Jerusalem of Khara

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A single artwork / Michal Sapir January 3, 2022

"Jerusalem of Gold" is a misrepresentation, a deceptive fantasy of harmonious existence in a united city. It is a far cry from the city's reality. As in David Reeb's painting, behind the gilded holiness lurks a revolting mirror image: starting with the false line in Naomi Shemer's infamous song about the "empty market square," and on to the long-term policies of the Jerusalem municipality, intended to push out the city's Palestinian inhabitants.

Eight Palestinian neighborhoods in Jerusalem lie beyond the separation wall. They are part of the Jerusalem municipality, but in actuality they are cut off from the city's infrastructure and vital services. Tens of thousands of Jerusalem inhabitants, permanent residents of the State of Israel, live in enclaves of poverty and neglect, receive none of the basic services every resident is entitled to, and must go through roadblocks each time they wish to enter their own town. People pay their city taxes only to get SHIT in return. Furthermore, they live in constant fear of the authorities cutting them off completely from the city and canceling their permanent residence status.

דוד ריב.jpg


ירושלים
של
זהב
ירושלים
של
חרא

[1]David Reeb, Jerusalem, 1997, Acrylic on linen, 160*140 cm (after a photograph by Miki Kratsman)

Translation:
Top left: Jerusalem of Gold
Bottom right: Jerusalem of Shit

The past year has seen an increase of home demolitions in East Jerusalem, of buildings built "illegally." In reality, it is almost impossible for Palestinian residents to obtain a legal building permit. There is practically no public planning and construction for Palestinians. The population grows, people need housing solutions, but the authorities consistently refuse to create master plans for the Palestinian neighborhoods. Areas that might have development potential for this population have been expropriated for the benefit of the Israeli-Jewish one, or for public infrastructure or areas designated as open landscape or parks, where building is prohibited. As a result, most Palestinians are forced to build buildings that are labeled "illegal" by the city, and many live under the threat of losing their homes.

Another method of pushing out the Palestinian residents is the “Jewification” of their neighborhoods by Jewish settler organizations, secretly or openly supported by the Israeli government. This expulsion policy is based on political motivation, intended to establish a Jewish majority in extensive parts of East Jerusalem. Jerusalem's deputy mayor, Arieh King, is the dominant force behind the Jewish settlement that drives Palestinian residents from their homes in neighborhoods such as Umm Harun, Beit Hanina, and others. City council member Yonatan Yosef is one of those claiming ownership and demanding the evacuation of residents from their homes in Sheikh Jarrah. These are families who had been pushed from their homes inside Israel during the war of 1948, and settled in East Jerusalem by the Jordanian authorities in exchange for giving up the refugee certificates they received from the UN. The racist, discriminating Israeli law makes it impossible for them to likewise claim back the property they had lost in Jaffa, in Sarafend, and in other locations in Israel.

"Khara" (shit) is the Arabic name for the Skunk – an evil-smelling fluid developed by the Israeli police. It is sprayed from trucks on demonstrators, and the stench sticks to them and to their clothes. Whenever the Palestinian residents and the activists who support them dare to protest the racist policies, the discrimination, and the evictions, their demonstrations are suppressed, forcefully and violently, often with the help of the Skunk. The shitty odor of the occupation and its injustices rises for days and weeks from the ground, the roads, and the homes under the crystal-clear air of "Jerusalem of Gold."

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