations et la situation humanitaire précaire dans laquelle elles se trouvent résultent d'une politique israélienne continue de déplacement forcé de ces populations résidant dans des zones prévues à l'expansion des colonies et à l'annexion. La quête israélienne d'établir un « Grand Jérusalem » rend les Bédouins de Jérusalem-Est particulièrement vulnérables. L'accaparement répété des terres, motivé par le projet colonial israélien en Palestine, s'est intensifié après les accords d'Oslo. Les terres habitées par les communautés bédouines de Jérusalem-Est constituent dès

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lors un nouveau lieu de pouvoir où s'expriment les résistances aux tentatives d'expulsion des Palestiniens de la zone du Grand Jérusalem, y compris par le biais des tribunaux internationaux.

Just days before the 2021 Israeli election, ten Israeli political leaders, including MPs and ex-ministers, gave interviews in a studio erected in the vicinity of the Bedouin community of Khan al-Ahmar.¹ These politicians condemned the government's delay in demolishing homes and evicting Palestinian Bedouins in the Greater Jerusalem area. Khan al-Ahmar, located east of Jerusalem on the road to Jericho, has become a new focal point for Israeli-Palestinian politics in and around Jerusalem, and also an issue of intra-Israeli politics, as this moment in the Israeli electoral campaign illustrates. These Palestinian communities in the geographic heart of occupied Palestine are facing yet another iteration of Israeli dispossession and erasure operating as a historic and spatial continuum. This locality, therefore, emerges as a current locus of power in Palestine, and in particular in the Jerusalem periphery: the steadfastness of a small, vulnerable and marginalised community within Palestinian society in Bedouin hamlets has become a symbol of Palestinian resistance against Israeli expansionism.

The "Saga" of Khan al-Ahmar² began in 2009 with the issuance of demolition orders to the community.³ As the actual demolition did not take place, a petition to force Israeli authorities to carry out demolitions against Palestinians, including Khan al-Ahmar, without further delay was brought by Regavim, a right-wing Israeli NGO whose work seeks to defend the (Jewish) National lands. In response, Israeli authorities have explained that the reasons for the deferral of the demolitions are political, in an attempt to negotiate a solution with the local community for "relocation". This case has resonated internationally too: even the ICC Prosecutor issued a statement to make it known that she had been "*following with concern the planned eviction of the Bedouin community of Khan al-Ahmar, in the West Bank*", recalling that "*that extensive destruction of property without military necessity and population transfers in an occupied territory constitute war crimes*".⁴

The case of Khan al-Ahmar offers a high-profile example of Palestinian dispossession within the process of on-going Israeli colonization of Palestinian land.⁵ It is one of 46 Bedouin communities in the Central West Bank under threat of forcible displacement.⁶ It symbolises Israeli efforts to transform Palestinian space, and to establish Israeli geo-demographic hegemony and domination in the Jerusalem environs and across Palestine. At the same time, the case of Khan al-Ahmar has its own particularities. The Bedouin communities are Palestinian refugees who were displaced more than once,

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and thus they are not claiming historical land ownership over the lands they settle on. Further, due to their Bedouin identity as well as the continuous displacement, the communities are socially and politically marginalized, with no meaningful political role within the contemporary Palestinian national institutions or leadership. Finally, the case is directly linked to the contemporary Palestinian-Israeli struggle over Jerusalem and Israeli recent attempt of declaring sovereignty over occupied Palestinian territories. This article interprets these developments as reflective of a post Oslo shift of power, evidenced in the recent Israeli State's policies pertaining to expanding settlements around Jerusalem in order to fulfil what is called the "Greater Jerusalem" plan.⁷ We dedicate special attention to the manner by which legal structures operate in the region, being apparent in both Israeli colonial policies and in the Bedouin communities' contestation of such policies.

As widely discussed in the literature, the Oslo Accords have enabled Israel to consolidate its grip over Palestinian people and their space; as a result, the majority of land in the West Bank (Area C – over 60% of the West Bank) is under Israeli military and administrative control, facilitating the settler project which in turn drives Palestinian displacement.⁸ The Oslo Accords were designed, in principle, to have a temporary lifespan of five years. Nonetheless, more than two decades later, facts on the ground reveal a tighter Israeli grip on large swathes of the West Bank, including a significant increase of a settler presence in Area C and East Jerusalem and obstruction of Palestinian life. As the Israeli settler colonial project advances unequally over variegated Palestinian geographies, Khan al-Ahmar is one of the front-line confrontations. These expansion plans have annexationist features involving the eviction of the Bedouin communities and is thus further evidence of the new and ever-moving 'lines in the sand' drawn in the post-Oslo era around and beyond Jerusalem.⁹

Within the context of settler-colonial politics and practices since 1948, there is a historical continuum of Palestinian displacement: the Bedouin communities in the wider Jerusalem area is one example that illustrates how this reality continues in the post-Oslo period. As such, the parallels between the displacement and dispossession of Palestinian Bedouins in the Eastern Jerusalem periphery in recent years and the political and lived experience of the rest of the Palestinian communities become apparent. All Palestinian people and spaces are subjects to the same historic, yet on-going, programme of displacement and dispossession. As one of the new loci of power in the post-Oslo period, Jerusalem and Area C of the West Bank are at the sharp end of the evolving Israeli Judaization policies and political objectives. Palestinians in Area C are further marginalized in comparison as they fall

under Israeli civil and security jurisdiction, and the Palestinian Authority almost has no involvement in these areas. Such developments have brought to the surface new Israeli political objectives of annexation in and around Jerusalem, with the case of the E-1 Israeli zoning plan between Jerusalem and the Maale Adumim settlement chosen as a fitting case study.

This paper offers, firstly, an overview of the Bedouin communities in Palestine in general and around Jerusalem in particular; second, it critically discusses the political implications of the widely-criticised Israeli 'E1' plan that would put an end to the territorial viability of a future Palestinian State; finally, we analyse the post-Oslo Israeli policies and practices towards the Bedouin communities and the resulting interactions of the different actors (community, lawyers, NGOs, State agents) around the question of eviction and displacement of the Bedouin communities from the E-1 area.

Continuous displacement: The Bedouin Communities of Palestine between the Negev and Jerusalem

The Bedouin Arabs have inhabited southern Palestine as far back as the seventh century.¹⁰ Most of Palestine's Bedouin communities lived in southern Palestine, known today as the Naqab or the Negev, and belonged to eight main tribal confederations (*qabila*) namely, the Tayaha, 'Azazma, Tarabin, Jbarat, Hanajra, Jahalin, Ahiwat, and S'aidiyin. The population estimates by the end of the Ottoman rule suggest between 50,000, and 90,000 at the eve of the 1948 Nakba.¹¹ Like the rest of the Palestinian communities, the Bedouin Arabs of southern Palestine experienced social collapse and physical destruction of their space because of the *Nakba*. During this time, approximately 85% fled or were expelled by Zionist paramilitary groups, and after 1948 by Israeli forces.¹² It is estimated that only 13,000 Bedouins remained within what became the State of Israel, many of whom were later internally displaced, subjected to forced urbanization projects and informal housing conditions.¹³

Those who were expelled from their lands became refugees in the Gaza Strip, Egypt, Jordan, and the West Bank. The majority of the Bedouin refugees in the West Bank, and in the Jerusalem area in particular, are refugees displaced from the Tel-Arad area, south of Hebron as well as from the Jahalin tribal confederation. In an Ottoman 'index of the tribes' which has listed the various tribes in the Ottoman Jerusalem governorate, the following tribes were documented within the Hebron sub-district: Jahalin (800), Saraya'a (500), and the Kaabna (800); they were said to have lived in the

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Masfara lands.¹⁴ These communities subsisted on an integrated agro-pastoralist system.¹⁵ As refugees, their reliance on animal-husbandry grew. Since 1948, they moved and lived in different locations and sites within the West Bank. There are today close to 8,200 Bedouins living in the Central West Bank in 46 different communities, most of whom (close to 6,000) are refugees, living in precarious humanitarian conditions.¹⁶ As will be shown below, these communities are continuously at risk of displacement, relocation and forced urbanisation at the hands of Israeli authorities, including unlawful home demolitions to make way for the expansion of illegal Israeli settlements and related land grabs.

Territorial Overview of the E1 Plan

The 1995 Oslo II Interim Agreement, signed between the government of Israel and the Palestinian Liberation Organization, divided the West Bank into three administrative areas, A, B, and C, until a final status agreement was to be reached within the following five years. Area “A”, constituting mainly Palestinian cities and urban centres came under full Palestinian civil and military control. Area “B”, constituting mainly rural areas and villages outside Palestinian urban centres, was placed under Palestinian civil control and Israeli military control. Area “C”, comprising 59% of the area of the West Bank, and consisting of 63% of the agricultural land in the West Bank, was placed under full Israeli civil and military control.¹⁷

The Israeli government’s expansionist and settler colonial policy in Area “C” of the West Bank seeks to acquire maximum Palestinian land with the minimum number of Palestinians on it through the employment of three main strategies: appropriation and confiscation of Palestinian land, increasing the number of Jewish settlers through settlement expansion, and removing Palestinians through forcible displacement and concentration.¹⁸ The strategy of settlement expansion can be clearly seen in the increase in the number of settlers in the West Bank during the commencement of the so-called ‘Peace Process’. At the outset of the ‘Peace Process’ the number of settlers in the West Bank stood at 238,060,¹⁹ rising to 671,007 by the end of 2018²⁰, reflecting a 182% increase.

The E-1 area, located in the West Bank Area “C” to the east of Jerusalem, serves as a microcosm of Israeli government policy in the entirety of the area. The plan, denoted as Mavasseret Adummim, refers to a 12 km² narrow undeveloped land corridor that is bordered by the settlements of French Hill (west), Kedar (south), Ma’ale Adummim (east) and Almon (north),

and the Palestinian town of Abu Dis to the south west (see figure 1). Furthermore, the E-1 Plan is an integral component of the Greater Jerusalem Master Plan, which is the first planning framework that treats east and west Jerusalem as one urban unit, and serves as a mandatory map for land use and a blueprint for other municipal planning purposes. Demographically motivated, the plan contemplates a Jewish majority by 70% to 30% Arabs in Jerusalem by 2030.²¹

The E-1 plan, if implemented, will connect Ma'ale Adummim, established in 1975 and located 7 km to the east of Jerusalem, with East Jerusalem (see figure 1), foreseeing up to 15,000 housing units.²² Most of the land within the E-1 area is privately owned land that was confiscated and declared by Israel as State land in the 1980s.²³ In 1994, the borders of Ma'ale Adummim were expanded by the Yitzhak Rabin government²⁴ to include the E-1 area. Within this framework, the expansion of Ma'ale Adummim from the mid-1990s severely affected the Bedouin communities in the area and led to the relocation of some 150 families from the Jahalin tribe to Al-Jabal site between 1997 and 2007.²⁵ Furthermore, the E-1 masterplan (Plan no. 420/4) was approved in 1999,²⁶ and signed into law in 2002 by then Defence Minister Benyamin Ben Eliezer.²⁷

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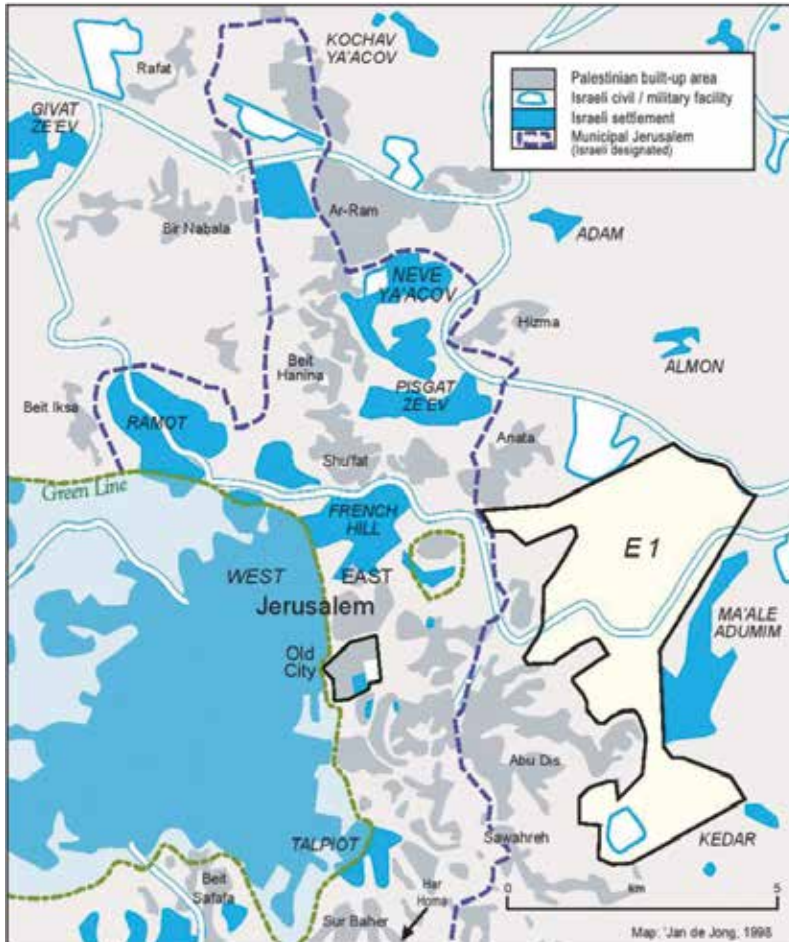


Figure 1: E-1 Area and Borders²⁸

The settlement of Ma'ale Adummim today houses over 40,000 settlers on lands confiscated from Abu Dis, Al-Izzariya, Al-Issawiya, Al-Tur and Anata.²⁹ While its current built-up area is some 7 km², its municipal plan covers a total area of 55 km², extending almost to the Dead Sea and including to the north the 12 km² E-1 area.³⁰ Israeli official statements, their approach towards the area in bilateral negotiations, their practices of Jewish settlements and Palestinian displacement, together with the route of the Separation Wall indicate that Israel envisages the area as part of Greater Jerusalem and the Jerusalem-Dead Sea corridor.³¹ This is clearly seen in steps taken to consolidate control over the area by the first and latter Netanyahu governments, Ehud Barak, Ariel Sharon and Ehud Olmert, as well as the

construction of the Wall 15 km into the West Bank in order to annex the entire Adummim bloc to the “*Israeli side*” of the Wall.³²

The E-1 plan, if implemented, would effectively encircle Jerusalem with a ring of Israeli settlements, and thus sever the intended Palestinian capital from the remainder of the West Bank making Palestinian access to the city impossible. This would bisect the West Bank dividing the north and central part from the south,³³ rendering territorial contiguity of the West Bank and agreement of permanent borders impossible.³⁴ For these reasons, the US Administration and EU have applied significant pressure on Israel to refrain from implementing the plan.³⁵ Notwithstanding such pressure, the Israeli authorities have steadily consolidated their control over the area.³⁶ Furthermore, the E1 proposal designates areas for tourism, industry, commerce, regional services, a regional cemetery (see figure 2), with plan for a police headquarters.³⁷ Pending sub-plans (see figure 2), the Ma’ale Adummim master plan further envisages another 6,000 units, thus bringing the total possible housing units in E-1 up to 15,000,³⁸ with the view of doubling the population of Ma’ale Adummim.³⁹

The adoption and implementation of these plans is based on maximizing the acquisition of land through land confiscation with the least percentage of Palestinians on them through both direct means (house demolitions and displacement) and the creation of a coercive environment, as elaborated below. This highlights how the E-1 area serves as a microcosm of Israeli settler-colonial expansionist policy throughout Area C of the West Bank. The steady increase of settlement housing units in the E-1 area and in particular the Ma’ale Adummim bloc places the Bedouin communities in a critical locality of Palestinian *Sumoud* and the viability of the two-State solution. Furthermore, the involvement and central role played by the Israeli judicial system in propagating Israeli expansionist settler-colonial policy, as illustrated in the next section, renders the Bedouin communities in the area a new locus of power and resistance in the post-Oslo era.

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Figure 2: E-1 Master plan Sub-Plans (Peace Now, The E-1 Plan- Information and Planning Status, Peace Now, 2011 <<https://peacenow.org.il/en/the-e1-plan-information-and-planning-status>>⁴⁰)

The Palestinian Bedouins in E-1

The Bedouins in the E-1 area reflect the composition of Bedouin communities throughout historical Palestine described in the first part of the paper. The E-1 area is home to almost 3,000 Bedouins in over 20 communities, the vast majority of them (2,700) belongs to the Jahalin tribe, while another 80 are affiliated with the Ka'abneh tribe and 150 belongs to the Sawahra tribe.⁴¹ Since 2011, there has been increased reporting of settler violence and harassment, house demolitions and issuance of stop-building orders and property confiscation against 2,300 Bedouins living in the area, particularly against those in the Khan Al-Ahmar and Wad Abu Hindi communities.⁴² Between 2009 and 2020, Israel demolished 315 structures in 10 Bedouin communities within the E-1 area,⁴³ 161 of which are residential structures, rendering 842 Bedouins displaced; over 60% of the residential demolitions have taken place in Khan Al-Ahmar, Jabal Al-Baba and Abu Nuwar communities.⁴⁴ UN-OCHA has described this situation as a “*coercive environment*”, and recalled the UN Secretary General’s statement that “*relocation may amount to a forcible transfer, a grave breach of the fourth Geneva Convention, even in the absence of direct physical force*”.⁴⁵

Israel is targeting all Palestinian Bedouins within the E-1 area, particularly those in Khan Al-Ahmar, to relocate them, together with other Bedouin communities outside the E-1, to three main sites: an existing site near the Abu Dis garbage dump called Al-Jabal (known also as Jahlain-East), and a new site at Nu'eimeh, north of Jericho, which was approved by the Israe-

li Civil Administration in May 2013 but rejected by both the Bedouins and the Palestinian Authority.⁴⁶ An additional less known site, Armonot Hashmonaim (known also as al-Fasayil), is also located in the Jordan Valley, north of Jericho.⁴⁷ As discussed below, Palestinian Bedouins and their representatives have demonstrated a high level of resilience despite the pressure of this coercive environment, and have responded in various ways.

The Palestinian Bedouin living in the Eastern Jerusalem periphery have become central players in the struggle for Palestine while facing a range of adversities. As Palestinians, these communities face the double burden of ensuring daily survival by maintaining a presence and livelihood on their habitation land, as well as carrying the weight of being the Palestinians 'on the front line' in the Jerusalem area. As Israel's settler colonial mission in Jerusalem intensifies, the Bedouin became bearers of Palestinian sovereignty to counter Israel's annexationist policies. The Post-Oslo period has brought about constant changes in the political and physical landscapes around Jerusalem, and transformed the lives and positionality of the Bedouin communities in the Eastern Jerusalem periphery.

Since their expulsion from the Tel Arad area in the Negev between 1949-1953 by the Israeli forces, the Bedouin communities settled in various locations across the West Bank, and until 1967 they continued to practice their habitation and economic practices with large degrees of liberty and autonomy under Jordanian rule.⁴⁸ Even after 1967, these communities were left to manage their lives without serious involvement or interruption from Israeli authorities. They faced few house demolitions, and the seasonal movement of some of these communities for reasons of pasture was not seriously obstructed.⁴⁹ However, moving from this state of apathy towards Israeli direct involvement in the Bedouin communities' affairs, brought with it policies and practices of displacement, eviction, various restrictions, house demolitions, and forced urbanization. Such transformation occurred with the adoption of the Oslo Accords in the mid-1990s, and continues to intensify. Israeli authorities have enforced discriminatory land and zoning measures,⁵⁰ framed it through a formal legalistic approach that disguises settler-colonial underpinnings, and relies on the threat or use of force to take control of these areas.

Similar to Israeli policies in the rest of the West Bank, the Israeli authorities started with declarations of lands in the Eastern Jerusalem region as State lands and fire zones.⁵¹ Such declarations laid the ground for the eviction of the Bedouin Palestinians communities by criminalizing their presence on these lands and turning them into trespassers on "State land." Concurrently, zoning plans came into play: firstly, planning for Israeli set-

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lements or expansion of existing settlements, and secondly, the planning of new settlements for the concentration of the Bedouin communities into new urban centres.⁵² Using the temporary tri-partition of Palestine in the Oslo Accords to its strategic advantage, and exceeding the letter and spirit of those documents, Israel governs the Eastern Jerusalem periphery as if it were within its sovereign territory, in ways that directly impact on the Bedouin communities. Instead of occasional demolitions and sporadic restrictions, what has become normalised is a significant increase in the number of demolition orders, comprehensive forced urbanization plans, as well as major zoning change for Israeli settlements and their attached purported infrastructural needs, including roads, industrial zones and more.⁵³ These developments have been accompanied by diverse restrictions on movement, on grazing, on family unification, and the revocation of residency or its denial thereof, to establish a coercive living environment.⁵⁴

With the view of pushing Bedouins off their land and breaking up communities, the coercive environment includes the continuous denial of basic social and economic rights and utilities to the communities, including running water, electricity, educational and health services, a functioning road system and public transportation.⁵⁵ The lack of access to healthcare and higher education is further exacerbated by the economic disempowerment of these communities.⁵⁶ Furthermore, the confiscation and deprivation of access to grazing land has impacted Bedouin livelihood and lifestyle and contributed to their economic disempowerment. Firstly, it has forced Bedouins to buy highly expensive fodder in order to feed the livestock.⁵⁷ This in turn has led to a decrease in the size of livestock, as well as an increase in the cost of dairy production, thus forcing Bedouins to look for regular employment jobs, usually in the form of cheap labour in nearby illegal Israeli settlements.⁵⁸

Bedouin *Sumoud*, Jerusalem, and accountability for international law violations

These Israeli practices operate within a settler colonial logic of elimination and replacement of the Palestinian people and space.⁵⁹ In E-1, to make room for Israeli Jewish settlers, the Israeli authorities developed plans for the relocation and concentration of the Bedouin communities.⁶⁰ These attempts to erase Palestinians from these parts have assumed different forms. In certain circumstances, the Israeli authorities negotiated with the Bedouin communities for their relocation; yet, these deals occur in the context of

a coercive environment under the threat of demolition and displacement and thus raise serious concerns on the free and informed consent of those families agreeing to move. An example of this is the 1997 relocation of approximately 150 families of the Jahalin tribe to the site known as “al-Jabal” or “Jahalin-East” near al-Ezariya, whereas the rest of the tribe and the other communities rejected all Israeli relocation proposals.⁶¹ As reported by UN-RWA (and others) the move has been catastrophic for these communities at economic, social, and human level.⁶²

Alongside retaining a Bedouin presence on the ground, a primary example of Palestinian resistance, there are other examples of agency by the local communities to remain on their land. Despite the Palestinian lack of trust in the Israeli judiciary and the possible political implications of legitimation and Israeli implied sovereignty,⁶³ the Bedouin and their representatives have turned to legal recourse and filed dozens of petitions to the Israeli Supreme Court against the legality of Israeli decisions pertaining to demolition, eviction, and relocation.⁶⁴ The Israeli Supreme Court, however, declared that the Bedouin presence was illegal and their structures on what it described as State lands were thus subject to demolition. Nonetheless, the judiciary deferred a decision with regard to the actual demolitions, passing the responsibility over to the Israeli political and military leadership. The delay in the physical enacting of demolitions of the Bedouin communities such as that in Khan al-Ahmar has triggered much criticism from Israeli settler groups, including Regavim which have brought several cases before the Israeli court to enforce the demolitions.⁶⁵ Finally, as the Israeli authorities planned for Israeli settlements and Bedouin relocation, some of the Bedouin communities, such as Abu Nuwar, took the initiative with other partners to propose an alternative zoning plan to legalize their presence on particular lands.⁶⁶ However, the Israeli Civil Administration never approved any of the alternative plans.

Recognizing the centrality of Bedouin *Sumoud* (steadfastness) for the integrity of Palestinian nation, the PA has attempted, with some success, to bring the struggle of the Bedouin communities under its national aegis.⁶⁷ Still wishing to save the shady two-State solution, the PA has attempted to resist Israeli policies through mainly political support and limited material support of the local Bedouin communities in light of the location of these communities in Area “C”, as well as through political mobilization vis-a-vis the international community.⁶⁸ It is interesting to note in this regard the arising Palestinian dilemma pertaining to the right of return. Similar to arguments against Palestinian refugees’ re-settlement in Arab States, Palestinian *Sumoud* and tenure in their current location would obstruct Israeli

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colonization around Jerusalem, but it also could negate their right of return to the Negev. With its limited power and resources, the PA is unable to provide adequate educational and health services to the Palestinian Bedouin communities in area C.

A new player in this locus of power is the International Criminal Court (ICC), which impacts dynamics on the ground with regards to the possible investigations and prosecutions of a range of violations of international law, which allegedly amount to international crimes.⁶⁹ Nonetheless, since its accession to the Rome Statute in January 2015, the State of Palestine has pursued prospects offered by international criminal law.⁷⁰ The State referred the “Situation of Palestine” to the Office of the Prosecutor on May 22nd, 2018;⁷¹ the list of alleged crimes includes the settlement enterprise⁷² and, relatedly, the situation of the Bedouin communities in the E-1.⁷³ The ICC confirmed its territorial jurisdiction in Palestine in 2021,⁷⁴ on the basis of which the Prosecutor officially commenced the investigation.⁷⁵ Notably, through its international legal advocacy efforts, the PA and in particular the Negotiations Affairs Department issued factsheets, media briefs, and statements on the Israeli policies and practices towards the Bedouin communities in the Eastern Jerusalem area.⁷⁶

Although the ICC constitutes a new player in this locus of power that tips the scale of power-relations against Israeli colonization, the possible demolition and eviction orders against the Bedouin communities in the Eastern Jerusalem periphery remain in force. At the same time, and although the political and military power is clearly in the hands of Israel, the Bedouin communities also remain on their current habitation sites despite the constant threat of displacement. Hence, though post-Oslo period paved the road for further Israeli colonization in area C, and despite the political marginalization of the Bedouin communities, there is a combination of forces and players, locally and internationally, that shaped this Israeli colonization front in the Eastern periphery of Jerusalem.

Conclusion

The struggle of the Palestinian Bedouin in the Eastern Jerusalem periphery has become a central component within Palestinian and Israeli political agendas, with the result being that the Palestinian Bedouins represent a primary locus of power within the complex and shifting dynamics in Palestine. While the applicability of Oslo remains moot,⁷⁷ it is being relied on by Israel to establish further domination and hegemony in the West Bank through

a policy of continuous imposition of facts on the ground. Israel claims that Area C is under its full jurisdiction, without formal sovereignty yet, and thus it is operating to enforce the rule of law. Thus far, none of the Bedouin communities has been allowed to return to their original lands in the Tel-Arad area in the Negev, or allowed to remain in their current location and for their structures to be legalized. Fractures within Palestinian society, the ongoing impact of the Israeli occupation, and the international community's reticence in enforcing international law, pose several hurdles. Further, the current strength of the Israeli right-wing and religious Zionist political parties domestically, and involvement of settler NGOs in mainstream Israeli and international politics over the last two decades, have played a part in consolidating Israeli sovereignty in and around Jerusalem. Consequently, the dispossession and displacement of the Bedouin communities paves the way for further Israeli colonization and annexation of the eastern Jerusalem periphery and beyond. The Bedouin communities of Eastern Jerusalem, therefore, will remain key actors in the new loci of power in the post-Oslo battle for Palestine. Supporting their steadfastness locally and ensuring international efforts to hold to account those responsible for the coercive environment in which they live so precariously should be a priority for anyone committed to justice in Palestine and beyond.

Notes

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2 Israeli Supreme Court Justice, Noam Sohlberg, used the term "saga". It is worth noting that Justice Sohlberg lives in the Israeli settlement of Alon Shvut.

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