



The Palestinian–Israeli Draft Agreement on Archaeological Heritage: Restarting Discussion on Jerusalem's Historic Sites

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This document proposes a management plan for ancient sites in Jerusalem's Historic Basin. The cooperation of Israelis and Palestinians in this effort is seen as a means to strengthen moderate voices on both sides. Professional bodies' and policy-makers' involvement is key to the plan's implementation and success.

Background

In the last ten years, an alarming increase in the struggle over antiquities and sacred sites in Jerusalem has escalated tensions, threatening the prospect of a peaceful solution to the conflict. Specifically, archaeological excavations and related tourism developments have become an important tool to strengthen Israeli settlements and territorial claims in the Old City and surrounding areas. Protecting Jerusalem's cultural heritage becomes even more pressing due to the stalled negotiations between the Israelis and the Palestinians, and the increased use by extremist groups of heritage sites to promote their own nationalistic and religious agendas.

New Vision: Principles for Managing Jerusalem's Historic Basin

In this situation, Emek Shaveh believes it is necessary to initiate a broad discussion on the management and preservation of antiquities in Jerusalem, as well as of these sites' deep connection to identity and local heritage. Such a discussion will take into consideration the needs of Israelis, Palestinians, and other stakeholders.

To promote a new vision for the management of the Historic Basin's pluralistic heritage, Emek Shaveh proposes to advance the **Palestinian-Israeli Draft Agreement on Archaeological Heritage (PIDAAH)**. PIDAAH was drafted in 2009 by Palestinian and Israeli leading archaeologists and heritage professionals to address cultural heritage management in both Israel and the West Bank. Adapting PIDAAH to Jerusalem's ancient and sacred sites in the Historic Basin will stabilize the situation and prevent extremists from claiming ancient sites for ideological purposes. It will further strengthen recognition of a broad spectrum of stakeholders, whose opinion is not heard.

Basic Recommendations from the Palestinian-Israeli Draft Agreement:

- Ancient sites should be treated equally regardless of their period of occupation or of any religious, ethnic, national or cultural affiliation.
- Archaeological sites should be accessible to the public without discrimination.
- Prohibiting the destruction of archaeological sites due to their religious or cultural affiliations.
- Both sides are strongly encouraged to form a bilateral, professional committee in order to consult on cultural heritage issues of joint interest.

Next Steps

The PIDAAH needs to be further developed to relate specifically to the needs of Jerusalem's ancient sites. The support of Israeli, Palestinian and international policy-makers, cultural heritage professionals and organizations (UNESCO, ICOMOS*) is crucial in pressuring the Israeli government to accept and promote the Draft Agreement. With the involvement

* International Council on Monuments and Sites

of the above groups, the agreement can serve as a basis for the creation of a committee of Palestinian, Israeli and international experts (archaeologists, architects and more). The committee will carry out tasks such as:

- **Examining the historical borders** of Jerusalem as a World Heritage Site
- **Developing detailed recommendations** for the protection of ancient sites in the whole of Jerusalem's Historic Basin
- **Ensuring** that all relevant archaeological layers and the diverse cultural heritage exposed in excavations are presented to the public according to international guidelines

Political Importance

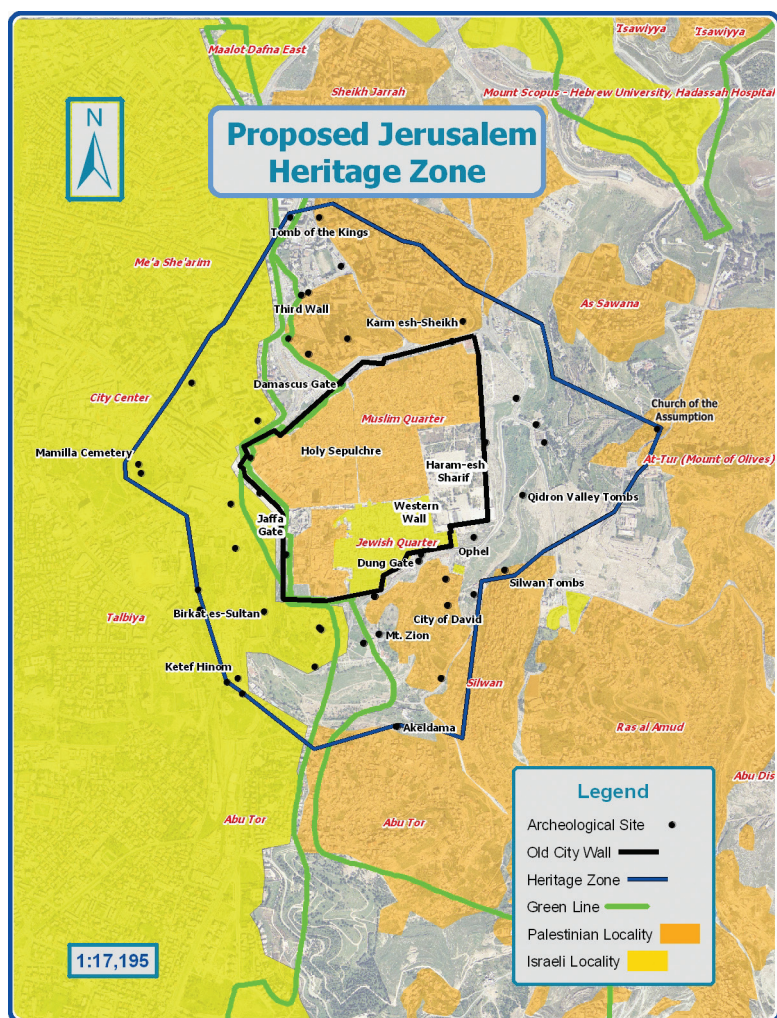
Cooperation between cultural heritage professionals on the basis of the PIDAAH document can make an important contribution to relieving tensions, and even create a positive environment for progress towards a political solution in Jerusalem. Crucially, although the management plan applies to the current situation in Jerusalem, we believe it can pave the way for inclusion in any final-status framework. While Palestinians stand to gain recognition and involvement in the heritage of Jerusalem, this plan will also include international recognition of the Jewish people's heritage in the area.

About the Israeli Palestinian Archaeology Working Group

This working group, operating between 2005 and 2009, was created in order to update the information about archaeological antiquities in Israel and Palestine, for the purpose of facilitating future negotiations between the two parties about the management of these sites. One important outcome of this group was a joint document listing recommendations for the management archaeological heritage in Israel and Palestine in a final-status agreement, informed by Jerusalem's status as a World Heritage Site.

About Emek Shaveh

Emek Shaveh is an organization of archaeologists, heritage professionals, and community activists focusing on the role of archaeology in Israeli society and in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. We view archaeology as a resource for building bridges and strengthening understanding between different peoples and cultures. To promote our goals, we engage in a range of activities including monitoring, publishing reports, legal petitions, and direct outreach to policy-makers and the public through guided tours, lectures, and briefings.



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