The Role of NGOs and Civil Society Organizations in Defending and Protecting Jerusalem

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Research Summary

The city of Jerusalem in particular, and Palestine in general are subject to a fierce Zionist settlement campaign aiming at erasing the Arab identity, Islamic and Christian from Jerusalem and completely Judaizing it. This is done through several terroristic means, the most important of which are settlement, seizure of properties, forced displacement in order to empty Jerusalem of its indigenous population – Arabs who have been there thousands of years ago.

The Jerusalemites and Palestinians are resisting this policy, with bare chests and weak potentials in front of the Arabs, Muslims and the world, who are doing nothing to save them and end this occupation.

The main elements of resistance in Jerusalem are The NGOs and civil society organizations in Jerusalem, supported by colleagues from outside – these organizations are doing heroic efforts to preserve what remains of this holy city. But it is a very big responsibility and it needs huge human, material and technical potentials, as well as political and military support from outside to remain strong and combat the occupational plans. In order to be able to perform this duty, they are working on the reconstruction of damaged houses and real estate, to enable citizens from staying in their homes. They are working on establishing new houses, in addition to their efforts in the field of education to find classrooms for students who are out of school, helping teachers to improve their status, and students to pay the fees, and preventing deviations. In the medical field, they support hospitals and health care institutions. They also work on small industrial projects, and support the poor and those in need with various means.

However, these efforts are not enough to plant the Jerusalemites in their own land, as the city needs big economic and constructional projects securing work and decent life for citizens. E.g. establishing big housing projects, opening markets and establishing big industrial, educational or medical projects, and finding job opportunities for the unemployed. This is beyond the ability or the potentials of the NGOs, but they call for this.

The second wing for the volunteer work, NGOs, and civil society organizations outside Jerusalem, is to continue and support the work inside Jerusalem. This is achieved by dedicating all potentials for this noble goal. It is not considered a charity but a sacred work that aims to save and protect Jerusalem, and doing that work is a resistance to the policy of frustration propagated by the enemies of the nation.

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It is necessary to raise the awareness of the institutions abroad of the needs of the institutions at home, beside holding conferences and symposiums about the awareness of citizens, and urging the governments to support them, and put the Jerusalem issue on the top priorities of social and humanitarian work.

In order to make the work fruitful and to save money, there must be coordination by committees determining the requirements and how to deliver this to the needy institutions. This is attained through effective committees who have expertise in this field.

Every penny paid for the sake of Jerusalem, helps its people in their resistance, and accelerating the end of the brutal Zionist occupation
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Introduction

The city of Jerusalem in particular, and Palestine in general are subject to a fierce Zionist settlement campaign aiming at erasing the Arab identity, Islamic and Christian from Jerusalem and not only covering it. This is done through several means, the most important of which is settlement, acquisition of land and real estate, house demolitions, forced migration, and emptying Jerusalem of the Arab population. This happens in front of the Arabs, Muslims and the whole world. They are just watching this reality, and also watching the Jerusalemites and Palestinians who are resisting alone, with bare chests and weak potentials this attack that cannot be dealt with at the same level except by a strong body. All forces believing in the Arab identity of Jerusalem, its religious heritage either Islamic or Christian, and its historical and humanitarian importance to the world have to be involved, confirming that Jerusalem is the essence of the Arab-Zionist conflict, and the key of war and peace in the region and the world.

Proceeding from this sacred duty, all Arab, Islamic and international forces have to support the Jerusalemites and Palestinians in resisting the terroristic practices of the Zionist enemy, and its continuous attacks on all human rights and restoring their rights.

The social humanitarian volunteer work alone, or in coordination with various governments is only one side of the means of support and is not enough to deal with Zionism. It has to be accompanied by another work supporting it in the Arab and Islamic political, militant and economic fields. This is out of the scope of this research, so we will focus here on the field of civil society in serving Jerusalem.

The Role of Civil Society Organizations

There is a key role for the civil society organizations with their different names in defending and protecting Jerusalem. This can only be achieved through in-depth studies in conjunction with knowledge exercise on the ground, in order to know the smallest details, points of strength and weakness, and how to confront the Zionist enemy, and its repressive laws and procedures that can hinder these efforts. Hence, this work should be divided into two areas:

1) The role of the NGOs inside Jerusalem which is more important, practical and effective.
2) The role of NGOs outside Jerusalem, supporting and funding the activities inside Jerusalem.

The role of NGOs inside Jerusalem:

This role in this stage is a distinct historical and militant role that differs from others in all stages and cities. This is because it has to aim at planting the citizen in his homeland,
and resisting the policy of forced displacement, and not only a social humanitarian service, although it is very important as well.

We have to focus on this principle and this strategy, i.e. focusing on the essence of work instead of the title only.

We have to work on putting this strategy into effect because it is the only means available for us now to protect and defend Jerusalem, as there is no other effective means for resistance.

This strategic role for the NGOs is represented in the following fields of work:

1) The existence of these organizations in Jerusalem – i.e. on the ground – asserts the Arab presence in Jerusalem, and fixing the Arab institutions, employees and beneficiaries on the ground. Thus, the number of effective organizations should be increased as well as that of their employees and financial resources, in order to increase the number of beneficiaries, and consequently, those who will receive the support, increasing their resistance to departure or deportation.

2) These organizations should be directed to work in the future as associations or development institutions, developing programs to benefit from development programs serving the continuity of production and self-reliance, especially in case of interruption of external resources.

3) There is more than 180 charitable associations operating in Jerusalem, and more than 350 in the governorate, and many of them have common goals. Hence, there should be coordination between the associations and similar organizations, and unifying their work if possible, in order to provide the greatest potentials for common work. According to my previous experience in this field, this did not happen because of the political vacuum in Jerusalem, leading to the failure in organizing and directing this work. This is because the Palestinian Authority does not want to interfere directly and effectively in organization and guidance, which also left the ground to chaos. Hence, there should be an effective coordination and a standard reference in order to bear the great responsibility. This guarantees:

1) Fair distribution of funds.
2) Coordination of the projects' activities at the lowest costs.
3) Integrated and strong areas of work
4) Capable, trained, and efficient human cadres.
5) Unity.

There are various fields of work, and here I mention them according to their importance in protecting and defending Jerusalem.

1. Reconstruction of Real Estate:

The Zionist enemy seeks to empty Jerusalem of its Arab population, by acquiring real estate and lands, houses demolition, and preventing building and reconstruction. Thus, the
number of suitable houses is small, and rents and taxes are high, and people should find suitable houses.

A huge effort is exerted to reconstruct the houses of the old town suffering from great destruction. This statistics was among some several years ago:
10% of the old town houses are uninhabitable.
10.5% need many reforms.
10.8% need extra room.
29.5% need some repairs.
18.1% inhabitable.
20.5% have multi requirements.
64% of the houses have no playing yards.
55% in unhealthy areas without health facilities.
In addition to other problems.

Many associations have carried out reconstruction operations among which is the cooperation association – for streets and institutions, the association of well-being and development, and other associations. However, they could only reconstruct a small part of these houses, while the rest needs an urgent reconstruction; As the Zionist enemy is working day and night on the demolition of these buildings under the pretext of lack of suitability.

The Zionist authorities put various obstacles and enact unfair laws in order to prevent the reconstruction operations. However, the will of reconstruction will defeat all measures.

These associations with the financial resources available cannot perform this duty, as we have to support them either directly or through the coordinating committee to start a campaign for the reconstruction of houses, or a particular site by individuals, NGOs, or governments from outside Jerusalem, in order to bear the costs of reconstruction within a documented and sound program.

In addition to the reconstruction of houses, there is the duty of reconstructing the surroundings of these houses and the neighboring yards, creating spaces for play, recreation, and others.

It is noteworthy that a number of owners has exploited some legal aspects, and raised the value of rents, which became a burden on citizens, pushing them to get out of Jerusalem to find cheaper houses. The armona high tax and other heavy taxes led to the same way – i.e. escape – Hence, these NGOs have to defend citizens and provide financial aids to those in need, and aids and loans to traders in order to help them to stay in their places of residence.

2. An organization for small projects:

It is very difficult to secure large amounts of capital – at least for the time being – that can do major economic projects using large numbers of workers. Therefore, we must work on establishing small projects that help in fixing employers and a small number of workers. This should be in areas needed by the country, e.g. small industries (shoes, carpentry, blacksmith, restaurants … etc). The capital can be provided as a loan or gift. These NGOs
can be included in the work of the existing charity associations – and in their programs (e.g. the association training for hairdressing can open a salon for this purpose and other examples). They can also be included in the programs of existing associations or establishing a special association for them.

3. Resisting the Zionist policy of deliberate illiteracy:

Zionism seeks to control knowledge in Jerusalem, and thus depriving its sons of Literacy and driving them to the cheap labor market. This happens by several inducements and Satanic methods among them contracting schools. There is a detailed statistics on the status of education in Jerusalem, summarized as follows:

1) 15 thousand children outside schools because there are no space for them, or due to leakage in pursuit of a living or behavioral deviations.
2) The number of classrooms is not enough especially in private schools, and schools run by Awqaf.
3) The inadequacy of classrooms for education.
4) Leakage of teachers from schools due to low salaries, incentives, and rewards, and because of barriers and the apartheid wall.

This phenomenon has to be dealt with, by addressing these gaps. The local effort cannot perform all these procedures for the lack of funding. Now there are several projects to fund the building schools or restoring them. However, there are big obstacles hindering the implementation of all of them, hence, they are implemented slowly.

There are many duties to be carried out by the NGOs in addition to establishing schools, including:

1) Helping in paying installments for incapable students to prevent their leakage to streets.
2) Helping in raising the teachers' salaries so as not to move to schools under Zionist supervision. Financial aids can be provided to those teachers to face the painful reality.
3) Finding clubs and cultural, sports, and social activities to engage the students and prevent them from behavioral deviations, the least of them is drug addiction.
4) Assisting university students in the University of Jerusalem in securing adequate houses and decent life in Jerusalem, especially if they are from outside Jerusalem.
5) Linking the students in Jerusalem in all stages with the Arab and Muslim students abroad through various means. The most important of which are electronic networks, visits and missions from Jerusalem to schools and universities abroad.
6) Twinning of schools in Jerusalem with schools abroad, so that one school or more is responsible for the twinning with the schools of Jerusalem, and providing connection, networking, moral, political, and financial support (the most important), e.g. securing laboratories, teaching aids and computers (twinning can take place with the University of Jerusalem as well).
7) Establishing nurseries on sound educational bases, and not just a place for sleeping for children.
4. **Supporting health institutions in Jerusalem:**

Zionism seeks to control the Arab health institutions in Jerusalem by linking treatment with Zionist institutions. The Arab institutions such as the association of charity "Al-Maqassed Al-Khairiya", the Red Crescent, and the eye hospital, in addition to other institutions, are exerting great efforts to remain semi-independent. However, they need financial support, and supplying them with Arab Specialist doctors and sophisticated equipment. It is recommended that the Arab hospitals should twin with these hospitals, providing opportunities for interdisciplinary collaboration necessary in these areas.

5. **Supporting the legal institutions:**

The people of Jerusalem are facing several Zionist attempts to seize their properties, either with false documents, municipal orders, or military orders, and other practices that lead them to resist these procedures by referring to the Zionist courts. This requires high fees and large defense expenses. In most cases, the poor citizen has to refer to a "Jewish" lawyer with high wages.

Several institutions in Jerusalem have assisted the Jerusalemites in facing these crises, including the institution of Adalah (Justice), the Arab Institution for Human Rights, Center for Human Rights, Al-Haq, Law in the service of humans, Freedoms, the institution of Law, the Center of Legal Opinion for the Jerusalemites' Human Rights, and other institutions, especially those working in the field of prisoners and detainees.

These institutions are working for free in most cases depending on the volunteer of a number of lawyers and men of law. However, in many cases they stand idle because they were unable to deal with a number of cases that need huge sums of money, fees for court, or referring to lawyers with high wages. Hence, these institutions have to be supported to cover these expenses.

Our success in supporting these institutions and fighting against the seizure of real estate is considered a success to fix Jerusalemites in their homes.

6. **Supporting the existing projects of associations and expanding their activities:**

There is an important role played by the several charity associations and institutions in Jerusalem which is providing services to poor families, opening schools, teaching girls sewing, secretarial duties, and other stuff, establishing orphanages, shelters for the elderly, associations for blind people, distributing food and clothes, child care and other areas. These associations need moral and financial support and must continue to work and expand. I think that coordination between them can lead to better results.

7. **Emergency Committees:**

The NGOs perform their role in emergency cases e.g. the demolition of the family's house or seizure of properties and the expulsion of residents. These need a
direct support. This is usually done immediately, but it is not enough to find a new house, furniture, food or other requirements. I firmly believe that these cases will increase in the future, and problems as well. This cannot be addressed directly in a proper and decent way. Therefore, an emergency fund has to be secured which is capable of facing these cases rapidly and properly, instead of subjecting the poor citizen to difficulties, emotional and physical pains.

8. Major Projects:

The role played by the NGOs in serving and defending Jerusalem was discussed, but it must be asserted that their work is also linked to major projects aiming at defending and protecting Jerusalem. These projects cannot be carried out by these NGOs, but it is the job of the other part of society as they serve the same goal, this includes:

1) Various housing projects, securing accommodation to citizens.
2) Economic projects securing different fields, the most important is securing opportunities for labor and fixing them in Jerusalem, e.g. factories, schools, etc.
3) Profit holding companies working in different commercial projects.
4) Supporting tourism and hotels in Jerusalem, and increasing the number of tourists.

The role of NGOs outside Jerusalem:

In the first section, we discussed the role of the NGOs in defending and protecting Jerusalem. However, this role alone is not enough to fulfill this goal. It is like a bird that cannot fly with only one wing. The second wing is represented in the NGOs and civil society organizations outside Jerusalem.

The NGOs play a big and effective role in defending and protecting Jerusalem, either directly or by pushing the governmental authorities to play this role and participate in all events. In order to make the role of the NGOs active and influential, and not only verbal, there must be some elements ensuring effectiveness and success.

1) Complete awareness of the issue of Jerusalem and the Zionist occupation, and what does it mean to the Arab and Islamic nations and the world and humanitarian community. The charitable and humanitarian work for Jerusalem does not mean to feed a hungry or teach a student; as done by any charity in any Arab village or city. This work means to save Jerusalem from the clutches of Zionism, and restoring its Arab and Islamic sovereignty. Therefore, it has to be up to the honor, justice, and importance of the goal.

2) Work has to be accompanied by hope, in order to end the Zionist occupation. So, it should not be regarded as a kind of "charity", as it is a struggle to end the occupation. Hence, this work should fight frustration and despair felt by many citizens as a result of repeated Arab defeats and frustrations. It is a step on the right path, along with other steps, and not a substitute, in order to end occupation.
3) There are several activities for the NGOs in Jerusalem. Hence, we should have a look on these activities, and know the fields of work, its volume and the possibility of expanding it to include other fields, in order to achieve proper coordination and support in the right field. The NGOs working in the field of education, know the activities and problems in this area, and therefore, they understand the situation, and can contribute in solving problems with different means, whether informative, cultural or financial, as well as the medical institutions and others. This does not mean to limit support. There must be coordination between inside and outside to achieve joint and continuous cooperation.

4) Mobilization for the sake of Jerusalem by all means to attract others' support, by holding conferences, seminars and lectures, and through publications and websites. It is also very important to discuss the issue of Jerusalem and the importance of supporting and protecting it in every local, regional, or international conference, where this humanitarian organization participates, in order to keep the issue of Jerusalem, and supporting its fixed historical rights in the spot light.

5) One of the most important means of support is the coordination between all NGOs in each region, or city, or a group of NGOs, to choose the institutions that give the best support. In addition to the distribution of tasks so as not to support one association in Jerusalem and neglect others. It is noted that most of the support goes to well known charities, while there are others doing several important tasks who do not get enough support. This coordination needs a responsible referee in the Arab League, who secures studies, information, as well as coordination.

6) Financial support is the most important means to defend and protect Jerusalem. Therefore, it has to be secured by a direct and sound means if possible by the accounts of the charities in banks, if there are no precautions on this direct support – such as the reservations of banks in sending this support as per the American orders and others. In this case, there has to be a substitute that will be discussed then.

7) Support could be provided indirectly as materials, as these materials cannot be entered directly. Therefore, money can be converted to buy them from the local market and give them to the institution.

These were some steps to activate the role of NGOs and civil society organizations inside and outside Jerusalem, in order to defend and protect Jerusalem, which is a sacred duty for any citizen, whether Arab, Muslim, Western, or Eastern who believes in the freedom of nations and their right to self-determination.

Let us DO and not SAY.
Victory for the struggling nations.

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