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# Implications of the Popular Uprising within the Green Line

Unit for Political Studies

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Series: **Situation Assessment**

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## Unit for Political Studies

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The areas of Palestine occupied in 1948 have been witnessing a widespread popular upsurge in solidarity with the Palestinian families who face forced eviction from their homes in the Sheikh Jarrah neighborhood of East Jerusalem to be replaced with settlers and in solidarity with those defending Al-Aqsa from repeated incursions by settlers and Israeli forces. These protests escalated and expanded with the Israeli occupation army's response to the resistance's warning missiles against the Al-Aqsa incursions with a comprehensive military war on the Gaza Strip. The growth of the demonstrations within the Green Line prompted Israeli Prime Minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, on 12 May 2021, to declare a state of emergency, especially in the city of Lydd, where Palestinians were met with widespread violence by Jewish settlers. He granted the head of the Israeli police the right to seek assistance from the Israeli army to put a stop to the protests.<sup>(1)</sup>

## The Political, Economic and Social Conditions of the 48 Palestinians

Palestinians with Israeli citizenship within the Green Line number about one and a half million people, living in Galilee, the Triangle, the Negev and coastal cities, in addition to Lydd and Ramla. The protests took the Israeli political and security establishment, as well as many of the Palestinian political elites by surprise. The movement came under a complex political context inside the Green Line since the Al-Aqsa Intifada in late September 2000, when they launched similar widespread protests in solidarity with the West Bank and Gaza, and the Israeli security and police forces have so far responded with severe violence that resulted in the killing of 13 Palestinian citizens. These events prompted Israel to adopt a set of carrot and stick policies, to both intimidate and contain, in order to prevent a similar popular uprising from happening in the future, and to weaken Palestinian organization. The intifada at that time included the 48 Palestinians as an integral part of Palestinian cause.

Israeli policies pursued the prosecution of political organizations and leaders that the Israeli establishment considered a cause or factor in the uprising through their work and political discourse. In this regard, the political and security establishment went after the Balad party and its leader, Azmi Bishara, who they considered a major actor in the production of a Palestinian national discourse. He framed the Palestinians in Israel as a national group with collective civil and national rights, defended the idea of fundamental equality, which challenged the Jewish character of the Israeli state, and tied the Palestinians within the Green Line to the Palestinian cause. Subsequently, the fabrication of security charges led to Bishara's forcible exile from his homeland. The Israeli establishment also pursued the Islamic movement headed by Sheikh Raed Salah, outlawing it in 2015, and accusing it of being responsible for inciting the Palestinian public against Israeli policies in Jerusalem and Al-Aqsa.

On the other hand, Israel has deliberately pursued policies aiming to economically integrate the Palestinians with Israeli citizenship, which resulted in the rise Israelization, represented in the distancing of the Palestinian public within the Green Line from the Palestinian national project, and

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1 "Netanyahu gives the green light to carry out administrative arrests and for the army to enter cities," Arab48, 13/5/2021, accessed on 17/5/2021, at: <https://bit.ly/2S2Gyap>



the rise of an integrationist political discourse. This includes integration on the margins of the Israeli ruling establishment, reluctance to challenge the political system, neutralization of collective rights of a national character, and the decline in status of national political organizations in Palestinian society. The identity crisis and the decline in the importance of national frameworks coincided with a crisis of values. For nearly ten years, Palestinian society has been suffering from widespread crime and violence, with crime rates reaching unprecedented rates. In 2020 alone, Palestinians suffered more than 100 homicides, in light of the Israeli government's refusal to combat the criminal gangs operating inside the Green Line. Rather, the Israeli police implicitly encourage these gangs by turning a blind eye to their activities and not punishing the perpetrators.

Both the unattractiveness of the Palestinian national project in light of Palestinian division, and the counter-revolutions sweeping the Arab world, have deepened the identity crisis and the shift towards Israelization. In addition, a state of discontent prevails among the political party elites due to the split in the Joint List, and division over support for the Zionist right or the center and center-right parties in government coalitions, which marginalizes national forces.

All these events and transformations resulted in a state of frustration, and an inability to transform, in light of leadership and organizational weaknesses in Palestinian society.

## The Causes of the Popular Uprising

The Palestinian uprising inside the Green Line stems from the built up state of frustration from various aspects of political, economic and social life, and the transformation of this frustration into anger over the political reality, the spread of crime and violence, and the delegitimization of Palestinian political action. At the same time, Israel strengthened the Jewish character of the state, in both rhetoric and practice, through the legislation of the Nationality Law in July 2018. The events in Jerusalem and the attack on Gaza pushed this state of anger over the edge, exploding in three main arenas:

### 1. Sheikh Jarrah

The events in Sheikh Jarrah represented a model of the settler colonial pattern used by Israel in Lydd, Ramla, and the coastal cities, by bringing settlers into Palestinian residential neighborhoods and expelling the Palestinian residents from their homes with unfair legal mechanisms, in the aim of narrowing and Judaizing Palestinian spaces. This explains the violence of the confrontations in these cities in particular, which mirror Sheikh Jarrah in the manner by which the indigenous population is replaced with settlers. Young people and university students participated in the Sheikh Jarrah protests and were subjected violent repression by the Israeli police. The same demographic also confronted the erection of iron barriers at the entrance to the Damascus Gate. This prompted the Israeli police to remove the barriers, in a repeat of events following the Jerusalem protests against the metal detectors erected at the entrances to Al-Aqsa Mosque in 2017.



## 2. The Israeli Police Suppression of Worshipers at Al-Aqsa

The Israeli police entered the squares of Al-Aqsa Mosque on Saturday, 8 May 2021, towards the end of Ramadan, and began to suppress worshipers and prevent them from performing prayers. More than 200 Palestinians were injured during the confrontations. Palestinian holders of Israeli citizenship organized buses to Al-Aqsa to commemorate the last nights of Ramadan. The Israeli police tried to prevent them from reaching Jerusalem in preparation for the Israeli Jerusalem Day celebrations to make way for a Jewish right-wing march on the Old City that tries to assert Israeli control over Jerusalem. These events represent part of an Israeli plan to control the Al-Aqsa Mosque, and normalize the entry of Jews.

## 3. Youth Movements against Violence and Crime

Months before the outbreak of the popular uprising, demonstrations were organized with Palestinian youth initiatives within the Green Line against the complicity and failure of the Israeli police in combating crime and violence. These initiatives, in their organization and perseverance, transcended the political parties and leaderships, relying on peaceful protest and popular struggle, and were met with Israeli police suppression on occasion. The movement gave an indication of the attitudes of Palestinian youth towards the state's policies.

## The Israeli Management of the Popular Uprising

The Israeli authorities confronted the Palestinian popular uprising within the Green Line with violence and methods that include:

- Violent repression by the Israeli police, using rubber and live bullets; As a result, two young men were killed, one of them in Lydd by settlers, and the other in Umm al-Fahm by police.
- Expanding the powers of the Israeli police, enabling them to impose a curfew, closing off Palestinian towns, and barricading the entrances to Palestinian towns.
- Summoning border guards from the West Bank to Palestinian towns in order help suppress the popular uprising, units that are infamous for their violence towards the Palestinians.
- Executing mass arrest operations of Palestinian youth, totaling more than 1500 detainees, with motions against them submitted by the Public Prosecution Office submitted.
- Launching a media and political campaign of incitement against the popular uprising and describing it as acts of vandalism and terrorism to justify its suppression.
- Organizing armed and unarmed Jewish groups into militias to chase and attack Palestinians, and destroy their property and business in Lydd, Ramla, and many other cities. These militias, most of whom were brought from settlement outposts in the West Bank by buses, worked



under police observation, and sometimes even protection, to hunt the Palestinians in the streets and burn their shops and homes.

## Ramifications of the Uprising within the Green Line

The recent uprising has served to affirm the unity of the Palestinian people and the belonging of the Palestinians who hold Israeli citizenship to the Palestinian cause. It demonstrates that they are an integral part of the Palestinian people, and their willingness to engage in the Palestinian struggle to preserve the Arabness of Jerusalem and stand against the Israeli policy of ethnically cleansing the city. The Jerusalem issue, with all its symbolic, political and religious implications, has become the main link to unite *all* the Palestinian people on both sides of the Green Line. The residents of Jerusalem suffer from the same colonial settlement policies that the Palestinians across the cities occupied in 1948 have lived through: being restricted spatially, being sabotaged by encouraged crime and violence, and a hierarchy of civil and national rights.

The popular uprising demonstrates the decline of the rhetoric of integration into the Israeli political system. Recent events have highlighted its colonial essence and the failure of attempts to separate the national and civil rights of the Palestinians within the Green Line. The Israeli authorities' treatment of the popular uprising has also proven, as ever, that it wants to strip the Palestinians of their national identity and dignity.

The ruling Israeli authority represses Palestinian activists through arrest campaigns, and works to isolate them from their society, hoping to return to the status quo and marginalization of such activism, and keeping the Palestinians content with their share of incomplete citizenship and identity crisis. Hence it is important to think about what happened after the second intifada, and how to avoid the same scenario. It seems that it is crucial not to fear the recent Israeli repressive steps, and to maintain this peaceful protest movement in order to confront the policies of the Israeli authorities aimed at deterring Palestinian youth from linking their civil rights with their sense of belonging to the Palestinian nation.

The popular uprising has forced the Palestinian political sphere inside the Green Line to rethink the importance of organizing Palestinian society and review its political discourse, bringing it in line with the changes revealed by recent events. The Palestinian youth clearly surpassed the political elites and organisations whose actions lagged behind the uprising; in stark contrast to the Al-Aqsa Intifada in the year 2000, which was characterized by camaraderie and joint action between the elites, the public and the protestors.