

HOPE FROM JERUSALEM

13 Principles for Future Israeli-Palestinian Peace
in Jerusalem as the Capital of Two Peoples

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I. Background

"Jerusalem can serve as a concrete model on how to grant proper expression to the national aspirations of both peoples through an equitable approach based on a commitment to individual and collective rights, self-determination, and interdependence."

The deadly Hamas attack on October 7th and the ensuing devastating war in Gaza have deeply pained and shaken both Israelis and Palestinians, while shattering the myth that 'managing' or unilaterally 'shrinking' the conflict was a sustainable alternative to a negotiated political agreement. Although such a path might seem further than ever before, the past year has confirmed that the only way to achieve peace and security for both peoples is through an agreed political resolution. And there is no resolution without Jerusalem as the capital of both peoples.

Previous peace efforts have relegated discussions over the political future of the city to the final stages of negotiations, fearing they might be derailed by the complexities therein. However, this has only stalled negotiations and led to further deterioration of conditions on the ground. Rather than an obstacle, Ir Amim believes Jerusalem can serve as a key for resolving the conflict. Therefore, we seek to re-center Jerusalem in the political discourse.

In this paper, Ir Amim puts forward an outline for a political resolution for Jerusalem, including steps that should be taken now to advance towards this goal. This outline can bring hope to both peoples living in the city and, under the appropriate political conditions, serve as a lever for resolving the conflict as a whole. Our vision is predicated on the values of equality and self-determination for both Israelis and Palestinians and stems from the recognition of both peoples' historic, religious, and political attachments to the city.

This paper was written out of a sense of urgency and concern for the city of Jerusalem, the people that live in it, and the region at large. Ir Amim is a non-partisan organization that has a long history of addressing the complexity of life in Jerusalem and its political future, within the context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. At the center of our work is an understanding of Jerusalem as the home of both Israelis and Palestinians—a city that should uphold the dignity and welfare of all its residents and protect their holy sites and their historical and cultural assets.

The paper is organized in the following manner: In the first section, we present the context from which this paper sprung; then, in the second section, we put forward the 13 essential principles that should guide an agreement over Jerusalem; lastly, in the third section, we delineate some of the immediate steps that should take place to improve the lives of residents in both sides of the city and prepare the ground for political negotiations.

A. Why Speak about an Agreement Now

The events of October 7th and the war in Gaza have generated deep existential turmoil among Israelis and Palestinians alike. Dread has overshadowed all aspects of life, leading to increased fear and demonization. Along with the great collapse of a sense of security after October 7th, all unilateral concepts of ‘managing’, ‘shrinking’ or ‘determining’ the shape of the conflict—including the idea of a one-sided separation propped up by a sophisticated barrier—also collapsed. In contrast, the strength and significance of political agreements with countries that were once considered bitter enemies have proven themselves, even amidst these challenging times. As distant and impossible as a different reality may currently seem, a shift *can* take place that will lead to a political agreement, even amid the pain and loss of this conflict. This should be facilitated by international support, and based on the mutual right to self-determination and on the principles of equality and justice for both peoples.

There is likely nothing more difficult at present than envisioning a beneficial future of agreement and reciprocity between Palestinians and Israelis. After decades of ongoing delegitimization of political negotiation processes, a renewed discourse on a resolution must be relevant to people’s lives, address their concerns, and ensure a genuine improvement in their living conditions. It must recognize, on the one hand, the injustices of the occupation, and, on the other, the interdependence among both peoples who share this land. In addition to aspects of distinctiveness and self-determination, it must also include elements of sharing, equality, mutual prosperity, and broad civil support. Moreover, any renewed discourse on a political agreement must stem from an unwavering commitment to protecting the human rights of all individuals—including women, minorities, and children—as well as their physical and social environments. It must grant both populations a concrete sense of justice, inclusion, and hope.

This is not a utopian perspective. It will be fraught with challenges and obstacles, and there will be no shortage of actors who will take advantage of every opportunity to derail it. But neither is it naïve or impossible. Traces of it can be found in the mixed cities within Israel

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where tensions have not escalated during this period despite relentless attempts to ignite them, and, especially, in the city at the heart of the conflict: Jerusalem. Therefore, Ir Amim believes that Jerusalem can and should serve as the starting point from which a different reality can be imagined and promoted based on the principles proposed in this paper. These principles can help improve the city’s current reality and under the appropriate political conditions serve as the foundation for a political solution in Jerusalem and even for the conflict as a whole.

B. Why Start with Jerusalem

Jerusalem is the heart of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, its litmus test, and, at the same time, it is the city where the largest populations of Israelis and Palestinians live in a shared urban space. Both peoples see Jerusalem as their capital and as the focal point of their national, religious, and historic attachments. This reality of a shared connection to Jerusalem is a source of tension but has also fostered mutual recognition and interdependence.

Throughout all previous rounds of negotiations, discussions on Jerusalem were postponed indefinitely, on grounds that the issue was so charged that it would hinder the negotiations’ progress.¹ Yet, to date, putting off the question of Jerusalem has only served to normalize the occupation and to encourage a unilateral discourse that has increased mistrust among the parties. The approach presented in this paper, which is even more vital in the wake of October 7th and the subsequent outbreak of the war, proposes to reverse this paradigm. Rather than being considered an obstacle to peace, Jerusalem should be seen as its starting point and as the key to a sustainable agreement, parts of which can start being implemented immediately.

In both parts of the city, Israeli and Palestinian, there is a vibrant and diverse civil society which is vastly knowledgeable on the intricacies of living in an environment of conflict, and many of whose members are involved in activities to prevent violence and advance dialogue. This is an important social force which can and should be harnessed towards

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envisioning and implementing a political resolution. Jerusalem can serve as a concrete model on how to grant proper expression to the national aspirations of both peoples through an equitable approach based on a commitment to individual and collective rights, self-determination, and interdependence.

C. Jerusalem's Status

To date, life in Jerusalem has been based on an impossible anomaly: nearly 40% of its population is composed of Palestinian residents who live under occupation, lacking civil and political equality. Palestinian residents of East Jerusalem endure deep discrimination in the provision of public services, resource allocation, and the quality of infrastructure in their neighborhoods; they are subject to severe discrimination in housing and planning; live under the constant threat of having their residency status revoked; and face incessant attempts to push them from the city's physical and symbolic space.

Since the construction of the separation barrier in the early 2000s, East Jerusalem has been effectively cut off from the rest of the West Bank. Therefore, even while experiencing deep discrimination, Palestinian residents have come to increasingly depend on Israeli systems. Meanwhile, access to the city and its holy sites for Palestinian residents of the West Bank has been heavily restricted.

In addition to cutting off East Jerusalem from the rest of the West Bank, the construction of the separation barrier also physically disconnected several East Jerusalem neighborhoods from the rest of the city. Today, around one third of Jerusalem's Palestinian residents live in neighborhoods located beyond the separation barrier. They are cut off from most municipal services due to severe neglect by Israeli authorities and suffer from restrictions on their freedom of movement despite being residents of the city.

This inequality and the harmful consequences of the decades-long occupation have resulted in the deterioration of the social fabric and the escalation of violence and tensions in Jerusalem. Nevertheless, Jerusalem remains a city where Israelis and Palestinians live

side by side, and where cooperation and mutual dependence are present in many aspects of daily life. For example, over one third of East Jerusalem residents work in the Israeli labor market, in roles that range from entry-level to senior management, in fields as varied as transportation, construction, trade, tourism, and health services. Likewise, many of the city's public spaces are used by both populations.

Since the construction of the separation barrier, the number of Palestinian students in Israeli higher education institutions has steadily increased. In both parts of the city, the demand for language studies—both Israelis studying Arabic and Palestinians studying Hebrew—is steadily increasing. Cooperation among civil society activists on both sides is also growing.

Freedom of movement and spatial contiguity are shared needs for most Israelis and Palestinians in the city, and both share a local identity as Jerusalemites, in addition to, or as a complement to, their national identity. Interdependence has strengthened the routine of life in the city and has been one of the positive factors in helping to restore a partial sense of security even amidst a reality of regional conflict. Despite the incessant incitement and repression from various actors, including Israeli government ministers, an active civil society has prevented an uncontrolled deterioration from taking place. Concerned residents on both sides have cooperated in addressing the population's needs, and, in most cases, succeeded in protecting their communities and routines.

D. Framework for the Desired Agreement

Ir Amim's outline is based on the basic principles of a two-state solution: self-determination, democracy, equality, and human rights. Yet, it offers a flexible implementation adapted to the existing reality and incorporates lessons learned from prior negotiations. The permanent political framework (i.e. two independent states, a confederation, etc.) must be determined through an agreement by both parties, taking into consideration each side's collective needs. From this, the status of Jerusalem as the capital of both peoples will also be derived.

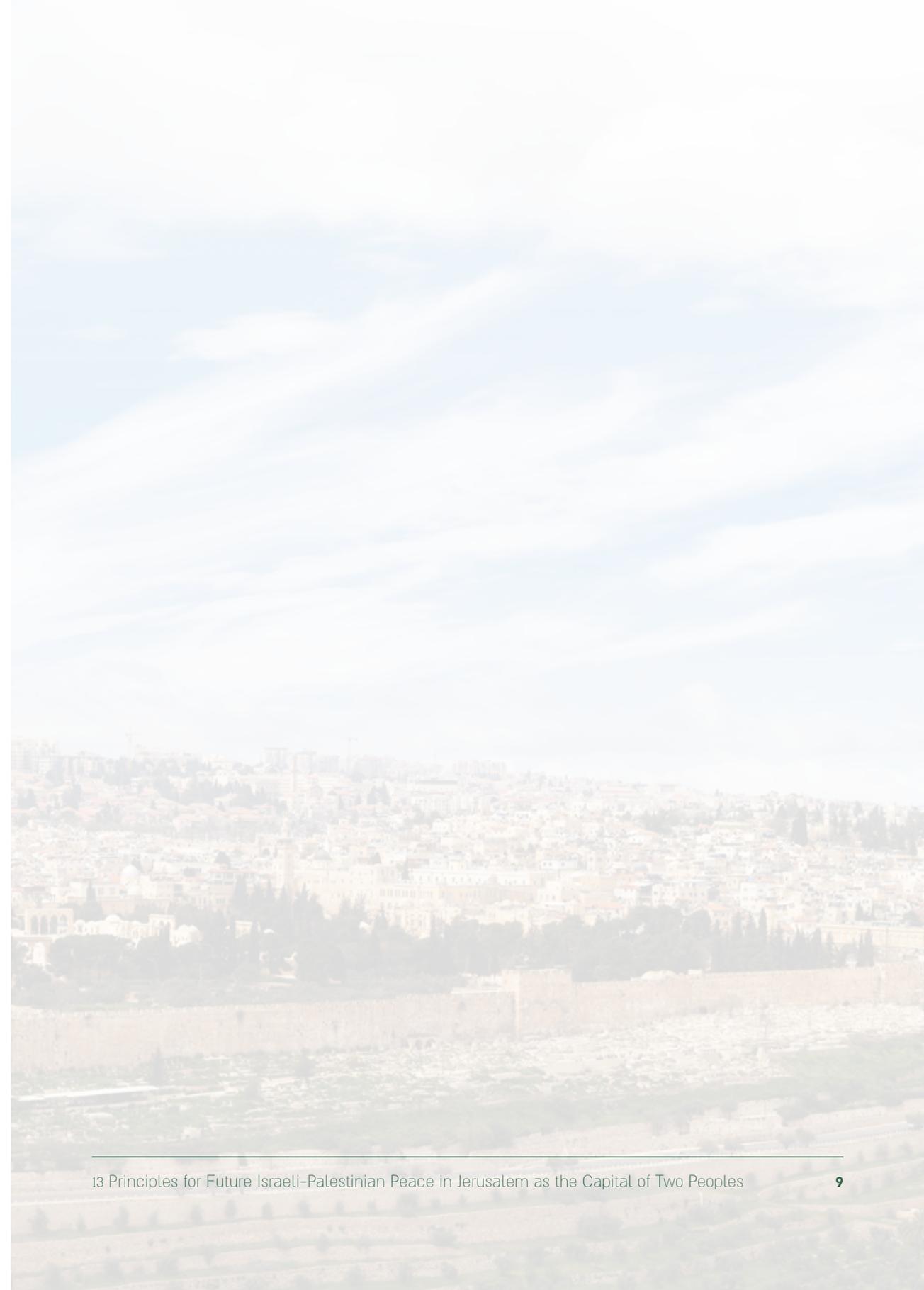
This paper establishes 13 essential principles that should guide any political agreement on Jerusalem. These principles address the core issues—including borders; authority and governance; citizenship status; and holy sites—as well as the necessity of maintaining

the continuity of life and fostering mutual dependency and ties. Furthermore, the paper points to concrete actions that must be taken to create a reality amenable to negotiations, some of which can already be implemented. Addressing these core issues from the start is essential considering ongoing attempts to create facts on the ground that thwart a political solution.

We believe the proposed arrangement will create a more beneficial and equitable reality for both peoples. Having said that, any agreement will entail pain, uncertainty, and significant concerns, whereby each side is likely to perceive its own concessions as greater than those of the other. It is even more challenging to compromise on places of great symbolic and religious significance. Extremist entities on both sides will do everything in their power to sabotage the agreement and set the region ablaze.

In addition, any discussion on Jerusalem should take into consideration the fact that a significant percentage of its population, both Palestinian and Israeli, live under the poverty line and face economic and other hardships. These factors raise additional considerations and requirements for the feasibility and sustainability of an agreement in Jerusalem that were taken into account in the formulation of this outline. We are convinced that the question of Jerusalem should no longer be delayed and believe that the outline proposed below can help promote a political solution and serve as a basis for discussions on the matter.

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II. 13 Principles for an Agreement on Jerusalem in the Framework of a Political Solution

"The fabric of life and freedom of movement must be maintained, within the framework of an open city where each collective can conduct their lives in an autonomous and sovereign manner, both independently and in relation to one another."

A. Nature of Agreement and Distribution of Powers

- 1. Under any political constellation, the two peoples (and many groups within them) will live side by side in Jerusalem.** Beyond constituting a core political issue, Jerusalem is a city with a shared daily reality, even if an unequal one. A sustainable solution for Jerusalem must take into account both of these aspects and create a horizon for an equitable future that recognizes both peoples' full range of ties to the city and ensures their capacity to lead their daily lives—as well as their public, religious, and political activities—side by side, free of fear, and in an independent and equitable manner.
- 2. The proposed solution in this paper is based on a flexible arrangement that enables self-determination and interdependence.** Since 1967, extensive connections and interdependence have developed between the two parts of the city, even if under a reality of occupation and deep discrimination. Israeli construction beyond the Green Line has reduced the distance between Israeli neighborhoods/settlements and Palestinian neighborhoods, and the seam lines between them have grown increasingly thin. A barrier separating the city would not only be ineffective, but could also harm physical and communal spaces, intensifying resentment and hostility. Thus, the fabric of life and freedom of movement must be maintained, within the framework of an open city where each collective can conduct their lives in an autonomous and sovereign manner, both independently and in relation to one another.
- 3. The proposed structure will require a framework of joint oversight in which participation of third parties must also be considered:** The United Nations, the United States, the European Union, Arab states, and moderate actors or representatives from the world's three major religions. The involvement of these parties is also desirable in helping to protect human rights and maintain favorable conditions for a solution prior to its achievement.

B. Borders, Territorial Contiguity, and Holy Sites

4. Clear borders are a condition for autonomous life and for each collective's capacity to develop as a community, preserve its heritage, and develop its physical spaces according to its needs.

This is especially true in Jerusalem where, since 1967, severe restrictions have been imposed on the physical development of the Palestinian population, and where many land reserves in East Jerusalem have been expropriated for Israeli settlements. The Clinton Parameters (2001) proposed that the Israeli neighborhoods built since 1967 beyond the Green Line would be included within the boundaries of Israeli Jerusalem based on a land swap—a principle that was tentatively accepted by both sides.² However, since then, tens of thousands of additional housing units have been planned and constructed in existing and new Israeli settlements. Given this reality, any advancement towards a political solution would first require the immediate cessation of land confiscation and settlement advancement, along with fair land swaps of equal quantitative and qualitative value in exchange for lands already confiscated. Preferably, settlement enclaves in the heart of Palestinian neighborhoods should be dismantled and vacated, given their proven harm to the fabric of Palestinian life and to relations between Israelis and Palestinians in the city. In the event that they were to remain in place, they should not retain a separate status within the territory that would be under Palestinian authority in the framework of a political agreement.

5. Territorial contiguity must be ensured both within East Jerusalem and between it and the West Bank.

Palestinians could consider expanding East Jerusalem eastward (toward E1, a-Ram, and other West Bank territory) where there are additional land reserves for development, just as Israelis could expand West Jerusalem westwards (preferably with respect to environmental considerations). However, it should be underscored that this is not another incarnation of the “Abu Dis plan”³: West Bank territory will constitute an addition, not a substitute, for East Jerusalem's organic urban contiguity. Furthermore, East Jerusalem neighborhoods beyond the separation barrier are an integral part of Palestinian Jerusalem and should not be separated from the city's urban space and population.⁴

6. The Old City is the core of East Jerusalem and an integral part of its sovereign space.⁵

At the same time, it is home to a high concentration of holy sites for both peoples and for the world's three major monotheistic religions. Freedom of access to holy sites must be ensured for all. To this end, special management arrangements should be considered with the support of the aforementioned international entities, especially the Jordanian government.⁶ Unnecessary expansion of these arrangements into other areas of the Old City basin should be avoided. Specific sites may be included on a reciprocal basis as necessary, but the use of holy and heritage sites (whether recognized or 'newly recognized') as a basis for the appropriation of further territorial control and contiguity must be avoided.⁷ The status quo must be maintained: the Temple Mount/Haram al-Sharif compound will remain a Muslim place of worship under Palestinian-Jordanian management, and the Western Wall Plaza will remain a Jewish place of worship under Israeli management.

C. Citizenship Status, Municipal Services, and Freedom of Movement

7. Residents of East Jerusalem (on both sides of the separation barrier) will enjoy full civil and political rights as part of the Palestinian collective.

Israeli residency status, alongside a Palestinian national identity, has so far defined the complex identity of East Jerusalem residents. Despite continuous attempts to undermine Palestinian connection to Jerusalem, this status has also helped to confirm it; it has largely enabled freedom of movement, granted partial socioeconomic rights, and provided a certain sense of stability.⁸ An abrupt disruption or change that would generate panic and chaos must be avoided; instead, flexible and gradual procedures should be established that recognize Israel's responsibility for the fate of East Jerusalem residents and that acknowledge their long-standing contribution to the city's life and economy. Residency status in the State of Israel should not expire overnight; instead, the parties should agree on steps that allow for the gradual transition of status while protecting individual rights throughout the process. Other options—such as Palestinians retaining long-term Israeli residency or establishing a special residency status for Jerusalem—should not be ruled out under conditions to be agreed upon.

8. Freedom of movement will be maintained throughout the urban sphere for the city's entire population.

Oversight of movement in and out of the city will be conducted at the peripheral boundaries of the city and allow for freedom of movement within the city itself.⁹ The city's entry and exit requirements will be determined through coordination by both parties and mutual commitment to the principle of freedom of movement.

9. The labor market, hospitals, commercial and recreational areas will be open to all of Jerusalem's residents, Israelis and Palestinians.

All the city's residents will enjoy full social protection and comprehensive medical insurance as part of ensuring their welfare and personal security.

D. Security

10. Security arrangements will be based on a mutually determined, realistic, beneficial, and inclusive approach formulated with minimal disruption to freedom of movement and daily routines.

October 7th demonstrated that even the most elaborate measures cannot provide hermetic security or replace good neighborly relations or diplomatic arrangements. At the same time, it significantly elevated anxiety levels and consequently increased physical and psychological dependence on security measures. Conversely, the relatively quick return to shared daily life in Jerusalem after October 7th helped restore at least a partial sense of security. Therefore, security arrangements should be based on a realistic conception of optimal security and on a horizon of hope for both sides and be developed with respect to cultural and gender sensitivities. Furthermore, civilian armament should end. In addition to the input of professional entities, the formulation of security arrangements should involve civilian, community, and religious actors from both sides, and, if necessary, international actors (as mentioned above). A parallel investment should be made to increase trust, cultivate tolerance, and promote non-violent ways of coping with fear.

E. Socioeconomic Development and a Shared Narrative

11. The formulation of a resolution for Jerusalem should include integrated processes between policymakers and civil society representatives (Top Down & Bottom Up) at all stages.

The process should include experts and consultants from a wide variety of fields and formulate equitable notions of security and welfare that are sensitive to social, religious, and gender diversity and that take into account the daily experiences of the different groups living in the city, their perceptions of life, and their needs in a reality of conflict. Active civil society on both sides has a critical role to play in mediating these processes, fostering public readiness for the change to come, and creating an atmosphere of dialogue, tolerance, and cooperation. This process must take place based on a mutual commitment to self-determination, equality, and human rights.

12. From the very beginning of negotiations, and throughout their various stages, considerable investments must be channeled towards Jerusalem.

Large-scale projects of cooperation and economic development for Palestinians and Israelis should be carried out in order for both populations to experience the immediate and concrete benefits of a political agreement and start building a shared story of growth, joint heritage, and peace. Additionally, significant investments should be made in order to mobilize broad public support for the agreement and highlight its immediate benefits. Widespread public and international support for the process, together with substantial and tangible benefits, will be crucial to the success of any agreement.

13. Along with promoting an outline for a solution and projects aimed at economic development, civil society on both sides must be harnessed to support projects that promote wide-scale dialogue initiatives, social entrepreneurship, and artistic and cultural activities.

A cadre of opinion shapers must be trained to increase public support for the agreement. The aforementioned entities, along with political, communal, religious, artistic, and cultural leaders, should be partners in the design and implementation of a new story for Jerusalem. This story should be grounded in shared pride for the city's uniqueness and symbolism, recognition and affirmation of its diverse populations, their heritage and contributions, and a perception of the political agreement as a success story.

III. Measures to Adopt Immediately

"A renewed discourse on a resolution must be relevant to people's lives, address their concerns, and ensure a genuine improvement in their living conditions."

- A. **All unilateral actions aimed at expelling one side, eroding conditions for negotiations and/or sabotaging a resolution must cease immediately.** These include construction and expansion of settlements; de facto and de jure annexation steps, including those implied by the separation barrier's route (the settlement blocs of "Greater Jerusalem"¹⁰); land registration procedures; violation of the status quo on the Temple Mount/Haram al-Sharif; systemic discrimination in housing and planning policy; evictions and home demolitions; as well as attempts to unilaterally change the city's demographic composition through the revocation of residency rights, legislation, territorial changes, formal disconnection of the neighborhoods beyond the separation barrier from the city, or through any other means.
- B. **Extreme caution must be exercised in the deployment of security forces towards civilian populations, and disruptions to daily routines and freedom of movement and expression should be avoided.** The asymmetry in control over security measures, which exposes the Palestinian population to discriminatory enforcement, must be taken into account. Those responsible for implementing security measures must provide equal security to Israelis and Palestinians, respect the rights of both populations, and act with fairness, restraint, and devoid of ethnic or political biases. Civilian armament should end.
- C. **The systemic inequalities affecting East Jerusalem residents must be addressed immediately and significantly by fairly allocating substantial budgets to reduce socio-economic gaps.** Any threat to residency status should be removed; building and planning policies should allow Palestinian communities to grow and develop adequately and should respect the integrity and contiguity of Palestinian space.
- D. **The city's Palestinian population should be free to build and strengthen their own institutions and entities,** and to manage their civic life in as many areas as possible in an autonomous manner and without fear.

- E. Living conditions in West Jerusalem must also be markedly improved** as a prerequisite for reducing tensions, strengthening personal security, and fostering a horizon for dialogue.
- F. Preparations toward an agreement and its implementation should be accompanied by huge investments, along with broad local and international support** aimed at strengthening the economy, democracy, human rights, and civil society. Such investments should involve education toward peace; dialogue; interfaith understanding; and the engagement of as many civil entities as possible to support the process based on the principles presented in this paper; as well as the development of socioeconomic and cultural cooperation to foster shared heritage, multiculturalism, hope, and a sense of success.
- G. Local neighborhood leadership and infrastructure should be strengthened** in order to harness them towards solution-supporting processes and to create the foundations for self-governance.

Endnotes:

1. Lior Lehrs, "Peace Talks on Jerusalem: A Review of the Israeli-Palestinian Negotiations Concerning Jerusalem 1993-2013" (Jerusalem: Jerusalem Institute for Policy Research, 2013).
2. Ir Amim, "Jerusalem: The Rising Cost of Peace" (Jerusalem: Ir Amim, February 2015); Lehrs, "Peace Talks Over Jerusalem."
3. The peace plan (2020) presented by the first Trump administration embraced the idea of establishing a Palestinian capital to the east and north of the separation barrier, including Abu Dis and the East Jerusalem neighborhoods that the barrier currently separates from the city. This idea was intended to negate the basis for a Palestinian claim to East Jerusalem proper and sought to delineate a Palestinian capital under untenable urban and geographical conditions. These are peripheral areas unconnected to each other and of no symbolic importance in and of themselves, and they cannot constitute a substitute for East Jerusalem and its crucial historic and symbolic values. These ideas have already been rejected by Palestinians in the past. See Ir Amim, "Ramifications of the US Middle East Plan on the Future of Jerusalem" (Jerusalem: Ir Amim, April 2020).
4. Ir Amim, "Destructive Unilateral Measures to Redraw the Borders of Jerusalem" (Jerusalem: Ir Amim, January 2018).
5. During negotiations under the Barak government, progress was made toward an agreement in which the Jewish Quarter would remain under Israeli sovereignty. Israel also wanted the Armenian Quarter, or a corridor from it that would allow access to the Western Wall through Jaffa Gate, to be under Israeli sovereignty, but this matter remained in dispute. See Ir Amim, "Jerusalem: The Rising Cost of Peace" and Lehrs, "Peace Talks Over Jerusalem."
6. Michael Bell, John Bell, and Michael Molloy, "Mandate Elements for the Old City Special Regime," in "Proposals for the Old City of Jerusalem" (Department of Political Science, University of Windsor, February 2010); Geneva Initiative, "Jerusalem Reconsidered: Two Capitals, One Undivided City" (Geneva Initiative, March 2021); Menachem Klein, "Back from the Brink: An Israeli-Palestinian Proposal for Jerusalem," *IAI Commentaries* 21, no. 29 (June 2021).
7. See, for example, Ir Amim, "Ramifications of the US Middle East Plan."
8. As stated by the Supreme Court, the status of East Jerusalem residents in Israel is unique by virtue of their being "indigenous residents" (Administrative Appeal 3268/14, Supreme Court of Israel, 2017).
9. See Geneva Initiative, "Jerusalem Reconsidered" and Klein, "Back from the Brink."
10. 'Greater Jerusalem' includes the settlement blocs of Ma'ale Adumim, Givat Ze'ev, and Gush Etzion which were included as part of the Jerusalem area by the route of the separation barrier. 'Greater Jerusalem' fragments the West Bank and isolates East Jerusalem and its residents from the overall Palestinian space, severely sabotaging a two-state solution. This plan also has a demographic component: approximately 140,000 settlers live in these three blocs. Were they to be counted within Jerusalem's metropolitan area and a similar number of Palestinian residents living in neighborhoods beyond the barrier subtracted from it (as some iterations of the plan intend), 'Greater Jerusalem' would create, even if artificially, a metropolitan area with a solid Jewish majority and a diminished and weakened Palestinian minority. For further information, see Ir Amim, "Ramifications of the US Middle East Plan" and "Destructive Unilateral Measures".



Ir Amim is a non-partisan Israeli organization that deals with the complexities of life in Jerusalem in the context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the city's political future. Ir Amim works towards making Jerusalem a viable and equitable city, while promoting conditions for a negotiated political future in Jerusalem.

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