

# 'Isawiya Town Profile



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## *Acknowledgments*

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## Background

This report is part of a series of booklets, which contain compiled information about each city, village, and town in the Jerusalem Governorate. These booklets came as a result of a comprehensive study of all villages in Jerusalem Governorate, which aims at depicting the overall living conditions in the governorate and presenting developmental plans to assist in developing the livelihood of the population in the area. It was accomplished through the "Village Profiles and Needs Assessment;" the project funded by the Spanish Agency for International Cooperation for Development (AECID).

The "Village Profiles and Needs Assessment" was designed to study, investigate, analyze and document the socio-economic conditions and the needed programs and activities to mitigate the impact of the current unsecure political, economic and social conditions in the Jerusalem Governorate.

The project's objectives are to survey, analyze, and document the available natural, human, socioeconomic and environmental resources, and the existing limitations and needs assessment for the development of the rural and marginalized areas in the Jerusalem Governorate. In addition, the project aims at preparing strategic developmental programs and activities to mitigate the impact of the current political, social, and economic instability with the focus on the agricultural sector.

All village profiles in Arabic and English are available online at <http://vprofile.arij.org>.

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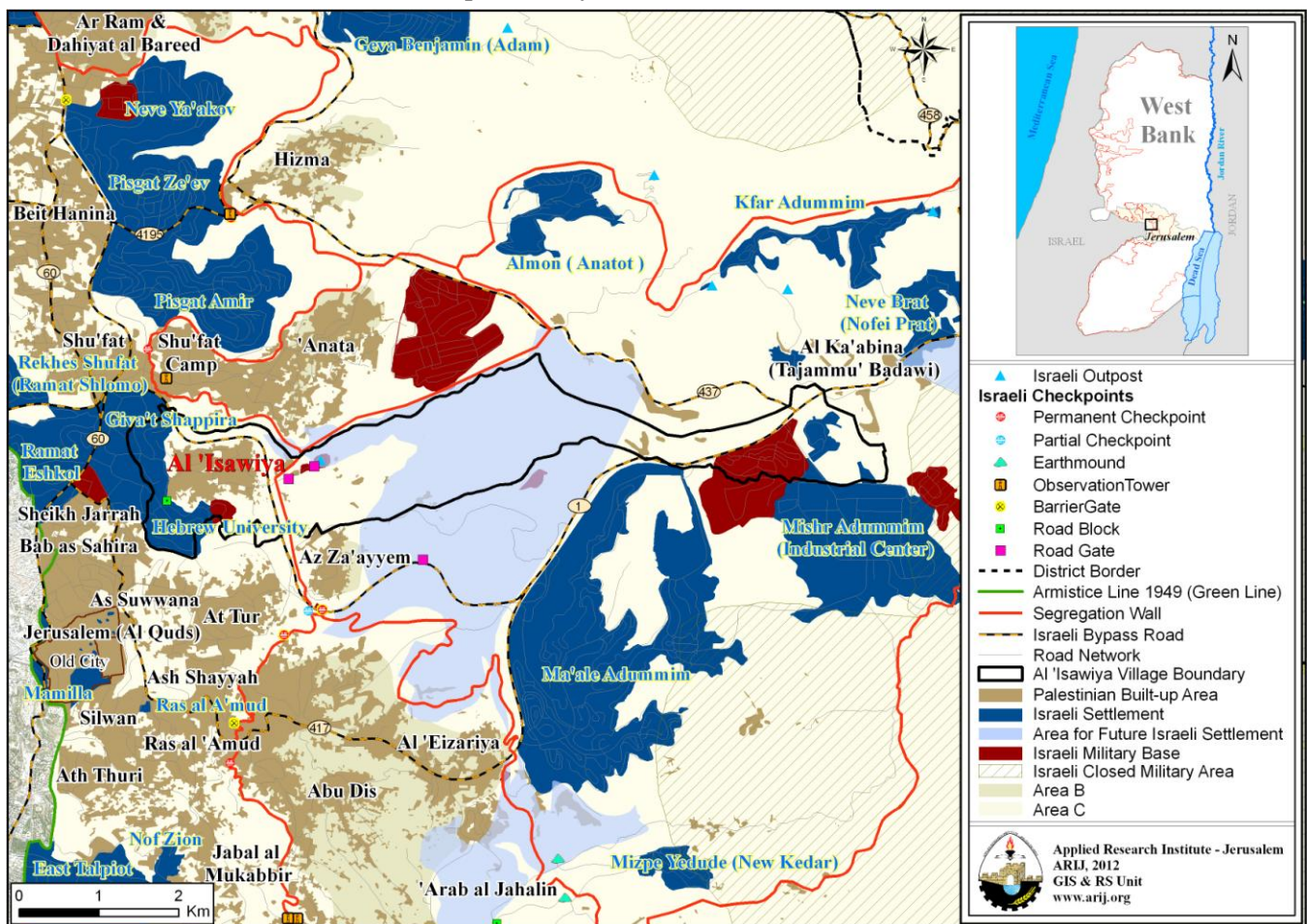
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# 'Isawiya Town Profile

## Location and physical characteristics

'Isawiya is a Palestinian town in Jerusalem Governorate located 2.9km north of Jerusalem City. It is bordered by El 'Eizariya and Al Ka'abina lands to the east, 'Anata and Shu'fat to the north, Jerusalem (Bait al Maqdis) to the west, and Jerusalem and Az Za'ayyem to the south (ARIJ-GIS Unit, 2012) (see map 1).

Map 1: 'Isawiya location and borders



Source: ARIJ - GIS Unit, 2012

'Isawiya is located at an altitude of 731m above sea level with a mean annual rainfall of 366.5mm. The average annual temperature is 17°C and the average annual humidity is approximately 60% (ARIJ-GIS Unit, 2012).

Since the 1980s 'Isawiya has been governed by a Development Committee, which is currently administrated by 7 members and 5 permanent employees. The Development Committee owns a permanent headquarters ('Isawiya Development Committee, 2012).

It is the responsibility of the Development Committee to provide a number of services to the residents of 'Isawiya, including ('Isawiya Development Committee, 2012):

- Providing information to visitors about 'Isawiya
- Implementing projects and case studies for the town
- Protecting historical and archeological sites
- Providing workshops for youth development
- Providing other social services

## History

'Isawiya town was named after King Issa, son of Salah ad Deen al 'Ayyubi who conquered Jerusalem and liberated it from the Crusaders ('Isawiya Development Committee, 2012).

The town was established over 900 years ago, and its residents are descendants of Iraqi Kurds, Syrians, and some tribes from the Arabian Peninsula ('Isawiya Development Committee, 2012) (see photo below of 'Isawiya town).

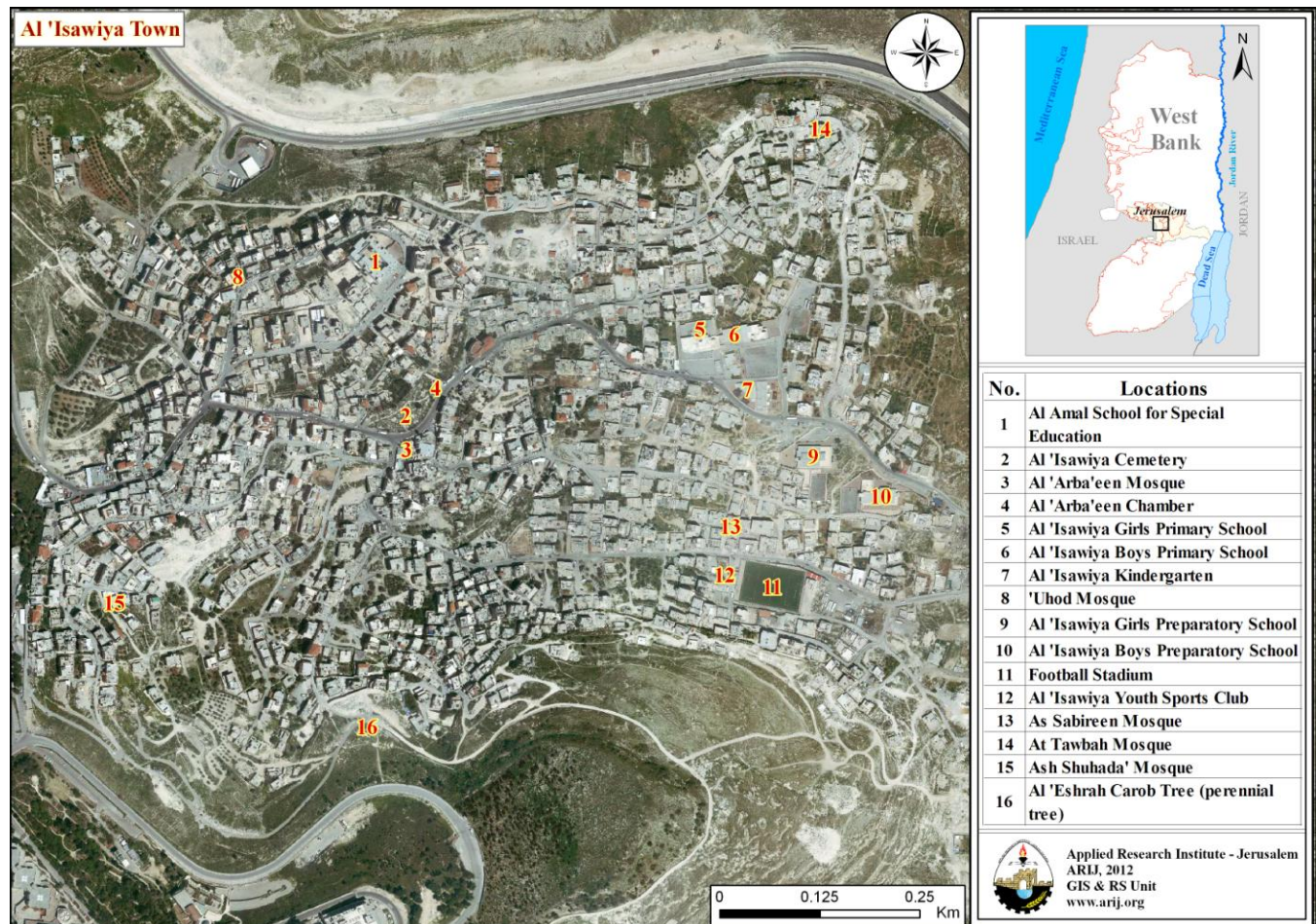
**Photo 1: 'Isawiya town**



## Religious and archaeological sites

There are 5 mosques in the town, Al 'Arba'een, 'Uhod, As Sabireen, At Tawbah and Ash Shuhada' Mosques. In terms of archaeological sites, 'Isawiya's old city and the olive oil press are of some interest. There is also a carob tree thought to be over 1000 years old ('Isawiya Development Committee, 2012) (see map 2).

Map 2: Main locations in 'Isawiya town



Source: ARIJ - GIS Unit, 2012

## Population

Unfortunately, no census has been conducted by the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS) to ascertain the population and number of houses in 'Isawiya town. However, the Israeli Central Bureau of Statistics indicates that the population of 'Isawiya was approximately 13,730 in 2011 (The Jerusalem Institute for Israel Studies, 2012).

## Families

'Isawiya residents are from several families, mainly the Darwish, 'Elayyan, Abu al Hummos, Mustafa, Mahmood, Dari abu Riyalah, Dirbas, 'Obeid, Hassan-Awad and Shludi families ('Isawiya Development Committee, 2012).

## Education

There are five schools in the town run by Jerusalem Municipality and one school run by a private body (see table 1) ('Isawiya Development Committee, 2012).

**Table 1: Schools in 'Isawiya by name, stage, sex and supervising authority**

School name	Supervising authority	Sex
The Future Scientific Academy Model School	Private	Mixed
Az Zahra' School	Jerusalem Municipality	Mixed
'Isawiya Girls' Primary School	Jerusalem Municipality	Female
'Isawiya Girls' Preparatory School	Jerusalem Municipality	Female
'Isawiya Boys' Primary School	Jerusalem Municipality	Male
'Isawiya Boys' Preparatory School	Jerusalem Municipality	Male

**Source:** 'Isawiya Development Committee, 2012 and Directorate of Education – Jerusalem, 2011

There is one local kindergarten in the town, Az Zahra' Model kindergarten, which is run by a private body and was attended by 152 children in 2011 (Directorate of Education – Jerusalem, 2011).

Due to the lack of some levels of education in 'Isawiya, students attend neighboring villages' schools, including Ar Rashidiya Boys' School in Western Jerusalem, the Orphans Islamic Boys' High School in the old city, Al Fatat al Laji'a Girls' High School in East Jerusalem (Bab as Sahira neighborhood), and Al Ma'muniya Girls' School in East Jerusalem (Wad al Jozz neighborhood). Each of these schools is 4-6km from the town. To complete their vocational and technical studies, some students go to Sakhneen 'Atarot school or the Lutheran School in Beit Hanina, both of which are 10km from the town ('Isawiya Development Committee, 2012).

The educational sector in 'Isawiya town faces some obstacles, primarily:

1. The lack of nurseries and kindergartens.
2. The overcrowded classrooms due to large numbers of students.
3. The lack of means of transportation.
4. The limited preparatory education for children.



## Health status

There are some health centers available in 'Isawiya town: 4 health centers run by Israeli insurance companies (such as Maccabi, Clalit and Meuhedet), general physicians and specialized physicians in most fields, a motherhood and childcare center, a medical laboratory, a radiology center, two private dental clinics, two pharmacies and a physiotherapy center. In the absence of required health services or in emergencies, residents of 'Isawiya go to the main hospitals in east and west Jerusalem, including Hadasa 'Isawiya, Ein Karem, Al Muttala', Ad Dajani, the Red Crescent, Al Maqasid and Al Faransawi hospitals, all 8 - 22km from the town ('Isawiya Development Committee, 2012).

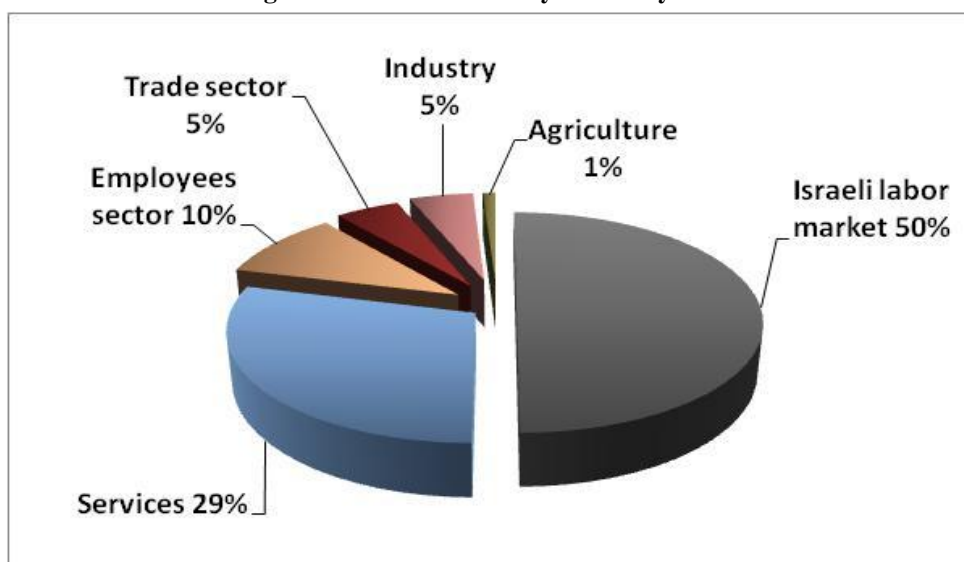
## Economic activities

The economy in 'Isawiya is dependent on several economic sectors, mainly the Israeli labor market, which absorbs 50% of the workforce ('Isawiya Development Committee, 2012) (see figure 1).

A field survey conducted by ARIJ in 2012 showed that the distribution of labor by economic activity in 'Isawiya was as follows:

- Israeli labor market (50%)
- Services sector (29%)
- Government or private employees sector (10%)
- Trade sector (5%)
- Industry (5%)
- Agriculture sector (1%)

**Figure 1: Economic activity in 'Isawiya town**



Source: 'Isawiya Development Committee, 2012

In terms of commercial and industrial production in 'Isawiya town, there are 12 grocery stores, 4 butchers, 4 fruit and vegetable stores, 9 different services stores and 7 professional workshops (blacksmith, carpentry etc.) ('Isawiya Development Committee, 2012).

The unemployment rate in 'Isawiya has reached around 20%, and it was found that the social groups in the town most affected as a result of Israeli restrictions and procedures are ('Isawiya Development Committee, 2012):

1. Workers in the agriculture sector.
2. Workers in the trade sector.
3. Workers in the services sector.

## Agricultural sector

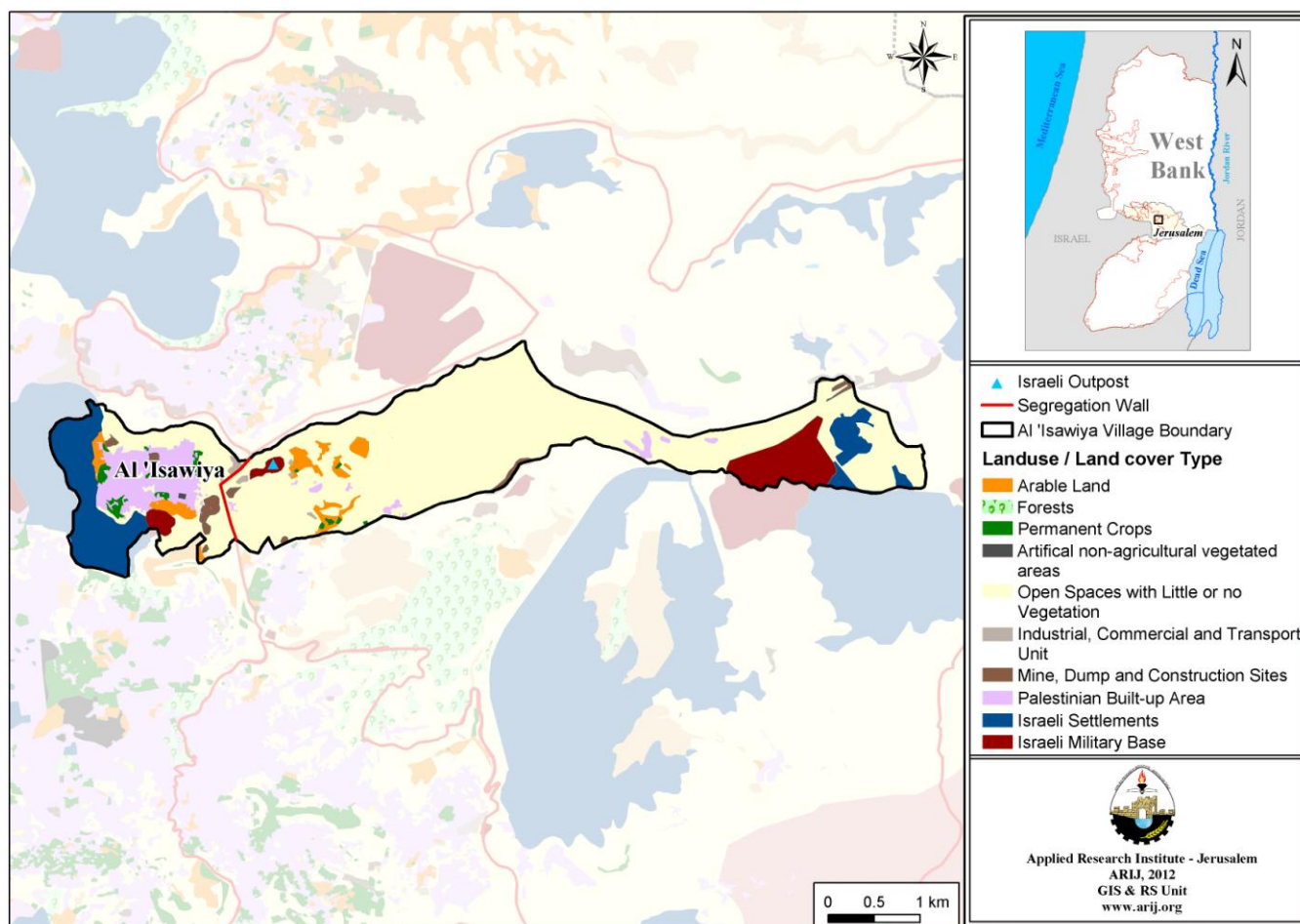
'Isawiya has a total area of around 9,418 dunums of which 390 dunums are considered 'arable' land and 708 dunums are registered as 'residential' (see table 2 and map 3).

**Table 2: Land use and land cover in 'Isawiya town in 2010 (area in dunums)**

Total area	Built up area	Agricultural area (390)				Inland water	Forests	Open spaces	Area of industrial, commercial & transport unit	Area of settlements, military bases & Wall zone
		Permanent crops	Greenho uses	Rangel ands	Arable lands					
9,418	708	95	0	0	295	0	1	6,479	172	1,668

Source: ARIJ – GIS Unit, 2012

Map 3: Land use/land cover in 'Isawiya town



Source: ARIJ - GIS Unit, 2012.

In terms of rain-fed and irrigated open cultivated vegetables in 'Isawiya, only fruity vegetables, mainly tomatoes and snake-cucumbers, are cultivated; there are a total of 3 dunums of irrigated vegetables and 4 dunums of rain-fed vegetables in the town (Palestinian Ministry of Agriculture - Jerusalem, 2010). Table 3 shows the different types of fruit trees planted in the area. The town is known for the cultivation of olives; there are 155 dunums of town land cultivated with olive trees.

Table 3: Total area of fruit and olive trees in 'Isawiya town (dunums)

Fruit trees	Rain-fed	Irrigated
Olives	155	0
Citrus	0	0
Stone fruits	2	0
Pome fruits	0	0
Nuts	0	0
Other fruits	3	0
<b>Total area</b>	<b>160</b>	<b>0</b>

Source: Palestinian Ministry of Agriculture - Jerusalem, 2010

In terms of field crops and forage in 'Isawiya, cereals, particularly barley, are the most cultivated, covering an area of approximately 20 dunums (Palestinian Ministry of Agriculture - Jerusalem, 2010).

The difference between the two sets of results obtained from the Ministry of Agriculture and by ARIJ's GIS Unit in size of agricultural areas is explained by the fact that the Ministry of Agriculture and the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (2010) conducted a survey which used a definition of agricultural areas based on land ownership. Therefore, the areas included in the survey were those of actual holdings of agricultural areas instead of seasonal ones. The survey did not consider fragmented and small seasonal cultivated areas in residential and agricultural areas. ARIJ's survey, however, indicated the existence of a high proportion of small and fragmented holdings (home gardens) throughout the occupied Palestinian territories, thus accounting for the larger area of agricultural holdings calculated by ARIJ.

ARIJ's field survey also shows that 1% of the residents in 'Isawiya rear and keep domestic animals such as sheep ('Isawiya Development Committee, 2012).

There are no agricultural roads in the town ('Isawiya Development Committee, 2012).

Agriculture is one of the sectors most affected by the Israeli occupation. All agricultural lands have been confiscated, and therefore the commercial agricultural sector has ceased to exist on all but a small area of land.

## Institutions and services

'Isawiya town has a few governmental institutions, including a post office. There are also some local institutions and associations that provide services to various sectors of society. These include ('Isawiya Development Committee, 2012):

- **'Isawiya Development and Reconstruction Society:** Founded in 2007 and subordinated by 'Isawiya Development Committee, the Society provides information on the locality and services to citizens, such as legal advice to protect Jerusalem identity papers. It also provides documents and news on field events and developments, mainly concerning settlers' attacks within the town.
- **'Isawiya Youth:** A sports center founded in 1965.

## **Infrastructure and natural resources**

### **Electricity and telecommunication services**

'Isawiya has been connected to a public electricity network since 1969 and is served by Jerusalem Electricity Company, which is the main source of electricity in the town. It is noted that approximately 95% of the housing units in the town are connected to this network ('Isawiya Development Committee, 2012).

Furthermore, 'Isawiya is connected to a telecommunication network and approximately 100% of the housing units within the town boundaries are connected to phone lines ('Isawiya Development Committee, 2012).

### **Transportation services**

There are 12 public taxis and 8 buses working on the 'Isawiya-Jerusalem line, and these are considered to be the main means of transportation in 'Isawiya town ('Isawiya Development Committee, 2012).

### **Water resources**

'Isawiya is provided with water by Jihon, an Israeli company, through the public water network established in 1965 and approximately 100% of the housing units are connected to this network ('Isawiya Development Committee, 2012). Each cubic meter of water from the network costs between 7 and 15 NIS ('Isawiya Development Committee, 2012).

### **Sanitation**

'Isawiya has a 14km public sewerage network established in 1990; about 95% of the town's housing units use the sewage network as the main means of wastewater disposal ('Isawiya Development Committee, 2012). The residents are charged 1200 NIS per year per housing unit for the service of collection and disposal of wastewater ('Isawiya Development Committee, 2012).

### **Solid waste management**

Jerusalem Municipality is the official body responsible for managing the collection and disposal of solid waste generated by the citizens and establishments in the town ('Isawiya Development Committee, 2012).

Most of the population in 'Isawiya benefits from the solid waste services, whereby waste is collected from households, institutions, shops and public squares in plastic bags and then transferred to containers distributed throughout the town. Jerusalem Municipality collects the solid waste from these containers and transports it using a waste vehicle to El 'Eizariya dumping site, where it is usually buried and sometimes burnt ('Isawiya Development Committee, 2012).

The daily per capita rate of solid waste production in 'Isawiya is 1.05kg. Thus the estimated amount of solid waste produced per day from 'Isawiya residents is nearly 14 tons, or 5,089 tons per year (ARIJ-WERU, 2012).

The town residents suffer from the poor collection and disposal services of solid waste; it is common for waste to accumulate in the streets for several days ('Isawiya Development Committee, 2012).

## **Geopolitical status of El 'Isawiya town**

El 'Isawiya town covers a total area of 9,419 dunums. The 'built-up' locations constitute just 8% of the town's total area and are under the control of Jerusalem Municipality, which was declared illegally and unilaterally in 1967 after the Israeli Occupation of the West Bank including East Jerusalem, in addition to the Gaza Strip and other Arab territories. Jerusalem Governorate was divided into two main regions. The first is called the J1 area, which is located inside the borders and under the control of the Jerusalem Municipality and includes many Palestinian Jerusalemite communities such as those in the Old Town and Jerusalem City (Beit Al-Maqdis) in addition to El 'Isawiya town which is located in the north of the J1 area. The built up area of El 'Isawiya town also falls under J1 area, and it is therefore under the control of the Jerusalem Municipality. The other classified region is J2, which is located outside the borders and the control of Jerusalem Municipality. This area is under the Palestinian Authority's control within Jerusalem Governorate and includes the eastern and western parts.

The total area of El 'Isawiya town that is under the control of Jerusalem Municipality (within J1 area) is 2,591 dunums (28% of town's total area) and includes the residential area of the town. The area outside the control of Jerusalem Municipality (J2) covers 6,828 dunums (72% of town's total area). All residents of El 'Isawiya town reside in the J1 area and the majority hold the Jerusalemite identity card (Blue ID card) (UNRWA, 2012).

According to the Oslo II Interim Agreement signed between the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) and Israel on 28<sup>th</sup> September 1995, the urban area of the town of El 'Isawiya was not subjected to the West Bank area classification scheme, which categorizes the West Bank into areas "A," "B" and "C." The town remained under the control of Jerusalem Israeli Municipality, as it had been previous to this agreement. However, the extension of El 'Isawiya lands to the east, outside the Municipality borders and beyond the Segregation Wall, which constitutes 72% of the town's total area, was classified as area C where Israel retains full control over security and administration related to the territory. In area C, Palestinian building and land management is prohibited without prior consent or authorization from the Israeli Civil Administration. This area includes some sporadic Palestinian Bedouin communities that are distributed over the lands of El 'Isawiya. It should be noted that most of the lands lying within area C in El 'Isawiya are open spaces, Israeli settlements, some agricultural areas and some Palestinian Bedouin communities.

It is further noted that Israeli Occupation Authorities (IOF) have used the separation plan which is represented by the construction of the Segregation Wall to illegally and unilaterally redraw Jerusalem Municipality's boundaries. The Segregation Wall separates the whole area of J1 from Jerusalem

Governorate except for Kafr ‘Aqab village, Shu’fat Camp and part of Shu’fat town which is located under J2 area, as a result of the Wall shifting them outside of J1.

## El ‘Isawiya town and Israeli occupation practices

Due to its strategic location to the north-east of Jerusalem city, El ‘Isawiya town has been subjected, to numerous Israeli confiscations for the benefit of various Israeli objectives. These Israeli aims are represented in the construction of Israeli settlements, outposts, military bases, barriers and bypass roads on the town’s territories and its surroundings, in addition to the Israeli segregation plan. That which follows is a breakdown of Israeli confiscations of El ‘Isawiya town territories:

During the Israeli Occupation of the Palestinian territory, the government confiscated 1,212 dunums in El ‘Isawiya town (12.8% from the total town’s area) to establish four Israeli settlements on the town’s territories and its surroundings; ‘Hebrew University’ and ‘Giv’at Shappira’ settlements west of the town, in addition to ‘Ma’ale Adummim’ and ‘Mishr Adummim’ settlements east of the town. The four settlements are currently inhabited by approximately 50,000 Israeli settlers (see table 4).

**Table 4: Israeli settlements constructed on El ‘Isawiya lands**

<b>Settlement name</b>	<b>Year of construction</b>	<b>Area confiscated from El ‘Isawiya (dunums)</b>	<b>Population of settlers (2009)</b>
Hebrew University	1968	568	1,236
Giv’at Shappira (French Hill)	1968	394	9,000
Mishr Adummim	1974	248	--
Ma’ale Adummim	1975	2	39,000
<b>Total</b>		<b>1,212</b>	<b>49,236</b>

Source: ARIJ-GIS Unit, 2012

Israeli forces have confiscated additional lands in El ‘Isawiya town to construct Israeli bypass roads numbers 1 and 437 in order to connect Israeli settlements in Jerusalem with the surrounding settlements. It is further noted that the real threat of bypass roads lies in the buffer zone formed by the Israeli Occupation Forces (IOF) along these roads, extending to approximately 75m on either side.

El ‘Isawiya town has also lost lands as a result of the construction of two military bases on the town’s territory. One is located adjacent to the town from its southern side near the ‘Hebrew University’ settlement, whilst the other is located on extended lands to the east near ‘Mishr Adummim’ settlement. The area confiscated for the two military bases is estimated at 616 dunums and has been established by the Israeli Occupation under the pretext of protecting settlements in the area.

## El ‘Isawiya town and the Israeli plan for the Segregation Wall

The construction of the Israeli Segregation Wall has had a negative impact on El ‘Isawiya town. According to the last amendment of the plan, which was published on the webpage of the Israeli Defense Ministry on 30<sup>th</sup> April 2007, the Segregation Wall divides the town’s lands into two parts. The first part totally isolates the built-up area of El ‘Isawiya town within the Jerusalem Municipal

boundaries, away from West Bank lands and the town's lands in the east. The Segregation Wall also isolates this part of the town from the adjacent towns of 'Anata and Az Za'ayem which both have historical and social relations with El 'Isawiya. The area inside Jerusalem isolated by the Segregation Wall is approximately 2,550 dunums (27.1% of the town's total area). The other part of El 'Isawiya is facing the danger of confiscation by the segregation plan of "Greater Jerusalem<sup>1</sup>" which includes the annexation of the 'Ma'ale Adummim' bloc and its surrounding areas. Upon the implementation of this future plan, all of El 'Isawiya lands extending to the east, which constitute 72% of the town's total area (6828 dunums) will be confiscated and isolated. The isolated lands (including the planned isolated areas) contain open spaces, Israeli settlements, Israeli military bases and agricultural areas, in addition to the currently isolated Palestinian residential areas inside Jerusalem (see table 5).

**Table 5: Land classification of the isolated areas to the west side of the Segregation Wall in El 'Isawiya town - Jerusalem Governorate**

No.	Land classification	Area (dunums)
1	Open spaces	6,480
2	Israeli settlements	1,051
3	Palestinian built-up areas	710
4	Israeli military bases	616
5	Agricultural areas	390
6	Construction sites	130
7	Industrial/commercial zones	38
8	Playgrounds	4
<b>Total</b>		<b>9,419</b>

Source: ARIJ-GIS Unit, 2012

## The Segregation Wall causes suffering to El 'Isawiya town residents

Since the outbreak of the Second Intifada in September 2000, the citizens of El 'Isawiya town and the neighboring communities lost their connection with Palestinian communities in the West Bank due to the construction of the Israeli Segregation Wall around Jerusalem. Although citizens of Jerusalem who hold the Jerusalemite identity (the blue ID card) can enter West Bank areas through the Israeli terminals, there is often huge congestion and they are subjected to thorough inspection at the hands of Israeli soldiers, which in turn causes delays and restricts movement.

On the other hand, the Palestinian citizens who live in the West Bank and hold West Bank identity cards (the green ID cards) are prohibited from entering the city of Jerusalem and its surrounding towns as the Segregation Wall totally isolates them from the city. Consequently, they can no longer benefit from health, educational and socio-economic services in the city such as hospitals, schools and medical centers. In addition, the Segregation wall isolates West Bank ID holders from their places of work in

<sup>1</sup> The "Greater Jerusalem" plan includes the annexation of the major settlement blocs surrounding Jerusalem city to Israel. This plan aims to re-delineation of Jerusalem City borders to commensurate with the Israeli plans to change the demographic status of the City for the benefit of the Israelis, and to exclude neighborhoods of high Palestinian population density from Jerusalem City. The Israeli settlement blocs are Ma'ale Adummim in the east, Giv'at Ze'ev in the north and Gush Etzion in the south.



Jerusalem. Only those with special Israeli permits issued by the Israeli Civil Administration (which are rarely granted) are able to enter the city through Israeli controlled checkpoints or crossings, through which they are subjected to thorough and lengthy inspections and humiliation at the hands of armed Israeli forces. This measure has been detrimental to family ties and social interaction, as well as causing the dispersal of many Palestinian families, especially those in which one half of the couple holds a Palestinian identity card (green card), and the other holds a Jerusalemite identity card (blue card). The Segregation Wall has also prevented Palestinians from reaching places of worship in the Holy City, thus depriving them from practicing their religious rituals in the holy city of Jerusalem.

According to the Segregation Wall plan which was published on the webpage of the Israeli Defense Ministry in 2007, the lands of El 'Isawiya town became isolated from neighboring Palestinian towns and villages to the north and east, as the Segregation Wall along with the settlement belt around Jerusalem City are isolating the East Jerusalem area from the rest of the West Bank. Parallel to the establishment of the Segregation Wall, the IOF constructed a settlement belt around El 'Isawiya (to its west and south) and Jerusalem city with the aim of creating an isolation area and preventing urban expansion in the Palestinian towns of Jerusalem. Urban expansion is restricted by the construction of settlements close to the urbanized areas in Jerusalemite towns, which has led to an increase in the total land areas confiscated in these towns, and has minimized the area available for future urban expansion. Once established, the presence of these settlements will create a new reality on the town residents that will be difficult to change. Consequently, Jerusalem and its surrounding towns are considered to have one of the highest population densities in the world. The population density in the Palestinian neighborhoods of East Jerusalem is recorded approximately 13,500 people per km<sup>2</sup> compared to 9,000 people per km<sup>2</sup> in the settlements of East Jerusalem and 8,300 people per km<sup>2</sup> in West Jerusalem.

### **The Israeli E1 plan will prevent the extension of El 'Isawiya lands**

The Israeli settlement bloc of Ma'ale Adumim is considered to be one of the most threatening settlement blocs in the West Bank, as it lies within Jerusalem Governorate borders and presents a geographical danger to the links between the northern and southern areas of the West Bank. Additionally, it isolates East Jerusalem from other Palestinian governorates, complicating proposals for an independent Palestinian state with Jerusalem as its capital and threatening the territorial continuity of such a state.

At the beginning of the Israeli project to segregate and fragment the West Bank through the construction of the Israeli Segregation Wall, the Ma'ale Adumim bloc, due to its location near to the eastern part of Jerusalem city, received special consideration from the Israeli governmental committee responsible for building the Segregation Wall. The Israeli administration developed the E1 plan which entails building a new settlement bloc to create a physical link between Ma'ale Adumim bloc and Israeli settlements in Jerusalem city. At the same time, the E1 plan prevents Palestinian communities from exercising their rights for urban development, in addition to creating an urbanized belt that will geographically separate the north and the south of the West Bank. Palestinian towns and villages affected by such policies include Abu Dis, El 'Eizariya, At Tur, El 'Isawiya, Az Za'ayem and 'Anata. The E1 Plan also includes the construction of 3,900 new housing units to the west and north of Ma'ale Adummim on an area of 13,213 dunums, which has been included in the master plan for the settlement. It is expected that this plan will dramatically increase the population of the settlement.

With the completion of the E1 Plan, the Israeli circular urban belt will be sealed around Jerusalem city. Consequently, El 'Isawiya town will lose 3,282 dunums of its lands (35% of the town's total area) from its eastern side. The eastern part of the town, which includes the non-urbanized area (mostly open spaces), will be distributed between settlements, military bases and the E1 plan. The remaining area will include only the urban area of El 'Isawiya, which will be surrounded by the Segregation Wall from the north and east, and by the settlements from the south, east and west. This will undermine the future development of the town as it will become isolated from all directions.

### **The dilemma of land and building licenses in El 'Isawiya town**

The problem of land and building licenses is considered to be one of the most difficult issues in El 'Isawiya town as well as other Jerusalemite towns in East Jerusalem, because of the high cost of both lands and licenses granted for land development.

El 'Isawiya town is characterized by its strategic location and proximity to the Old City and Al-Aqsa Mosque in East Jerusalem, which make it an important target for Israeli colonization and 'Judaization' activities. The town is further targeted through building license restrictions imposed by the Israeli authorities. The area is also lacking in open spaces and lands for the purpose of urban development, and suffers from an extremely high population density.

According to citizens of Jerusalem, land prices in East Jerusalem, and specifically land located within the borders of the Jerusalem municipality (which is rarely available), is significantly higher than land located outside the borders of the municipality, and can even be doubled in areas closer to the city center.

The Israeli Occupation Authorities have used their economic advantage as an effective instrument to buy the Palestinian lands in Jerusalem for very high prices in order to Judaize these lands and implant Jewish settlers in the city. They offer Palestinians high prices for these lands and houses, especially those in the city center and its surrounding neighborhoods. Anyone in Jerusalem who has land and wants to build a house on it or purchase additional land has to be granted authorization and permission from the illegal Municipality of Jerusalem, which creates many difficulties for Palestinians attempting to gain a construction license.

One of the main obstacles to obtaining a building license is that one has to prove ownership of the land. The Israeli Occupation Authorities demand that Palestinians seeking to build a house or structure, must prove their ownership of the land, which is considered a political problem relating to the occupation which has been ongoing since 1967.

According to a report prepared by Bimkom Organization (Planners for Planning Rights), approximately 50% of the East Jerusalem lands are unregistered in the archive of ownership, such as those in the town of Kafr 'Aqab and the area extending from Al 'Isawiya town in the north to Sur Bahir in the south. Additionally, 25% of the lands in East Jerusalem are in the process of survey and registration (such as Beit Hanina and Shu'fat towns), and only 25% of the lands in East Jerusalem are officially registered, including parts of Al Bireh, Qalandiya, Beit Hanina, Hizma and 'Anata, Ash Sheikh Jarrah and Beit Safafa (Bimkom, 2004).

According to the testimonies of Palestinians in the town of El 'Isawiya, the process for Palestinians applying for building licenses is lengthy (sometimes lasting years) and carries a very high cost depending on the land area and type of building, ranging between 150,000-300,000 NIS. Thus, Palestinians are often forced to build without waiting for the Israeli Authorities' license approval in order to meet their housing needs. In such cases, the Israeli Occupation Authorities usually demolish the property and force the Palestinian owner to pay for his own demolition and submit a new building application, incurring further costs and more time. On top of this, the majority of Palestinians in Jerusalem are living in difficult conditions because of high poverty rates as a consequence of the Israeli Occupation closures which restrict their movement and prevent them from reaching their places of work. These Israeli restrictions and harassments towards the Palestinians in east Jerusalem, along with the housing problems, lack of lands for building and an increased unemployment rate, force many Jerusalemites to migrate outside the borders of the Municipality towards the West Bank or even travel abroad in search of better living standards.

According to the 'Civic Coalition for Defending Palestinian Rights' in Jerusalem, (CCDPRJ, 2009), the Israeli Authorities have adopted many policies that aim to enact pressure on Jerusalemites. An example of this is the case of the demographic status and urban growth in Jerusalem. The area allocated for the development of Palestinian neighborhoods in East Jerusalem and lies under the jurisdiction of the Jerusalem Municipality is estimated at approximately 9,200 dunums, (only 13% of the total area of East Jerusalem), whilst the remaining area (of East Jerusalem and under the jurisdiction of the Jerusalem Municipality) is classified as Israeli settlements, green areas (which are not available for Palestinian urban growth), public buildings, roads and other uses.

Furthermore, the Israeli Authorities often do not prepare the required master plans for the Palestinian neighborhoods in East Jerusalem which are necessary for the urban planning process. In instances when master plans are prepared, Israeli Authorities usually enforce numerous restrictions and limit the percentages of areas designated for Palestinian urban expansion to below the necessary percentages for natural urban growth, (between 25% and 75%). If one compares these percentages with the percentage of lands used for Israeli settlements, it is found that urban growth varies between 75%-120%. In El 'Isawiya town for example, the Israeli Authorities determined the urban growth percentage to be 50%-75%, whereas the neighboring settlement of French Hill, which was illegally constructed on the land of El 'Isawiya town, covers a percentage of 120% (CCJ, 2009).

### **Az Za'ayyim terminal: the eastern gate of El 'Isawiya**

The Israeli Occupation Authorities have constructed Az Za'ayyim terminal near El 'Isawiya town, at the entrance of Az Za'ayyim town located on bypass road no.1 which extends from Jericho and the Dead Sea to Tel-Aviv, passing through Jerusalem city. It is considered an eastern gate for Jerusalem through which only Israelis, Palestinians holding Jerusalemite identity or those with special Israeli granted permits are allowed to pass through. This terminal represents an obstacle for the movement of both Palestinians and Jerusalemites, as many towns in Jerusalem have been separated by the construction of the Segregation Wall, Israeli barriers and settlements.

## **The danger of Israeli escalation of housing demolitions in Jerusalem**

During recent years, the Israeli Occupation Authorities have escalated their attacks against the houses of Palestinians living in Jerusalem, targeting them through demolitions under the pretext of ‘unlicensed construction’. An estimation made by the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA) shows that since 1967, the Israeli Occupation Authorities have demolished approximately 2,000 Palestinian houses in Jerusalem in addition to thousands of other structures (OCHA, 2009). According to Al-Maqdese Organization for Society Development, the number of Palestinian houses and structures that were demolished in East Jerusalem during the period of 2000 to 2011 was 1,059, resulting in the displacement of 4,865 Palestinians from Jerusalem, of whom 1,290 were women and 2,537 were children (Al Maqdese, 2012).

As for El ‘Isawiya town, many houses are under the threat of demolition under the pretext of ‘unlicensed construction,’ despite the fact that residents of El ‘Isawiya town are fulfilling the necessary requirement of obtaining building licenses. However, the Municipality of Jerusalem usually rejects their license applications under non-justified pretexts, as stated by El ‘Isawiya residents.

## **The Municipal tax (Arnona) has a negative impact on the living status and economic situation of Palestinians in Jerusalem**

The Municipal tax, (‘Arnona’ in Hebrew), is imposed by the Jerusalem Municipality on the owners of buildings and lands in Jerusalem. This tax is considered to be one of the greatest burdens faced by Palestinian residents of Beit Hanina and Shu’fat. The Israeli Authorities use this tax as an instrument to put pressure on Palestinians to force them to leave the city.

The ‘Arnona’ tax is calculated based on certain criteria that take in to consideration the classification of the area and the land use classification of the Jerusalem master plan (residential areas, commercial, industrial, agricultural, public buildings, parking...etc.). They also they take in to consideration the zone type, the type of use and the area of building or land (Jerusalem Municipality, 2012). Regarding the residential areas they classify these into four categories (A, B, C and D), and based on this zoning, along with the area of building, they determine and calculate the amount of tax that must be paid to the Municipality. For example, the tax tariff in the residential areas varies in the four zones between 35-98 NIS per m<sup>2</sup> which is equivalent to approximately 10-25 US\$ per m<sup>2</sup>. This means that a small house (or apartment) with an area of 100-150m<sup>2</sup> will cost the owner 3,000-10,000 NIS a year in tax, equivalent to approximately 800-3,000 US\$. For commercial shops, the tax imposed by the Municipality is folded, which affects the economic activity as these taxes force the merchants to increase their prices. The tax rate for the commercial shops varies between 309-319 NIS per m<sup>2</sup> depending on the area of the shop, which is equivalent to approximately 80 US\$ per m<sup>2</sup>. In addition to the taxation of residential and commercial areas, the Municipality also imposes taxes on places of worship, agricultural areas, schools, kindergartens, elderly homes and other facilities.

The segregation plan has had a significant negative impact on the economic situation of the Palestinians living in Jerusalem in general and on the commercial sector in particular, as it has also suffered from the global recession. Much of the trade in Jerusalem is largely dependent on the Palestinian visitors to the Holy City from the West Bank, the Gaza Strip and those from the occupied lands of 1948, but Israeli closure of the city has negatively affected this trade and the economic situation of the city and its

residents. Despite these difficulties, the Occupation Authorities continue to impose taxes without taking into consideration the situation of the Jerusalemites, who represent the poorest social group in the Holy City. In fact, just last year (2012), the Municipality decided to increase the 'Arnona' by approximately 3%, increasing still further the burden on the Palestinians of Jerusalem.

It is also important to note that in the case of Jerusalem, Palestinians are forced to pay these taxes just to maintain their presence in the city, without even receiving a decent level of Municipal services in return. The planning process in the Municipality of Jerusalem focuses on the political-demographic dimension that aims to Judaize the city rather than planning for the purposes of prosperity and well-being of its citizens. Furthermore, Palestinian neighborhoods and communities in Jerusalem are deliberately neglected in the provision of services. For instance, the Municipality rarely carried out the necessary maintenance for the infrastructure of Arab neighborhoods, including roads, water and waste water networks, solid waste and other services. The most obvious problem that the people of Jerusalem suffer from is the lack of a cleaning service and the accumulation of solid waste, despite their commitment to paying their taxes to the Municipality. This injustice can be clearly seen if we compare the situation of the Palestinians in Jerusalem with that of the illegal settlers living in the city who have all of their facilities and services provided for them in order to encourage them to stay in the Holy City.

### **Israeli violations against Bedouin communities on the lands of El 'Isawiya**

There are a number of Palestinian Bedouin tribes living in East Jerusalem areas, which are surrounded by the settlements of the Ma'ale Adumim bloc. Three Bedouin communities belonging to Al Jahalin (Bir Maskoub and Wadi Sneisel) and Arab as Sawahira (Za'atrat Az Za'ayyim) tribes reside on El 'Isawiya lands. These tribes suffer from Israeli Occupation and settler violations and restrictions, whereby they are regularly threatened with evacuation due to their proximity to Israeli settlements. It should be mentioned that Bedouins from the 'Arab al Jahalin tribe have lived in East Jerusalem since the 1970s before the establishment of Israeli settlements in this area. However, the Occupation Authorities are attempting to remove their homes and expel them from the area in order to further expand the settlements and control as much of the area as possible.

It is worth mentioning that Al Jahalin Bedouins, like other Bedouin tribes and Palestinians in the Jerusalem Governorate, have been subjected to various Israeli attacks since Israel's occupation of Jerusalem in 1967. During this time, the Israeli Authorities have confiscated hundreds of thousands of dunums which were classified as pastures, and subsequently declared them to be 'closed military areas' and constructed military bases and settlements on these lands. An example of such an action in practice is the seizure of pastoral lands for the construction of the Ma'ale Adumim settlement bloc, as land from these areas was previously residential and agricultural land for the Bedouins who used to farm and use the lands for the grazing of livestock.

During the 1990s and after the signing of the Oslo Agreement, a new era of suffering began for the Bedouins living in this area, as the Israeli Occupation has continually exploited their presence within area C (under the civil and security control of Israel), to demolish their homes. Bedouins have been forced to move away from their homes under Israeli claims of 'security purposes' to protect nearby settlements such as the Ma'ale Adumim bloc, They have also claimed that the Bedouins are an obstacle to Israeli urban development in the eastern part of Jerusalem Governorate (OCHA 2011).

## Development plans and projects

### Implemented projects

'Isawiya Development Committee has implemented several development projects in 'Isawiya during the past five years (see table 6).

**Table 6: Implemented development plans and projects in 'Isawiya during the last five years**

Name of project	Type	Year	Donor
Construction of a post office division	Public Services	2010	Jerusalem Municipality
Construction of 2 retaining walls (40 and 12 meters long)	Infrastructure	2010-2011	Jerusalem Municipality
Beautifying the eastern entrance (Al Khan al Ahmar)	Infrastructure	2011	Jerusalem Municipality
Construction of a retaining wall in the eastern region	Infrastructure	2010	Jerusalem Municipality
Construction of iron barriers along 3 roads (Al Kharrubah, the stadium and the schools)	Infrastructure	2010	Jerusalem Municipality
Installation of bumps on roads	Infrastructure	2010	Jerusalem Municipality

**Source:** 'Isawiya Development Committee, 2012

### Proposed Projects

'Isawiya Development Committee, in cooperation with the civil society organizations in the town and the town residents, hopes to implement several projects in the coming years. The project ideas were developed during the PRA workshop conducted by ARIJ staff in the town. The projects are as follows, in order of priority from the perspectives of the participants in the workshop:

1. Constructing three high schools, providing facilities for both boys and girls.
2. Expanding the existing elementary schools.
3. Providing water for agricultural purposes through the rehabilitation of old Roman cisterns.
4. Distribution of beehives and layer chickens.
5. Providing vocational and industrial training courses in the town.

## Town development priorities and needs

'Isawiya suffers from a significant shortage of infrastructure and services. Table 7 shows the development priorities and needs in the town according to the Development Committee's feedback (Isawiya Development Committee, 2012).

**Table 7: Development priorities and needs in 'Isawiya**

No.	Sector	Strongly needed	Needed	Not a priority	Notes
<b>Infrastructural needs</b>					
1	Construction and paving of roads	*			4km*
2	Rehabilitation of old water networks			*	
3	Extending the water network to cover new built up areas			*	
4	Construction of new water networks			*	
5	Rehabilitation/construction of new wells or springs			*	
6	Construction of water reservoirs		*		Prohibited
7	Construction of a sewage disposal network			*	
8	Construction of a new electricity network			*	
9	Providing containers for solid waste collection	*			20 containers
10	Providing vehicles for collecting solid waste	*			1 vehicle
11	Providing a sanitary landfill	*			1 landfill
<b>Health needs</b>					
1	Building new clinics or health care centres			*	
2	Rehabilitating old clinics or health care centres			*	
3	Purchasing medical equipment and tools			*	
<b>Educational needs</b>					
1	Building new schools	*			All levels
2	Rehabilitation old schools	*			All levels
3	Purchasing new equipment for schools	*			Computer and laboratory equipment
<b>Agriculture needs</b>					
1	Rehabilitation of agricultural lands	*			1800 dunums
2	Building rainwater harvesting cisterns	*			3 cisterns
3	Construction of barracks for livestock			*	
4	Veterinary services			*	
5	Seeds and hay for animals			*	
6	Construction of new greenhouses			*	
7	Rehabilitation of greenhouses			*	
8	Field crop seeds			*	
9	Plants and agricultural supplies			*	

\*4km are sub roads

Source: 'Isawiya Development Committee, 2012

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