



KUFR
AQAB
ABSTRACT

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**The Arab Neighborhoods in East Jerusalem
Infrastructure Research and Evaluation**

KUFR AQAB

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THE ARAB NEIGHBORHOODS IN EAST JERUSALEM
INFRASTRUCTURE RESEARCH AND EVALUATION

KUFR AQAB

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KUFRAQAB - ABSTRACT

Kufr Aqab is one of the two largest Arab neighborhoods in North Jerusalem, located beyond the security fence (the other neighborhood is the Shuafat Refugee Camp) where we estimate that 61,500 people reside and where there are sufficient empty apartments to house an additional 15,000 residents (as well as a further 200 apartments in eight buildings that are currently under construction and likely to provide housing for another approximately 1,000 residents in the near future). About 10,000 more residents live in the eastern section of the neighborhood, under the municipal jurisdiction of the Palestinian Authority. Ever since a decade ago when it was moved beyond the fence, with respect to law enforcement Kufr Aqab has become a kind of no-man's land, and especially in regard to the regulation of planning and construction laws. For this reason Kufr Aqab, including the sub-district of Semiramis has become a center of construction characterized by new housing units sold at extremely low prices, in ten-twelve storey buildings that lack approved construction plans and appropriate engineering supervision. This construction has essentially taken over most of the area and prevents the addition of public spaces and public facilities. As a designated area for new residential construction, Kufr Aqab responds to the lack of building possibilities in all the Arab neighborhoods of East Jerusalem and thus, in a round-about way, contributes to stability in East Jerusalem.

A significant portion of the residents of Kufr Aqab belong to the middle class.

The main problems of the neighborhood include: an uncertain municipal future; the absence of a police station and efficient means to enforce the law; neglect by the civil authorities; indirect municipal activity in the neighborhood via the Community Administration, instead of direct intervention that could help to nurture involved and active local leadership; partial water supply from the Palestinian Authority based on absent and inadequate infrastructure and a tradition of not paying bills on time; lack of a sewage system; poor internal roads; inadequate garbage collection; a lack of schools; a lack of public space and public facilities; and an absence of public services in general and emergency services in particular.

It should be stressed that Kufr Aqab is similar in size and population to the cities of Ramla, Lod, Nazereth, and Ra'anana while it is more highly populated and crowded than cities such as Givatayim and Hod Hasharon. In terms of the scope of the population, it is larger than the most highly-populated

neighborhood in Jerusalem – the Ramot neighborhood. However, in comparison to Ramot and the cities mentioned above, Kufr Aqab receives a tiny budget and its municipal services are practically non-existent.

The ongoing neglect of the two neighborhoods beyond the security fence (Kufr Aqab and Shuafat refugee camp) and the size of the population that reside there have led various politicians in Israel to suggest removing Kufr Aqab from the jurisdiction of the Jerusalem Municipality based on demographic considerations and concerns about the image of the city.

A LIST OF THE MAIN PROBLEMS THAT CHARACTERIZE THE NEIGHBORHOOD OF KUFRAQAB



Absence of Personal Security, Government Presence and Law Enforcement The location of the neighborhood beyond the security fence has transformed it into a kind of no-man's land characterized by a lack of law enforcement in every sphere. As opposed to the Shuafat refugee camp, where there is an integrated policing center at the checkpoint at the entrance, comprising four members of the police force, there is no police presence at all in Kufr Aqab. Residents complain about the absence of personal security which is the result of the fact that the police is not present there, and because the army occasionally enters the neighborhood at night. When the police are called as the result of a violent incident or a crime, they always arrive late. The chairman of the neighborhood committee, Munir Zughayr (Abu Ashraf), approached the municipality with a request for the presence of civil (as opposed to military) police as well, when security arrests are being made, and requested that female officers be included in the force in the event that women are involved.

It was recently announced that the IDF will assume security responsibility for the neighborhoods situated beyond the security fence. It should be noted that security responsibility for the prevention of terror is not a substitute for the rule of law in the civil sector.

Government presence and law enforcement are a vital foundation for the administration of neighborhoods in the framework of the State of Israel, and therefore it is recommended that Israel allocate a larger and more significant police force which can provide the residents with services and ensure their personal security and the security of service providers in the neighborhood, as well as enforce the laws.



Remote Control Administration of Services and Infrastructure in the Neighborhood

The Jerusalem Municipality is barely active in the neighborhood, except via the "Jerusalem and Environs" Community Administration which is situated at the Qalandiya checkpoint. Residents' access to it involves extended periods of waiting in line and security checks at the checkpoint.

It is recommended that the municipality will establish a special operational body for direct and unmediated municipal administration of the neighborhood.



Disorderly, Unsupervised and Dense Construction Which Overruns Public Areas and Infrastructure Facilities

The absence of law enforcement leads to, among other things, unsupervised construction and vertical building to great heights with no planning, engineering or quality control oversight. The initiators of the building projects try to make maximum profit at the expense of the residents. As a result of the irresponsible construction, damage is caused to infrastructures and to the possibility of connecting the new housing to the existing infrastructure in a proper manner. The first order of business for a municipal or administrative authority in the neighborhood must be in the sphere of general law enforcement and the enforcement of the laws of planning and construction, including engineering examinations of buildings that have already been constructed and are not yet occupied.

It is recommended that top priority be given to enforcement of construction laws and to oversight of infrastructures and areas designated for public facilities, in order to bring to an end the chaos that currently reigns in these sectors. This can only be accomplished with the addition of significant policing forces.



Provision of Water Only Two Days a Week

Water is provided to the neighborhood by the Palestinian Water Authority, which supplies water only two days a week and is not capable of keeping up with the increase in demand caused by the increase in the number of residents in the neighborhood.

A significant investment is required in planning and in replacement of pipes with new pipes of the appropriate diameter to meet the needs of the growing population and improve the water supply to the residents.



The Sewage Pipes Can't Cope With the Strain The sewage system wasn't planned for the scope of the existing population, and the High Court has instructed the authorities to improve the situation.¹

The recommendation is to invest in expanding the current sewage system and upgrading the sewage pipes.



A Lack of Internal Roads and Sidewalks in the Entire Neighborhood The network of roads is very problematic. Most of the internal roads must be re-designed, paved, and surfaced with asphalt. The construction supervision must prevent the contractors from building on the areas designated for roads.

The recommendation is that the state should budget special funds for infrastructures in this neighborhood and the other Arab neighborhoods as well, which will include paving and surfacing of internal roads according to the required standards, inasmuch as this is possible given the topography of the areas.



Poor Sanitation The large scope of the population means that there is a large amount of solid waste and the manpower and equipment allocated to cope with this is far from sufficient to meet the needs. The recommendation is for greater frequency of trash removal and the addition of large and small receptacles, as well as trucks and small tractors for the narrow roads on the margins of the neighborhoods. The designated budget for the removal of trash in Kufr Aqab and Shuafat refugee camp is 5.5 million NIS, but according to the residents' assessment, 800 tons of garbage is generated monthly in Kufr Aqab alone and a concomitant budget must be allocated.

The recommendation is that the designated budget for trash removal be doubled in the neighborhood, to provide an adequate response to the needs.



Inadequate Education System Since the neighborhood lacks schools, many students study outside its limits. According to the data from the Jerusalem Education Administration, every morning the municipality transports 510 students to schools in adjacent Arab neighborhoods within the area of the security fence. According to the neighborhood parents' committee, a further several hundreds, if not thousands of students are bused privately to schools within the area of the security fence. In addition, some of the schools operate in residential buildings that have been converted into schools and do not meet existing standards for schools.

1 The High Court 14/2235 – Jamil Rashad Sanduka and 13 others vs the Government Water and Sewage Authority et al.

The recommendation is that the municipality and the Ministry of Education identify suitable public spaces where new schools can be built (and where necessary appropriate buildings may be rented), so as to obviate the need to bus students outside the neighborhood. With the assistance of the Chairman of the Neighborhood Committee, the research team identified two plots on which new schools could be built.



Public Services and a Lack of Public Facilities There is a severe lack of public services such as a mother and baby clinic, a local post office, banking services and welfare services provided from a bureau that should be located inside the neighborhood or at the Qalandiya checkpoint. Cultural activity is minimal and its budget is only NIS 60,000 (less than one shekel per person).

The recommendation is that the Ministry of Welfare establish a branch in the neighborhood or at the Qalandiya checkpoint. It is recommended that a branch of the post office and a mother and baby clinic be established in the neighborhood.



Lack of Public Facilities such as Public Parks and Playgrounds and Suitable Sports Facilities The Kufr Aqab neighborhood has no playground for children and families, and not even one suitable sports facility. There are no green spaces and no areas designated as places of entertainment or recreation.

The recommendation is to create a fund using the construction and development fees collected in the neighborhood and utilize the money to lease or purchase plots where public facilities can be located, and to allocate budgets for establishing such facilities following implementation of a survey to map needs and determine priorities.



Lack of Health and Rescue Services According to neighborhood activists, the health funds do not provide all services at the same level at which they are provided in other parts of the city. The neighborhood also lacks adequate emergency and rescue services.

The recommendation is to urgently ensure the availability of the above services in the neighborhood.



DEVELOPMENT AND GROWTH ENGINES

With the help of the chairman of the Neighborhood Committee the research team identified land where two schools could be built. The first, on block 20 and part of block 21, plot 2908, an area of 10 dunams (one dunam = 1,000 square meters) is available, in the area between the Al-Matar neighborhood and the Atarot Airport, inside the security fence (with access from the Semiramis neighborhood). The second location identified is a four-storey building on the main road (near the maternity hospital) for which a building permit exists and which could be converted into a school.

Development of the main road as a commercial area.

