

## Palestinian Protests

### *Jerusalem's Shifting Fortunes*

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**ABSTRACT** This paper argues that both the institutions and the social cohesion of Palestinians in Jerusalem were dealt a heavy blow following the creation of the Palestinian Authority in 1994. The Palestinian Authority increasingly demobilized Palestinians within Jerusalem and eroded traditional institutions. Nevertheless, the Israeli occupation's intention to repress Jerusalemites by shutting down their organizations has inadvertently opened up new opportunities for collective action. Since then, Jerusalemites have begun reviving traditional institutions and working to address Israeli policies. This article incorporates new quantitative and qualitative data on the most recent waves of protest to make the argument that social cohesion is crucial to understanding protest capacity in East Jerusalem today.

**KEYWORDS:** protest, East Jerusalem, social cohesion, collective action, repression

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### INTRODUCTION

Historically, Jerusalem has been the center of political life for Palestinians. From the 1936 Arab Revolt to the 1990s, Jerusalemites have been highly mobilized and organized, lending their efforts in crucial ways to Palestinian uprisings. Organizers and organizations from Jerusalem were critical for the success of the First Intifada. They were also central, in many ways, to the political organizing that happened after the Oslo Accords.

Recently, however, Jerusalem has taken a back seat in Palestinian politics. Beginning in 1993, traditional institutions in Jerusalem began to recede in order to make space for institutions of the Palestinian Authority (PA). However, since the Second Intifada, PA institutions have ceased to exist in Jerusalem. Since then, Palestinians in Jerusalem have found themselves cut off from their leadership in the West Bank. They have had to struggle with Israeli repression and policies of displacement on their own, without organizing

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vehicles to help them resist. Traditional/informal institutions that once existed either no longer exist today or have been deeply weakened.

What explains this shift in fortunes for Jerusalemites? Why have Palestinians in Jerusalem been transformed from active and mobilized citizens to weakened and fragmented subjects? I argue in this article that both institutions and social cohesion of Palestinians in Jerusalem were dealt a heavy blow following the creation of the PA in 1994. The PA inadvertently affected social cohesion within Jerusalem in ways that Israel struggled to achieve before the Oslo Accords. Simply put, the PA's role in Jerusalem stunted Jerusalem's political development. As the PA increasingly behaved as a "subcontractor" for the Israeli occupation, it demobilized Palestinians within Jerusalem and eroded traditional institutions responsible for the oversight of Jerusalem's society. The legacy of the PA's role in Jerusalem from 1993 to 2002 can still be seen today as Jerusalemites struggle with social disintegration and incapacity to mobilize.

Nevertheless, the PA was removed from Jerusalem at the beginning of the Second Intifada. Ironically, by shutting down Palestinian institutions within Jerusalem, the Israeli occupation's intention to repress Jerusalemites has inadvertently opened up new venues of mobilization and opportunities for collective action. Since the PA was shut out of Jerusalem in 2002, Palestinians in Jerusalem have certainly struggled, but they have also begun organizing themselves, reviving traditional institutions and working to address Israeli policies of occupation and displacement.

This article traces the shifting patterns of Palestinian mobilization within Jerusalem. It outlines these shifts using qualitative evidence in three different periods: before the First Intifada; after Oslo; and following the Second Intifada. Following that, it presents a case study example of protests in Jerusalem, using a comparison of the Al-Aqsa protests that erupted in July 2017 with the protests around President Donald Trump's announcement regarding the US embassy.

#### **WHAT IS SOCIAL COHESION AND WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?**

Social cohesion can be defined as enhanced intergroup cooperation and the capacity for collective action, fueled by shared preferences (El Kurd 2017b, 25–26). The level of social cohesion within a community has profound effects on a variety of outcomes. Social cohesion can help determine who participates in civil conflict (Cunningham 2013, 659–72), whether or not a group of protestors can hold the picket line (Pearlman 2007), and how a community faces

external threats (Taylor 1988). The link between social cohesion and collective action is an important one and helps to bring societal dynamics into the center of the discussion regarding protest and dissent. After all, decisions to participate in collective action are not made at the individual level alone, but are affected by the contexts in which they emerge (Van Stekelenburg and Klandermans 2013, 891).

Certain conditions can affect the level of social cohesion in any given community. International involvement, for instance, has been found to impact social cohesion by driving a wedge between elites and their publics (El Kurd 2017b, 33–55). International patrons have also been found to polarize society, thus weakening social cohesion and limiting the ability of domestic groups to face external pressure (El Kurd 2017b; Jamal 2012). Alternatively, domestic dynamics may also affect social cohesion. For instance, the presence of various ethnic groups in a particular space may have an impact on social cohesion in the sense that it may lead to less intergroup cooperation and more intra-group insularity (Horowitz 1985; Chandra 2005).

Studies also show that authoritarianism may have an effect on social cohesion. Specifically, authoritarian strategies used by a regime, such as co-optation and repression, play a role in weakening the level to which social groups can cooperate with one another (El Kurd 2017b, 77–129). These strategies weaken cohesion in two ways: by increasing grievance between groups and by increasing insularity within groups. Both repression and co-optation can create a situation of haves and have nots, or segments of the population preferred by the regime over others. This breeds grievance between groups, as one group ties itself to the fate of the regime, and other groups feel the impact of preferential treatment. In certain contexts, authoritarian strategies also breed insularity within groups. This insularity serves as a defensive mechanism to avoid repression. It also occurs as a result of a “hardening” of positions within each group; over time, preferred segments and non-preferred segments of the population find they have little overlap on their preferences and positions. Repressive strategies in particular have been found to polarize societies.

Societies with low levels of cohesion find it difficult to engage in collective action on a mass scale, since coordination on common interests or goals is hampered by the insularity and grievance described above. In Palestine in particular, analysis of the historical record finds that high levels of social cohesion facilitated the highly coordinated and impactful First Intifada. On the other hand, lower levels of social cohesion led to the less coordinated and less effective Second Intifada. Activists today agree that social cohesion, or lack

thereof, is a major concern to them and impacts their ability to engage politically (International Crisis Group 2012, 11–14). As a result of both Israeli repression and PA co-optation, social cohesion in Palestine has regressed dramatically.

And yet, despite the impact of weakened social cohesion on Palestinian collective action, we still see protests and social movements emerge and succeed, even if they are often short lived. What explains the emergence of effective protest despite the context of occupation and apartheid facing Palestinians today? This article argues that the source of authoritarian strategy matters; specifically, the PA's intrusion into Palestinian political life has a greater impact on social cohesion than does Israeli repression. This is not to say that Israeli repression is tangential; in fact, the repression of a fully sovereign state such as Israel will clearly be more damaging than the repression of a semi-sovereign regime such as the PA. This argument is also not meant to equate the PA's role with Israel's role in the suffering of Palestinians. From a legal (and some would argue an ethical) perspective, the onus of responsibility falls on the state of Israel for the violence and hardship Palestinians face.<sup>1</sup>

Moreover, much has been written with regards to the structural dependency of the PA on the Israeli occupation, and many have characterized the PA as merely a “subcontractor” of the Israeli government and its objectives (Amrov and Tartir 2014; Tartir 2015, 2016). Nevertheless, this article argues that the PA has an additional effect than Israeli repression alone, and that societies react differently to the repression of an indigenous regime, versus the repression of an external occupier.

Moreover, Palestinians today face varying degrees of PA and Israeli authoritarianism. In Area A, for example, we find that Palestinians face PA strategies most directly. In Area B, the PA has less impact, given its requirement to share jurisdiction with the Israeli occupation. Third, in Area C, the PA is not allowed to function whatsoever. There, Palestinians face Israeli repression solely. Finally, Jerusalem's situation is a special case since it remains outside the peace process negotiation, though it is most similar to Area C in terms of the lack of PA intrusion. Palestinians in Jerusalem face Israeli strategies and the declining effect of the PA over time. However, Israel deals with Jerusalem in a different manner than in Area C to some degree. This is because even East Jerusalem is increasingly a mixed city, with Arab neighborhoods adjacent to

1. 1907 Hague Regulations (articles 42–56); Fourth Geneva Convention (GC IV, articles 27–34, 47–78).

Israeli ones. Thus, when the Israeli government represses the Palestinian population of Jerusalem, it must contend with the implications of such repression on its own population.

To explain why protest emerges in Jerusalem despite Israeli repression, I rely on Asef Bayat's concept of "non-movement." Bayat defines non-movements as "the collective actions of non-collective actors." These movements "embody shared practices of large numbers of ordinary people whose fragmented but similar activities trigger much social change" (Bayat 2010, 14). Thus, although there may not be a single unifying institution or organizing vehicle, such as in the past, Jerusalemites are still able to channel their grievances at key moments. In this way, they can use these "non-movements," which flare up periodically, to protest Israeli actions and demand change. Non-movements emerge in Jerusalem because they do not need a high degree of coordination or social cohesion; by definition they emerge in an uncoordinated fashion at the individual level.

These types of movements can be effective, but only under particular circumstances. Specifically, they can effect change when the issue or grievance at hand is limited in scope and time frame. Long-term political change, on the other hand, is difficult to sustain via non-movement. This is the case because long-term objectives often require a high level of coordination and, therefore, strong social cohesion. Fragmentation during social movements or uprisings often leads to spoilers and a lack of agreement on shared strategies for the movement, whereas cohesion in social movements helps maintain a unified front by which the movement can challenge their opponents effectively. Thus, Jerusalem's non-movements can express grievance and effect change in the short term, but the context of weakened social cohesion and continued Israeli repression makes these non-movements insufficient to achieve long-term political objectives.<sup>2</sup>

As will be shown below, the PA played a role in weakening social cohesion in Jerusalem due to the trajectory of its development. This subsequently weakened the capacity of Jerusalemites to face Israeli repression effectively. Nevertheless, because of the PA's exclusion from Jerusalem following the Second Intifada, Jerusalemites have been able to begin rebuilding social cohesion in their city. As a result, we find that protests now emerge in Jerusalem, but

2. I use the "non-movement" concept here as an ideal type. It accurately describes the majority of protests happening in the territories, but does not describe them all. Some organizing still happens under the auspices of organized parties and groups, though much less so today than in the past, and with much less efficacy.

they remain of a certain character; particularly, they take the form of “non-movements,” without the capacity for long-term transformative change in the context of Israel occupation.

## HISTORICAL TRAJECTORY OF PALESTINIAN MOBILIZATION

### Before the Palestinian Authority

Before the creation of the PA, the entire West Bank and the Gaza Strip were under direct military occupation. When Israel occupied the remainder of historic Palestine in 1967, settlements were introduced into these territories, renewing friction between Israelis and Palestinians. By the 1980s, the Israeli government had defined Jerusalem based on the borders expanded by the occupation of 1967. This meant a ratcheting up of settlement expansion and, concurrently, further Palestinian disenfranchisement (International Crisis Group 2012, 18).<sup>3</sup>

Palestinians in Jerusalem faced a number of pressing issues during this time. First, Palestinians in East Jerusalem became occupied subjects with a (not so) “permanent residency” status. This left Jerusalemites in a precarious position, susceptible to deportation and punitive measures. Most refused to acknowledge Israeli sovereignty over the city and thus boycotted municipal elections for fear of granting legitimacy to the Israeli occupation of the city (International Crisis Group 2012, ii–9). The Israeli authorities attempted to co-opt Palestinians in Jerusalem by appointing hand-picked *mukhtars* as local leaders who could assist the occupation in controlling Palestinian society. But instead, as one report notes, the *mukhtars* “never gained legitimacy and were widely mistrusted for their connections with the state” (International Crisis Group 2012, 8–9).

At the same time, other forms of political engagement were severely repressed. During the Intifada, for example, Defense Minister Yitzhak Rabin instituted an “Iron Fist” policy against any form of Palestinian nationalism and political activity (Shlaim 2000, 461–62). If suspected of engaging in politics, a Palestinian could expect to be arrested, have his home demolished, and then subsequently be deported. In Jerusalem, certain families began

3. As noted in International Crisis Group (2012), “This was done in cooperation with new non-governmental settler organizations that became important drivers of the settlement project. Such groups, which worked closely with government ministers, focused in their early years on establishing residential footholds in Arab neighborhoods in the Holy Basin, acquisitions that were enabled by significant relationships forged during this period with foreign Jewish donors, especially from the U.S. and UK.”

organizing their neighborhoods/areas in local committees, and tried to use these informal institutions to demand basic services from the Israeli government. As these neighborhood committees gained strength and lobbied the Israeli municipality for services, they eventually took on “social, educational, and cultural” roles (International Crisis Group 2012, 11). Thus, they were subsequently used to advocate for political rights. Palestinians in Jerusalem also founded the “Orient House,” which became an important channel of communication with the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) outside historic Palestine.

Despite these attempts to face the political situation, Israeli repression coupled with economic hardship led to unprecedented levels of tension in the West Bank and Gaza. These tensions erupted in the form of the first Palestinian intifada (uprising). While the PLO forces present outside historic Palestine coordinated on tactics with forces on the ground, local organizers and institutions were directly responsible first for organizing the uprising and its principles, and then facilitating its progress for the four years it lasted.<sup>4</sup> Moreover, during this time before the creation of the PA, urban centers accounted for much of the political mobilization against the Israeli occupation (Jamal 2005, 30–54). Residents in many major cities across the West Bank were among the first to respond to the call of the Unified National Leadership of the Uprising (UNLU) (Stein 1991). Jerusalem was a particular hotbed of activity during this period, as a stronghold of Fatah support and as the cosmopolitan capital of the Palestinian people (International Crisis Group 2012, 6). Jerusalem was also instrumental in coordinating with parties on the ground as well as the PLO on strategies of resistance (2).

The main organizing institution of the intifada—the UNLU—emerged with the support and involvement of Fatah, the Popular Front, the Democratic Front, and the Palestinian Communist Party (Stork 1989, 70–73). High levels of cohesion across the Palestinian territories and within Jerusalem itself meant that, for the majority of the intifada, those who took part in the uprising adhered to the principles set forth by UNLU (Pearlman 2012, 23–46).<sup>5</sup>

4. The Unified National Leadership of the Uprising decided on strategies of civil disobedience and nonviolent resistance, which for the most part were maintained throughout the main period of the uprising (1987–91).

5. Fragmentation, and the emergence of Islamist resistant groups, did not occur until after the main thrust of the uprising was over (post-1991). These Islamist resistance groups (i.e., Islamic Jihad and Hamas) did not emerge until the PLO began talks with the Israeli government, and preparation began for the creation of the PA.

Overall, Palestinians from the urban centers and adjacent refugee camps accounted for the bulk of intifada participants—Jerusalem in particular. As one report finds, Jerusalem had a “significant role in organizing the first intifada.” Jerusalem’s political leaders, such as Faisal al-Husseini, acted as “conduits” for coordination with the PLO leadership. To reflect their major role in the success of the First Intifada, “Jerusalem members of Fatah came to hold a disproportionate number of posts in the Palestinian national leadership” (International Crisis Group 2012, 6).

### Following the Creation of the Palestinian Authority

Patterns of mobilization across the Palestinian territories changed drastically following the creation of the PA. Although the Palestinian population was indistinguishable between areas before the PA’s creation, they were subjected to different administrative schemes following the denotation of Areas A–C. The PA gained full control of Area A (three percent of territory, sixty percent of the population), gained joint control of Area B (twenty-three to twenty-five percent of territory, thirty percent of the population), but ceded full control to the Israeli occupation of Area C (seventy-two to seventy-four percent of territory, ten to fifteen percent of the population) (International Crisis Group 2004, 3). These allocations of control were decided based on the density of settlements in each vicinity rather than on any difference between Palestinians living in these areas. Rural areas, in Areas B and C, were subsequently neglected politically as a result of the lower level of control in those areas (Jamal 2005, 30–54).

Jerusalem’s situation also took a unique turn. In East Jerusalem, Israel tacitly ceded some ground to PA organizations so that they could service the Palestinian community in ways in which Israel itself was unwilling. They allowed for some level of PA involvement in East Jerusalem institutions, such as Al Quds University, as well as the existence of the Orient House, the de facto headquarters of the PLO within Jerusalem, that housed a number of projects and initiatives (International Crisis Group 2012, 1–2). The Israeli government also allowed, to some degree, PA “Preventive Security” officials to exercise a certain level of control over the Palestinian population, especially with regards to fighting crime and inter-Palestinian conflict (2). Although the PA was involved more heavily in Jerusalem’s politics during this period, the scene was still dominated by local leaders from the large families that make up the Jerusalem elite. These leaders, including, for example, Faisal al-Husaini, had enough charisma and local support to act as a “rival political center” to



Yasser Arafat's Ramallah headquarters (3). Thus, despite greater PA intrusion during this time, Jerusalem political action remained somewhat autonomous in comparison with parts of the West Bank or Gaza. For some time after Oslo, Jerusalem was even described as the "center of gravity" of Palestinian politics (2).

Nevertheless, the proliferation of PA institutions, all headquartered in the West Bank and, to some degree, in Gaza, had an effect on the institutions within Jerusalem, as well as the importance of Jerusalem in Palestinian politics overall. After 1993, the growth of the PA caused informal institutions that relied on family and social ties to recede (International Crisis Group 2012, 9). Family networks that had been responsible for organizing the First Intifada's efforts quickly lost "political weight" (9). Activists complained that the traditional leadership no longer felt "responsible" for organizing Jerusalem's residents. Instead, the political leadership took a back seat to the headquarters in Ramallah and pursued "professional" gain over the public good (9). Overall, Jerusalem's traditional institutions were eroded, to be replaced by PA institutions operating from Ramallah. These institutions struggled with their own inefficiencies, including corruption and clientelism. As a result, they could not adequately respond to Jerusalem's challenges or represent Jerusalemites.

### The Second Intifada

The change in capacity for mobilization across the territories overall, and in Jerusalem in particular, has no better illustration than in the events of the Second Intifada. When protests erupted in response to Israeli provocations, the manner in which the uprising spread differed dramatically from patterns of mobilization seen in the past. Scholars and activists note that this uprising was characterized by polarization amongst Palestinians in both strategies and objectives (Pearlman 2012, 23–46). Certain urban centers fell under the purview of Islamist resistant groups, while others remained Fatah strongholds but split off from the PA (International Crisis Group 2008).

In Jerusalem, collective action efforts were inhibited in comparison with collective action during the First Intifada. Palestinians in Jerusalem relied more heavily on armed resistance or individual actions, such as suicide bombing. In fact, Jerusalemites caused most of the Israeli casualties that came as a result of suicide bombing (International Crisis Group 2012, 1). Unlike the First Intifada, in which Jerusalem played a key role, in the Second Intifada Jerusalem's institutions were not as effective, and Jerusalemites were largely silent (9).

In addition to the diminished level of mobilization in certain parts of the territories, the post-PA West Bank and Jerusalem were also characterized by higher levels of polarization. Scholars have noted that the intrusion of the PA on civil society, for example, led to divisions amongst those involved and low levels of trust between them (Jamal 2007, 1–14). During the Second Intifada, this division manifested itself with the downright fragmentation of the uprising. Not only were participants polarized in terms of appropriate strategies and objectives, but also they took up arms against each other. In fact, scholars point to the fragmentation and polarization of Palestinian society as the main explanation for the emergence of violent methods during the Second Intifada (Pearlman 2012, 23–46). Even strongholds of Fatah support eventually split off from the PA at the onset of the uprising, thus creating conditions of lawlessness in significant portions of the West Bank (Rubin and Rubin 2003, 185–215). In Jerusalem, divisions inhibited mobilization to a large degree. One leader of the uprising working in Jerusalem, Marwan Barghouti, notes that despite attempts to initiate clashes with the Israeli occupation forces and thus start an uprising, the “differences in opinion” between the various political factions involved meant his attempts remained unsuccessful (2005). Despite some initial protests, factions in Jerusalem and other parts of Area C were too fragmented over their preferred strategies to cooperate with each other. Sustained protest efforts were nonexistent, and much of the activity in these areas turned violent and sporadic as a result.

### Jerusalem Today

The failure of the Second Intifada, particularly with regards to the PA’s ability to maintain order, led to a targeted campaign of revamping the security forces and regaining control over all parts of the West Bank.<sup>6</sup> Salam Fayyad was appointed prime minister following the 2006 legislative elections, and his first task was security sector reform. These reforms were intended to professionalize the PA specifically, and the security forces more generally. This way, he attempted to guarantee that the fractionalization of security forces that occurred during the Second Intifada could never occur again. It also guaranteed the increased coercive capacity of the PA. To a large degree, these reforms succeeded. Fayyad purged many “unprofessional” personnel, and consolidated

6. I focus on the West Bank because PA control over the Gaza territories ended following Hamas’ electoral victory, and subsequent removal. Although today there is some coordination between the PA government in the West Bank and the Hamas government in Gaza, the same dynamic of PA control does not exist outside the West Bank. Thus, it would not be a useful comparison.

control once more over the West Bank (International Crisis Group 2010, 6–10). In addition, he increased coordination with the Israeli government and the PA became more coercive (Dumper 2013, 1258). Political factions that did not reject the use of violence were targeted, particularly those of the Islamist persuasion.

These reforms and subsequent crackdown had the effect of further fragmenting mobilization across parts of the West Bank. Coupled with the failure of the Second Intifada to achieve political gains, these reforms made patterns of mobilization across the different areas highly divergent by increasing the polarization of society where the PA held power. First, coordinated mobilization across the different areas was no longer the norm. Area A, including urban centers such as Ramallah, today feature very low levels of protest and other forms of political mobilization. Scholars argue that in most areas, particularly Area A where most Palestinians live, mobilization is “elite-driven.” These elites can be categorized into two main types: middle-class adherents of mostly defunct leftist organizations; and foreign-educated policy experts who function through nongovernmental organizations (NGOs). Overall, these groups are tied to particular personalities that have very little social backing. Thus, they cannot mobilize or coordinate effectively across groups in Palestinian society (Dana 2017). Attacks against the occupation persist in Area C, or in Jerusalem, where the PA has no control, but attacks are sporadic and are often quickly repressed by the Israeli military (International Crisis Group 2010, 21).

In particular, the Israeli stance on Palestinian organizing in Jerusalem changed following the Second Intifada. Israel began taking an increasingly aggressive approach to Palestinian collective action and organizing, closing down Orient House and leaving Jerusalemites ever more disconnected from their leadership. More importantly, the Israeli occupation clamped down on Jerusalemites organizing even amongst themselves. The Israeli Security Agency tasked with combating “political subversion,” included within this task anyone who opposed the Israeli occupation (International Crisis Group 2012, 1). Therefore, Palestinians of all political persuasions became a target of Israeli forces in Jerusalem. Today, Palestinian political parties have become fragmented and almost nonexistent in Jerusalem (6). Even institutions such as the Chamber of Commerce, founded before the State of Israel existed, were closed down in the campaign of political repression that followed the Second Intifada (3).

The PA has since been unable to intervene, provide services, or advocate for Jerusalemites via the peace process negotiations. In turn, the Israeli government has taken the political vacuum as a green light to pursue aggressive settlement policy in the same areas. These settlements pose a continuous threat to Palestinians within Jerusalem, and political organizing often revolves around this problem. Moreover, Palestinians in Jerusalem are burdened with exorbitant taxes, called *armona*, to the Israeli municipality, even though they are provided with subpar services. A total of ninety percent of Jerusalem city's budget is directed towards Jewish Israeli neighborhoods despite the fact that Palestinians are at least thirty-seven percent of the population. This all serves to marginalize these communities economically, in addition to their political disenfranchisement.

In recent years, the Israeli government has also pursued a policy of excising Arab neighborhoods out of Jerusalem by way of the segregation/apartheid wall. This wall has been snaked around predominantly Arab neighborhoods of Jerusalem—such as Abu Dis, Bir Nabala, Hizma, among others—in order to cut them off from the center of the city (International Crisis Group 2012, 21). Overall, these conditions compound to create an increasingly aggrieved population, with limited political institutions to direct their frustration. The fact that alternative leadership has not been allowed to emerge has also increased the sense of despair and disenfranchisement in East Jerusalem (4).

Nevertheless, more coordinated, large-scale mobilizations continue to occur in Jerusalem, despite these challenges. Jerusalemites have organized around religious and grassroots organizations, not the PA's institutions, on a number of occasions. Palestinians in Jerusalem have been able to organize, in short bursts, in order to air their grievances and pressure the Israeli government into conceding on important topics. These efforts are often “highly localized,” taking place almost “exclusively on the neighborhood level” and as a result of the “efforts of particular individuals,” given the lack of centralized leadership (International Crisis Group 2012, 6).

How do Jerusalemites organize themselves despite Israeli repression? Bayat's concept of “non-movement” can help explain this phenomenon to some degree. People in Jerusalem do not have to be fully coherent “collective actors” in order to accomplish short-term shared goals. Thus, although there may not be a single unifying institution or organizing vehicle, Jerusalemites can channel their grievances at key moments to protest Israeli actions and demand change.

In particular, the lack of PA intrusion in the city has meant that Jerusalemites are relatively more free of the political limitations imposed by the Palestinian leadership. Jerusalemites today are revitalizing some of these informal institutions, including the family networks. They have begun experimenting with forms of local organizing, including reorganizing the “popular committees” in particular neighborhoods, creating local security patrols, founding parent unions, and more (International Crisis Group 2012, 11–12, 14). At the very least, they can call for protests confident in the fact that a critical mass of other Jerusalemites will join them. This is unlike the situation in the West Bank, where turnout for collective action is often encumbered by individual political ties.

Activists note that the objective of these revitalized organizations is first and foremost to reconstruct social cohesion (International Crisis Group 2012, 11–12, 14). After the Oslo Accords, public, collective objectives were replaced with private, individual objectives; Palestinians in Jerusalem “ceded responsibility” to the PA’s institutions and foreign aid, pursuing professional aspirations above the public good (9). Thus, the informal institutions that have emerged today have attempted to undo this blow to social cohesion brought on by the creation of the PA, focusing on rebuilding a sense of community and responsibility. Although these informal institutions remain weak, and they do not have the organizing capacity of a unifying organization such as the UNLU, their existence proves that Palestinians can organize even in contexts of severe repression.

When we examine the number of protests in Jerusalem between 2007 and 2016 (figure 1), we find that protests have steadily increased in the city, especially when it comes to issues related to day-to-day life and the livelihood of Palestinians.<sup>7</sup> In 2014, for example, the Israeli government attempted to impose restrictions on the Al-Aqsa compound. Settlers in East Jerusalem also launched a number of provocative murders and attacks against Palestinians in the city. In response to these daily challenges, Jerusalemites erupted in protest. East Jerusalemites declared a general strike, and protests took place in the areas that had suffered settler attacks. These protests shut down the city, as parts of Jerusalem became virtually inaccessible to Israeli forces. Because of this outrage, the Israeli government ceded to local pressure, allowing Muslim access

7. This is based on an original data set of daily protests in the West Bank and Jerusalem, 2007–16, collected by the author from a number of sources, including the Institute for Palestine Studies chronologies, *Shabakat al Quds al-Akbbariya*, the Palestinian Census Bureau, and United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA) records.

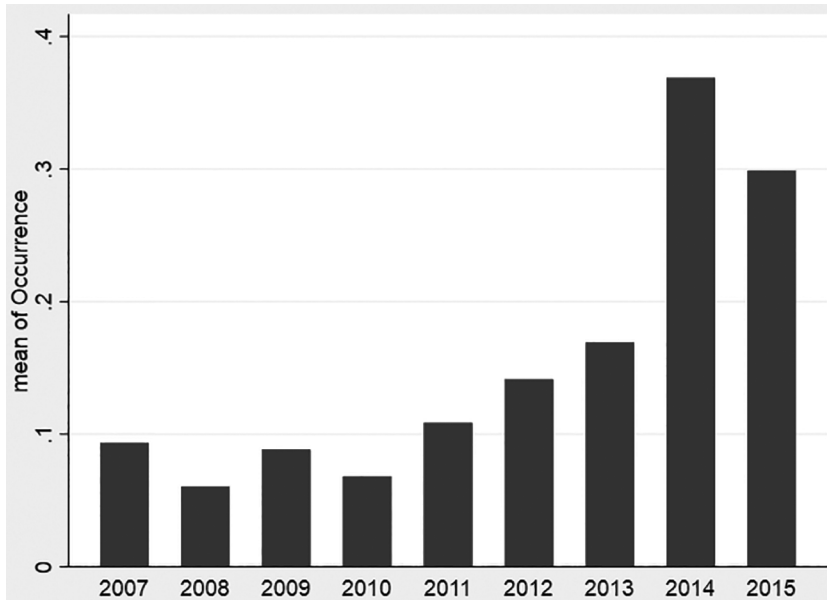


FIGURE 1. Protests by Year in Jerusalem.

from Israel and Jerusalem for all ages, limiting the provocations from religious Jews, and keeping out all ministers and Knesset members from the Al-Aqsa compound. The Israeli government also halted efforts in the Knesset to the Al-Aqsa compound's legal status.

This episode clearly shows that Jerusalemite's have the capacity for a particular type of protest; specifically, less coordinated "non-movements." These non-movements emerge when the daily lives of Palestinians in Jerusalem are under attack, but they are less likely to emerge against long-term political challenges. They are also only effective when dealing with short-term objectives. Nevertheless, Jerusalemites have clearly begun to rebuild social cohesion, which is why the short-term protests have now become possible.

### PROTEST EXAMPLES

This section will compare and contrast two recent waves of protests that emerged in Jerusalem. First, it examines the nature and efficacy of the Al-Aqsa protests of July 2017. It then examines the nature and efficacy of the protests around President Donald Trump's announcement regarding the US embassy.

In July 2017, Israeli soldiers outside the Old City were stabbed by a Palestinian assailant. The Israeli government used the occurrence as an opportunity to impose increased restrictions over the religious site. Recognizing that this action was setting a dangerous precedent, Palestinians called for protests specifically to target and roll back the new restrictions in the wake of the stabbings. In this case, the PA was also slow to react and did not take a position until a few days of intense activity had passed (El Kurd 2017a). Calls for protest from the political parties were also belated, and piggy-backed on the existing calls. Instead, young people spread the call for protest through social media. As research shows, the social media campaign was locally organized and organically spread rather than being imposed externally or by government entities (Unver 2017). The protests were subsequently decentralized.

Many of those who took part in protests came either from the Old City itself or from the marginalized poor neighborhoods most under threat from Israeli policies, such as the segregation wall or aggressive settlement activity. These neighborhoods include Abu Dis, Ras al-Amud, and Al-Tur. They relied on their social ties not only to spread the news about protests but also to agree on tactics. Many of the original participants had already engaged in protesting settler incursions into the Al-Aqsa compound (Al-Tahhan 2017). These activists joined forces with religious organizations present in the Old City, such as the Islamic *waqf* organizations, to unify efforts and provide a focal point for protests. They used organic strategies, such as protesting at prayer time and engaging in mass prayer, as a means of protest. Importantly, they maintained a mass boycott against praying within the Al-Aqsa compound until restrictions had been lifted. This maximized the disruption by praying in the streets and alleys outside.

Those who were injured or killed during these protests also indicates to a large degree who actually protested. Most of those who were injured or killed were from neighborhoods around the Old City or within the Old City itself, neighborhoods which had been subjected to settlement incursions and economic marginalization for years (Al Jazeera 2017). Many of these neighborhoods surrounding the Al-Aqsa would be most directly affected by the Israeli restrictions. Thus, protests were clearly emerging because both the Al-Aqsa restrictions presented a narrow and attainable target and it had to do with their day-to-day living.

The protests were very different when it came to President Trump's announcement, however. He announced that he was upending years of American policy regarding the final status of Jerusalem. Instead, the United States

would now recognize Jerusalem as Israel's capital and move the US embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem for this purpose. The ramifications of this move are, of course, dangerous, especially regarding the future of Palestinians within Jerusalem, as well as the precedent this move might set on the international stage (Arafah, El Kurd, Nuseibeh, Kattan, and Baconi 2017). Protests broke out in many Arab countries, as well as across the Palestinian territories. However, the protests in Jerusalem were muted in comparison with those of the summer (Kershner 2017). Reporters noted that there was much less participation in the Trump protests when compared with the Al-Aqsa protests that summer. They also noted that participants did not seem to have a coherent strategy or demands; most felt protesting was futile to begin with. Whereas the Al-Aqsa protests were grassroots, and sustained effectively over two weeks, the protests around Trump were called for by Fatah party operatives and involved only activists with direct affiliation to the party or a small subset of the population engaged in clashes with the Israeli army on a regular basis (interview with Zena Al-Tahhan 2018).<sup>8</sup> As a result, protests in East Jerusalem died out in a few days. Simply put, Palestinians were fatigued with the situation and did not see the point of protesting; the Trump announcement did not have as direct an impact on their lives in comparison with restrictions on the Old City, settler activity, and segregation policy.

In sum, when we look at the most recent waves of protests emerging from Jerusalem, we corroborate the theory of “non-movement” and short-term objectives described above. During the protests surrounding the restrictions on the Al-Aqsa compound, Palestinians mobilized effectively across Jerusalem's neighborhoods. They maintained a cohesive strategy as well as successfully pressured the Israeli government into acquiescing. On the other hand, during the protests regarding President Trump's decision to move the US embassy to Jerusalem, Palestinians did not mobilize on a large scale. Not only were the protests unsuccessful at attracting participation, but also they did not have a coherent strategy. As a result, they expectedly failed to change any policy regarding the embassy. The reason these protests were disparate in approach and efficacy has to do with their targets. The Al-Aqsa protests had very narrow short-term goals, that is, to get rid of the restrictions surrounding the Al-Aqsa compound which severely hampered the ability of Palestinians

8. Al-Tahhan was stationed in East Jerusalem during both the protests in July as well as those against President Trump. She notes that Fatah encouraged “people to demonstrate only because Trump's declaration means an end to the Palestinian Authority—they [the PA] will become futile and the plan for a two-state solution would be dead.”



in the city to worship freely. Trump's announcement did not have an effect on the day-to-day lives of Palestinians, however, and so protests did not have a narrow short-term goal on which to focus. Although the implications of Trump's announcement are severe in the medium to long term, it is difficult for Jerusalemites to mobilize effectively around larger issues given their limited capacity and social cohesion.

## THE WEST BANK COMPARED

While Jerusalemites have been rebuilding social cohesion, the remainder of the Palestinians in the West Bank still struggle with the impact of the PA and its policies on their social cohesion. Events following the Second Intifada, particularly the legislative elections, deeply polarized Palestinian society. After Hamas was quickly and forcibly removed from office, a crackdown that ensued against Hamas and its affiliates has exacerbated tensions between the two "camps" of Palestinian society (International Crisis Group 2010, 28). Moreover, this crackdown began to target not only those affiliated with Hamas but also anyone who was vocal in their criticism against the PA (International Crisis Group 2008, 28–33). Many complain that there is no effective civilian oversight of the security forces, and that the government functions by presidential decree only (International Crisis Group 2010, 3–5). This has led many activists to claim that Palestinian society has developed a "culture of fear," with the implicit understanding by all that the PA did not consider the current stage a "right time to protest" or mobilize (30).

Thus, Palestinians in the West Bank are divided between those who continue to support the PA as a representative of the Palestinian people and those who claim that the PA lost all legitimacy following the crackdown on Hamas (Abu-Helal 2013). Those in Area A remain largely reliant on public sector salaries, which by many accounts is a key aspect of PA governance that is maintaining its control over certain areas (Sarsour, Naser, and Atallah 2011).<sup>9</sup> Those in Area B, that is, the rural areas in particular, often have fewer ties to the PA through public sector positions or otherwise.<sup>10</sup> Many groups that operate within this area express criticism of the PA (as well as Fatah, the main political party within the

9. Approximately twenty-four percent of the population works directly for the PA, and are said to provide for one-third of the population. Government spending to the gross domestic product (GDP) ratio is forty-four percent, and a large portion of the Palestinian population relies on the PA for essential services.

10. Villagers in places such as Nil'in, Kafr Qaddum, and Budrus rely on farming. Their protest movements were initiated as a result of farm land confiscation.

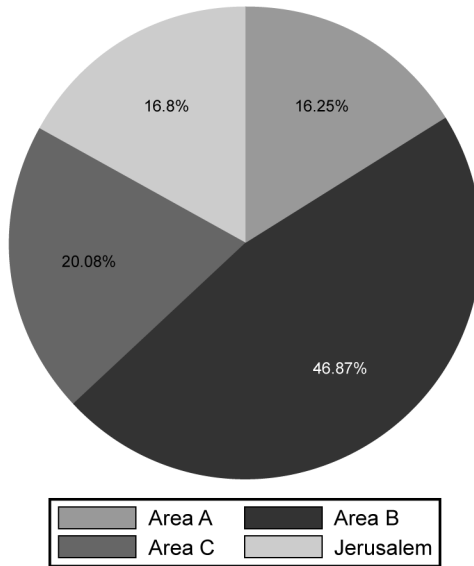


FIGURE 2. Protests by Area.

PA). Palestinians in Area C are mixed about their allegiances, with many political parties represented in this area without direct fear of crackdown. In fact, areas in Jerusalem under direct Israeli control have become “safe havens” for Hamas to continue their organizing illicitly (International Crisis Group 2012, 7).<sup>11</sup> Only a small fraction of Jerusalemites receive PA salaries, making the PA’s role in everyday life limited by comparison (4).<sup>12</sup> This dynamic of division across the West Bank facilitates the lack of coordinated mobilization between areas. But *within* areas, we find variation in the level of social cohesion, as well as the subsequent capacity to mobilize. Figure 2 outlines the variation in the number of protests across areas.

## CONCLUSIONS

The analysis shows that the PA had the inadvertent effect of weakening social cohesion within the city. Alongside Israeli repression after 1994, this has meant that Jerusalemites lost much of their capacity for collective action. This has inhibited Palestinians in Jerusalem from facing the occupation effectively.

11. Certain mosques and organizations are affiliated with Hamas, for example.

12. “The PA reportedly employs 7,400 civilian and security staff with Jerusalem residency” (International Crisis Group 2012, 4).

Nevertheless, following the Second Intifada, Jerusalem's political dynamics changed. The PA was no longer as involved, and Jerusalemites began regaining some of their mobilization capacity. As a result, when we examine protest movements today, we see what Bayat calls "non-movements" emerge in Jerusalem. As collective action capacity increases, Jerusalemites can face at least a narrow subset of challenges more effectively. Specifically, Palestinians in Jerusalem are most capable of collective action around issues that relate to their day-to-day lives.

Their social cohesion is not so great, however, as to face long-term political challenges. Israeli repression as well as Palestinian divisions still pose substantial obstacles to Palestinian social cohesion and collective action. Thus, the argument presented here does not imply that protests in Jerusalem have become cohesive and centralized, or that they are very effective in making more than a marginal change. In fact, the political vacuum left by the PA's neglect of the Jerusalem question, as well as the fragmented state of the remainder of the Palestinian territories, means that Palestinians in Jerusalem will continue to struggle in facing long-term threats. Nonetheless, we see a clear difference between protests in the West Bank versus protests in Jerusalem—and social cohesion is crucial to explaining this variation. ■

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