

## **The Right to Education Campaign**

# **Education in Jerusalem: Current Situation and Challenges Ahead in the Lack of a Unified Educational Authority**

**Jerusalem**

**2008**

Civic Coalition for Defending the Palestinians' Rights in Jerusalem  
(CCDPRJ)

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## Lack of a Unified Educational Authority in Jerusalem

### Overview:

Education in Jerusalem is supervised by four different authorities: the Islamic Waqf affiliated to the Palestinian Authority, the Israeli Ministry of Education/Municipality, the private sector, and UNRWA. The multitude of supervising bodies has a negative impact on the status and development of education in the City. The following table demonstrates the distribution of students by the supervising body according to 2007-2008 statistics:

**Table 1:**

Supervising body	2007-2008		Per cent	
	Students	Classes	% Students	% Classes
Israeli Ministry of Education/ Municipality	36770	1079	50.4	44.7
Islamic Waqf	12431	471	17.0	19.5
Private	17839	669	24.4	27.7
UNRWA	3572	106	4.9	4.4
Other bodies (*)	2419	88	3.3	3.6
Total	73031	2413	100	100

(\*) A group of investors who open schools with financial support from the municipality. The schools are known as Sakhnin schools, and to date total 8 in Jerusalem.

### Sources:

1. Planning and Statistics Department at the Jerusalem Directorate of Education
2. Jerusalem Municipality website: [www.jerusalem.muni.il/jer\\_main/defaultnew.asp?lng=1](http://www.jerusalem.muni.il/jer_main/defaultnew.asp?lng=1)
3. Sakhnin schools' administration

## Islamic Waqf schools:

Waqf schools (previously known as Husni Al-Ashhab schools) are considered the heir of the education department in Jerusalem district from the period of Jordanian rule. The schools were established post-1967 in response to measures taken by the Israeli occupation to control Jerusalem schools and attempts to impose the Israeli curriculum. These schools occupy residential buildings that have not been originally adapted to become schools, but have however managed to accommodate the large demand resulting from the Jerusalem community's refusal to accept the Israeli curriculum. These schools have been subjected to numerous harassments by the Israeli authorities<sup>1</sup>. Despite these adverse conditions, the Waqf schools continue to provide education to Jerusalemites free of charge without the Israeli agenda and curriculum, and hence they remain very popular.

Conditions with regards to school building and facilities:

1. The premises are originally residential buildings that are not adapted to accommodate a large number of students. The schools have crowded classrooms and there is a lack of schoolyards and playgrounds for the children.
2. Most classrooms do not meet educational or health standards, with the average classroom density at 0.9 sq. meters per student, compared to the international standard of at least 1.26 sq. meters. In some schools, the space per student is even less than 0.5 sq. meters.
3. Approximately half of the school buildings are rented. Their annual rent amounts to over USD 750,000, which is considered a high financial burden.
4. It is difficult to obtain a building license due to the complicated procedures imposed by the Israeli occupation's municipality in Jerusalem. A building license requires long years of follow up in view of the incapacitating requirements and heavy fees levied, which may ultimately lead to achieving no result at all. In addition, the municipality imposes fines on school buildings in amounts reaching tens of thousands of shekels (NIS).

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<sup>1</sup> Many organizations document the harassment children face both on their way to and from school as well as disruptions to their studies as a result of harassment from Israeli authorities, including military. For further information, please refer to the Monthly Bulletins of CCDPRJ available at [www.ccdprj.ps](http://www.ccdprj.ps), or the Weekly Protection of Civilians reports by OCHA, available at [www.ocha-opt.org](http://www.ocha-opt.org).

5. Many schools lack libraries, science labs and computer labs. This is either due to lack of funds or limited space within the building hosting the school.

Conditions with regards to staff:

1. Teachers receive low salaries, causing some of them to seek jobs in schools run by the Israeli municipality. This also contributes to the low rate of applications for vacancies in teaching jobs at these schools. Heads of departments, school principals and school supervisors do not receive administrative benefits or allowances that match their workload: the benefits average less than \$50 per month. Most holders of Jerusalem IDs do not show interest in the announced vacancies. In addition, the supervising body does not cover social security charges and taxes, which are imposed on them by the Israeli authorities.
2. These schools suffer from a severe shortage in teaching qualifications in basic subject matters, such as Arabic language, English language, math, physics and Islamic education.
3. Boys schools suffer from the lack of adequate teaching staff and competency of existing staff, leading to a low quality education:
  - i. Male teachers holding Jerusalem IDs and working in Islamic Waqf schools do not exceeding 50 teachers. Their colleagues holding West Bank IDs face difficulties accessing Jerusalem due to the Wall and checkpoints and often are unable to obtain permits required to enter Jerusalem.
  - ii. Some teachers are in need of training in specialized and general education topics. A large number of teachers are not qualified in the field of teaching (do not hold a diploma in education).
  - iii. Some school principals are in need of training in management.

### **Israeli Ministry of Education/Municipality run schools:**

Following the occupation of Jerusalem, the Israeli authorities controlled the City's schools from the period of Jordanian rule, such as Rashidiyeh, Mamouniyeh, Khalil Sakakini, Abdullah Bin Al-Hussein and others. The Israeli authorities also attempted to impose the Israeli curriculum in these

schools. This attempt failed due to the objection of families, teachers and students, forcing the authorities to abandon this idea and proceed with the teaching according to an amended Jordanian curriculum.

Characteristics of schools run by the Israeli Ministry of Education and municipality:

- 1.The Israeli supervising bodies show little concern with education in Arab schools in Jerusalem, evident in the wide differences in budgets from those allocated to Jewish schools. The authorities also demonstrate no intention to address the causes of low quality education prevailing in the Arab community.
- 2.No educational supervision system is in place to monitor, evaluate and improve the performance of these schools. Everything depends on individual attempts by some principals to improve the performance of their schools.
- 3.The Israeli Ministry of Education and the Municipality have in recent years established new schools in different neighborhoods in Jerusalem, such as Mount of Olives, Silwan, Shu'fat, Eisawiyeh, Beit Safafa, Mukabber, Beit Hanina and Sur Baher, and has added new classrooms to some old schools. These efforts are inadequate in the face of the continued severe shortage in classrooms, forcing some parents to file complaints at courts in order to ensure a place for their children in a school.
- 3.The new schools have adequate infrastructure, in terms of classrooms, schoolyards, playgrounds, and halls.
- 5.Teachers' salaries are much better compared to those of teachers in other schools of Jerusalem. That even these are inadequate for the high cost of living in Jerusalem serves to illustrate the unfavorable salary situation of the Waqf teachers.
- 6.School dropout rates are very high at over 10%. No procedures of follow up with the dropouts are made by the Israeli Ministry of Education.



## **Private schools:**

Private schools in Jerusalem have had a positive national role in rejecting the Israeli curriculum in the post 1967 period. They have continued to teach the amended Jordanian curriculum and have absorbed thousands of students coming from schools run by the Israeli Ministry of Education and municipality, leading to an increased pressure on its capacity. An indicator of this fact is evident in the case of Rashidiyeh secondary school – one of the oldest and popular schools in Palestine. In the pre 1967 period, the number of students in the school was about 780. This number declined in the years during which the Israeli curriculum was imposed, reaching 210 students in the school year 1969/1970, 168 in the 1970/1971 academic year, and only 70 students in 1971/1972.<sup>2</sup>

This year, the proportion of students receiving their education in private schools was 24% of total students in Jerusalem . Private schools are run by different supervising bodies, including churches and monasteries, charitable societies, and individual owners.

### **Characteristics of private schools:**

- 1.Inability to attract adequately qualified teachers due to the Wall and restrictions of movement around Jerusalem. Teachers holding Jerusalem IDs demand high salaries and often are not available in adequate numbers for private schools, as many prefer employment in schools run by the Israeli Municipality and the Israeli Ministry of Education for reasons associated with higher salaries and pension.
- 2.Some private schools face financial difficulties as the school fees are usually inadequate to meet the basic needs of the school.
- 3.A large number of these schools have approached the Israeli municipality to demand financial assistance. The municipality is disbursing assistance at varying levels according to types of services available in each school.
- 4.Some schools suffer from high rent fees they have to pay for their buildings.

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<sup>2</sup> Arab Education in Jerusalem: The Realities and the Future.» Report published by the Palestinian Ministry of Education and Higher Education.

### **Quality of educational in private schools:**

Private schools are known to offer high quality education for the following reasons:

- 1.They have to keep up with high standards in view of the competition among them.
- 2.Private schools adopt an employment system based on annual contracts and thus can dispose of any teacher demonstrating lack of commitment.
- 3.They seek to recruit well performing students and reject those who do not meet the required standards.
- 4.The schools have the liberty to offer exceptional programs, such as teaching other foreign languages (French, German, Spanish, etc) or give increased focus to English language by increasing the number and quality of English lessons.
- 5.They offer other educational activities, such as music and arts.
- 6.Some schools run by Islamic charitable societies focus on Islamic education and Qur'an recital.
- 7.These schools tend to dispose of students with special needs and low achievers.

### **Support to private schools:**

The Ministry of Education and Higher Education has not been concerned with supporting the private schools in financial terms, with the exception of a very limited number of schools. This is despite the fact that the Palestine Liberation Organization used to offer such support in the 1970s, 1980s, and early 1990s.

Therefore, we recommend that conditional support should be offered in order to avoid making private schools dependent on Israeli funding. Such support should take the following into consideration:

- a.No school should receive funds from two sources (Palestinian and Israeli) at the same time.

- b. Educational scholarships should be given to special cases of students, such as the poor, orphans, children of prisoners, etc).
- c. Schools should refrain from increasing their tuition fees

### **UNRWA schools:**

There are 7 UNRWA schools in Jerusalem. Their students account for only 5% of the total student population. In the early post 1967 years, UNRWA schools managed to accommodate more students and offered adequate educational services. In more recent years, however, they have been short of financial resources, particularly since the reductions in UNRWA budgets. UNRWA schools in Jerusalem also suffer from overcrowding and only teach up to the ninth basic grade, except for schools in Shu'fat refugee camp, where a tenth grade is also available. This increases the burden on secondary schools run by other authorities in Jerusalem.

### **Challenges stemming from the lack of a unified authority for education in Jerusalem:**

- Schools run by the Israeli Ministry of Education and municipality do not fully abide by the curriculum, either by skipping subject matters such as national education and civic education or by skipping certain chapters in the textbooks. This impedes the achievement of the general goals of Palestinian education, most prominently attachment to and pride in the Palestinian identity.
- Short-term and long-term planning is difficult due to the lack of necessary data, either because such data needs to be gathered from multiple sources or because some sources intentionally deny access to their data.
- There is an evident shortage in the number of schools and classrooms in certain neighborhoods in Jerusalem.
- It is difficult to monitor school dropout rates for Jerusalemite children.
- Uncoordinated planning between the different supervising bodies may lead to contrary and sometimes conflicting directions, for example the variation in the instructions regarding schooling days and hours and school holidays causes confusion to families, especially when a family has children attending schools run by different authorities.

- The different supervising bodies do not take the responsibility for their students to sit the general final secondary exams, whether in terms of inspection during the exams or reviewing and grading students' papers. This negatively affects the management of the exams and delays the publication of their results.
- Jerusalem students lack the opportunity of actual participation in unified activities of Palestinian nature, such as sports, cultural, artistic, folklore and voluntary events, which is believed to weaken the sense of national identity and attachment to Palestinian culture among Jerusalemites.
- There is variation in the age of admission to grade one among the different educational authorities, as reflected in the following table:

Supervising body	Admission age
Schools run by Palestinian Ministry of Education	7 February of the admission year (2003)
Private schools	14 April of the admission year (2003)
Israeli Ministry of Education/Municipality	25 December of the year preceding the admission year
UNRWA schools	31 January of the admission year (2003)

- Communication between the different schools as well as between the district office and schools is limited.
- Some schools do not abide by criteria for passing or failing the grade, as some seek to get rid of poor achievers by referring them to other schools. It could happen that some resort to issuing school certificates that do not reflect the actual scores of the student.
- The different supervising bodies adopt different criteria for accepting students, especially when it comes to accepting students in the different secondary education tracks.
- Some schools seek to recruit the best qualified teachers by offering incentives in the form of high salaries in view of the severe shortage in highly qualified teachers. This results in the lesser funded schools getting not as qualified teachers, negatively impacting the education of the students.
- Some schools do not abide by the requirement of endorsing the

certificates and keeping record of students' scores, which may jeopardize the education of students when they are transferred to new schools or when they sit to the final general secondary exams.

- Staff of Israeli run schools and some private schools do not actually participate in training courses related to the new Palestinian curriculum, which affects their ability to teach this curriculum and increases complaints regarding the contents of the curriculum by both teachers and students.
- The lack of a unified authority has lead to lack of attention to vocational education.



## Indicators of uncertainty in the planning for education in Jerusalem:

Under regular population growth, the number of students per grade is expected to start of large and then decrease from the first basic grade up to high levels including secondary school. This is because the annual population growth normally brings more students into the academic system every year. Students in occupied Jerusalem, however, are not thus distributed in grades, as is reflected in the following statistics and charts:

Distribution of students and classrooms by grade and supervising body, 2007/2008

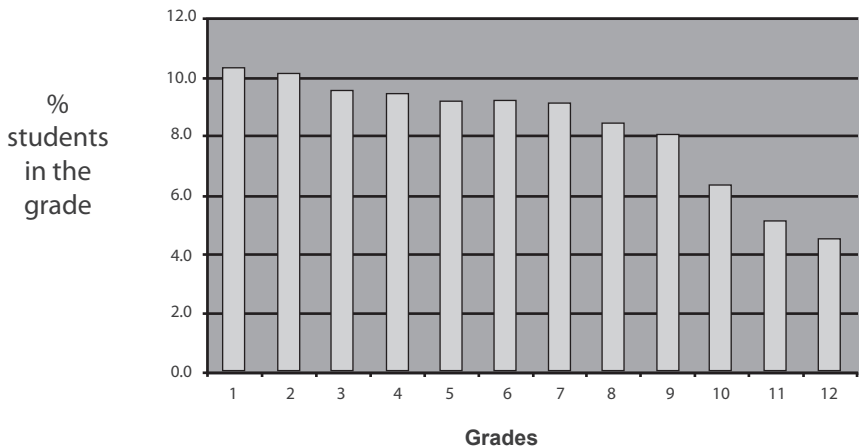
Grades	Islamic Waqf		Israeli MOE and municipality (*)		Private		UNRWA		Total	
	Classes	Students	Classes	Students	Classes	Students	Classes	Students	Classes	Students
Basic 1	38	945	92	3057	103	2972	8.5	260	241.5	7234
Basic 2	36	977	96	3191	94	2607	10.5	317	236.5	7092
Basic 3	38	953	94	3215	77	2197	10.5	348	219.5	6713
Basic 4	37	1050	97	3308	73	1933	9.5	353	216.5	6644
Basic 5	34	976	102	3460	61	1612	13.5	414	210.5	6462
Basic 6	40	1070	105	3575	56	1402	12.5	442	213.5	6489
Basic 7	43	1174	107	3633	40	1174	13	431	203	6412
Basic 8	43	1111	102	3394	37	1019	12	404	194	5928
Basic 9	39	1061	101	3380	32	829	10	402	182	5672
Basic 10	41	1107	75	2389	31	767	6	201	153	4464
Secon. 1	42	1056	60	1860	35	709	0	0	137	3625
Secon. 2	40	951	48	1635	30	618	0	0	118	3204
Total	471	12431	1079	36097	669	17839	106	3572	2325	69939

## Distribution of students in Jerusalem schools to grades by supervising body, 2007/2008

Grades	Islamic Waqf	Israeli MOE and municipality	Private	UNRWA	Total	Islamic Waqf %	Israeli MOE and municipality %	Private %	UNRWA %	Total %
Basic 1	945	3057	2972	260	7234	7.6	8.5	16.7	7.3	10.3
Basic 2	977	3191	2607	317	7092	7.9	8.8	14.6	8.9	10.1
Basic 3	953	3215	2197	348	6713	7.7	8.9	12.3	9.7	9.6
Basic 4	1050	3308	1933	353	6644	8.4	9.2	10.8	9.9	9.5
Basic 5	976	3460	1612	414	6462	7.9	9.6	9.0	11.6	9.2
Basic 6	1070	3575	1402	442	6489	8.6	9.9	7.9	12.4	9.3
Basic 7	1174	3633	1174	431	6412	9.4	10.1	6.6	12.1	9.2
Basic 8	1111	3394	1019	404	5928	8.9	9.4	5.7	11.3	8.5
Basic 9	1061	3380	829	402	5672	8.5	9.4	4.6	11.3	8.1
Basic 10	1107	2389	767	201	4464	8.9	6.6	4.3	5.6	6.4
Secun. 1	1056	1860	709	0	3625	8.5	5.2	4.0	0.0	5.2
Secun. 2	951	1635	618	0	3204	7.7	4.5	3.5	0.0	4.6
Total	12431	36097	17839	3572	69939	100	100	100	100	100

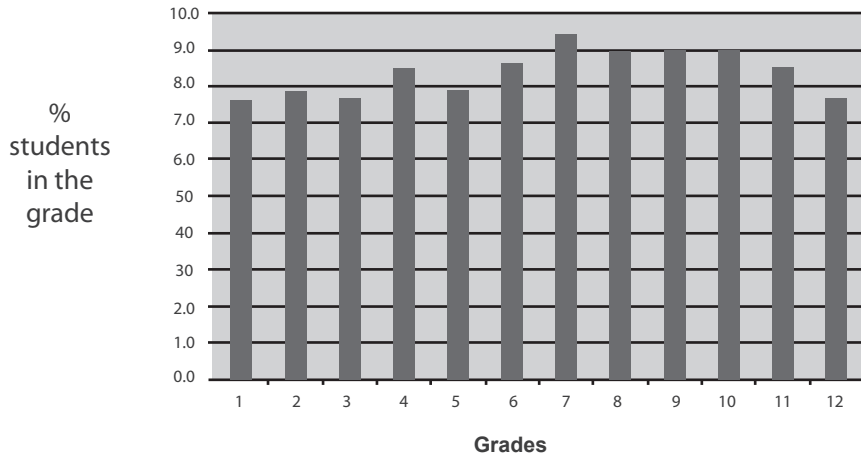
(\*) 673 students in advanced education are to be added to students in basic schools run by the Israeli Ministry of Education.

## Percentage distribution of students to grades in Jerusalem schools in general, 2007/2008

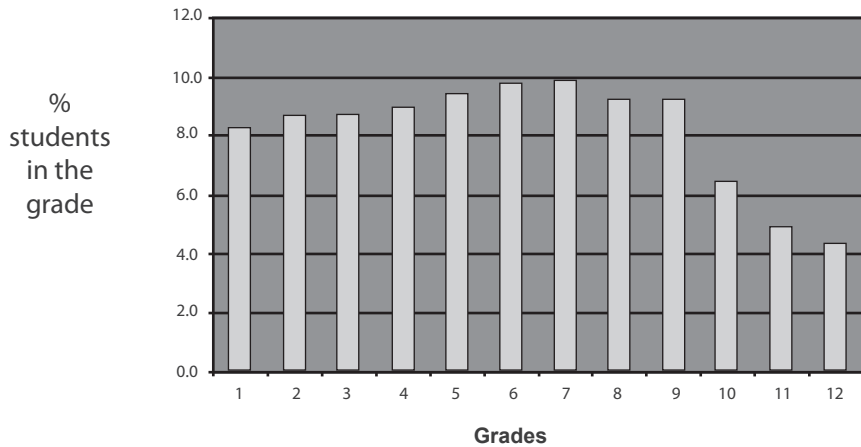




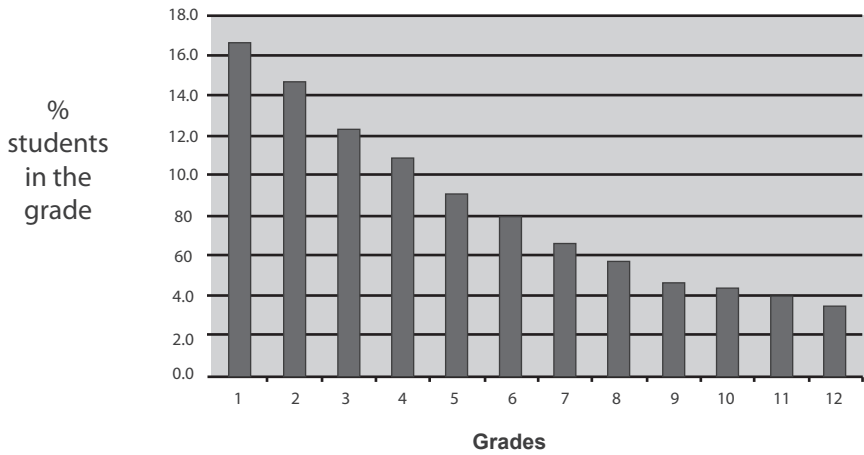
Percentage distribution of students to grades in Islamic Waqf schools



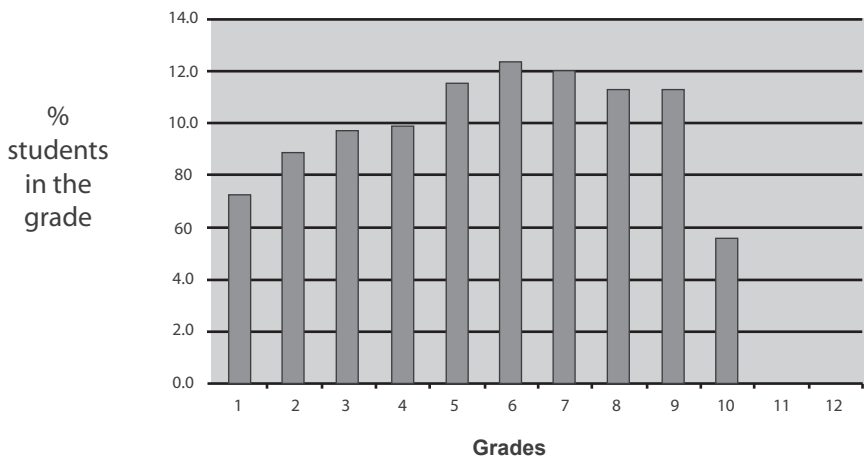
Percentage distribution of students to grades in schools run by the Israeli Ministry of Education/Municipality



Percentage distribution of students to grades in private schools



Percentage distribution of students to grades in UNRWA schools



Another indicator that contributes to uncertain planning in the education sector in Jerusalem is the distribution of schools to neighborhoods in the city. The following table illustrates the distribution of schools by their location and supervising body.

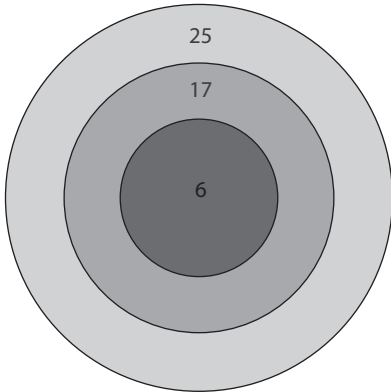
	Islamic Waqf schools	Israeli MOE and municipality run schools	Private schools	UNRWA schools	Total
City center	15	6	16	2	38
Surrounding closer to the center	2	17	4	0	23
Outer surrounding	21	25	27	5	58
Total	38	48	47	7	119

Notably, the municipality has avoided adding any new schools in the city center. This fits with Israel's policy of minimizing the non-Jewish presence in Jerusalem and increasing the city's Jewish presence, with particular focus on the city center. Schools already located in the center have been there since Jordanian rule. The nearest schools to the center were built in Mount of Olives, Silwan and Al-Thory.

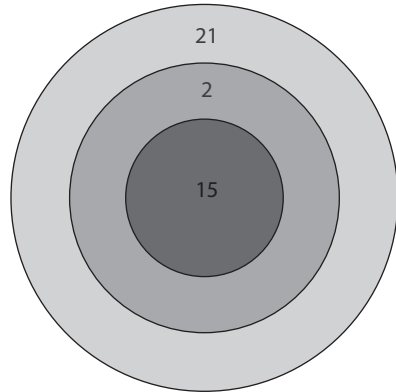
### **Graphs illustrating the distribution of Jerusalem schools to neighborhoods by supervising body, 2007/2008**

The city is divided into three circles: the central circle that includes the Old City, Wadi Al-Joz, Al-Sowanah, Herod's Gate, Saladin street and Musrarah; the second circle represents the surrounding area closer to the center and including very close neighborhoods, such as Al-Thory, Silwan, Ras Al-Amud, Mount of Olives and Sheikh Jarrah; and the third circle represents the outer surrounding areas and includes the remaining neighborhoods of Kufr Aqab, Samiramis, Beit Hanina, Shu'fat, Shu'fat refugee camp and Anata, Eisawiyeh, Mukabber, Western Sawahreh, Sur Baher, Um Tuba, and Beit Safafa.

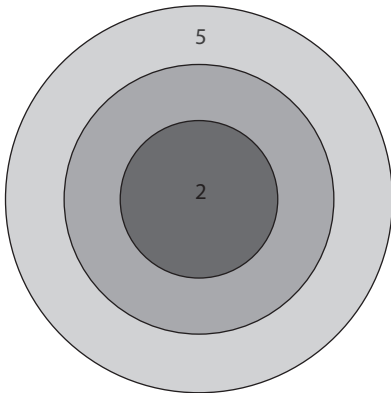
Israeli MOE and municipality run schools



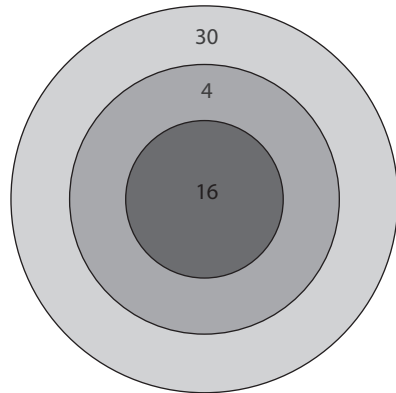
Islamic Waqf schools



UNRWA schools



Private schools





## Recommendations:

**C**reate committees representing the different supervising bodies within the private schools (i.e., religious, charity or individuals) in order to accurately represent private schools in comprehensive planning for the education system in occupied Jerusalem and clearly delineate the role of the private schools vis-à-vis other types of schools. The committee would form a unified body to contribute to highlighting the national role of private schools and act as a communicating channel between private schools and Jerusalem institutions, as well as with the Palestinian institutions in general.

Create a committee from the principals of Israeli run schools according to neighborhoods and school level (primary, preparatory, secondary). This committee can help facilitate communication with other schools and can present a real diagnosis of the situation of Arab education in schools run by the Israeli Ministry of Education and the Israeli Municipality of Jerusalem, contributing to comprehensive planning on education in occupied Jerusalem.

The above committees should play a role in promoting active participation of their corresponding schools in the educational and cultural activities at the district level.

These committees should cooperate with the District Office of Education (Palestinian Authority) and coordinate the involvement of teachers in the Jerusalem schools in the final general exams, whether in the inspection of students sitting the exams or in reviewing and grading their papers.

The committees should also cooperate with the District Office in regard to training courses on the new curriculum and the instructions of the Ministry of Education (Palestinian Authority) related to the system of lesson

distribution, criteria for passing and failing the grades, and submission of a copy of students' annual scores to be kept at the District Office in order to safeguard the interests of Jerusalem students.

The Palestinian leadership should play an active role in providing financial support to Jerusalem schools (Islamic Waqf and private) and match the funding obtained by Israeli run schools and some private schools receiving assistance from the administration of the Israeli Ministry of Education and the Municipality. This support is essential to enable the schools to carry out their educational and pedagogical duties at an adequate level. The support should help cover the salaries of teachers, administrators and service staff, as well as educational and cultural activities and support to school equipment.

The Palestinian Ministry of Education should increase the number of school supervisors in order to cover all 50 private schools, in addition to providing their services to schools run by the Israeli Ministry of Education and the Municipality if so requested by a school principal.

The Palestinian Ministry of Education and Higher Education should adopt a clear and consistent approach towards supporting the private schools in order to ensure their sustainability.

Private industrial schools need to be rehabilitated in order to accommodate new professions and encourage students to enroll in vocational education.

The union of parents' committees should assume an active role in creating the proposed structures and linkages with the active principals in schools run by the Israeli Ministry of Education and the Municipality; and should help encourage these principals to fulfill their important educational role at the level of Jerusalem City.

