
The Economy of the Occupation
A Socioeconomic Bulletin



EDUCATION IN EAST JERUSALEM:
REPORT ON THE EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM IN EAST JERUSALEM

Shir Hever

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This report is based on research that Niv Hachlili conducted and compiled between September 2005 and January 2006. For the purpose of the study, extensive bibliographical research, onsite tours, meetings and personal interviews were conducted. Shir Hever edited and expanded the report. Rima Essa helped in preparing the research.

Foreword

This report does not purport to cover the entire educational system in East Jerusalem. Rather, it presents, as much as possible, an up-to-date and extensive picture of education, and recommends several alternative actions to change and improve the current situation. It goes without saying that none of

All who visited schools in East Jerusalem can see how ingrained is the fear of the system

these recommendations can be realized without the help of the Israeli educational system, since Israel's illegal annexation of East Jerusalem by military force created a responsibility for the Israeli government to provide for the civilian services to the local population.

Despite the limitations of the research, the conclusions of the report make evident that the Education Ministry and the Jerusalem Education Authority (henceforth, JEA) have failed in their duties to provide the requisite infrastructure, design, con-

struction, and operation of schools in East Jerusalem. Even officials with the best of intentions, who try to improve the educational situation within the institutional framework, are unable to initiate significant changes in a system that maintains educational gaps between the Jewish and Palestinian Arab sectors, under the cover of political and legal correctness, all the while distorting facts.

Discrimination in education is not a new phenomenon. It has existed since the annexation

of Palestinian neighborhoods following the war in 1967; over the years, it has gotten worse. Because of the uncertainty over the continuation of Israeli rule over Palestinian neighborhoods and because of the Separation Wall that prevent tens of thousand of Palestinian schoolchildren who live east of the city from attending schools, both local and national authorities refrain from long-term investment in a suitable educational infrastructure for Palestinian children in East Jerusalem.

The data presented in the report

were collected from different sources, but even after examining and cross-checking them, not all of them were corroborated. It is not a coincidence that the data and documentation connected to the educational system are not updated and do not reflect the actual situation. Rather, this general oversight reflects the attitude of the Israeli state towards education in East Jerusalem.

During the course of the interviews and testimonies that we conducted, the interviewees feared the price that they would likely pay for criticizing the educational system. Thus, we minimized citing testimonies as much as possible and avoided mention of names unless we received express per-

mission from the interviewees. All who have ever visited schools in East Jerusalem can see with their own eyes how ingrained is the fear of the system, even in the area of education. The harsh things that were described in the interviews strongly suggest that workers in the educational system are exploited in many areas. Various complaints that we heard were removed from the report since we had not the tools to verify them.

All the same, despite tremendous difficulties, it is possible to find teachers, parents, community leaders and school principals who try to introduce improvements in the current educational system and raise the level of education.

Background: Discrimination against Non-Jews in the Educational System

As in many other fields, Palestinian citizens and residents of the State of Israel suffer

The Israeli educational system discriminates against Palestinians on every measurable criterion

from discrimination in education. The educational system also discriminates in different ways against children of migrant workers, children living in development towns, children of Ethiopian immigrants, and children of other politically and economically weak groups in Israeli society. However, discrimination against Palestinian citizens of Israel is most widespread and

systematic, and in East Jerusalem it is particularly extreme, and thus worthy of a particular emphasis.

Researchers Sorel Cahan and Yaakov Yelink have shown that among four sectors, (Arabic, Druze, official Jewish, and unofficial Jewish) non-Jewish schools suffer the most discrimination in the allocation of compensatory education.*

According to them, allocation is arbitrary and ignores the differences in educational disadvantage among the sectors. The authors argue that were there a common index of educational disadvantage that weighed three socio-economic indicators—the proportion of low income families, the proportion of large families, and the proportion of poorly educated parents—then the allocations for Jewish elementary and

* The distinction between Arabs and Druze is common in Israeli public discourse (even though many Druze see themselves as Arabs). Likewise, there is a tendency to avoid using the term “Palestinians” to describe Israeli citizens. For this research, we will keep to the current distinctions used in the sources, but in our own writing we will refer to Arab citizens of Israel as Palestinians, in order to recognize this group’s right to self definition and to show awareness of the negative connotations of commonly used expressions such as “the Arab sector.”

junior high education would turn out to be five times greater than allocations in the non-Jewish sector.¹ Or, as the American-based Human Rights Watch report that was published in 2002 states: "At the present rate, Israel will not close the gap between Jewish and Arab education, even if it were to allocate equally annual allowances to schools."²

The report that Human Rights Watch published shows data according to which the Israeli educational system discriminates against Palestinians on every measurable criterion. Although Palestinian pupils make up 22.2% of the educational system in Israel, they receive only 17.6% of the allocation of teaching hours and 19.5% of classrooms; the average number of pupils per classroom is higher, as is the teacher student ratio; they have fewer libraries; educational and psychological counseling is very limited; the number of social workers is minimal, as is the number of teachers with university degrees; programs designed to improve teacher performance are few; attendance at kindergartens is very sporadic; special education programs are minimal as is the number of those

eligible for matriculation-certificates; and, more Palestinian pupils do not qualify for university admission.³

Dr. Daphna Golan, the chair of the Committee for Closing the Gap in the Education Ministry's Pedagogical Secretariat, told Human Rights Watch that "If everyone gets more or less the same share in society and the gap is ignored, we will never close it when it comes to physical conditions of schools, the number of kids in class, and teachers' skills and training."⁴

The Education Ministry sponsored a research study whose main conclusions were that the Ministry itself discriminated against the Palestinian education system.⁵

The policy to close the gaps in the Education Ministry was severely criticized in an internal report written by the head of the Post-Primary Education in the Ministry. The report argued that the policy of the Education Ministry perpetuates if not exacerbates the educational gap, and that the program to reduce the gap is merely intended "to throw sand in the eyes." The Ministry shelved the document.⁶

When Human Rights Watch asked Dalia Sprinzak, of the Educa-



Girls on the way to school / Photo: Rem Esse, 2005

tion Ministry's Economics and Budgeting Administration, if she thought the gap between Jewish and Palestinian education would ever be closed, she answered, "It is very difficult. No, I don't think so... But it is the right direction. Our expectations are too high that we can advance very quickly in this direction." All the same, Sprinzak noted that "It is important for the State to say that it [closing the gaps] is important to us."⁷

Background: Israeli Annexation of East Jerusalem

Following the 1967 War, Israel annexed to the municipal boundaries of West Jerusalem some 70 sq. km, about 12% of the West Bank. This area includes the municipality of East Jerusalem, which was 6 sq. km. and had been under Jor-

danian rule. Although the international community has never recognized the annexation, Israel treats this area as an integral part of the country.⁸

Since 1967, Palestinian residents of East Jerusalem are granted permanent residency status. This special status prevents them from having full citizenship rights, such as the right to vote in

East Jerusalem Palestinians do not have full citizen rights, but are entitled to social benefits

national elections, but it does entitle them to social benefits provided by the National Insurance Institute and to health insurance, as well as the right to work in Israel without the necessity of special permits. This partial status holds also for children of Palestinian residents who were born inside the

State of Israel. Of course, Jews who moved to settlements that were built on expropriated Palestinian lands have not lost their Israeli citizenship.*

Preventing Palestinian residents of Jerusalem from acquiring Israeli citizenship plugs into the “demographic problem” discourse in Israel and exemplifies the avowed effort of Zionist parties in the Knesset to maintain the Jewish majority of the city’s population. In reference to the future boundaries

of the city, Uri Lupolianski, the mayor of Jerusalem, said: “I will not go into details about the border line. Let’s say it will be based on the maximum number of Jews and the minimum number of Arabs within the State of Israel.”⁹

Under the Compulsory Education Law and Compulsory Free Educa-

* Israeli government authorities claim that Palestinians were offered full Israeli citizenship but chose to reject it on political grounds. Nonetheless, today it is very difficult for Palestinians residing in East Jerusalem to ask for Israeli citizenship. Children born in East Jerusalem today are in fact not citizens of any country (see Wargen, Yuval, *Education in East Jerusalem*, The Knesset Research and Information Center, Jerusalem, October 16th, 2006).

tion Law, the State of Israel and the Jerusalem Municipality are required to provide free public education for all Palestinian children in East Jerusalem, as to all residents of Israel.¹⁰

According to the Central Bureau of Statistics, at the end of 2005 Jerusalem had an estimated population of 719,900, but according to the population census of the Interior Ministry, only 788,700 (the gap between the two results from taking the census every 12 years). The Palestinian population was estimated at 230 thousand in 2004 in East Jerusalem proper, and an additional 1,385,400 in surrounding communities. To this estimate must be added the expected growth of the Palestinian population until 2006, as the state authorities do not report the extent of the population on a frequent basis.*

According to this estimate, the Palestinian population in East Jeru-

salem was 246,940 in 2006, that is to say, 31.31% of the city's population. Nevertheless, the Jerusalem Institute for Israel Studies estimates that the proportion of the Palestinian population in East Jerusalem is 34% of the total population in the city. The reason is that, since the construction of the Separation Wall began in East Jerusalem, many Palestinians have had to settle inside the city so that they wouldn't be cut off from centers of employment, education, health and commerce.¹¹

Because the population in East Jerusalem is younger than the population in the western part of the city, one can surmise that the proportion of the population in East Jerusalem requiring primary and post-primary educational needs is greater than 34%.¹²

According to 2003 figures, 66% of the Palestinian families in Jerusalem live below the poverty line, as opposed

* To gauge the rate of population growth, we drew on population growth figures of the Palestinian Muslim population living within the Green Line. According to this cautious estimate, the annual rate of growth is 3.617%. Some argue that the rate of population growth in East Jerusalem is actually 6%, on account of migration to East Jerusalem (see Svetlova, Ksenia "A Basic Right," *Jerusalem Post*, September 14th, 2006).

to 48% of Palestinian families and 15% of Jewish families throughout Israel. Seventy-six percent of Palestinian children in Jerusalem live below the poverty line. While Palestinians make up 34% of the total population in the city, they make up 56% of the poor and about 58% of poor children (i.e., more than 105 thousand Palestinian children). More than 49% of East Jerusalem residents are children.¹³

These are the highest poverty figures in the State of Israel. This is despite the widespread conceit that the percentage of Muslim men in Jerusalem among all Muslim men employed in the civilian workforce is greater than that of Jews.¹⁴ Discrimination, not laziness and indolence, is at the root of poverty.

66% of the Palestinian families in Jerusalem live below the poverty line, as opposed to 15% of Jewish Israeli families

These figures offer supporting evidence for the need to provide suitable and free education in East Jerusalem, as defined by law.

Background: Education Authorities in East Jerusalem

The official bodies in the Jerusalem Municipality and Education Ministry that deal with education in East Jerusalem are the JEA for the Palestinian sector, the JEA Administration for Planning and Educational Development, the JEA Administration of the Holistic Program, Education Ministry supervisor for education in East Jerusalem, Safety Engineer for educational institutions, the JEA Department of Educational and Physical Planning, the Department of Guidance and Oversight of Finances of educational institutions, the Department of Assets, the Department of Policy Planning in the Department of Urban Planning, Education Ministry Assistant Director General responsible for the Palestinian sector, and the Department of Unofficial Recognized Education in the

In its official website, the JEA enumerates its functions for the Palestinian sector:

- Responsibility for maintenance, safety, and cleaning services of educational institutions in East Jerusalem;
 - Supervision of special education institutions;
 - Cooperation and planning in construction of new educational institutions (in cooperation with the unit of physical and education planning);
 - Regular use of inspectors;
- Training and placement of teacher assistants and secretaries;
- Management of transportation (mainly special education children);
 - Transfer of monies for ongoing management of schools and kindergartens;
 - Development of playgrounds; and
- Management of training centers in East Jerusalem, including an array of continuous education programs for kindergartens and schools.

Likewise, JEA is obligated to run educational programs for the advancement of the educational system:

- Promotion of achievements and basic skills in Arabic, mathematics, English, and sciences;
- Programs to prevent school dropout, especially in preparatory programs and high schools;
- Programs helping children with learning disabilities;
 - Programs for gifted children;
- Development of social education programs with an emphasis on reduction of violence; and
- Activating school-based initiatives and cultural activities.

Education Ministry (on unofficially recognized schools, see page 40).

The Education Ministry is responsible for paying teachers and principals' salaries, and the JEA for building maintenance and ongoing expenses.¹⁵

In combination with Ministry of Education supervision, the department attributes great importance to promoting school principals as spearheading the promotion of the educational system in East Jerusalem.

In a conversation with Lara Mubariki, the assistant director of the JEA in East Jerusalem, it was stated that the JEA is responsible for school registration, printing textbooks,* building educational institutions, school safety by means of Safety Engineers and transportation (pupils who are registered as living on the other side of the Separation

Wall travel by means of the "back to back" procedure).^{** 16}

Other positions mentioned: the person in charge of post primary education, the person responsible for enrollment in kindergartens, the person responsible for manpower, janitors, secretaries, and workers from the department of self-examination.

It was also pointed out in conversation that the municipality pays for ongoing expenses (heating, water, and the like) and that money is transferred four times a year. Mubariki estimates that the expenditure on every primary school child is NIS 20 to 30 per quarter, for post-primary and special education pupils NIS 100 per quarter.

We were told that earmarked money received from the Education Ministry is designated for equipment and dif-

* Every year there is a review of the textbooks before they are published—a drawn out process that only comes to a close at the beginning of the new school year (one person is responsible for reading the books, together with a regular inspector).

** The Israeli army has set up the "back to back" procedure, whereby, under close army supervision, owners of vehicles without permits drive up to a checkpoint and transfer goods and move people to another vehicle on the other side of the checkpoint.

ferent activities, and not for payment of bills. It was also pointed out that the municipality helps private schools in East Jerusalem by providing entry permits for teachers from the West Bank. Among the schoolchildren in East Jerusalem are those who are not registered in the Population Registry and, thus, are not eligible for health insurance and the like.

Pupils attending public schools in East Jerusalem learn an average of 185 school days a year, as opposed to

Among the schoolchildren in East Jerusalem are those who are not registered in the Population Registry and, thus, are not eligible for health insurance

220 in the primary education system in Israel. There is considerable difficulty in determining who is responsible for what in the system and how the division of labor is carried out. Often, we found that the data from the JEA and the Education Ministry about areas of responsibility contradicted each other. The outstanding discrepancies that we identified will be presented in this report.¹⁷

Curriculum

Following the Oslo Agreements, in which civilian authority in the Occupied Palestinian Territories (henceforward, OPT) was transferred to the Palestinian Authority, the Palestinian curriculum gradually replaced the Jordanian one. The JEA does not interfere with the contents of school subjects in the educational system in East Jerusalem, that is to say, the curriculum, school material,

and matriculation exams. The official, urban educational system for the

Palestinian sector receives funds from the Education Ministry and the Jerusalem Municipality, but the educational content is a mixture of Palestinian and Jordanian curricula. This fact makes most evident the educational differences between East Jerusalem residents and Palestinian citizens of Israel. It also removes any responsibility for the State of Israel to provide education for the children of East

Jerusalem, as the criteria used in the State of Israel to assess pupils are irrelevant to children in East Jerusalem. On the one hand, the State of Israel is legally obliged to provide education as specified in the country's laws. On the other, the state does not oversee

of East Jerusalem Palestinians into Israeli society. This policy goes hand in hand with a policy that prevents residents of East Jerusalem from being Israeli citizens.

Nonetheless, it is important that there is no uniform curricular policy

in East Jerusalem. In the Silwan neighborhood,

The curricula taught in East Jerusalem do not promote Palestinian pupils' integration into Israeli society

the curricula; it relies on data with which it is either unfamiliar or unable to check for its reliability.*

The curricula taught in East Jerusalem do not promote Palestinian pupils' integration into Israeli society and work market; nor do they prepare pupils for higher studies in Israeli institutions (in stark contrast with the Israeli educational system). Thus, Israel implements a policy whose goal is to disallow integration

for example, operate Israeli schools alongside those administered by the Palestinian Authority, Jordan, and the United Nations. Each school has a respectively different curriculum.¹⁸

According to the Knesset Research and Information Center, most of the unofficial recognized schools in East Jerusalem teach the Palestinian curriculum, which suits neither the Israeli labor market nor system of higher education.¹⁹

* Israeli government authorities claim that the residents of East Jerusalem opposed the attempt to go over to the Israeli study program, as they feared that the Israeli program would hurt their chances to study in universities in Arab countries (see Wargen, Yuval, *Education in East Jerusalem*, The Knesset Research and Information Center, Jerusalem, October 16th, 2006).

Data on Number of Students

The Israeli school system is divided into “sectors”: secular-Jewish, religious-Jewish, ultra-orthodox, and Palestinian. For those persons who collect and analyze data in the national education system, it was found convenient to bring all Palestinian education together under one umbrella. For example, Palestin-

Thousands of Palestinian children in East Jerusalem are unrecognized by the authorities and it is unknown if and where they are studying

ians in the North, who also suffer discrimination in comparison to Jewish settlements, apply the Israeli curricula. The budgets and educational infrastructure that they command is far better than those of the Bedouins in the Negev or of Palestinians in East Jerusalem. The success rate in matriculation exams in certain Palestinian communities in the North even surpasses the national average. As stated

above, the curricula in East Jerusalem is Jordanian-Palestinian and has no connection with what the rest of the Palestinians in Israel study. The Education Ministry and the Central Bureau of Statistics collect data from the entire Palestinian sector of the Israeli education system, and then publish the average for the sector. Thus, a distorted picture emerges, one composed of several “averages” that have no connection whatsoever with reality in East Jerusalem.

In October 2005, the Ir-Amim Foundation published a comprehensive report on public education in Palestinian East Jerusalem (which was also submitted as a petition to the Israeli High Court regarding the insufficient number of classrooms). The report exposed, for the first time, the issue of “absentee pupils” in East Jerusalem. According to the report, “some 14,500 Palestinian children in East Jerusalem are not recognized by educational authorities and it is not clear where—or even if—they are

studying.”²⁰ Neither the municipality nor the state bothers to check this numerical gap. As a result, it is difficult to know how many children of mandatory school age are living in East Jerusalem. The JEA presents different figures in the same annual publication for the exact same cross-section of pupils.

According to the JEA figures, updated for 2006, there are 163 public educational institutions, 96 of which

are kindergartens (94 for children age five, and two for children younger than age five), 48 primary and post-primary schools and 19 special education schools are currently in operation in East Jerusalem. In addition, there are 76 unofficial recognized (see above) educational institutions, 55 of which are kindergartens and 21 are primary and post-primary schools, in operation.²¹

The total number of pupils study-



Girls in a classroom in coats because there is no heating / Photo: Niv Hachlili, 2005

ing in the official educational system (including special education) for the school year 2004/2005 is 45,846. This figure includes unofficial recognized educational institutions. Alongside the public school system and the unofficial recognized educational institutions in East Jerusalem, operates a private school system catering to 20,363 pupils. According to the official figures of the Jerusalem Municipality, a total of 66,209 pupils study in East Jerusalem.

According to the Central Bureau of Statistics and the Jerusalem Institute for Israel Studies (on which the Jerusalem Municipality bases its figures), 237,100 Palestinians reside in East Jerusalem. Forty-seven percent of them are between the ages of zero and 18, in other words, more than 111 thousand children. Even if 30% of them are not

of school age, close to 80 thousand of them are supposed to be in school or kindergarten. Even this calculation raises the fact that 14 thousand children of school age are “unaccountable” in the school system.²²

According to the Knesset Research and Information Center, 48,572 pupils studied in the public school system in East Jerusalem in 2005/2006, that is, 44% of all pupils in East Jerusalem.*

These figures shed light on the actual number of “unaccountable” children. Based on the figures of the center, the estimated number of children not registered in school is 40,245. Some 22 thousand of them study in the private school system (about one fourth of them in Waqf schools), and, thus, the number of children not attending any school in 2006 comes to about 18 thousand.²³

* The JEA estimates that an additional 4,000 pupils were added to the educational system in East Jerusalem for the school year 2006/2007. Half of them attended public schools; the other half, officially unrecognized schools. If this estimation is accurate, then for this year the rate of growth in the educational system stands at 8.2%—the fastest population growth rate among all groups in Israel. The implications of this estimation are particularly worrisome given the shortage rate of classrooms and the widening gap in the allocation of resources. For comparative purposes, Ir-Amim foundation cites a 6% annual increase in number of pupils; this figure is also the highest of any other population group in Israel (Ir-Amim, *Inadequacies in the Public Education Infrastructure for Palestinians in East Jerusalem: Overview—September 2006*, September 2006).

According to municipality figures, 66 thousand children in East Jerusalem are registered, but these figures are not reliable. Not everybody who registers to an official school is guaranteed a spot. From an examination of the JEA figures for the past five years,

Many of the children enrolled cannot find places in the municipal schools, and must at private schools

the number of pupils in private schools has practically not changed from year to year, and, thus, it is evident that nobody has the actual figures with regard to the 20 thousand pupils who supposedly study at private schools.

The municipal comptroller gave an explanation of this matter: "Let us remind ourselves that the municipality must enroll all school aged children. With regard to pupils from second grade on, who did not begin compulsory education within the municipal framework and ask to be transferred from a private school to a public one, their enrollment is based on the number of available places, all the while finding creative solutions. The JEA does not concern itself with the regis-

tration of pupils in the private school system in East Jerusalem, and has no knowledge about it."²⁴ Despite the Education Ministry regulations, the JEA does not keep track of deferred registrations in public schools, and thus it is not possible to know how many

children in East Jerusalem are prevented from learn-

ing in the public education system due to classroom shortages.²⁵ Yet from these figures it is clear that many of the registered children do not find an available place in the municipal school system and that there is neither supervision nor information on the private school system.

Individuals in the Education Ministry and JEA responsible for education in East Jerusalem admit that there are glitches in registration and information of children. In reference to the registration of pupils, one of the Education Ministry supervisors in East Jerusalem said that "There are errors in the tracking system, and thus problems with teachers." "There are a lot of pupils registered in more

than one school. The place allocated for a child is blocked the moment we discover these kinds of errors. There are registration areas but the address of the parents is not correct. Parents write the wrong addresses in order to get rights.”²⁶

The municipal comptroller’s report also refers to this issue: “At the time of registration to institutions in East Jerusalem, which was determined by the Education Ministry, the percentage of registered pupils is very low. The norm is to register to schools and kindergartens close to the beginning

In order to absorb all first graders, the sixth grade classes were disbanded

of the school year and even after it. This is despite attempts by the JEA to get parents to register their children on time, and despite widespread publication about the issue (notices, letters to parents, newspapers, media, et cetera). This makes it difficult for an orderly preparation for the beginning of the school year. Until the school year 2003/2004, registration to kindergartens and recognized un-

official schools was done at the institutions themselves, by means of registration forms from the JEA, which the municipality later received back. Instructions from the Education Ministry established that registration to kindergartens must be carried out at the municipality. Since the school year 2003/2004, the municipality acts accordingly.”²⁷ There is a serious shortage of classrooms in East Jerusalem. What emerges from the master plan for educational institutions in East Jerusalem, which was published in the beginning of 2003, is that the Palestinian student population in urban schools in Jerusalem has grown in the past decade at an annual rate of 7%.²⁸

Likewise, according to the Ir-Amim report, “In practice, neither the Education Ministry nor the Jerusalem Municipality are capable of estimating how many pupils apply to public schools in East Jerusalem and how many classrooms are needed to provide this demand. Likewise, neither body is capable of estimating how many pupils drop out of the public school system in East Jerusalem.” The

Ir-Amim Foundation estimates that there is a need to build approximately 160 classrooms a year—in order to not to lose ground.²⁹

Today, about half of the Palestinian children in Jerusalem study in the public school system while thousands of others are forced to pay for their education, whether Waqf schools or schools of other unofficial systems. Many simply do not go to school at all.

In 2001, the Israeli High Court obliged the Municipality to provide public education for every Palestinian child from kindergarten and first-grade age, and to continue to provide for their education through future years.³⁰ Yet despite this verdict, the number of pupils in public kindergartens has dropped in this period from 2,832 to 2,245. At the same time, the kindergarten age population grew at a staggering annual rate of 4.2%.³¹ At the opening of the 2005/6 school year this September, in Silwan, for example, a “unique” solution was found: in order to absorb all first graders, the sixth grade classes were disbanded, and those pupils were sent to learn in private schools. Similarly, some children

who complete their studies in public elementary schools are refused entry to public middle and high schools.”³² In November 2005, the Israeli High Court obliged the Jerusalem Municipality to conduct a survey of educational needs regarding the school age population of East Jerusalem. The survey has yet to be carried out.³³

Budget for Educational Infrastructure and Financial Supervision

Discrimination in allocation of education resources is well-known to all parties involved—most of the relevant decision makers do not deny this. The JEA (which does not concern itself with education in the ultra-orthodox sector—this has a separate supervisory body and separate budget), is responsible for a total of 110 thousand pupils in the entire city, 45 thousand of them in East Jerusalem (that is to say, 42% of the pupils under the JEA’s responsibility). Yet only NIS 100 million out of a total of the NIS 490 million JEA budget (20.4%) is allocated

to education in East Jerusalem. These financial figures, however, do not reveal both the scale and severity of the situation in its entirety.

29% of the JEA budget is spent in East Jerusalem, even though East Jerusalem schoolchildren are 33% of Jerusalem children population

Sixty percent of the budget is targeted to salaries of teachers and teaching assistants. Other than salaries and rentals, the JEA spends a total of NIS 20 million in East Jerusalem. Three million of this expense is for the re-printing of textbooks (more of which will be elaborated below). Thus, investment in the entire educational infrastructure of children from East Jerusalem (the poorest in Israel), comes to a total of NIS 17 million. This sum is supposed to be divided among the schools to cover the upkeep of buildings, continuous administrative activity of the schools, payment of services, overhead (heating, electricity, water, sewerage etc.), and to promote an “adequate” learning environment.

Discrimination is equally evident in

the allocation of computers. In West Jerusalem there is one computer for every ten students, while in East Jerusalem there is one computer for every

26 students.

In the letter sent by the director of the JEA, Ben-Tzion Nimat to

Saar Nathaniel, a member of the Jerusalem municipality committee, it was written that the physical conditions make it difficult to set up computer systems in Palestinian and ultra-Orthodox schools. Nimat added that in 2005, 300 computers were added in East Jerusalem in an attempt to lessen the gap.³⁴

It is not at all clear who supervises the receipt of payments from parents, or the amount of money the schools actually take in. Nor is it clear how the JEA budget is broken down, or how the JEA supervises this budget. In 2006, the JEA reported that the education budget for East Jerusalem was NIS 112,933,000, which is 29% of the annual JEA budget, even though the percentage of school aged

children here is about 35% of all the children in Jerusalem.³⁵

Registration Fees

Educational institutions in East Jerusalem are not included within the framework of self-administration. Parents of schoolchildren must pay a registration fee to the municipality at the beginning of every year. These fees are supposedly used

for different activities, such as school trips, educational activities, parties, etc. The tariffs that the JEA established for the 2003/2004 school year were the following:

Kindergartens	NIS 220
Elementary schools	NIS 150
Junior High schools	NIS 200
Senior High schools	NIS 300

These fees are lower than the ones that the Education Ministry recommends.



Girls on the way to school / Photo: Rema Essa, 2005

Inspection and Supervision of Finances

The JEA operates the Department of Guidance and Oversight of Finances for schools in both East and West Jerusalem. The municipal comptroller's 1999/2000 report investigated initiatives that the JEA was to have implemented in

Israel is not willing to supply children with books displaying the symbol of the PA, and censures sections it sees as incitement against the state

East Jerusalem schools. Among other things, her report revealed that since February 1998, the JEA has not had anyone to oversee the public funds injected into education in the Eastern part of the city. She recommended the immediate appointment of an inspector to East Jerusalem schools. Also, the Ministry of Interior department responsible for inspecting municipal finances wrote in the report for 2000 that "in the last three years, oversight of schools in the Palestinian sector of the city was not conducted due

to lack of manpower." In the municipal comptroller's follow-up report of 2001/2002, it was reported that at the end of February 2002, the inspection position was filled and work was under way. In late 2002, the JEA distributed a booklet of rules and regulations regarding accounting and record keeping to all school principals. For the 2002/2003 school year, the comptroller found that audits were conducted

in only 12 of 44 schools and all the schools which were audited had significant

shortcomings. No system of follow up or correction of these shortcomings was proposed.

For years there has been a lack of effective financial oversight, leading to poor management of money in the system. Until the school year 2003/2004, no set uniform fees for school services were established, nor were there rules for granting discounts. In a March 2003 letter concerning collection of fees that the JEA sent to school principals, it was stated that reductions of fees (but not exemptions) were al-

lowed. Criteria for granting reductions and the permissible rate of reductions were not established. The comptroller found that the JEA also had no data on sums educational institutions collected from parents, on the collection rates, or on the types of discounts given.³⁶

“Printing of School Textbooks” Clause in JEA Budget for Education in East Jerusalem

Needless to say, in almost every clause of the budget that we examined, many questions were raised with regard to the distribution of money, supervision and sound procedures. One example of how the education budget for East Jerusalem does not reflect reality is the clause on textbooks, which the municipal comptroller studied.

For years, Education Ministry and JEA officials made a point of mentioning how investment in the printing of textbooks made a considerable difference in pricing for schoolchildren in

East Jerusalem. In grades one to ten, the price of a textbook was established at NIS 6, in grades 11-12 at NIS 8.

There are two main reasons for reprinting textbooks. First, the books come from the Palestinian Authority, displaying its symbol. The State of Israel is not willing to supply children with books displaying the Authority’s symbol, because it would be seen as if the Palestinian Authority is responsible for their education (even though Israel is neither responsible for the curricula, or its supervision). Second, the books include material that the Israeli Education Ministry considers as incitement against the State of Israel. In the course of reprinting textbooks, the contents are subject to censorship.

The JEA employs someone to peruse the textbooks, with the assistance of one of the regular inspectors.

In recent years, the textbooks have been gradually replaced. For the 2000/2001 school year, textbooks for grades one and six were replaced; the following school year, for grades two and seven. Thirty new books are published for an additional two school grades per year.

Because of a lack of budget, books

for grades three and eight were not replaced for the 2002/2003 school year, nor books for grades four and nine as planned for the 2003/2004 school year. Following the breakdown of the budget, in the previous year, NIS 3 million had been paid to printing houses for the reprinting of textbooks.

The municipal comptroller's 2004 report showed how the system wasted money as a result of wrong decisions, defective implementation, and lack of supervision. Printing of textbooks for the beginning of the school year was done on a tight schedule and often too late. For the 2002/2003 school year, permission for printing textbooks was received on August 1st, 2002. For the

By 2010 the shortage in classrooms is expected to reach 1,883, but between 2002-2005 more classrooms were closed than built

2003/2004 school year, permission was received very late, on August 28th, 2003, because the Education Ministry delayed the transfer of budget. On account of this delay, the textbooks were not published until the end of Octo-

ber 2003 (two months after the opening of the school year), and hence, were not issued to the schools. "At this point, the parents of schoolchildren privately bought the books from the Palestinian Authority and stores," the municipal comptroller noted. "It turns out that a substantial portion of the expenses for printing books was for nothing, since in the course of the year these books will not be used."³⁷

Despite the recommendation of the comptroller to reexamine if the expenses are necessary, and, if so, how supervision and printing can be carried out given the experience of the past few years, nothing has been done. The JEA continues to pour money into reprinting despite the fact that

the majority of books arrive so late that they are not distributed to schools at all.

The quality of reprinting is poor and there are many mistakes both in form and content of textbooks. In several schools the price of books is different from those the municipality advertises. Most parents buy the books

straight from the Palestinian Authority. The problems noted here have not yet even addressed the financial and other issues touching on the production processes of the books.

Physical Infrastructure

In a 2002 report, the state comptroller briefly touched upon the shortage of classrooms in East Jerusalem. Among other things, the report stated, "In an internal memorandum that the JEA prepared in 1989 (see above), it was pointed that there is a serious lack of educational structures in East Jerusalem, and that almost half of the institutions of the municipal educational system operate in rented apartments and rooms unfit for instructional purposes. The Jerusalem municipality allocated buildings for construction of educational structures of the Palestinian sector in East Jerusalem (180 classrooms in 1995 and an additional 130 in 1999). The shortage of classrooms and the particular difficulties of this sector were for years well known to the JEA. Yet only in 2002 did the Municipality start to prepare a master plan for the

educational system in East Jerusalem, a master plan that would indicate the educational needs of this sector and suggest ways to provide these needs. According to data from the Jerusalem Institute for Israel Studies, during the 1990's, an average of 52 new classrooms was being built per year. Yet, according to the data from the Municipality, only 445 classrooms were built between 1988 and 2000 in East Jerusalem, 75% of them being built in the past five years. The Municipality also pays the rent of some 400 classrooms in East Jerusalem.³⁸ According to the municipality figures in 2002, the educational system in East Jerusalem is short of about one thousand classrooms. Between 1995 and 1999, 310 classrooms were built. The master plan for the educational system is under preparation.³⁹

According to more update figures (2005), the Eastern part of the city is short of 1,354 standard rooms; in 2010, this number is expected to reach 1,883.⁴⁰ All the while, the master plan of the educational system in East Jerusalem that the Jerusalem Institute for Israel Studies prepared and submitted remains a dead letter at the

municipality offices.

The city comptroller found that East Jerusalem has a great shortage of classrooms. “Based on the master plan for educational institutions in East Jerusalem published in 2003, the population of pupils in municipal schools in the Palestinian sector in Jerusalem has increased in the past decade at a rate of seven percent per year.”⁴¹ The Ir-Amim report presents up-to-date figures: “Instead of embarking upon a plan to speed up budgeting and construction—in order to build

the 245 new classrooms required by the 2001 Court ruling (following Ir-Amim’s court petition on the shortage of classrooms), budget levels for new classrooms declined by 22%, in comparison to the years preceding the ruling.” Although 161 classrooms were constructed for the Palestinian educational system between 2002 and 2005 (using funds allocated before the 2001 Court ruling), 213 were closed; a net loss of 54 classrooms.” From the JEA figures, only 35 classrooms were completed for the school year



Schoolchildren from Anata fleeing tear gas fired at them by soldiers / Photo: Niv Hachlili, 2005



Soldiers near a school in Anata pointing their weapons at the school / Photo: Niv Hachlili, 2005

2005/2006.⁴² The Knesset Research and Information Center found that 55 classrooms are “missing” from the October 2006 plans that existed in the plans of November 2005.⁴³

The Education Ministry estimates that construction of a classroom is about NIS 500 thousand. According to Ministry of Finance figures, the national budget of construction of classrooms in 2005 is NIS 349 million.⁴⁴ On the basis of the budget, the Education Ministry granted local municipalities the authorization to be obligated

in construction contracts of new classrooms for a sum of NIS 325 million. According to July 7th, 2005 figures, only NIS 129.5 million were paid, that is, about 32% of the budget.⁴⁵ It is important to note that the Education Ministry does not use the entire budget at its disposal. In the first half of 2006, it was found that 20% of the education budget was underutilized. This underutilization of the budget results from a stringent policy of the Ministry of Finance that oversees all expenses as well as from a lack of mo-

tivation of government officials and elected representatives to find uses for the money at their disposal. Nonetheless, underutilization of the budgets designated for East Jerusalem is by far the worst.⁴⁶

At the official level, the Education Ministry blamed East Jerusalem residents, claiming classroom shortage resulted from residents' refusal to sell land for school construction, the widespread illegal construction in the Eastern part of the city, and the inaccurate registration of land ownership. Yet the

The Education Ministry claim that residents refuse to sell lands to build schools in East Jerusalem, but 35% of lands in East Jerusalem were confiscated for settlement construction

difficulties in identifying public land and illegal construction result from the policies of the Israeli authorities, which do not allocate enough building permits to the Palestinian population. Moreover, about 35% of Palestinian lands in East Jerusalem have been expropriated in order to build Jewish neighborhoods in the eastern part of the city.⁴⁷

Researchers at Ir-Amim identified many open plots whose owners are willing to sell in order to establish schools, but the Education Ministry refrains from acquiring these plots.⁴⁸ In the neighborhood of Umm Tuba, in southeast Jerusalem, for example, the official line of land shortage was refuted by the head of the Parent Teachers Association in East Jerusalem, Abd Al-Karim Lafi, the chairman of the East Jerusalem Parents Teachers Association and Sara Kreimer of the Ir-Amim organization.⁴⁹ In Ras-el-

Amud, plans for the construction of 48 classrooms have been delayed for many years due to

expropriation of land designated for expansion of the Jewish settlement Ma'ale HaZeitim. The expropriation realizes, in part, the E-1 quadrant plan—the attempt to create territorial continuity between Ma'ale Adumim and Jerusalem.⁵⁰

The municipality claims to be aware of the shortage of classrooms in East Jerusalem, but, in this context,



The soldiers after firing tear gas at the school / Photo: Niv Hachlili, 2005

functions as a contractor working for the Education Ministry. That is to say, the municipality works in East Jerusalem with the budget coming from the ministry, and, thus, does not take responsibility for the failures resulting from the shortage in the budget.⁵¹ The above arguments make evident how the JEA relies on existing restrictions to justify its shortcomings.

As of today, the Jerusalem Municipality has not approved any master

plan for East Jerusalem (approval has been withheld for many years under a number of different pretexts). The lack of a master plan delays granting building permits. Likewise, there is almost no available private land that suits construction of large buildings. Rather, the State of Israel holds onto available lands in East Jerusalem and is in no hurry to release them for building needs. Even when suitable land is identified, the Education Min-

istry and JED delay construction on the land for years.

Even after plots needed for public needs are identified and approved, the plan for urban construction requires their expropriation. This expropriation assumes reasonably high compensation. The Education Ministry finances construction of new buildings in accordance with its abilities and budget, but it does not finance compensation to land owners. The municipality is not able to finance on its own the great expenses entailed in the expropriation of properties designated for construction of schools and kindergartens.

“On May 30th, 2002, the municipal council approved an exceptional budget of NIS 5 million to finance the evacuees of East Jerusalem in order to construct educational institutions. According to the figures of the municipal Assets Department, compensation for lands expropriated for construction of schools in East Jerusalem came to a total of US\$ 1,410,000 (NIS 6,419,620 according to the exchange rate in 2002) for the past five years. In addition, there is a need to draw up a plan for registration needs for almost

every project. The cost for preparing the plans for these projects in East Jerusalem is estimated in tens of thousands of NIS.”⁵²

A specific example of how the current situation is perpetuated is the case of the residents of Tel Sawahreh in East Jerusalem. In their own words, “Four years ago, the residents of Tel Sawahreh came to an agreement with the Waqf on allocating Waqf land in the neighborhood of Umm Leisson for the construction of two new schools. In July 2003, the Parents Association of the neighborhoods received a letter from Yehudit Shalvi, then the director of the JEA. The letter stated that the municipal committee of moneys approved construction of two schools on land that was given. Yet, since then, no action has happened on the ground. Due to the delay, the Waqf threatened to use the land for other purposes. In January 2005, the new director of the JEA, Ben-Tzion Nimat, wrote the following to the Parents Association: “The municipality has no intention of ignoring its promises to the residents. The municipal branch of Public Buildings plans to build two schools. They have already begun work plans for the

girls' school. If the Education Ministry approves the construction budget, construction will begin this year. Concerning the boys' school, planning has been a little delayed because the Education Ministry has asked that the program matches the instructions of the Dovrat Report on Israeli Education. After approval is received from the Education Ministry, the planning procedures will continue."

The exchange of letters in the past years between the residents of Tel Sawahreh and the municipality come to a dozen pages. In the beginning of the 2005/2006 school years, after it became evident that nothing had changed, the residents decided to boycott the schools, protesting their affairs being continuously put off. Eight thousand, two hundred pupils in East Jerusalem participated in the strike. The strikers pointed out that the reason for the strike was "Fifty two pupils to a classroom, double shift lessons, classrooms in shelters, and four hours of learning a day—Third World conditions in the capital of Israel." The strikers wrote to the mayor and indicated that in the nearby Armon HaNatsiv neighborhood there

are new and improved infrastructures, and desire to put an end to the ongoing discrimination. The following day, the then Education Ministry Director-General Ronit Tirosh intervened. She set up a meeting with representatives of the municipality and sent off a letter where she promised to transfer a budget for building a girls school in Umm Leisson (18 classrooms) and to work at improving the physical conditions in the schools in East Jerusalem. "I would like to stress," she wrote, "that our ministry is working as soon as possible to realize the agreements reached today. Thus, I expect the striking pupils to return tomorrow to their desks."⁵³ The Parents Association in East Jerusalem continues their struggle and is considering another strike for the 2006/2007 school year.⁵⁴

The municipal comptroller summarizes the situation: "In the current conditions, despite great effort invested in the municipal Palestinian education system, absorption of all the students who want to transfer to the municipal education system is difficult. Although the annual number of classrooms built in municipal schools in the Palestinian sector has been,

on average, 50 per year, an expected shortage of adequate classrooms in kindergartens and schools will reach in 1,354 in 2005 and in 1,883 in 2010 (with reference to preschool to twelfth grade, including special education). Reference is to classrooms conforming to official standards. Other classrooms (for example, those in rented buildings) are not included in this calculation. Following approval by the Education Ministry, the municipality built about 370 classrooms in East Jerusalem between 1995 and 2002 (a similar number of classrooms were built in the same period in the western part of the city).⁵⁵ From the updated figures that the Jerusalem municipality published in 2006, only 125 classrooms are planned for construction in the coming years.⁵⁶

Creative Solutions

In order to try to cope with the serious shortage of classrooms, the municipality has had to adopt what the municipal comptroller called “middling” solutions, at least outwardly, to implement the Compulsory Education Law for all East Jerusalem

children. Among these solutions are rented buildings, a double-shift system (i.e. pupils attend either in the morning or in the afternoon), mobile units, and permission to operate unofficially recognized schools. Each of these solutions has serious drawbacks, which adversely affect the education given to pupils. According to JEA figures, 108 buildings serve as schools in East Jerusalem. 46 of them are standard structures; 62 are substandard. The substandard structures are residential buildings rented and converted into classrooms. It is hard to verify municipality figures given that that even recognized schools (that are not included in the official school system) are located in rented buildings.

According to the budget book for 2003, the municipal comptroller found that the annual rentals come to a total of NIS 10 million. The comptroller’s report states: “For the 2002/2003 school year, the number of rented classrooms in the official educational system came to 400. According to the person responsible for assets, before the municipality rents a building, the department in charge of inspecting structures checks that the

structure has a license and that there are not any building violations. Due to the growing student-aged population, even standard schools avail of annex rooms (laboratories, libraries, and computer labs) as classrooms. The school buildings that the municipality has built are modern and spacious and would stand up to standards in West Jerusalem. On the other hand, the conditions of the rented structures (in the neighborhoods of Ras-el-Amud and Tel Sawahreh) that were investigated are particularly bad. The combination of small classrooms and a large number of pupils produces over-

Homes are converted into classrooms, creating crowded conditions, windowless classrooms, lack of bathroom, etc.

crowding (children without desk or a desk meant for two but used by three pupils), classrooms without windows, bathrooms in the yard, very small yards (if present at all), families living in the same building, and worse.”⁵⁷ The Israeli law states that every pupil must have a surface of 120 square centimeters, but in East Jerusalem schools

only 50 square centimeters is allotted to every pupil.⁵⁸

The solution to rented buildings is “very problematic, but inevitable,” writes the municipal comptroller. She further adds, “Of course, these structures are not fit to be used as educational institutions, and except for minor adjustments, it is impossible to do much in this matter. In most of the schools and kindergartens that are located in rented buildings, the conditions are inferior and there are serious safety problems. Furthermore, double shift lessons and the set up of mobile units in various sites are temporary solutions, neither wanted nor satisfactory. The most natural and successful solution, but slower and longer, is to design and build standard schools, despite all the difficulties mentioned above.”⁵⁹

The Coalition for the Advancement of Arab Education in Jerusalem, which was founded in order to address the shortage of classrooms in the educational system in East Jerusalem, and the Association for Civil Rights in Israel pointed out that as long as the

public school system is unable to absorb all the pupils in East Jerusalem, the State of Israel is obligated to pay the tuition of children attending private schools, and this obligation has even been recognized in the past by the Israeli High Court.⁶⁰

Suitable Learning Conditions

It is important to stress the significance of some of the points that the municipal comptroller raised. The conditions of schools in rented buildings are not conducive to mini-

Some buildings never had a safety inspection. Rubbish, broken cement and sharp iron wires are strewn about, classes are liable to become firetraps in case of a fire

mal level of learning. The implications of this are far reaching. From the visits we conducted in more than 15 schools between November 2005 and January 2006, emerges a very harsh picture. Nothing has changed since the comptroller's report. The regulations of the Education Ministry state that a stan-

dard class has 20 to 40 pupils.⁶¹ The standard classroom size is 49 sq. m. for elementary schools, and 53 for post-primary schools.⁶² Clearly, the conditions as set by the Education Ministry do not exist in rented buildings. According to the comptroller's report, in 2002 about 40% of the classrooms in East Jerusalem were substandard and that there were schools whose safety had never been inspected.⁶³

We found a shortage of bathrooms, and bathrooms situated outside the building. Children had to wait in the cold and rain, and the water pressure in the bathrooms and drinking fountains (if there were any) was very low.

In many schools, there is no playground. Around many buildings are strewn rubbish, broken cement blocks and sharp iron wires. The hallways and entrances to rooms are narrow; many rooms are without windows, or have windows without metal security grates. Most classrooms are very overcrowded, and in some cases, kitchens and bedrooms were convert-



Tear gas canisters collected by the headmaster of the school in Anata / Photo: Niv Hachlili, 2005

ed into classrooms. It is not clear how one can leave the classrooms in the case of an emergency. In the case of a fire, all these buildings are liable to become firetraps. In some buildings the heating does not work, and the children remain with their coats on.

Overcrowded classrooms are on the rise in the past few years. Between 1989 and 2006 the number of pupils in public schools and unofficially rec-

ognized schools in East Jerusalem has grown by 185%, while the number of classrooms by only 166%. That is to say, the crowdedness of classrooms has grown by seven percent.⁶⁴

According to the figures of Ir-Amim organization, between 2000 and 2005, 151 classrooms in public education in East Jerusalem were budgeted for construction. Yet the Education Ministry has figures for neither

this budgeting nor actual construction. The Education Ministry claims that 300 classrooms were budgeted for the years 2000-2006, but it does not elaborate how many classrooms were actually built. Examining the Education Ministry figures, it emerges that only 32% of the contracts for construction of classrooms are at the advanced stages. Thus, it is possible to conclude that, up to now, out of the 245 classrooms as required by the High Court less than one hundred classrooms have been built.⁶⁵

Maysoun Hallaq, the principal of the Shuafat Girls School B, says that the JEA allocates her NIS 24 thousand a year for overhead costs. With this sum, she needs to run the school. There are no laboratories, no computers, and no art lessons. Until last year the municipality supplied hot meals, but this year Hallaq had to forgo them. There is nowhere to eat them, and reorganizing space wastes precious learning time. In any case, there is shortage of teaching hours. The inspector from the Education Ministry arrives from time to time to the school, but he is very limited. His position is defined as escorting, following up and

training principals and teachers. All the other things are outside his competence.⁶⁶

One of the heads of the Parents Association in East Jerusalem relates: "We reached a situation in which the High Court obligated the Education Ministry to build 245 additional classrooms. Four years have passed, and nothing has changed on the ground. The judges sometimes seem indifferent. The Education Ministry puts the responsibility on the JEA, and the JEA claims that it's the fiscal responsibility of the Education Ministry, and, thus, the matter falls between two stools, at the expense of the children. There is a serious shortage on the ground. Beit Hanina and Shu'afat are considered as a continuous geographical entity. Today, there is one elementary school for boys in Beit Hanina; previously there was an elementary school and a junior high school, but the junior high school was transferred to the new senior high school. Every year the elementary school is immediately filled to capacity at the time of registration. They have filled the junior high classrooms with additional elementary school pupils. There is one elementary school for

girls at Beit Hanina. It is located in four separate buildings distant from one another. 600 girls study there. Last year, the Ibn Khaldun high school for boys was launched. It is the only public high school in the area; 1,400 pupils study there. There is neither a junior high nor a senior high school for girls in Beit Hanina. At Shu'afat, there are two elementary schools for boys, and two for girls. One of the elementary schools for girls includes a junior high section. There is one high school for boys. The junior high for girls is unable to absorb all the elementary school pupils. This shortage has been going on for years. One of the boys' elementary schools operates in semi-official building. The elementary school B for boys has two rented buildings; the elementary school A for girls has one main building and two rented buildings. The elementary school B for girls has a rented residential building. The shortage in Shu'afat results from the fact that many of the pupils come from the Shu'afat, Anata, Dakhiyat Al-Salam and Ras Hamis refugee camps. In these places there are no public schools. Everybody comes to Shu'afat, and, thus, it creates pressure

and on-site shortage."⁶⁷

Beside the question how a child can study in these conditions, it is worthwhile to consider the several risks children face when at school. Among Palestinian pupils in Israel (i.e. those having Israeli citizenship), the percentage of children who were hurt and required treatment from a paramedic or doctor was 63%. This is in contrast to 50.4% among Jewish pupils. In 2002, the percentage of Palestinian pupils who were treated in emergency rooms on account of serious injuries was higher than among Jewish students: 12.4% as opposed to 8.8%.⁶⁸ There are no figures for injuries in the educational system in East Jerusalem.

Double Shifting

As a result of the shortage of classrooms, the JEA estimates that, in the current school year, 1,200 children from the Tsur Baher, Tel Sawahreh, and Silwan neighborhoods in East Jerusalem attend school in the afternoon. According to the municipal comptroller's report, since 2003/2004 the number

of children being taught in the second shift is greater than 1,300.⁶⁹

Among opponents of double-shift system are teachers, principals, parents, and the pupils themselves. Pupils who attend school in the afternoon find themselves without anything to do till the beginning of their lessons. Working parents are unable to supervise their actions. The pupils have difficulty concentrating at these

Over 1,300 schoolchildren study in the second shift, in hours they find difficult to concentrate. Vandalism, violence and risks during the morning hours ensue

hours, especially on hot days, and the teachers are already exhausted from teaching in the morning shift. As a result, there are very high drop-out rates, difficulties in mastering the material and a lack of concentration. Afternoon shifts bring about an increase in vandalism, violence, and danger for children wandering in the morning hours without supervision. The Education Ministry and JEA admit that the afternoon shift creates many problems.

Unofficial Recognized Schools

More than 10,000 of the 65,000 children in all the educational institutions in East Jerusalem attend unofficially recognized schools. The Department of Unofficially Recognized Education in the Education Ministry is responsible for licensing these schools, and

the criteria are identical to those required of official state schools.

U n o f f i -

cially recognized schools are funded by the Education Ministry according to the number of enrolled pupils (up to 85% of the tuition per pupil). The fundamental difference between public schools and unofficially recognized schools is that the latter are privately established and operated; most often, non-profit organizations run them. The Israeli Minister of Education may release the unofficial schools from rules and standards pertaining to curriculum, study conditions, and various

financial matters.

As will be elaborated further on, this track allows the educational system to shirk responsibility for providing adequate educational institutions for residents of East Jerusalem and spending money.

In her report, the municipal comptroller strongly criticized the attitude

Unofficially recognized schools allows the municipality to shirk responsibility for these schools, with regard to both the curricula and the physical conditions

of the municipality towards recognized institutions. She pointed out that the municipality cannot convert apartment buildings and houses into schools without proper approval. Conversion of buildings into schools is problematic even when it is carried out by a third party that receives support from the municipality (this is the case for an unofficially recognized school).⁷⁰

Most of the “recognized” educational institutions (86%) were established between 2000 and 2006.

The municipality claims that this allows and encourages private parties to open such institutions as an additional solution to the severe shortage of classrooms in the official municipal school systems. The municipality also brought this matter up in the High Court deliberations, all the while indicating that it preferred the official school system and considered private solutions as alternatives only when appropriate solutions were impossible to find.⁷¹

The hybrid solution of unofficially recognized schools allows the municipality to act through subcontractors who rent private buildings and operate educational institutions. Thus, the municipality saves millions of shekels that would otherwise be spent on planning, construction, rentals, and establishment of official schools. This privatization also allows them to shirk direct responsibility for these schools, with regard to both the curricula and the physical conditions.

According to the JEA, there are 21 unofficially recognized schools in East Jerusalem. Yet, the Department of Un-

officially Recognized Education in the Education Ministry, which is solely responsible for licensing these schools, lists only 13 schools of this type. The above numbers notwithstanding, the Education Ministry list of official educational institutions, which appears on the Ministry's web site, features 36 schools under the unofficially recognized status.⁷²

Because the unofficially recognized schools belong to dozens of private organizations, they differ from one another in their capabilities and goals. It is thus difficult to treat them as a single entity. Some charge tuition; others do not. Classrooms are slightly less crowded than in the official schools, but the rate of crowdedness is immeasurably greater. The growth rate which includes crowdedness of classrooms (in public schools and unofficially recognized schools) is 0.4% per year. Yet the annual rate for unofficially recognized schools reaches 7.8%. According to these figures, the crowdedness of unofficially recognized schools will pass that of official schools by the year 2008.⁷³

"This is a completely permeable market," says Mahmoud Abu Khadar,

the imam of Shuafat. "Schools are the most profitable businesses in East Jerusalem. There is no supervision of what is happening in them. Come here at nine in the morning and you will see children already wandering around outside the schools."

A parent of a pupil attending an unofficially recognized school says, "There are clearly different levels here. I pay US\$ 1,200 a year to send my child to school, and that does not include transportation, uniforms, after-school activities, and field trips. Consider what it would cost if I sent three children, and the school gets subsidies from the Education Ministry. There are unofficially recognized schools that do not take money, but their situation is like that of the public schools: there's violence and neglect, and the children do not learn anything. I wouldn't send my children there."⁷⁴

Parents of pupils attending unofficial schools have been protesting the inferior quality of education and difficult conditions for some time. Many of them fear being exposed. "There are no studies. Children simply come and sit in class," says a parent about an unofficial high school that his son

attends.⁷⁵ “We spoke with the administration, but all they want is money. That’s what interests them. Since the beginning of the year they have yet to find a physics teacher; there are no labs and not enough computers. The students do not trust the school administration. As such, it is impossible to study. Next year many parents want to send their children outside the village. Parents do not know what to do. We sent a letter to the Education Ministry. They told us that the school is a private one that the college operates. The supervisor must be from the municipality or the Education Ministry, but the college does not have its own supervisor to come and assess the school’s standards.”

The municipal comptroller has referred to the issue of unofficially recognized schools and their supervision. According to her findings, in many cases there were no preliminary discussions or collaborations between the municipality and private organizations running the schools. Further, she noted that in a number of cases, the institution was not opened in response to professional considerations or an overall view of the educational

system. Also, the ambiguous relations between the municipality and private parties had been in existence for several years without an official arrangement.⁷⁶

“Some of the unofficially recognized schools fire teachers every year and re-hire them in an effort to avoid granting tenure,” says a Palestinian educator from East Jerusalem. “There are no computer rooms, no laboratories, no conditions, no teacher training or supervision. Until we solve the problem of deprivation in the classroom, that is how it will be. You are constantly engaged in a struggle for the existence of schools and you neglect the level of education. The problem is that we are constantly attacking the Education Ministry and telling them that there are not enough schools—so how could we prevent them from opening unofficially recognized schools? That’s the catch with the Education Ministry and the municipality. Permits to open unofficially recognized schools flow smoothly from the ministry, even in the case of substandard schools. The ministry does not have the time to check and actually see them. I believed that some of the private schools, which

have high tuition charges, would get subsidies from the ministry and become official schools or at least we would see a reduction in tuition. But, unfortunately, this hasn't happened. That's what bothers us. They could provide better education and reduce tuition."

Some schools fire teachers every year and rehire them in an effort to avoid granting tenure

Hussam Wated, of the Beit Hanina Community Administration, summarizes the "Catch-22" that residents face: "There is an order of priorities, and we have not yet even investigated the issue of unofficially recognized schools. If we demand to close them now, because of all of the irregularities, the pupils will be the ones who are hurt by this. There is damage we can stand and damage we cannot stand. Parents prefer to see a child attend school rather than to discover that there is no place for him. This is the dilemma that we constantly weigh."

There seems to be a contradiction between the respective positions of the JEA and the Education Ministry

about responsibility over unofficially recognized schools. With regard to school supervision, the JEA reports, "The Education Ministry is responsible for the supervision of all schools under the unofficially recognized status in East Jerusalem as in the rest of the State of Israel. There is no plan

to transfer responsibility for unofficially recognized schools to the JEA." Yet the Edu-

cation Ministry reports, "The JEA is responsible for unofficially recognized schools in East Jerusalem, but the Department of Unofficially Recognized Education in our ministry is responsible for licensure. The JEA conducts pedagogic supervision."

In response to an additional question posed to the Education Ministry pertaining to the contradiction inherent in these statements, the Ministry reported, "There is no contradiction. The Department of Unofficially Recognized Education licenses these schools, but it does not supervise them. The JEA supervisor supervises the schools on behalf of the Education Ministry. To that end, there is a

supervisor in the Education Ministry who serves, among other roles, as the supervisor of these schools, and his job is to visit them and to supervise their ongoing operations. This supervisor is subordinate to the JEA supervisor on behalf of the Education Ministry.

The JEA is responsible for physical and organizational infrastructure including construction, renovation and equipment of schools, transportation, security, safety and the like.”

Clearly, from the above responses, the two official bodies do not agree



Schoolchildren in East Jerusalem with UN-donated backpacks / Photo: Rema Essa, 2005

on areas of authority. The complete disassociation between the municipality and the Ministry in all matters pertaining to the supervision of these schools in East Jerusalem makes evident that in fact there is no effective supervision of unofficial schools. The municipal comptroller wrote, "In any case, there is no supervision [pedagogic or otherwise], in practice, on the part of the municipality of unofficially recognized educational institutions in the eastern part of the city." She exemplified her point, citing safety permits, which schools must obtain for licensure from the Ministry; some of the schools obtained them from private safety consultants. "The JEA officials claimed to the comptroller that they do not understand how certain institutions received permits of this type," the comptroller wrote. "The comptroller believes there is reason for Safety Engineers, under the auspices of the JEA, to also examine the buildings that were granted permits by the Education Ministry, because if, God forbid, there is an accident, the municipality will not be able to free itself of responsibility."⁷⁷ The lack of supervision revealed among other things that

at least one unofficially recognized school that is under the responsibility of the Israeli Education Ministry is the Hamas School; it receives additional financing from Hamas.⁷⁸

Safety Supervision

How are issues of safety in eastern city schools dealt with? To note, most of the schools are in buildings not intended for educational purposes. Buildings, which were originally designed as schools, also have many deficiencies.

"Inspections were carried out in educational institutions in East Jerusalem," the municipal comptroller notes in her report. "These included visits of standard buildings—modern and spacious buildings—that the municipality built, as well as rented buildings whose situation report is particularly bad—inferior conditions, severe safety problems and the like." "It should be pointed out that rented facilities used as schools were originally residential buildings, that no change whatsoever has been done to adequately transform them for educational purposes, and that no permits

were granted for the necessary new uses. Despite previous decisions on this matter, as of the inspection visit, nobody has been appointed for safety in educational institutions in the Palestinian sector. Meanwhile the Safety Engineer for West Jerusalem is filling the position. From the inspection it emerges that the work of the Safety Engineer for East Jerusalem is neither planned nor arranged. The working plan for 2003 is based on the safety reports that the Education Ministry initiated. The Safety Engineer approved execution of works and their order of priority, in line with the budget approved for this matter (which is about half of the estimated costs for repairs and necessary changes). There is no written approval for execution of the works or the Safety Engineer's approval of their proper execution. Nor has the engineer inspected on site the places where the work was carried out, not even on a sample basis. From this investigation it emerges that educational institutions in East Jerusalem lack files including inspection reports and permits for execution of necessary works and the like."⁷⁹

Up until the beginning of 2003,

the safety arrangement of educational institutions in the city would have included an engineer responsible for the educational system in East Jerusalem. Already in March 2003, the municipality's Inspection Committee received a detailed report of all the safety problems. Up until the conclusion of the comptroller's report, nobody has been appointed as being responsible for the safety of educational institutions in the Palestinian sector. Meanwhile, the Safety Engineer who is also responsible for West Jerusalem fills the position. Most of his work on safety in educational institutions in East Jerusalem is neither planned nor organized. Thus, he neither adequately tackles nor suggests an orderly system to deal with the safety problems. In December 2005, the municipality claimed that for the past three years there has been a Safety Engineer in educational institutions in East Jerusalem, providing consultation, training services, and accompaniment to educational institutions and the JEA bodies. If this is the case, how does this fact fit with the claims of the comptroller, who in a 2003 report, indicated that there was no supervisor? On the JEA's Web site,

the same person appears with the title of “Electricity Supervisor.”⁸⁰ Likewise, the question begs, do “consultation and accompaniment” also include repair of safety problems, or is there nobody responsible for these problems?

Moreover, it was not clear for which educational institutions the safety inspector has responsibility, whether only public schools or also unofficially recognized schools. The municipal comptroller indicated that in order for recognized institutions to obtain a licensure from the Education Ministry they must also have safety permits. These permits were obtained from private safety consultants, even though the safety inspector of the JEA is solely responsible for these permits.

Over the course of several visits to educational institutions in East Jerusalem an infinite number of safety problems were noticed, some of which were indicated in the section dealing with the shortage of classrooms and rented buildings. To a large extent, schools in rented buildings do not meet the safety regulations of the Education Ministry.⁸¹ Among the existing problems are narrow hallways and openings, dangerous stairways,

flammable material, classrooms without windows or bars, playground equipment (if there are any), which often times are either dangerous or do not meet safety standards, exposed electric wires, and dangerous improvisations. The municipal comptroller found documents in the files of the safety inspector that revealed that several schools in East Jerusalem did not even have fire extinguishers.⁸²

Safety and Maintenance Budget

According to the municipal comptroller, the safety budget in 2002 came to NIS 6 million (of which 4.5 million was allocated for West Jerusalem and 1.5 million to East Jerusalem). The safety budget approved for 2003 was considerably lower and came to NIS 2.7 million of which 750,000 was for East Jerusalem. It turns out that in 2003 the Safety Engineer for educational institutions based his work on the safety reports that the Ministry initiated. Following the reports, the Maintenance Department in East Jerusalem

estimated the initial costs for repairs and necessary changes to come to NIS 1,577,600, more than twice the budget approved for safety. In a July

The budget approved in 2003 sufficed to correct only half of the safety deficiencies

16th, 2003 document, the Safety and Security Supervisor for educational institutions approved implementation of some of the clauses; in accordance with the order of priorities and the budget approved. The implementation would cost NIS 757,200, more than the safety budget allocated to all of East Jerusalem. According to the work plan of the Safety Engineer, the safety budget is supposed to include not only repairs of previous deficiencies but also additional clauses. However, the budget allocations that are necessary to correct existing shortcomings are not enough.⁸³

At the time of the municipal comptroller's report, an orderly work plan had not been decided upon for the school year 2003/2004. Yet the Safety Engineer maintains that it includes completion of the aforementioned

projects that were carried out. There is no written documentation addressing the execution of projects and their time-tables, costs, and the like. Nor is there written permission from the Safety Engineer that the projects were properly executed.

The engineer admitted that he had not visited any of the places in which the projects were carried out, not even on a sample basis. The report also raised the issue that the municipality had neither inspection reports, educational establishments in East Jerusalem in its files, nor documentation and permits for the execution of necessary projects. Even the safety file for East Jerusalem at the JEA head office was not properly organized.⁸⁴

In her report, the comptroller did not address key aspects underlying the correction of safety deficiencies: who is appointed to execute the projects and on what basis are these permits given, how are the payments of these projects carried out, and to whom are they remitted? All our attempts to verify the matter with the JEA and some schools were met with a total lack of

cooperation. Nor were we given any documents addressing these topics.

The comptroller pointed out that the safety file, which specifies what repairs need to be undertaken, includes hygiene inspection reports that the district inspector of the Ministry of Health drew up for kindergartens in East Jerusalem. Every report specifies the existing shortcomings as well as requests for their resolution. It turns out that the shortcomings and resolution were not followed up. Nor were the reactions to the report's findings transmitted to the Ministry of Health. The Assistant Director-General of the JEA in charge of the Palestinian sec-

With regard to transportation there is also no supervision over the quality of service to schoolchildren or over their safety

tor told the inspector in person that many of the safety problems are beyond repair. As of the publication of this report, no responsible body, including the Ministry of Health, has initiated and conducted systematic inspections.⁸⁵

Transportation

According to the person responsible for transportation at the JEA, about 3,250 vehicles, (vans and buses), are used to transport pupils to schools in East Jerusalem. The Education Ministry determines the criteria for providing transportation; the child, not the school, is entitled to transportation. The number of vehicles that operate on a daily basis and have a contract with the municipality is 340. The municipality pays the salaries of the drivers. From observations of different neighborhoods in East Jerusalem over the course of several weeks, during the morning and afternoon hours, many shortcomings were discovered: the municipality vehicles load more children than the actual number of seats; they drive too fast; and they drop off children at dangerous spots that are forbidden for stops. It seems that also with regard to transportation there is no real supervision over the quality of service given

to schoolchildren or over their safety.

The problems of transportation have an impact on teachers as well. For example in the Umm Tuba neighborhood, about half of the land was expropriated in order to establish the Jewish settlement of Har Homa. The neighborhood school has had to spread out to five different buildings situated quite far from one another, and the school principal acts as driver, transporting teachers from one building to another in order that they arrive to lessons on time.⁸⁶ The particular problem of school transportation has worsened with the construction of the Separation Wall in East Jerusalem (see below).⁸⁷

Preschool Education

A 1984 amendment expanded the scope of the 1949 Free Compulsory Education Law to cover three and four-year-old children throughout the country. However, the revised law was never implemented. In 1999, it was resolved to implement the law in stages over a period of ten years for the entire country. Up to now, only a few mu-

nicipal authorities have been chosen to implement the law. In Jerusalem it was decided to implement the law in specific neighborhoods and streets in the Western part of the city, but in the eastern part only the Beit Safafa neighborhood was chosen, even though all the neighborhoods in East Jerusalem are ranked very low on the socio-economic scale.⁸⁸

In 2006, between 17,500 and 21,000 children aged between three and four years old live in East Jerusalem, 90% of whom do not receive any type of preschool education (the discrepancy in numbers results from the gap between the data from the Central Bureau of Statistics and those from the Knesset Research and Information Center). Only 55 of these children attend one of the two existing municipal preschools in East Jerusalem, and another 1,900 are enrolled in private facilities.⁸⁹ The annual tuition rates of the private preschools are very high (between US\$ 1,400 and US\$ 1,800). The overwhelming majority of parents cannot afford private preschool tuition. Likewise, there is no supervision over private preschools. The preschools are located in small

and crowded buildings, and many of them lack playground equipment.

Because of this unfortunate situation, a coalition of eight organizations has formed the Free Compulsory Education Law with the single purpose of implementing education for children aged three to four years in East Jerusalem.⁹⁰ The coalition found that there were no preschools in either

90% of children aged between three and four years old in East Jerusalem do not receive any preschool education

the Bab-a-Zahareh or Ras-el-Amud neighborhood; preschool-age children, who live in these neighborhoods, are not enrolled in any type of educational framework.⁹¹

Data from the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics present a less harsh picture. According to the data, 54.6% of children aged four and five years are enrolled in some type of educational framework; 78.6% of them in a private one. Nonetheless, the situation of children living in Jerusalem and under the responsibility of the Palestinian Authority is much better;

62% of the children aged four and five years old are enrolled in an educational framework.⁹²

Current research has shown that preschool education has a decisive impact on child development, on future earnings, and success in escaping conditions of poverty. Studies have made evident how investment in preschool education yields eight times more than investment in primary and secondary education.⁹³

While the poverty rate for all Palestinian residents of East Jerusalem is 66%, the poverty rate amongst children is higher at 76%. In contrast, the poverty rate amongst Jewish children in Jerusalem is 38% (the rapid population growth is indicative of the rapid increase in the number of school aged children in the coming years).⁹⁴

The welfare offices in East Jerusalem handle hundreds of children aged three to five, who are categorized as children at-risk. This judgement is based on parental functioning, health problems or physical or mental disabilities in the family, the existence of family violence, or households suffer-

ing from severe economic conditions. The welfare services are of the opinion that all the children categorized as at-risk are not integrated into any daily educational framework.⁹⁵ The Coalition for Implementation of the Free Compulsory Education Law estimates that the cost to implement the revised law in the first year would only amount to 143 million shekels.⁹⁶

Professional supervision in mathematics, English and sciences does not exist at all in the eastern part of the city

Comprehensive Supervision

The municipal comptroller writes that “the Education Ministry allocates three positions for overall supervision of educational establishments in East Jerusalem (one of them for preschools), and half an urban position for special education.” Professional supervision (mathematics, English and sciences) does not exist at all in the eastern

part of the city, but there are twenty professional counselors. Given the lack of professional supervision, there are many instances in which teachers teach subjects without professional qualifications—a fact that adversely affects their salaries and infringes upon their legitimate rights. The Education Ministry has not established acceptable standards for the position of inspector. Yet even without supervision of recognized institutions, as one inspector pointed out to us, the number of schools that he and his colleagues have to inspect in East Jerusalem is far greater than that of their colleagues working in the western part of the city.

In response to a draft report on the lack of professional inspectors, the JEA administration argued for developing a cadre of counselors, and thus, it was of great importance to substantially increase the extent of training days. The JEA also pointed out that there exist two counselor training courses for about 50 teachers. The existence of qualified counselors in the school system partially solves the lack

of professional inspectors in the major subject matters. The issue will be examined by the JEA supervisor that the Education Ministry has appointed.⁹⁷

“An inspector is a pedagogical authority,” remarked the comptroller. “He manages the quality control of the teaching staff’s work and deals with the new staff’s absorption, professional qualifications, the curricula, and more. No matter how senior the counselor is, he has no official authority of enforcement.”⁹⁸

Situation of Teachers

To prepare this report we met dozens of teachers. Teachers were only willing to be interviewed under the condition of absolute confidentiality. Most preferred not to discuss the management of schools, but rather hinted at the larger problem of managing schools without real supervision. The hiring conditions of teachers, the complexity of their roles and the great responsibility these educators carry on their shoulders make their situation particularly difficult. Teachers have to maneuver between the demands of

the educational system and the particular situation of the students, and between principals and parents, all within a cultural configuration whose expectations are considerably different from those in the national educational system in Israel. Women who teach in schools where male pupils study (the sexes are separated in middle school and high school, and even in many primary schools) confront many difficulties and must often cope with a lack of respect.

The educational system does not provide support to teachers dealing with either academically challenged or violent students. This in turn forces teachers to react with means that the national educational system considers illegitimate (for example, the use of corporal punishment) or with sweeping indifference that adversely affects the learning process, i.e. they give up trying to help students acquire knowledge. While these phenomena are also present in the regular Israeli educational system, particular tensions in the educational system in East Jerusalem render them more widespread.

A.A., a teacher in one of the high schools, stated: “The teacher stands in

front of the class. The children do not want to learn. You come and transmit the learning material without paying attention, only in order to finish and leave. There are only four teaching hours a day and you go. The principal does not care. He is not really around. He has more important matters to take care of.”⁹⁹

Another teacher, M.A., told us: “They had me sign an agreement that they would fire and then rehire me ever year in order not to give me seniority; after five years, I would have to completely leave the school. All because the Israeli Council for Higher Education refuses to license us.”¹⁰⁰ M.A. is a graduate of Al-Quds University. Unlike other universities in the West Bank, the Council does not accredit Al-Quds University. Palestinians in East Jerusalem are of the opinion that the lack of accreditation is for political reasons, given that the university is located in Jerusalem and is named Al-Quds, and thus, seemingly challenges the legitimacy of the Israeli annexation of the city.

Inspectors responsible for education in East Jerusalem and who work for the Education Ministry do not

deny the situation: “A teacher needs a BA, the teacher’s certificate and a teaching license in order to receive tenure at a high school. Al-Quds University cannot grant a teacher’s certificate accredited by the Education Ministry because they are not recognized. Graduates of Al-Quds University can teach primary school and receive tenure, but they cannot advance to grade coordinator and principal. These teachers constitute a large portion of the teachers in East Jerusalem. Indeed, this is the university in Jerusalem for Palestinians. Many of them are considered good teachers. But it is not up to us. A graduate of Al-Quds who is fired from a high school and goes to work in a primary school receives years of seniority, but neither a pension nor tenure. If he is good and the job slot is available, he will continue to work the next year. Otherwise, he is fired.”¹⁰¹

A.S., a teacher in one of the elementary schools, told us: “All the time a threat is hanging over us. It is not enough that you struggle with the students, you must always worry that if you do not do exactly what the persons in authority deem correct, then

you will not be here.”¹⁰²

According to Education Ministry laws, every teacher must fill out a consent form agreeing to disclose information about themselves.¹⁰³ In contrast to an Israeli teacher who needs to receive confirmation from an

Teachers in the Palestinian sector must receive confirmation from the administration office, while Israeli teachers need only a confirmation from an education supervisor

education supervisor that she has no criminal record, in the Palestinian sector every teacher must receive confirmation from the head administrative office of the Ministry of Education.¹⁰⁴ Discrimination in the hiring conditions of teachers who are not Jewish and the assault on their privacy are only some of the many forms of discrimination that Palestinian education workers face.

H.M, a grade coordinator in one of the schools in the North of the city, commented: “The truth is that we are in an embarrassing situation. We do not receive genuine support from

the Education Ministry, nor from the principal. He expects us to transmit the material and that’s all; just like he did ten years ago. Nor do we get support from parents, who are not in the picture. Nor from the rest of the teachers; every one is suspicious of the motives of the other. It is a total breakdown of the educational system.”¹⁰⁵

With regard to the status of teachers who graduated from Al-Quds University,

the official response of the JEA is that it only absorbs teachers after receiving permission from the Education Ministry’s Department of Manpower in Education. The Education Ministry is the only authorized body to recognize diplomas from institutions of higher education. According to the Education Ministry, graduates of Al-Quds University are hired as temporary workers without tenure in East Jerusalem schools. Extension of their employment is conditional upon recognition of Al-Quds University degrees by the Israeli Council for Higher Education.

Situation of Pupils

The situation of East Jerusalem pupils who study in the official educational system is almost as difficult as that of those who study in the unofficial one. The conditions in which they have to function and learn are extremely difficult. For example, there is no infrastructure supporting disabled pupils. Unlike pupils in West Jerusalem, those in

East Jerusalem lack a variety of educational frameworks, such as technology and art schools. Many children have to leave school and work in order to help out with family finances. Thus, the failure of the educational system is double, and the statistical data cannot provide a full picture of the situation. The dropout rates, which are the highest in Israel, are only one index for measuring the failure of the system. Moreover, those pupils who do pass



School dropout: senior classrooms are half-empty / Photo: Niv Hachlili, 2005

through the system lack proficiency in the subject matters. Most of them will fail the high school matriculation finals known as Tawjihi. And even for those who do pass them, their average scores will not be sufficient for acceptance to higher education. Fe-

Only one and a half truancy officer positions are manned, and thus there is no supervision over school attendance

male pupils quit their studies for lack of a school near their homes, because their parents refuse to send them out of the village or neighborhood and, in many cases, prefer to marry them at a young age. Likewise, from our interviews with representatives of parent committees and conversations with parents and pupils, a very problematic picture emerges with regard to pupils' rights and the flexibility of the educational system.

School Dropout

The JEA allocates three truancy officers' positions, responsible for 90 schools in

East Jerusalem. In West Jerusalem, on the other hand, there are 11.5 positions, each officer responsible for 15-20 schools. The Knesset Research and Information Center found that in fact two truancy officers for East Jerusalem together share one and a half positions, while the third post remains unfilled.¹⁰⁶

Among the functions of the truancy officer is to check up on children's regular attendance at schools, to identify children-at-risk and prevent them from dropping out of the educational framework. One of the positions is broken down into two posts; each officer working for half a position. There is no structured and organized work plan. Rather, the officers act in response to calls from the schools. According to official figures from the JEA, the dropout rate in East Jerusalem schools reaches 50%.¹⁰⁷ "Whoever makes it to high school tries to stay. It does not require much," explained one high school teacher from East Jerusalem. "The parents put pressure on the children to arrive, so that they do not hang out on the street, but the situation is a catastrophe. Most do not

come to learn; they made it through elementary and middle school and understood that all that is expected of them is to come to class. Many of the pupils prefer to play with their cellular phones and goof off. And teachers feel that they are placed here to be babysitters, that they simply make sure that the pupils are sitting in class. Those who do not make noise are in a no less awful situation; some arrive to high school without knowing how to read and write.”¹⁰⁸

According to the annual statistics of the JEA, this year 1,096 12th grade pupils currently attend East Jerusalem schools that are under the supervision of the Education Ministry. An examination of the number of 10th grade high school pupils in 2003/2004, and those who continued to 11th grade in 2004/2005, and 12th grade in 2005/2006 reveals that more than 50% of the pupils in male high schools dropped out.¹⁰⁹ The figures are skewed because JEA includes

**Data on retention figures, from 10th to 12th grade,
from the Annual Statistical Digest of the JEA:**

High School	10 th Grade (2003/4)	11 th Grade (2004/5)	12 th Grade (2005/6)	Comments
Beit Safafa	140	138	120	
Abdallah Ibn al-Hussein Boys	139	88	46	
Shu'afat	186	129	99	
A-Tur Boys	195	126	91	
Jabel Mukhaber	154	127	111	
Ma'mouniyeh Girls	601	521	442	
Rashidiyeh Boys	401	247	192	
Tsur Baher	0	65	69	est. 2005
Ibn Khaldun	0	28	23	est. 2005
Total	1,816	1,376	1,101	Excluding new schools

the Beit Safafa high school in its list of high schools in East Jerusalem, even though it is the only official high school that follows the Israeli program of studies. Given that this high school is in fact part of “West Jerusalem” and that the infrastructure is considerably better than the other high schools in East Jerusalem, the dropout rate is very low. It should be noted the village of Beit Safafa is located both inside and outside the Green Line.

The Jordanian system decreased the ratio of people who never attended school by 17.5% annually, compared to only 0.72% annually by the Israeli system

An additional indication of the extent of school dropout is provided in a survey conducted by the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics. Breaking down the population according to years of schooling, the survey examines the number of years Palestinians studied under the Jordanian educational system prior to 1967, as opposed to those who studied under the Israeli one after 1967. Although the findings show a gradual increase in the number

of years of schooling following 1967, the rate of accumulation of education differs significantly between the two educational systems. What emerges from the comparison between graduates of the Jordanian educational system (twenty years prior to the Israeli occupation) and recent graduates (thirty years after the occupation) is that under the Jordanian educational system the number of school years increased on an average of 0.25 years annually, while under the Israeli educational system the rate dropped to 0.08 years annually. Furthermore, the number of Palestinians in East

Jerusalem who reported that they had never attended school under the Jordanian system decreased every year by 17.5%. While the number of persons who reported that they never attended school under the Israeli system dropped only by 0.72% annually.¹¹⁰

Indeed, it is more difficult to improve an established educational system than one in its infancy. It is obvious the Palestinian population that learned under the Jordanian educa-

tional system until 1967 was in a relatively better state than twenty years prior. Thus, the Israeli educational system has difficulty in demonstrating with statistics a significant improvement, as is the case with the Jordanian system. Yet the gap between the rate of improvement before and after the occupation is so evident that it is clear there instead of a gradual decline of improvement figures that one would expect from a sound educational system, we witness an abrupt break in the educational system in East Jerusalem, which clearly fails to meet the minimal needs of its target population.

Success in Matriculation Exams

Ibrahim Al-Khatib, the principal of the Tsur Baher High School, says “73% of our science-track students pass the Tawjihi matriculation exams, and 55% of the humanities-track students also pass. The rate of success has risen over the years. That is to say, of 17 exact sciences-track students, 12 passed; of 46 humanities-track students, 26 passed.”⁶³

pupils from the high school took the matriculation exams and 6 students did not take the exam at all (and were therefore not included in measuring the rate of success).¹¹¹

These figures do not reflect the situation on the ground, however. Tsur Baher is a new high school. From the beginning those who enrolled in the upper classes had already survived the educational system, and were thus students with relatively better chances of succeeding.

According to the internal figures of the JEA for the year 2005, in contrast to the figures submitted by the principal of Tsur Baher, only 20 students, in other words only 38% of all students passed the humanities matriculation exam. One of the teachers at the high school estimates that “of one hundred students who move up to high school from middle school, seven or eight of them cannot read and write. And that’s a very cautious assessment.” According to him, “whoever reaches 9th grade in this state is roughly at the level of 3rd grade, and there is no program in the school to deal with students with learning disabilities, not even for basic subjects. Also, there is no connection

between the school and parents; nor is there coordination with regard to children who need help in their studies.”¹¹²

On the basis of the JEA figures, in the 2002/2003 school years, the percentage of students from official high schools who successfully completed their compulsory matriculation exams was 55%. This percentage has persisted in climbing over the past few years.¹¹³ These figures are misleading, however. As mentioned above, all the students from East Jerusalem take the Tawjihi, the Palestinian matriculation

The ratio of Jews in Jerusalem who have matriculation certificates is 41 times the ratio among Palestinians

exams (first introduced under the Jordanian education system), which are different from the Israeli format. The Israeli educational system does not at all prepare students in East Jerusalem to continue their studies in Israeli higher education and does not oversee the level of studies.

The JEA takes pride that in 2003/2004, the gap in the success

rate of matriculation exams between Jewish students in West Jerusalem and Palestinian students in East Jerusalem narrowed—55% in East Jerusalem as opposed to 58% in West Jerusalem. Yet the calculation of this success rate is based only on those pupils who took the exams. According to the statistical data of the annual report of The National Council for the Child (“Children in Israel, 2004), East Jerusalem pupils had the lowest rate of eligibility for the matriculation exams in all of Israel, only 17.9%. In contrast, the average for the country

was 57.9%. Many of those eligible for the exams still do not receive grades that meet minimum university entrance requirements.

In 2005/2006, the rate of eligibility dropped considerably to 13.78%.¹¹⁴ In West Jerusalem, on the other hand, the rate of eligibility for the school year 2004/2006 was 53.9%.¹¹⁵

According to the figures of the Adva Center, for every Palestinian living in Jerusalem and holding a matriculation exam certificate, there are 82 Jews holding one. This translates

into a ratio of 1:41. Likewise, the Adva Center showed that the gap in the rate of success in matriculation examinations in Jerusalem widened between 2003 and 2004. In 2003, a Jewish pupil had 3.5 times more chance of being eligible for a matriculation certificate than his Palestinian peer in East Jerusalem. In 2006, his chances grew to 3.6 times more.¹¹⁶ The Jerusalem municipality responded that “in post-primary schools in East Jerusalem, several educational programs to deal with children liable to drop out of school were implemented. These programs emphasize a variety of subject matters, in addition to [promoting] social and emotional skills of pupils.”¹¹⁷

The Holistic Program

In an effort to reduce the gap between the educational system in the Jewish sector and that in the Palestinian sector in Jerusalem, a four-year-long holistic program was implemented in East Jerusalem from September 1999. The program attempted to engage with the gamut of problems in their entirety. Over the course of

four years, the budget for various subjects came to NIS 130 million. In comparison to sums expended in the Jewish sector all over the country, this is little money—less than one seventh of a percent (0.14%) of the total educational budget for those years.¹¹⁸ The holistic program also received an additional NIS 107 million to reduce gaps in educational opportunities and another NIS 26 million for infrastructure; about NIS 30 million a year. The project was the pride of the JEA, even though the budget of the program covered less than one tenth of the gap in investment in education between the two sectors during those years. The JEA noted in the final report of the holistic program (March 2003) that although the program operated within a difficult political and security context, it succeeded in spurring many significant changes in the educational institutions in East Jerusalem, and enhanced the municipal educational system.

In our conversations with high school teachers and principals in East Jerusalem, we asked about the holistic program. All of the interviewees pointed out that the

question was irrelevant, given that the program ended after four years (even though in 2005/2006 it resumed “operation,” but with a far smaller budget of NIS 8 million). Most schools currently do not avail themselves of the holistic program. All the interviewees agreed that if one wants real positive results, then the state must increase the program budget every year, to continue and expand it, and to conduct it for at least ten straight years. As for measuring the success of the program as defined in the final report, most

The Wall creates difficulties for children and teachers to reach schools. It is estimated that transportation costs created by the Wall are NIS 320 per child, monthly

interviewees pointed out that it was arguable whether the level of studies and reading comprehension improved, rates of illiteracy, violence, and school dropout declined—given the realities they witness. Many a time, we were told that the authors of the report were given the data and did not actually check them.

The Impact of the Separation Wall on the Educational System in East Jerusalem

The construction of the Separation Wall in Jerusalem is near completion. The Wall is built in Jerusalem’s north, east and south, cutting many Palestinian neighborhoods in two and isolating Palestinian areas from their surroundings. The sections that have not been completed are under heavy security, and all

movement through them comes with a mandatory search by Israeli soldiers. The issue of the Separation Wall has already been

dealt with in an earlier publication of the Alternative Information Center: *The Separation Wall in East Jerusalem: Economic Consequences*, No. 11-12, January-February 2007. Household incomes in East Jerusalem have been adversely affected as a result of its construction, and, with them the ability of parents to invest in their children’s

education.¹¹⁹

The Ir-Amim Foundation has pointed out that the Wall has exacerbated the problems of educational system in East Jerusalem. Many children who reside on the eastern side of the separation barrier and whose school is located on the western side, must walk far to transit the nearest gated checkpoint to attend school. Hundreds of Palestinians who teach in private schools in East Jerusalem faced difficulties in acquiring permits to cross the checkpoints, and children attending private schools thus lose thousands of teaching hours. The Knesset Research and Information Center corroborated these findings.¹²⁰

Pupils from the Kufr Aqab village, for example, have to spend four hours each day going to and from school, because of the delays caused by the Wall. The courts forbade the state from completing the wall at the village of Sheikh Sa'ad, and a permanent roadblock was thus set up. Soldiers at this roadblock check all the children on their way to school each morning, without exception. The Wall has even entailed spending money on travel, up to NIS 320 a month per child.¹²¹

Sirhan Salima, Council Head of the A-Ram neighborhood and Coordinator of the Popular Committee against the Apartheid Wall in Jerusalem, points out that 22 schools in Al-Barid and A-Ram are liable to be closed, given that the Wall closes off the neighborhoods and children have difficulty going to school.

A study conducted by the veteran Palestinian human rights organization Al-Haq on the school for orphans in Beit Hanina reveals an especially harsh example of how the Wall has hurt the educational system in East Jerusalem. Since construction began, children and teachers have had difficulty in reaching the school. Few get entry permits; those who do have to renew them every three months. In many instances, the permits are not renewed.¹²³

Long-Term Economic Impact

Neglect of the educational system in East Jerusalem not only violates children's right to education, but further harms

the entire Palestinian population in the region. As the Indian economist Amartya Kumar Sen argues, every person has the right of opportunity to realize his or her abilities. Inadequate education hurts the future opportunities of children as adults, in addition to the opportunities of their families and dependents.¹²⁴

The Jerusalem Institute for Israel Studies, an independent, non-profit organization, showed that the close relationship between rate of participation in the workforce in Jerusalem and level of education, and specifically, the very low participation of East Jerusalem Palestinian women in the workforce, is largely a result of a deficient education. The low participation in the labor market does not indicate idleness but rather, for the most part, a life of hard labor, unrecognized by the authorities and insufficiently remunerated.¹²⁵

It is not possible here to assess exactly how the potential loss of income of the Palestinian population in East Jerusalem results from neglect of the educational system. We would have had to script a scenario in which the educational system functioned well,

and to compare the differences between these imagined and the actual income levels. No doubt were the State of Israel to provide Palestinians in East Jerusalem the full rights they deserve, their income would be similar to the national average in Israel. However, the right to education is only one of the many rights Israel denies the inhabitants of East Jerusalem.

Drawing on data from 2005, the average per capita salary in West Jerusalem (calculated as the average earnings of a salaried person in Israel times the rate of participation in the labor force in West Jerusalem) is NIS 3,515 a month. In East Jerusalem the average salary (calculated according to the average earnings of a salaried person in East Jerusalem times the rate of participation in the labor force in East Jerusalem) is NIS 1,151 a month. In other words, the residents of East Jerusalem earn NIS 6.5 billion a year less than were their salary and rate of employment equivalent to that in West Jerusalem. This gap accumulates over the years, and greatly increases the inequality between the two populations.¹²⁶

Summary

“The right to education without any distinction, exclusion, limitation or preference which, being based on race, color, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, economic condition or birth.”

— The Convention against Discrimination in Education, ratified by Israel in 1961,

Given that Israel maintains separate educational systems for Jews and Palestinian citizens, then it must provide the same standards of education in equivalent conditions.

The education laws in Israel—Compulsory Education Law, Free Compulsory Education Law, Rights of the Pupil and Law of Special Education—oblige the State of Israel to provide free education to children in East Jerusalem.

The right to education is universally recognized under international law. The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and the Convention on the Rights of the Child, to which Israel is a party, guarantee a right to education.

International jurists have deter-

mined that Israel breaks international law in that it adversely affects the continual operation of the educational system in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, and particularly in East Jerusalem.¹²⁷ The educational situation in East Jerusalem should concern not only those in charge of the educational system in Israel and in particular Jerusalem, but also all persons concerned with the future of Jerusalem.

The Israeli educational system is responsible for the education of East Jerusalem children, but Israeli decision makers openly express an unwillingness to invest resources and efforts in East Jerusalem education. The State of Israel is obligated to provide the best possible education in order to improve the future collective lives of communities under its rule and to guarantee

the future of every child. In reality, Israel shirks its responsibilities and is incapable, uninterested or makes little effort to supply suitable education, as well as influence the shaping of the future generation in practical and positive ways.

The legitimate demand of Palestinians to end the occupation in East Jerusalem does not conflict with the demand for equal treatment to all

The collapse of the educational infrastructure destroys the moral foundations of a society, and provides the groundwork for intolerance, violence, poverty, crime, ignorance and racism

people who live under Israeli control. Furthermore, the legal and moral obligation of the Israeli authorities to repair the damage accumulated through decades of neglect of the education system in East Jerusalem will not end when the Israeli military forces withdraw. Restoring the education system in the city is part of Israel's debt owed to the Palestinian population in East Jerusalem.

The collapse of the educational infrastructure destroys the moral foun-

datations of a society, a society open to dialogue and difference, one that is stronger, healthier, giving and developing. The existing situation provides a recipe for every possible disease: intolerance, violence, poverty, crime, ignorance and racism.

The solution is not at the local level, but at the national one. Israel must take responsibility for the situation of the children in East Jerusalem,

irrespective of political issues on the agenda. Physical, organic and pedagogical infrastructure

must be transparent and built with the full participation of the residents of East Jerusalem.

The Israeli government repeatedly complains that the textbooks used in the Occupied Palestinian Territories are full of hatred toward Israel. But at the same time it does nothing to positively influence the "products of the system" that are under its tutelage. On the other hand, the state could provide better education and knowledge, improve the subject contents,

and instill foundational moral values of society, whether Palestinian, Israeli, or western.¹²⁸

At the local level, the Jerusalem Municipality must change its priorities and immediately allocate appropriate budgets to reduce the educational gap between East and West Jerusalem, and ensure a proper educational system for all.

At the national level, an all-time high in insensitivity was registered in January 2007 when, in his speech in honor of the launching of the annual report of the National Council for the Child, Prime Minister Ehud Olmert opted to say: "In the past few years there has been a revolution in the Arab education in East Jerusalem. There is no place in the country which, relative to the size of its population, more money is invested in pupils, more buildings have been built and more resources allocated to improve the ed-

ucation." The figures that the Primer Minister gave do not concur with any of the studies that have been done on this topic, and completely contradict both official figures and the situation on the ground.¹²⁹

All official bodies that deal with the education of East Jerusalem children must get together and immediately set up time tables, in order to implement a multi-year program to rehabilitate the educational system. This must be done immediately, with the active participation of local residents, together with qualified and experienced persons who can make decisions at the highest level. In order for this to happen, the educational system, both at the local and national levels, must be reassessed. If such a reassessment does not happen soon, the results are liable to sow disaster for both Israelis and Palestinians alike.

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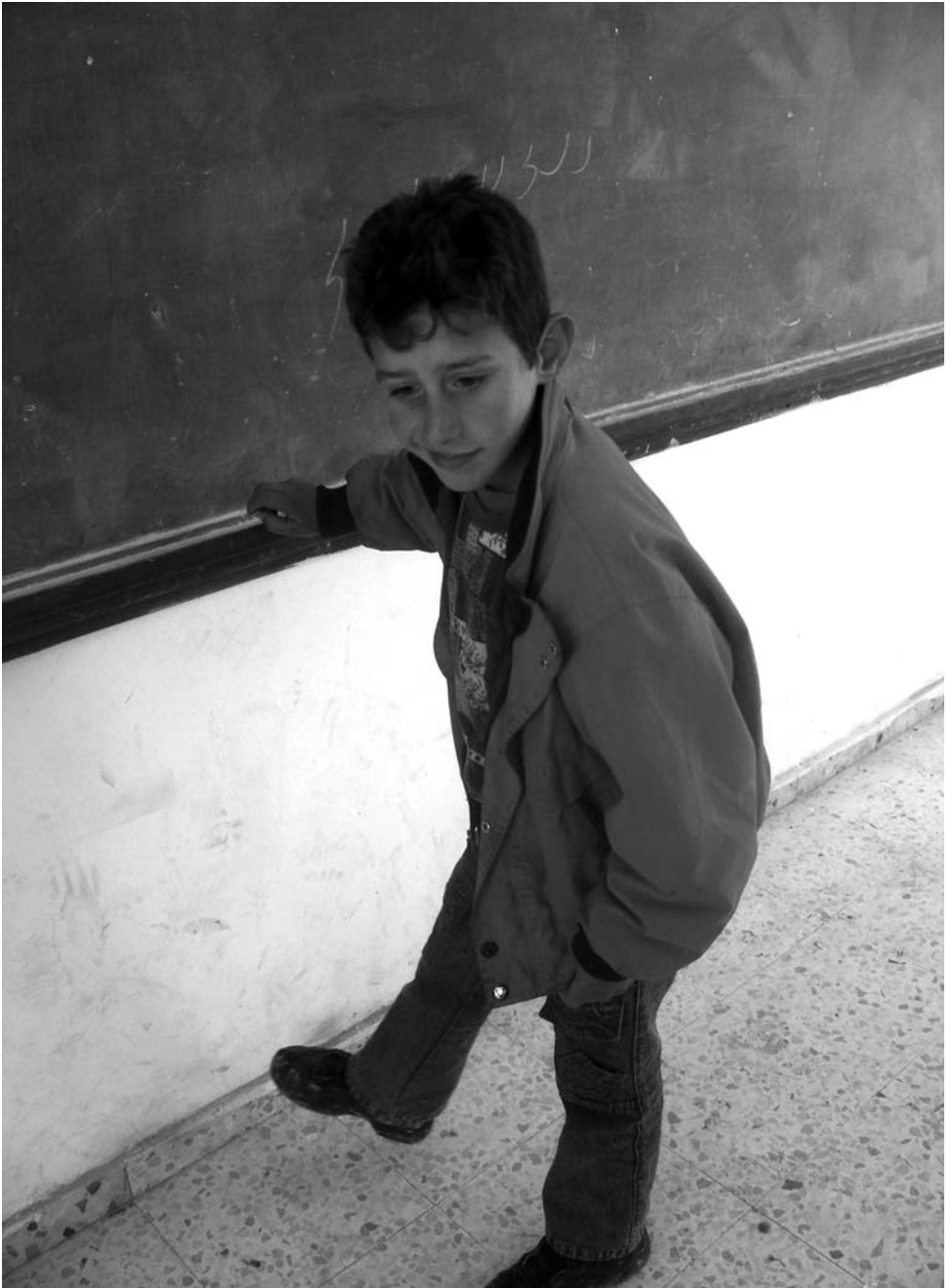


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