



RAS AL-'AMUD

ABSTRACT

Jerusalem Institute for Policy Research projects – No. 523
The Arab Neighborhoods in East Jerusalem
Infrastructure Research and Evaluation

RAS AL-'AMUD

Ahmad Asmar | Jerusalem, 2020

Research Team Israel Kimhi, Ya'ara Issar,
Ahmad Asmar, Murad Natshe, Galit Raz-Dror, Tehila Bigman.

Photographs Israel Kimhi, Ahmad Asmar.

Maps Murad Natshe.

Additional Publications in this Series

1. Sur Baher and Umm Tuba
2. Beit Hanina
3. A-Tur
4. Wadi Al-Joz
5. Isawiya
6. Jabel Al-Mukaber
7. Abu Tur
8. Kufr Aqab
9. Shuafat refugee camp
10. shuafat

JERUSALEM מכון ירושלים
INSTITUTE למחקרי מדיניות
FOR POLICY معهد القدس
RESEARCH لبحث السياسات



THE ARAB NEIGHBORHOODS IN EAST JERUSALEM
INFRASTRUCTURE RESEARCH AND EVALUATION

RAS AL-'AMUD

AHMAD ASMAR

RAS AL-'AMUD

This study is part of a series of studies on Arab neighborhoods in East Jerusalem, conducted by the Jerusalem Institute for Policy Research. The aim of the studies is to produce a profile of the society and infrastructures of the city's Arab neighborhoods in a range of areas, in order to promote informed, proactive efforts to improve the quality of life for East Jerusalem's residents. In addition to describing the situation, the studies are aimed at identifying mechanisms for growth and development that will improve the socioeconomic conditions of these neighborhoods and villages. We believe that research combining practice with policy recommendations provides a basis for rectifying social and political injustices, with a view to creating a properly functioning city for all its residents. Our research methods include fieldwork, in-depth interviews with residents, the use of official authorities' and research institutes' databases, and roundtables with the participation of neighborhood, municipality, and civil society representatives.

Ras al-'Amud is located to the east of Silwan and the Old City, south of the Jewish cemetery on the Mount of Olives, and north of the Arab A Sawahreh Bedouin tribal area. Ras al-'Amud is, in effect, an extension of Silwan, and most of the land plots in the neighborhood are owned by the original residents of Silwan. When Silwan became overcrowded as a result of rapid development during the twentieth century, its extended families began to spread towards Ras al-'Amud, which, under the British Mandatory partition of the area, belonged to the village of Silwan. In recent decades families from other East Jerusalem neighborhoods have moved to Ras al-'Amud, and in particular families that trace back to Hebron.

The sub-neighborhood of Wadi Qadum spans 630 dunams, Located south of the old Jerusalem-Jericho Road, Wadi Qadum spans both sides of a channel that connects with the Qidron Valley. To the east it borders the Security Fence and the municipal boundary of Jerusalem (across from the village of Abu Dis); to the west it borders the old Bethlehem Road, which linked Bethlehem with East Jerusalem during Jordanian rule.

THE MAIN CHALLENGES IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Overall, the problems facing Ras al-'Amud differ from those of Wadi Qadum. The two neighborhood divisions therefore need to be addressed, and have their problems resolved, separately.

Both neighborhoods have problems in terms of infrastructure, the state of their roads, a lack of sidewalks, and drainage. In all these areas the situation in Wadi Qadum is more dire than in Ras al-'Amud: the state of infrastructures, the shortage and poor quality of public services, the housing situation, environmental conditions, and sanitation. Many years of illegal construction in Wadi Qadum have now rendered it nearly impossible to address a remedy of significant portion of its problems.



Roads and Transportation All the neighborhood's roads need repair. Most of the roads have at least an 8% grade and contain curves that do not meet safety standards. To improve these roads, it will be necessary to widen them, which would be very difficult under current circumstances.

Most of the streets lack sidewalks and have zero-lot-line buildings, making it impossible to widen the roads unless the buildings that were constructed along the road without a permit are demolished. A significant portion of the alleys are not paved with asphalt, which results in flooding during the rainy season. Plans for road expansion, particularly the American Road, will require demolishing buildings along the route.

We recommend that a detailed road survey should be conducted, and repairs should be decided based on its findings: expansion, transformation into a one-way street, the addition of a sidewalk, creation of parking spaces along certain segments or the prohibition of parking along other segments, and the like.



Parking and Bus Stops The neighborhoods of Ras al-'Amud and Wadi Qadum lack convenient parking, and parking along the roads creates traffic congestion. In addition, there are no parking bays for public transportation. Parking spaces have been designated, at the expense of built-up areas, along the roads adjacent to institutions that were built in later years, but these not meet the needs, particularly not those of the neighborhood's more newly constructed schools. Because the roads are narrow, the public transportation routes contain only signposts, rather than bus shelters, which is a source of hardship for residents during the summer and winter seasons. The narrow roads, most of which do not exceed 10m in width, also mean that public transportation relies on limited-capacity minivans.

We recommend that the possibility of creating public parking facilities in Ras al-Amud, as an alternative to parking along the roads, be assessed. Another recommendation is to build specially designed bus shelters wherever possible.

As an overall recommendation, transportation should be regulated throughout the neighborhoods, including the changing of traffic direction, prohibiting vehicles from entering certain streets, designating stops for schoolchildren disembark and creating new parking bays, creating concentrated parking areas in several lots in critical areas, and linking blocked roads with the main and local transportation routes. All these measures should be taken in cooperation with the residents and their representatives.



Planning and Construction The municipality is currently preparing a comprehensive master plan for the area. The plan will not resolve the hardships and problems that require immediate, targeted attention.

We recommend that local surveys be conducted to determine what repairs are needed, and that the necessary repairs and changes be made as soon as possible, without waiting for comprehensive plans whose approval takes a long time.



Connection to the Sewage System Many homes have not been connected to the sewage system and continue to use septic tanks. These are not always properly maintained, which results in sewage flowing into the drainage system.

We recommend, as a matter of urgency, that all homes be connected to the municipal sewage system.



Educational Facilities for Additional Students in the Future

According to current data, there is no need for additional classrooms in the neighborhood. However, the projected population growth will require the creation of new schools, and we recommend that the necessary land be designated in advance.

A suitable alternative is needed to replace the school at the entrance to Wadi Qadum, which operates in provisional buildings. The municipality is taking measures to address the issue by purchasing the land on which the provisional buildings stand.

SPECIFIC PROBLEMS TO THE SUB-NEIGHBORHOOD OF WADI QADUM



Shortage of Public Parks and Play Areas for Children Both neighborhoods lack public parks and play areas for children.

We recommend that suitable areas be identified for the creation of play areas for children, and this should take place in coordination with the residents or, alternatively, by expropriating land and properly compensating its owners.



Transportation The state of the roads in Wadi Qadum is dire, and public transportation is not feasible because the narrow roads do not allow buses to make a U-turn and exit the neighborhood via the old Bethlehem Road.

We recommend that a planning solution be found as a matter of urgency.



Sanitation – Cleanliness, Garbage Removal, and Animals The frequency of garbage removal from containers and dumpsters in Wadi Qadum is insufficient. Litter accumulates around the open containers, and residents then set it on fire. The narrow alleyways do not allow entry of the necessary mechanical equipment. In addition, the number of sanitation workers is inadequate to address the quantity of garbage along the roads and adjacent to homes.

The residents of Wadi Qadum have complained about roaming animals that disturb them and constitute a health hazard. These include dozens of dogs, donkeys, horses, rabbits, and various rodents.

We recommend increasing the number of sanitation workers and the frequency of garbage removal in the neighborhood. In addition, a professional solution is needed to remove the animals that roam the streets.



Drainage During the winter Wadi Qadum and other areas face a problem of drainage. Some of the streets include a drainage system with vents for runoff water, but they are blocked by sediment and litter and thus do not function properly when needed.

We recommend that an effective drainage system be constructed as a matter of urgency.



Water Supply Wadi Qadum has a water supply problem. Many residents are illegally connected to the main water supply or to neighbors' water meters. Some residents have large debts to the water company Hagihon because of the family's financial situation. Consequently, when the water company cuts off their supply, it is the most disadvantaged who are affected.

We recommend that the municipality and the water company address this problem at the individual and neighborhood levels, while cooperating with the residents and their representatives.