



AFEDJ

American Friends of the Episcopal Diocese of Jerusalem

Bearing Witness

A Journey with Holy Land Christians

GETTING TO KNOW THE HOLY LAND

Jerusalem

JERUSALEM

“If we were able to learn how to see the attachments of others to Jerusalem as a gift, and not as a threat, we might resolve the conflict and bring blessing to humanity. But, unfortunately, all of us in Jerusalem suffer from some kind of trauma, both from the past and the present and traumatized people are not normally able to see beyond themselves and their own interests.”

—Rabbi David Rosen, International Director of Interreligious Affairs, American Jewish Congress

Geography

- Elevation of 2,575 feet
- 49 square miles
- The Old City, a walled medieval enclosure, is less than ½ square mile
- To the east the city looks down on the Dead Sea and across the Jordan to the arid mountains of eastern Jordan (the biblical mountains of Moab).
- To the west it faces the coastal plain and the Mediterranean Sea, about 35 miles away
- A mixed subtropical semiarid climate with warm dry summers and cool rainy winters

Population:

- 957,000
- 19,000 residents per square mile
- When Israel took control of East Jerusalem in 1967, it created a new political demographic—Palestinian Jerusalemites. There are currently between 270,000-300,000 Palestinians living in Jerusalem and roughly 600,000 Jews
- 220,000 Jews live in post-1967 East Jerusalem neighborhoods beyond the 1949 armistice line or “Green Line.” By international law these neighborhoods, also called settlements, are considered illegal.



Syria

Golan Heights

Sea of Galilee

Haifa

Nazareth

Jordan River

1994 Treaty Line

West Bank

Janin

Nablus

Ramallah
Jericho

Amman

Jerusalem

Bethlehem

Dead Sea

Hebron

Gaza Strip

Gaza

Deir Al-Balah

Khan Yunis

Rafah

1950 Armistice Line

1949 Armistice Line

Israel

Jordan

Egypt

0 40 km 40 mi

The Old City of Jerusalem



Religions:

- 64% Jewish (secular and religious)
- 34% Muslim (mostly Sunni)
- 2% Christian (mostly Eastern Orthodox, Oriental Orthodox, Roman Catholic, and Protestant)
- 9,000 claim no religion

A Holy City of Pilgrimage

- For Jews it is the focus of biblical history and yearnings, living proof of ancient grandeur and independence, and a center of national renaissance; the Western Wall is its most holy area as well as the Temple Mount where the First and Second Temples once stood
- For Christians it is the scene of Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection
- For Muslims it is the goal of the Prophet Muhammad's mystic night and the site of one of Islam's most sacred shrines – the Dome of the Rock and Al-Aqṣā Mosque
- The walled Old City consists of Armenian, Christian, Jewish, and Muslim quarters

Economy

- In addition to tourism, Israel's global prominence in high-tech industries has had an impact on Jerusalem with two high-tech office complexes that employ thousands of highly educated Israeli scientists, engineers, and entrepreneurs.
- In politically stable times, thousands of West Bank Palestinians enter the city to work as unskilled laborers, especially in the hospitality and construction industries.
- 5.9% unemployment
- 52.6% of women and 60.6% of men take part in the workforce
- Men make 65% more per year than women even in the highest areas of employment
- The average housing density is higher among Palestinians (about 1.9 persons per room) than it is among Jews (about 1 person per room)
- Lack of available housing for residents keeps thousands from living in the city, but the community continues to grow substantially each year.
- Extreme poverty is concentrated among sections of the Muslim population, particularly in the Old City, and among strictly Orthodox Jews.

Education

- The language of instruction is Hebrew in most Jewish schools and Arabic in Palestinian schools; English is the most common second language.
- Separate Jewish school systems exist for the various religious traditions; the curriculum concentrates on the study of Jewish religion, history, and sacred texts.
- More than half the government schools in East Jerusalem serving Palestinian students use the Israel curriculum which does not include Palestinian history or culture.
- While most school-age children attend government schools, there are numerous private institutions maintained by Jewish, Muslim, and Christian religious organizations. In the Christian schools the language of instruction is sometimes English or French.

Travel

- Some neighborhoods are divided by walls. There are separate roads to access Israeli settlements, that are not open to Palestinians.
- Palestinians must submit requests for spouses or family members who are not Jerusalem residents to join them. This effectively denies Palestinians the possibility of living in East Jerusalem with spouses who are from Gaza or the West Bank – the other parts of current-day Palestine – and denies their children permanent residency status.
- Palestinians live in East Jerusalem and must cross checkpoints and blockades to enter other parts of the city, preventing freedom of movement.
- To travel abroad Palestinians must apply for a temporary travel document (*laissez passer*) as they are not eligible for an Israeli passport.

Infrastructure

- Palestinians in East Jerusalem comprise 37% of the population of Jerusalem, but they receive 12% of its budget in services and infrastructure.
- Palestinians in East Jerusalem pay taxes to the municipality but do not receive the same services that Jewish residents of West Jerusalem do. The Jerusalem Municipality avoids investment in infrastructure and services in Palestinian neighborhoods – including roads, pavements, water and sewage systems, schools, parks and cultural institutions.



Everyday Life and Challenges in “the Most Divided Capital City in the World.”

Perhaps the most complex of all issues that divide Israelis and Palestinians, the question of Jerusalem is central to both sides’ narratives, internal politics and diasporas. The Israeli government considers the city “Israel’s eternal and undivided capital” — highlighting the Jewish people’s historic connection to Jerusalem, and the “unification” of the city in 1967 after 19 years of Jordanian control of the eastern part.

Palestinians assert a historical, religious, social and cultural claim to Jerusalem, and demand that “East Jerusalem” be the capital of a future Palestinian state. Jerusalem has long played a central role in Palestinian politics and social affairs, even during the 50+ years of Israeli control. Important Palestinian institutions are located throughout East Jerusalem, including hospitals, universities, and many cultural sites.

Arab and Jewish residents of East and West Jerusalem inhabit different districts, speak different languages, attend different schools, read different newspapers, and observe different holy days. In theory residency entitles Palestinian Jerusalemites to similar socioeconomic benefits as citizens, yet in practice social services for East Jerusalem remain under-funded in comparison to services in West Jerusalem. West Jerusalem offers more schools, playgrounds/pools, and municipal services like trash pick-up and building permits. Palestinians are called “permanent residents” of Israel – but they’re not citizens of the state of Israel. Some jobs are not open to non-citizens. They can live and work in Israel and receive some social benefits – but they cannot vote or run for office. Palestinian residency status can be revoked, unlike citizenship. With the loss of resident status, they lose their health insurance, livelihood, and even the right to enter Jerusalem.

Biblical History

- Around 1000 B.C.E., King David conquered Jerusalem and made it the capital of the Jewish kingdom (2 Samuel).
- His son, Solomon, built the first holy Temple about 40 years later at the site many believe was the location of Abraham’s near sacrifice of his son Isaac (1 Kings 6:1 and Genesis 22:1-18).
- The Babylonians occupied Jerusalem in 586 B.C.E., destroyed the Temple, and sent the Jews into exile (1 Kings 17 – 2 Kings 25).
- About 50 years after that, the Persian King Cyrus allowed Jews to return to Jerusalem and rebuild the Temple (Ezra and Nehemiah).

Recent History

- After World War I, Great Britain took over Jerusalem, which was part of Palestine at the time, controlling the city and surrounding region until Israel became an independent state in 1948.
- Jerusalem was divided during the first 20 years of Israel’s existence. Israel controlled the Western portions of it, while Jordan controlled East Jerusalem.
- After the 1967 Six-Day War, Israel seized all of Jerusalem. The status of the city remains a central issue in the dispute between Israel and the Palestinian Arabs, who claim East Jerusalem as the capital of a future Palestinian state.
- Since the early 1970s, more than 220,000 Jewish citizens have moved to settlements in East Jerusalem and now make up about 40% of the population.

Finding Jerusalem in Scripture

Haram Al-Sharif (Temple Mount)
where the Dome of the Rock
and Al-Aqsa Mosque is located today
(Genesis 22:1-19, 1 Kings 8:1-21, and
Matthew 21:10-17)

Western Wall (1 Esdras 2:1-8, 6:8)

Church of the Holy Sepulcher
(Mark 6:1-8)

The Via Dolorosa (Way of Sorrow)
follows the route of Jesus Christ after
his condemnation as he bears his
cross towards execution at Calvary.
(John 19:13-42)

The Mount of Olives which includes
the Church of the Ascension, Church
of the Pater Noster (Lord's Prayer),
Church of Dominus Flevit (where Jesus
wept), and the Garden of Gethsemane
(Matthew 26:36-46 and Luke 24:50-53)

The Old City Walls and Gates
(Damascus, Lions', Jaffa, Dung, etc.)
(Nehemiah 2:11-20)

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Meet Violette Mubarak

Violette Mubarak, general director of the Jerusalem Princess Basma Center (JPBC), was born in Zababdeh a Christian village in the northern West Bank. She came to JPBC in 2014 serving first as officer for the human resources and procurement departments. Over the next eight years she assumed increasing responsibilities becoming operations director, deputy director and, in 2022, general director.

"We turn challenges into creativity," she said, when talking about the importance of the work JPBC engages in to support families from East Jerusalem, the West Bank, and Gaza. "We stand very strong and pursue our mission despite all the hard and difficult times." Violette credits the smiles and appreciation that staff receive from the families of children with disabilities as an important driver to offer this ministry. She explained that she and her staff are motivated by "the improvement and success that we see every day in children treated at our center, the impact of sharing our experience in the community, and the success stories of our children at the inclusive school and the Autism kindergarten."

Violette believes deeply the importance of sustaining JPBC so it may continue to offer services to children with disabilities and their families. "We still have many things to do for the benefit our neighbor across Palestine."