



## Israeli police forces target Palestinian institutions in East Jerusalem

CCPRJ strongly condemns the raids, closure, destruction, and confiscation of property of Palestinian institutions in occupied East Jerusalem. In the past week three Palestinian institutions were raided by Israeli authorities: a community center, a media center, and the Palestinian national theatre.

On 8 December 2016, two institutions were raided and closed down by the Israeli authorities. Israeli police first stormed the premises of the youth organization *Elia for Media*, which aims to develop the capacities of youngsters in Jerusalem by strengthening their national and cultural awareness and by seeking to spread the spirit of volunteerism among the youth. The raid caused destruction and prevented people from entering or leaving the premises. Laptops were confiscated after the police turned everything upside down. The entrance gate and the recording studio sustained severe damage.

The second raid targeted the Palestinian National Theater in Sheikh Jarrah, known as *el-Hakawati Theater*, a Palestinian nonprofit cultural institution which strives to create and develop a unique cultural life in Jerusalem, by producing and presenting artistic, educational and entertaining programs that reflect the aspirations of the Palestinian people. The theatre was raided on this specific day in order to prevent organizers from holding an event titled "Sing with Us".<sup>1</sup> Local sources reported that the management of the theater was officially notified of an Israeli decision to close the theatre from six o'clock in the evening until midnight. Israeli authorities claimed that the singing event was to be held by people affiliated with the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine. An Israeli spokesperson stated that Jerusalem police chief Yoram Halevy signed an order on Thursday "to prevent holding a conference for the terrorist PFLP group,"<sup>2</sup> The basis for the order was a clause in the recently adopted and widely criticized Israeli anti-terrorism law. According to this law, the definition of terrorist organization membership includes "passive members" who are not actively involved in any group.<sup>3</sup> At the time, the Arab parties' Joint List opposed the bill, with MK Ahmad Tibi terming it, "draconian and unacceptable."<sup>4</sup>

On Monday 12 December 2016, a third institution was targeted. *Burj Al-Luqluq Social Center Society* is a community center which has been servicing the Jerusalem community within the Old City walls for almost 21 years. It is built on almost 9 acres of land owned by two Palestinian families. In 1989, this area was threatened by Israeli presence with the desire to build a new settlement on the site. During the two-hour raid Israeli forces destroyed some materials and confiscated computers. Director Muntaser Edkik stated that Israeli forces occasionally raid the center to put

<sup>1</sup> Israeli police say singing event was organized to 'sympathize with terrorists', Ma'an News Agency, 8 December 2016, available at: <http://www.maannews.com/Content.aspx?id=774336>.

<sup>2</sup> Israeli authorities close Hakawati Theater in Jerusalem, Palestine News Network, 10 December 2016, available at: <http://english.pnn.ps/2016/12/10/israeli-authorities-close-hakawati-theater-in-jerusalem/>.

<sup>3</sup> Israel's Knesset passes 'draconian' anti-terrorism law, Ma'an News Agency, 15 June 2016, available at: <http://www.maannews.com/Content.aspx?id=771897>.

<sup>4</sup> Jonathan Lis, Knesset Passes Sweeping Anti-terrorism Law, Haaretz, 15 June 2016, available at: <http://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/1.725225>.

pressure on workers there "in an attempt to prevent them from providing services to Palestinian residents of the Old City."<sup>5</sup>

Since August 2001, the Israeli authorities closed approximately 32 organizations serving the Palestinian community which includes non-governmental organizations, including the reputable Orient House, the Jerusalem Chamber of Commerce, and the Arab Studies Society. Since the beginning of 2009, Israeli authorities have banned, and physically prevented, numerous peaceful, cultural, and educational activities marking the declaration of Jerusalem as the "Capital of Arab Culture 2009." The **activities** carried out by many institutions were publicized in the media, and **all relate to the social, cultural, and economic development of the Palestinian community.**

East Jerusalem is incontrovertibly recognized under international law as an integral part of the occupied Palestinian territory over which the Palestinian people are entitled to exercise their right to self-determination. As a fundamental principle of international human rights law, the right to self-determination includes the right to freely pursue social, cultural, and economic development. Furthermore, freedom of expression, association and peaceful assembly are also fundamental guarantees enshrined under international human rights law that are systematically denied to Palestinians in East Jerusalem.<sup>6</sup> Furthermore, limiting the right of Palestinians in East Jerusalem to express their national identity includes targeting the Palestinian curriculum, including the prohibition of teaching about the Nakba, and the deliberate disappearance of the Arabic language from public spaces.

The closure of these and other Palestinian institutions are part of a broader policy through which the Israeli authorities seek to stifle Palestinian development in Jerusalem and take control of the city by increasing the strength of Israel's occupation over East Jerusalem. **These closures must be seen in the context of socio-cultural repression, forced population transfer, and the policy of Israelization, which includes home demolitions, evictions, and revocation of residency status.**

**CCPRJ calls upon the international community to address these violations in their diplomatic relations with Israel** and work to ensure that the above-mentioned institutions can operate without the imposed constraints of the Israeli occupation. We urge you to:

- oblige the Israeli government to refrain from closing and raiding the Palestinian institutions in East Jerusalem;
- strongly condemn Israel's unlawful measures aimed at altering the status of East Jerusalem and denying the realization of the Palestinian people's right to self-determination;
- fulfil your international obligations and take immediate and concrete steps towards ending the illegal situation created in East Jerusalem by the numerous statutory policies of the Israeli occupation authorities.

---

<sup>5</sup> Israeli forces raid community center in Jerusalem's Old City, Ma'an News Agency, 12 December 2016, available at: <http://www.maannews.com/Content.aspx?ID=774388>.

<sup>6</sup> These rights are codified in numerous human rights treaties, the Universal Declaration of Human rights amongst them: article 19 on freedom of expression, article 20 on the right of peaceful assembly and association. Self-determination is codified in article 1 of the United Nations Charter.