Beyond the Physicality of Space:

East Jerusalem, Kufr 'Aqab, and the Politics of Everyday Suffering

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This is a temporary solution to the issue of our residency ... the area might become West Bank any moment, and we don't know what do if that happens. The fact that it's excluded from Jerusalem by the wall, and that Israel allows for such 'ashwa'iyat[1] *means that it will be excluded one day. I won't be able to live with my family in that case.*

—Kareem, 33

We are like sheep, through their policies and laws they push us here and lead us to the destination they want. We have no control over where our lives are headed. Kufr 'Aqab will remain as it is because they don't want all these Palestinians migrating back to Jerusalem. The investigator told me that Kufr 'Aqab is the storage space for Israel, like the storage you keep in your home for junk you don't want.

—Ismail, 38

In late October 2015, at the time of writing this article, Israeli media reported on Benjamin Netanyahu's recent remarks calling for the consideration of revocation of residency status of East Jerusalem Palestinians living on the eastern side of the separation wall.[2] Netanyahu claimed that residents of these neighborhoods "do not fulfill their duties as residents, while enjoying the rights that the State of Israel gives them."[3] Israel's strategy of minimizing the number of Palestinians in Jerusalem goes beyond the physicality of the separation wall and into the intimate control of Palestinian life at the capillary level, through the strict enforcement of the Jerusalem permit regime. The combination of the "center of life" policy, which requires Palestinian residents of Jerusalem to constantly prove that they are living within Jerusalem's municipal boundaries, and

prohibition of family reunification of Palestinian spouses with different legal status, have complicated family life, mobility, and residency decisions. Through interviews with residents of Kufr 'Aqab, one of the northernmost neighborhoods on the east of the separation wall to which Netanyahu refered, this study sheds light on how such mechanisms impact everyday life. It highlights how such mechanisms have become deeply entrenched in individual, family and community structure, impacting individual partner choice and family formation; birthing and child registration; and manifested in the omnipresent system of surveillance in the form of investigators.

Background and Context

Following Israel's illegal and unilateral annexation of East Jerusalem in 1967, the boundaries of the city expanded threefold to include newly captured lands of 28 surrounding villages.[4] The extension of municipal and administrative control over the whole of newly annexed Jerusalem, which was codified in the form of Israel's amendment to the "Laws of the State" and the "Basic Law" on Jerusalem, would later result in Israel's imposition of the "permanent residency" regime.[5] At the time, Israeli authorities conducted a census whereby Israeli "permanent residency"[6] status was granted to about 66,000 Jerusalemites who were *physically* present in Jerusalem; residents who were not present at the time lost their right to reside in Jerusalem.[7]

Compared to Palestinians residing in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip,[8] permanent residency status offers a relative degree of freedom of movement, the right to live and work in Israel, as well as entitlements to social and health care provided by the Israeli National Insurance Institute.[9] However, despite their longstanding connection to Jerusalem,[10] permanent residents do not have citizenship rights and their only legal bond to the state is their permanent residency. That is, unlike Israeli citizens, they are unable to travel freely across Israeli borders (except with permission from the minister of interior) and unable to automatically pass their legal status to their children (except under limited circumstances at the discretion of the minister of interior). Moreover, while the revocation of Israeli citizenship is virtually impossible, the risk of revocation of permanent residency status is ever-present and left to the absolute discretion of the minister of interior.[11] Hence the weight of Israeli prime minister Netanyahu's reported cogitation on mass revocation of residency for Palestinian Jerusalemites "outside" the wall.

Since 1967, it is estimated that about 14,200 East Jerusalem permanent residency holders have had their rights revoked.[12] Most of these residents are alleged to no longer meet requirements of the "center of life" policy, which was introduced in 1995 and requires that permanent residents consistently prove that they reside within Jerusalem municipal boundaries and submit regular documentation substantiating this claim.

With the construction of the separation wall in 2002, Israel physically solidified its control of the illegally annexed territories. Jerusalem city, included *inside* the wall, is now cut off from the remainder of the West Bank and is only accessible through a series of checkpoint gates that require Israeli approval for entrance. Palestinians cross the

military checkpoints in a pathway barricaded by metal bars, through revolving gates that lead into identification and security checks. Once through the gates, Jerusalem permanent residents may pass to the other side by virtue of their legal documentation; residents of the West Bank are denied entry, unless they acquire an Israeli-issued permit beforehand. These are given only under special circumstances, and are extremely difficult to obtain.[13] Such physical barriers have effectively moved East Jerusalem, once the center of Palestinian political, economic, religious, and cultural life, to the margins of Palestinian society, exacerbating a process that began earlier.[14]

In further constricting the freedom of permanent residents, a 2003 amendment to the Nationality Law prohibited Palestinians with permanent residency who are married to Palestinians from the West Bank or Gaza from applying for family reunification so that their spouse can obtain Jerusalem residency.[15] Thus, many permanent residents who have been denied family reunification and cannot live "legally" in Jerusalem city with their families, have been forced into areas where they would maintain their residency rights by fulfilling the "center of life" requirement, while living with West Bank ID–carrying spouses, children and other family members who cannot access or reside in Jerusalem without a permit from Israel.

Kufr 'Aqab is one such area. Since it is (dis)located outside the wall and the Qalandiya checkpoint, and yet is within the Israeli-defined Jerusalem municipal boundaries, it provides a legal basis for families of different legal status to live together. As Noura Alkhalili, Muna Dajani, and Daniela De Leo have argued, such residual spaces on the peripheries of Jerusalem are manifestations of discriminatory planning strategies that seek to displace Palestinian Jerusalemites.[16] These areas have been produced to host displaced Palestinian Jerusalemites, harnessing the illusion of inhabiting Jerusalem. Some estimates suggest that over 100,000 Palestinians live in East Jerusalem neighborhoods beyond the separation wall, with the population of Kufr 'Aqab and Semiramis (another such Jerusalem neighborhood located beyond the wall) somewhere between 60,000 and 80,000.[17] Given the politically dictated mass influx of people to Kufr 'Aqab, this onetime sleepy village has been transformed into an area characterized by overcrowding, unregulated construction, and urban sprawl with detrimental environmental living conditions. Although residents are required to pay municipal taxes, municipal services are virtually absent in these areas and therefore a paradoxical state void, characterized by a physical retreat from the area, is marked. Moreover, the physical exclusion of Kufr 'Aqab by the wall – and the precarious nature of its current Jerusalem status that this seems to imply – signals the possibility of a future re-demarcation of Jerusalem municipal boundaries in which it is not included, leaving many residents uneasy about the future of their families' legal status.

While an exploration of the physical manifestations of the space as a result of discriminatory policies and mechanisms of control is important, the focus of this research seeks to look beyond the physicality of space in understanding the impact of these measures on intimate everyday life. Indeed, this research clearly illustrates that Kufr 'Aqab residents are exposed to various life-stressors, including anxiety resulting from legal and administrative battles to maintain residency; the distress of

having to relocate to areas with poorer living conditions in order to maintain Jerusalem residency; and feelings of mistrust and community disintegration. Elia Zureik and Nigel Parsons and Mark B. Salter have emphasized the need to incorporate an analysis of biopolitical practices of mobility regulation to explain the context of the occupied Palestinian territories.[18] Biopolitical practices, which include physical manifestations of control like the separation wall, Israeli army checkpoints which dot the landscape, and other physical obstructions to movement, as well as identity documentation and an overarching permit regime, all of which sever families from each other, are all central to this discussion. Moreover, given the diffused nature of Israeli power throughout the whole of the territory, the biopolitical lens is useful insofar as policing essentially takes place everywhere.[19]

We expand on this notion of biopolitics in illustrating the profound control of intimate family life and its contribution to the disintegration of community through the Kufr 'Aqab case study. Drawing on the Israeli-imposed policies and restrictions which permeate Palestinian family life, we recognize a peculiar type of "displacement" in Kufr 'Aqab, where the type of immobility imposed is not only physical and bureaucratic, but also includes a paradoxical mobility forced on families to move to areas like Kufr 'Aqab because of the overriding circumstances (including discriminatory land and housing policies in areas to the west of the wall), but ironically implemented by families themselves for the sake of family survival and viability. In addition, given the restrictions in movement managed and controlled by Israel by virtue of Israeli-defined legal status and the permit regime, families formed of members with different legal statuses compromise any sense of "mobility" to maintain the family, even if an individual *within* the family is relatively more "mobile." This paradoxical "immobile mobility," then, where the family must relocate to an area with a politically ambiguous future in order to maintain residency status temporarily for some of its members, is reified by the repercussions of bureaucratic and indirect, through arguably acute, forms of violence. The study highlights the severe uncertainty and insecurity that characterizes the lives of many of Kufr 'Aqab's inhabitants.

Methodology

The findings set forth in this study are based on an analysis of 63 in-depth qualitative interviews, conducted with 27 women, 20 men, and 16 young people (aged between 18–25) residing in Kufr 'Aqab. Interviews with women and men were conducted by the lead author and interviews with young people were conducted by the second author. Fieldwork was conducted in the period between October 2013 and August 2015, in places where participants felt comfortable speaking.

The semi-structured interview schedule explored questions related to reasons for relocating to Kufr 'Aqab, living conditions, and the quality of individual and family life. Participants were selected through purposeful-convenience sampling methods to include Palestinians with Jerusalem residency married to residents of the West Bank and vice

versa, and were solicited through snowballing. The Institute of Community and Public Health (ICPH) Research Ethics Committee granted ethical approval. Participants were presented with an oral informed consent and confidentiality statement, and indicated whether or not they agreed to participate in the study. Care has been taken to maintain participant's anonymity in writing their narratives and concealing their identities when publishing research. The names used throughout this paper are pseudonyms. Narratives were analyzed thematically through repeated reading and re-reading, where patterns, themes, and sub-themes gradually appeared. In this paper, we attempt to address a select range of issues extrapolated from the data. These are highlighted through the narratives of participants presented below.

Partner Choice and Family Formation in Political Limbo

From 1967 until 2000,[20] it was possible for Palestinian residents of Jerusalem and Palestinian citizens of Israel married to Palestinian residents of the West Bank and Gaza to obtain legal status for their spouses by applying for family unification.[21] Essentially, non-Jewish foreigners married to an Israeli citizen or resident might (background "security" checks permitting) acquire the same status as their sponsor. He or she would go through what is known as a "gradual process," whereby they would initially acquire a "temporary permit" to live in Israel, followed by "temporary resident status," and then "residency." And, if the sponsor were an Israeli citizen, he or she would acquire citizenship.[22] In 2003, the Knesset enacted the Citizenship and Entry to Israel Law (Temporary Order), prohibiting family unification between Israeli citizens (mostly Palestinian citizens of Israel) and residents, and their spouses from the West Bank and Gaza.[23]

The promulgation of this order denying family unification of Palestinians with different legal status has had serious consequences on family formation, and the narratives obtained highlight how politically induced stressors become intimately intertwined in everyday family life. While the order impacts both residents of Jerusalem as well as Palestinian citizens of Israel who are married to residents of the West Bank and Gaza (excluding occupied East Jerusalem), the study focuses on Palestinian Jerusalem ID holders (Israeli residents) married to residents with West Bank IDs.

In light of an already uncertain future, participants expressed worries about how issues related to their legal status strain their relationships and create marital tension. Spousal reactions to unions of different legal status seem to oscillate between feelings of renewed perseverance and regret in hindsight. Some participants pride themselves for their ability to maintain their relationship against all odds. They feel they have challenged a state determined to control their freedom to live and love as they see fit. For them, this obstacle becomes a site of resistance. Others regret subjecting themselves and their children to this type of suffering. In reflection, Sawsan, 34, stated: "Had I known it would be this difficult, I wouldn't have even looked in his direction."

In other narratives, regret was expressed in the form of advising against unions of mixed legal statuses, urging their friends and families to learn from their experiences. While some were blatantly discouraging, others warned of severe difficulty that could be overcome if you are willing to fight for it and make major compromises. Based on the narratives, there is some indication that unmarried young people are becoming more aware of the difficulties ahead and are making conscious decisions to avoid this type of suffering. Sara, 30, stated:

> I only started to think of how tragic the Jerusalem ID is when I was getting married. After they saw what we went through, my sisters decided that a Jerusalem ID is a priority for them when they get married. It's the first filter, everything else comes after.

One participant (Ahmad, 50) noted his attempt to introduce his colleague at the university to a potential partner.

> At the beginning, it seemed like a good match. They really liked each other, but when he realized she had a West Bank ID, he opted out. He said that he doesn't have the power it takes to deal with the hardships and he doesn't want to spend his life at the [Israeli] ministry of interior. It's a shame it ended, but that's just the way it is.

Another participant (Dina, 28) whose mother married a resident of the West Bank did not want her children to do the same, likening the prospect to marrying a foreigner:

> My mother says jokingly "we have enough family unification cases in our family." But really, she worries about this. She even used the word *yatagharribu*[24] when she talks about this . . . People say such things from the tragedies they have lived. Maybe at the end of the day, people decide not to marry someone with a different ID because of the circumstances, but deep inside, they feel they are not different, they are both Palestinians.

Although members of the family with Jerusalem residency can theoretically maintain their own legal status and their choice of partner by living in Kufr 'Aqab, the couple compromises family cohesion and quality of life. Interactions with the state system, in the form of legal bureaucracy and physical checkpoints restricting movement make apparent the invisible biopolitical clutch of the state into seemingly mundane family affairs and obligations. These have disastrous effects on the family, often culminating in tensions and prolonged anxiety.

Physical barriers make their way into the practicalities of everyday family life, restricting mobility for family with different legal status. Points of direct interaction with soldiers at checkpoints are not merely physical boundaries restricting movement. For couples carrying different residency status, they serve as markers to your position

vis-à-vis the occupation. As Mohammad, 33, recounted:

> My brother-in-law was getting married; the wedding procession began
> outside the wall where the families met. I was able to attend that, but I faced
> problems when the wedding ceremony moved inside the wall, near my in-
> laws' house. Imagine my situation. Everyone was well dressed, they were
> just at a wedding. We got stopped at the checkpoint, and everyone with a
> Jerusalem ID was allowed to pass except for me. I have a West Bank ID.
> They had to wait while I was interrogated by the soldier and managed to
> convince him to let me through. I felt so embarrassed that they had to wait
> for me ... I felt like a stranger, I felt like I am less than all of them because
> they can come and go ... I mean, I know I'm not inferior to them, but I can't
> help feeling that way ... I was in shock.

Although we cannot extrapolate or conclude that changes in marriage patterns are
occurring based on legal status, these narratives raise concerns that Israeli policies
denying family unification are in some ways succeeding in further fragmenting
Palestinian communities. Some participants noted that such policies have been
internalized and manifested in self-policing their own love. Indeed, the lived experiences
of couples juggling choice of partner and family sustainability in the corridors of an
overly regulated political legal system attest to this phenomenon.

Life in the Margins: Birthing, Boundaries, and Wellbeing

Although under Israeli law a child born to an Israeli citizen is entitled to citizenship
by virtue of his or her parents, the same does not hold true for a Jerusalem permanent
resident. Jerusalem residents cannot automatically pass on their residency status to
their children, and need to ensure that their children are born in an Israeli recognized
Jerusalem hospital so they may begin the process of registration.[25] For residents of Kufr
'Aqab, giving birth in a hospital inside Jerusalem is especially challenging because of
the physical barriers, especially when the female spouse is a resident of the West Bank,
since she has very limited access to Jerusalem. Birthing in this context presents a special
conundrum for couples living in Kufr 'Aqab, especially for those with different legal
status.

The findings of this study corroborate many of Nadera Shalhoub-Kevorkian's findings
in her research focusing on the politics of birthing in occupied East Jerusalem. Shalhoub-
Kevorkian provides narratives from women taking considerable risks to ensure that their
children are born in Jerusalem, and argues that gendered violence against Palestinian
women's bodies is part of a larger system of structural dispossession.[26] In a similar
vein in Kufr 'Aqab, women interviewed described heightened anxiety and stress during
times of pregnancy and childbirth for issues related to unplanned birthing outside the
Israeli-defined municipal boundaries of Jerusalem. And given Kufr 'Aqab's dislocation

outside the separation wall and the physical obstacles couples may face in reaching Jerusalem inside the wall, these fears were internalized and negatively embodied in their pregnancy and birthing experiences.

Women often articulated fears of giving birth at a checkpoint, fearing the denial of their child's birth certificate. Indeed in the context of Palestine, following intensified closure and restrictions on movement, birthing at checkpoints has become an increasingly pressing issue, changing birthing location patterns in the occupied Palestinian territories.[27] Between 2000 and 2007, for example, 10 percent of pregnant Palestinian women heading to hospitals to give birth were delayed at checkpoints, resulting in 69 births and 35 infant and 5 maternal deaths.[28]

One woman living in Kufr 'Aqab who had previously witnessed another woman having to give birth at the checkpoint expressed her obsessive thinking about the possibility of this happening to her on her way from Kufr 'Aqab to a Jerusalem hospital inside the wall. Much of her psychologically distressed state during her pregnancy was attributed to this memory, furthering an already anxious experience in her own life. Another participant mentioned that she had a miscarriage at the checkpoint, indicating the perceived link between physical political barriers and induced anxiety and distress leading to negative health outcomes.

The place of birth was so crucial in one woman's birthing experience that she put herself at risk in order to ensure the documentation of the newborn child. Indeed many women discussed feelings of familial separation, despite little geographic distance. Natasha, 38, is one example:

> We were newlywed, it was my first pregnancy and I was in my eight month. I sneaked into Jerusalem to my in-laws house. I was "illegal" for a whole month, but worse than that is that I felt like a stranger. I mean, we just got married and my husband was working in the north and would come only once a week. And of course, my mother couldn't reach me. All of this for the sake of ensuring birth in the right hospital. I really felt like I was in prison.

These feelings of lessened social and familial support are arguably "false" states induced by the biopolitical power of bureaucracies and physical barriers imposed by the Israeli occupation, which lead to the potential breakdown of traditional support networks. For Jerusalemite women, the support network is compromised at its core, with the common exclusion of the father of the child if he is a resident of the West Bank and does not have a military permit to access Jerusalem. Mariam, 35, described the feelings produced by such a situation:

> When I'm at the hospital alone I feel my soul is reaching out of my body; I want my husband there by my side to help me. When I remember how difficult that was, I tell my family and friends to only consider marrying someone with the same ID so they'll never have to experience it.

While some women suffer from the breakdown of traditional support networks, men unable to access Jerusalem during childbirth are robbed of their initiation into fatherhood and witnessing the first precious hours of their newborn's life. Kareem, 33, was one of the male participants that described agonizing experiences:

> My wife went for a check-up in Jerusalem; she was 7 months pregnant at the time. She had complications and needed to deliver right away. She called frantically and said she needed to go into an operation. It was 10:00 pm, and my permit had expired at 7:00 pm. I couldn't get in ... the most I could do was pick up her sister and drop her off at the checkpoint ... I sat in the car and began to cry. It was one of the very few times I've cried in my life. It was the worst moment. I kept saying: Why me? Why now? It was a horrible feeling. My sister-in-law's husband was able to be there and I, her husband, could not be there.

Another man, who was also unable to access Jerusalem while his wife was in labor, narrated a sober account of this experience. As his voice receded, he was unable to articulate his feelings and merely ridiculed the fact that he had to send his well-wishes (*hamdillah 'al-salama*) over the phone, despite the fact that husband and wife were, physically, just a few miles apart.

To avoid this experience, one woman asked her doctor to induce her birth in line with the duration of a permit allowance given to her husband so she could ensure he would be able to witness the birth of their child. Having understood the difficulty in obtaining a permit for her husband in time for childbirth, the doctor empathized with the couple and agreed to an induced labor. This particular story illustrates the imposition of the state on the natural rhythms of childbearing, thereby trespassing on women's bodies throughout the birthing process.

Indeed, the fears of giving birth at the "wrong" place and time is a politically dictated emotion resulting from the prospect of missing the crucial opportunity for documentation vital for the future and does not fall within the "normal" realm of birthing experiences of most couples. These fears push women to take potential health risks and illustrate how their political reality interacts with traditional support networks and stress.

Recognizing the Family:
(Il)legality and Surveillance in an Uncertain Future

Beyond the politics of birthing at the "right" place and time, many participants in the study also discussed the difficulties of proceeding with registration long after birth. "Proving" the child's existence requires years of consolidating proper documentation and various investigations carried out by the Israeli National Insurance Institute.

In order to register a child, families must again prove that their "center of life" is in Jerusalem. This process requires the collection of documents that link a family's various

living domains to the municipality borders. And while their meticulous collection is time-consuming and demoralizing, these rather mundane documents became markers of their identity and, as expressed, "proof of existence." As Dina, 28, explained:

> We can't throw away anything. We keep tax payments, rental agreements, water and electricity bills, medical receipts and school certificates. Because each one of us has a different ID, my mother keeps a folder for each, marked by a different color. My brother is 16 and still has no ID. His file is the thickest. The second file is for those who have an ID number, my mother and other brother. The smallest is me and my sisters' – we have West Bank IDs.

Participants narrated years of unsettling experiences related to their unpleasant, but necessary, trips to the ministry of interior, battling back and forth between having no identification number, having a "temporary" number, and obtaining a "permanent" residency number. In some cases, the registration of children born to the same parents was characterized by different patterns of experiences with each child, depending on new policies being implemented at a given time. Mariam, 40, described her struggle to register her children:

> I registered my kids after a lot of perseverance and lawyer fees. It was an accomplishment. But it's humiliation at the same time. For three years [before she was approved, my daughter] Sara had no ID; she got one in 2006. [My son] Yusuf got a temporary ID for two years and then a permanent number in 2009. So from 2006 till 2009, I barely had a birth certificate even though I gave birth to them in Jerusalem. Those years were very stressful. I wouldn't be able to sleep thinking that my children have no proof of existence in the world. Thoughts like these set my heart on fire.

In addition to the documentation required, proving that Jerusalem is the "center of life" for applicants requires passing an investigation carried out by the Israeli National Insurance Institute. The family must "pass" the investigation in order to process the children's registration and obtain permanent residency. The investigation process has been described as extremely intrusive, creating a source of extreme anxiety for many. Asma, 36, told of one incident:

> My husband was out of town, I was home alone. The investigator came unexpected and asked to see the house. He looked inside the fridge, inside the toilet bin; he checked if the toothbrushes are wet and opened my closet. He went through my clothes. Apparently such invasion of privacy is normal. He kept interrogating me and accusing me of lying about living here. I know this is expected, but was shocked for three days afterwards. I kept shaking. I felt extremely unsafe in my own house. He is Palestinian, but I felt he was Israeli.

Participants expressed different views on the investigation process. Whereas some delegitimized the investigators, who are Palestinians, implying that their work is a form of collaboration with Israel, others saw them in a less negative light. In fact, some saw the investigation as a *necessary disturbance*, indicating there was progress in the processing of their application in the Israeli bureaucracy, however intrusive. As Laila, 43, said:

> It is normal that it's intrusive, it's an investigation. In fact, once they come, you feel that you have achieved something at least; it's a positive development, signaling your application is being processed. I try to make the best of it, to use the opportunity to show that I do really live there, that I can for example easily navigate the space and make coffee.

In all cases, the investigators are seen as holding power over the family's future. The personal impression they reflect to the investigator makes its way into official legal documentation that ultimately determines whether or not the state is convinced of their residency. The power of official judgment reinforces the power dynamic inherent in the relation of state bureaucrats to its subjects. Whereas some residents attempt to impress the investigator by organizing the myriad of documents required or by being warm and hospitable to their "guest," others react with defiance, attempting to reclaim the domestic space that has been intruded upon. In this sense, they renegotiate the power dynamic inherent within the system and create sites of resistance. Dalia, 28, described her mother's response:

> When the investigator comes, my mother does not allow him to question each one of us separately. She insists that we're all in the same room. She also refused to begin answering questions until the investigator gives his complete name and family name, and then she draws on her local Jerusalemite lineage and history about the families there to say "ah, you are the son of so-and-so" ... this makes them clearly uncomfortable.

Fear, Mistrust, and Communal Fragmentation

Participants described how the investigator's work often went beyond their nuclear family to the extended one. Moreover, the narratives indicate that this type of surveillance is lived and experienced in public spaces, where participants feel vulnerable and subject to covert investigation. Samah, 35, recalled an investigator who "presented to me pictures of myself outside my old house in Ramallah; he accused me of living there . . . I explained I was only picking up some stuff."

Participants discussed the investigators' infiltration of the Jerusalem community to gather information that may be used to revoke permanent residency status in Jerusalem or obstruct a process of registration. As Ayman, 40, noted:

An elderly Palestinian woman takes a break as she walks up Kufr 'Aqab's hills, 27 November 2014. Photo by Doaa Hammoudeh.

> They come dressed casually as any other men from the community, or come disguised as phone company employees and ask the shops and neighbors about so-and-so. They speak as if they are from the area, asking about Abu or Umm Ahmad,[29] for example, to check if people have seen them around. They are sneaky. Whenever we see someone looking in our direction we immediately think, "he's an investigator."

Consequently, many residents described community unease and fear in building social relations. These feelings generated an unwillingness to form neighborly bonds, with mistrust permeating communities. Dia, 37, related that the investigation regime

> is affecting us; it is causing a lot of fear. I, for example, don't want to meet the neighbors so that we don't exchange stories and I won't have to lie one day if I am asked about them, and so they don't have to do the same for me. Even though my building has 36 families, I only know three of my neighbors, and even with them we just say "hello." This would not be the case anywhere else.

However, state surveillance through investigators is not the only reason behind community disintegration and mistrust. Residents emphasize that Kufr 'Aqab is a "functional" space dictated by political necessity rather than living convenience and preference. Furthermore, it lacks traditional components of Palestinian society, which are characterized by knowledge of neighbors and surrounding communities. Instead, Sireen, 32, stated, "What unites us all is that we want to keep our residency, nothing more. The area collected people from all over the country with different lifestyles and morals, all for the same purpose."

Moreover, this condition has repercussions on subjective emotional and psychological wellbeing. Noor, 23, described this impact:

> I feel alone in all of this crowding because I don't know anybody . . . I keep comparing my life now to my life before moving to Kufr 'Aqab . . . There, I felt like I was part of a community. I know them and they know me. I used to belong to something and it made me happy; now I feel empty. They [Israelis] have taken away our sense of belonging and have distorted our traditions.

Conclusion

The Kufr 'Aqab phenomenon is situated within a broader context of settler-colonialism, seeking to empty Jerusalem of its Palestinian inhabitants through gradual displacement toward the peripheries "outside" the separation wall. While many residents of Kufr 'Aqab recognize their predicament as part of broader policies of displacement and exclusion, their immediate connection to it presents an inherent tension. That is, relocation to Kufr 'Aqab has helped Israel's policies of displacement succeed. These policies have forced residents to constantly have to "prove their existence," which they must substantiate with meticulous documentation attesting to a connection with Jerusalem as well as intrusive investigations that cause community disintegration and negatively impact sense of belonging, and therefore wellbeing.

The seeming perpetual limbo has compromised their quality of life, and family mobility is ultimately constrained by a series of bureaucratic and physical obstacles. As one resident put it, "you put out one fire, only for another to be ignited, and it goes on and on." Indeed, the overwhelming presence of the Israeli state is expressed and reinforced through physical barriers that obstruct movement into and out of Jerusalem (and its neighboring villages). For residents with families of different legal status, physical barriers have severe consequences on social and familial relations, permeating all aspects of life, including, literally, the body.

Palestinian families living in Kufr 'Aqab whose members hold different legal statuses find themselves living on a seeming continuum of mobility and immobility. While there are relative "freedoms" for those with Jerusalem residency, compared to Palestinians holding West Bank residency, the formation of the family comprising different legal statuses neutralizes these "freedoms." This brings in a paradoxical sense of "immobile

mobility," where the family must move to an ambiguous and precarious location in order to maintain residency for some (despite their ability to move freely, in theory, by virtue of legal status). This is exacerbated by the consequences of bureaucratic and indirect yet acute forms of violence. These constitute, as Shalhoub-Kevorkian argues, a form of structural violence as part of a logic of elimination.[30] As the narratives highlight, the biopolitical practices of mobility regulation have become deeply entrenched in issues that are both intimately personal and mundane. These include an individual's right to love, to marry, and to have and live with a family. They also encompass an individual's ability to register their children through official systems and maintain traditional support systems from immediate and extended family. The biopolitical separation has been internalized to the extent that some women resort to manipulating their bodies with technologies to conform to Israel's restrictions by inducing birth prematurely, for example. These policies have compromised the viability of the family as a stable body, threatening its survival and destabilizing any sense of family normalcy.

The ramifications of this particular setting are all-encompassing, affecting individual and family life, as well as communal life, and its structures and support systems. In effect, these policies and their attendant pressures increasingly impact the political identifications of Kufr 'Aqab's residents, which are internalized and articulated in language. For example, as one participant noted, Palestinians with Jerusalem IDs would say *ihna* (us) in reference to Jerusalem ID holders and *intu* (you) in reference to Palestinians with West Bank IDs, while Palestinians with West Bank IDs use the reverse, as if they are no longer part of the same Palestinian national polity. As the narratives have shown, these have become reified in a potential self-policing in love based on legal status, potentially impacting marriage patterns and marriageability. The narratives raise concerns about whether Israeli policies may in the future cause additional separation of the Jerusalemite community from the rest of the Palestinian community by changing marriage patterns in ways which correspond to accommodating a very harsh reality.

These overarching policies of displacement and biopolitical regulation, camouflaged by the formality and rigidness of the state bureaucracy, infiltrate the most intimate and seemingly mundane aspects of individual and family life. The repercussions of such everyday forms of violence make it clear that, in this context, little can be taken for granted. Indeed, the Kufr 'Aqab predicament highlights the social suffering of a particularly vulnerable group, governed by ambiguity and uncertainty within a context of prolonged Israeli military occupation, subjugation, and political oppression. Family life decisions become dictated by politically induced calculations, which reinforce and create new forms of social suffering that come to define family mobility. Kufr 'Aqab as a case study exemplifies a paradoxical state of immobile mobility and further highlights the mundane and yet totalizing nature of systemic political violence.

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Endnotes

1   Unplanned, unlicensed, and unregulated slum-like areas (literally meaning "random" or "haphazard").

2   Barak Ravid, "Netanyahu Mulls Revoking Residency of Palestinians beyond E. Jerusalem Separation Barrier," *Haaretz*, 25 October 2015, online at www.haaretz.com/israel-news/. premium-1.682276, accessed 26 October 2015; Itamar Eichner and Attila Somfalvi, "PM Considers Cancelling Residency of 80,000 East Jerusalem Palestinians," *Ynet News*, 26 October 2015, online at www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-4716274,00.html, accessed 26 October 2015.

3   Ravid, "Netanyahu Mulls Revoking Residency."

4   UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, occupied Palestinian territory (OCHA), *East Jerusalem: Key Humanitarian Concerns* (Jerusalem: OCHA, March 2011), online at www.ochaopt.org/documents/ocha_opt_jerusalem_report_2011_03_23_web_english.pdf, accessed 20 January 2016.

5   Danielle C. Jefferis, "Institutionalizing Statelessness: The Revocation of Residency Rights of Palestinians in East Jerusalem," *International Journal of Refugee Law* 24, no. 2 (2012): 202–230.

6   Although they are referred to as permanent residents, this term is arguably misleading and must be qualified, as this status can be revoked by the Israeli minister of interior.

7   Saree Makdisi, "A Racialized Space: Social Engineering in Jerusalem," *Contemporary Arab Affairs* 2, no. 4 (2009): 542–551; Yael Stein, *The Quiet Deportation: Revocation of Residency of East Jerusalem Palestinians* (Jerusalem: HaMoked and B'Tselem, April 1997), online at www.hamoked.org/items/10200_eng.pdf, accessed 20 January 2016.

8   For the purposes of this article, the term "West Bank" does not include East Jerusalem unless otherwise specified. This is a decision taken for the sake of simplicity and is not intended to legitimize the differentiated status that Israel has imposed on residents of the occupied territories; under international law, East Jerusalem is a part of the Israeli-occupied West Bank.

9   Jefferis, "Institutionalizing Statelessness."

10 This includes those born and raised in the city to parents of the same standing and with family roots in the city stretching for many generations and centuries.

11 Jefferis, "Institutionalizing Statelessness."

12 Ir Amim, *Displaced in Their Own City: The Impact of Israeli Policy in East Jerusalem on the Palestinian Neighborhoods of the City beyond the Separation Barrier* (Jerusalem: Ir Amim, June 2015), online at www.ir-amim.org.il/sites/default/files/akurim_ENG_for%20web.pdf, accessed 20 January 2016.

13 UN OCHA, *East Jerusalem*.

14 Salim Tamari, "Jerusalem: Subordination and Governance in a Sacred Geography," in *Capital Cities: Ethnographies of Urban Governance in the Middle East*, ed. Seteney Shami (Toronto: Center for Urban and Community Studies, 2001), 175–198.

15 B'Tselem and HaMoked, *Forbidden Families: Family Unification and Child Registration*

in East Jerusalem (Jerusalem: HaMoked and B'Tselem, January 2004), online at www.btselem.org/download/200401_forbidden_families_eng.pdf, accessed 20 January 2016; Mazen Masri, "Love Suspended: Demography, Comparative Law, and Palestinian Couples in the Israeli Supreme Court," *Social and Legal Studies* 22, no. 3 (2013): 309–334.

16 Noura Alkhalili, Muna Dajani, and Daniela De Leo, "Shifting Realities: Dislocating Palestinian Jerusalemites from the Capital to the Edge," *International Journal of Housing Policy* 14, no. 3 (2014): 257–267.

17 Ir Amim, *Displaced in Their Own City*.

18 Elia Zureik, "Constructing Palestine through Surveillance Practices," *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 28, no. 2 (2001): 205–227; Nigel Parsons and Mark B. Salter, "Israeli Biopolitics: Closure, Territorialisation, and Governmentality in the Occupied Palestinian Territories," *Geopolitics* 13, no. 4 (2008): 701–723.

19 Parsons and Salter, "Israeli Biopolitics."

20 Beginning in September 2000, family unification applications for residents of the West Bank were unofficially suspended.

21 B'Tselem and HaMoked, *Forbidden Families*.

22 Masri, "Love Suspended."

23 For a thorough legal analysis on the constitutionality of the Citizenship Law, see Masri, "Love Suspended."

24 In Arabic, the word y*atagharribu* usually refers to when people emigrate to a foreign country.

25 Child registration is a process that may take years, in which the parents attempt to change the status of a child from a birth certificate to a residency status with a permanent Israeli number, which is necessary to obtain future residency as an adult. The process is more complicated for couples with different legal status, as their children are given a 'Notification of Live Birth' rather than an official birth certificate. Many families with different legal status mistake this document for a birth certificate, and find out, sometimes too late, that their child cannot obtain a Jerusalem residency in the future. Through another application, this document may then be used to obtain an official birth certificate that enables them to *start* the registration process for a newborn child.

26 Nadera Shalhoub-Kevorkian, "The Politics of Birth and the Intimacies of Violence against Palestinian Women in Occupied East Jerusalem," *British Journal of Criminology* 55, no. 6 (2015): 1187–1206.

27 Rita Giacaman, Laura Wick, and Hanan Abdul-Rahim, "The Politics of Childbirth in the Context of Conflict: Policies or De Facto Practices?" *Health Policy* 72, no. 2 (2005): 129–139.

28 Halla Shoaibi, "Childbirth at Checkpoints in the Occupied Palestinian Territory" [Abstract], *Lancet*, 5 July 2011, online at www.thelancet.com/pb/assets/raw/Lancet/abstracts/palestine/palestine2011-4.pdf, accessed 20 January 2016.

29 *Abu* (father of . . .) and *Umm* (mother of . . .) are followed by the name of the first born and used casually within community as a replacement for an adult's first name. These names are not used in "official" documentation.

30 Shalhoub-Kevorkian, "Politics of Birth." See also: Patrick Wolfe, "Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native," *Journal of Genocide Research* 8, no. 4 (2006): 387–409.