



Israel Police Closed Map and GIS Department for 6 months

Jerusalem, 14 March 2017 - The Civic Coalition for Palestinian Rights in Jerusalem (CCPRJ) strongly condemns the recent Israeli closure order against the Map and GIS Department in occupied East Jerusalem.

On the 14th of March, Israeli police and intelligence forces stormed the office of the Map and GIS Department in Dahiat Al Bareed Junction, North of occupied East Jerusalem, and ordered its closer for 6 months. The office files and computers were confiscated and the director of the department was taken for interrogation for 5 hours.

The closure order was under the claim that, “the department works for the Palestinian Authority through monitoring documentation of people who sell properties to the Israelis”.

The arbitrary closure of the department office is not an isolated incident. Since August 2001, Israeli authorities have permanently or temporary closed at least 32 Palestinian public institutions and NGOs in occupied East Jerusalem,ⁱ including the PLO headquarters (Orient House), the Jerusalem Chamber of Commerce, the Arab Studies Society, the Cultural Forum Society, the Agricultural and Industrial Chamber of Commerce, the Higher Council of Tourism, and the Small Projects Center established by the European Union. In 2009, Israeli authorities also banned numerous peaceful, cultural and educational activities in response to organizations advertising their events under the title of “Jerusalem, Capital of Arab Culture”. The Palestinian National Theater, which hosts folklore dance festivals, art exhibitions, and a Palestinian literature festival, has also been subject to several closure orders. All of the above activities were public events aimed to serve the Palestinian social, cultural, and economic development in Jerusalem.

Israel’s policy of closing Palestinian institutions and banning Palestinian public activities has systematically undermined Palestinian freedom of expression and assembly, and stifled Palestinian political, social, cultural, and economic development in occupied East Jerusalem. It is a policy of persecution carried out against organized Palestinian society that continues to resist the myriad of arbitrary and discriminatory laws, policies, and measures whereby Israel seeks to permanently annex the occupied Palestinian city and transform it into a predominantly Jewish-Israeli town.

Based on the fact that the right to self-determination of the Palestinian people in occupied East Jerusalem is universally recognized, the Civic Coalition for Palestinian Rights in Jerusalem calls upon the international community to protect Palestinian institutions and Palestinian freedom of expression and assembly in occupied East Jerusalem. The right to freedom of expression and assembly are essential to ensure Palestinian self-determination and development in the city and a *sine-qua non* for peace.

The Civic Coalition calls upon the international diplomatic community: to take immediate and effective action in order to ensure that Israel will rescind its closure orders against the Maps and GIS Department and all other affected Palestinian institutions in occupied East Jerusalem.

We also urge the EU to adopt the relevant recommendations included in the annual East Jerusalem reports of EU heads of missions, to apply intensive pressure on Israel to allow the reopening of all Palestinian institutions, and to provide requested diplomatic protection for public activities of Palestinian official and civil society organizations in occupied East Jerusalem.
