Jerusalem Schools, Synagogues Would Be Shut If UN Resolution is Implemented

January 24, 2017

By [Rafael Medoff](http://www.jns.org/latest-articles/?author=513b781ce4b0911897d69305)

JNS.org

<http://www.jns.org/latest-articles/2017/1/24/jerusalem-schools-synagogues-would-be-shut-if-un-resolution-is-implemented#.WIi4M32HhX4>=

The human consequences of implementing the recent United Nations resolution about Israel would be devastating, say American representatives of Israeli schools, synagogues and other institutions in parts of Jerusalem that Israel captured in 1967.

U.N. Security Council Resolution 2334, adopted Dec. 23 with the U.S. abstaining, asserted that all “Israeli settlement activities” in “the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem” are “a flagrant violation of international law.” It stated that Israel must “immediately and completely cease” such activities and also take action to “reverse negative trends on the ground.”

A number of major Jerusalem neighborhoods are situated in what the U.N. calls “East Jerusalem,” which is the area that Jordan occupied following the 1948 Arab-Israeli war. Nineteen years later, those sections of the city were reunited with the rest of Jerusalem as a result of the 1967 Six-Day War.

One of those neighborhoods is French Hill, a major urban area located in the northeastern part of the city. “I live in French Hill,” award-winning Israeli author Yossi Klein Halevi told JNS.org. “So the recent U.N. resolution has criminalized me and my family as occupiers.”

“I’m not illegal, and I’m not a ‘settler,’” said historian Maurice Roumani, a professor emeritus at Ben-Gurion University of the Negev who resides in Armon HaNetziv (East Talpiot), a neighborhood in eastern Jerusalem with a population of 14,000. “These artificial definitions by the U.N. do not reflect reality.”

**Teenage ‘settlers’ with disabilities**

The institutions that could be adversely affected if the U.N. resolution leads to international boycotts or other actions include the Ilan Residential Home for Handicapped Young Adults and the Beit Or Home for Young Autistic Adults, both of which are located in the Gilo neighborhood; forests and housing projects sponsored in and around Jerusalem by the Jewish National Fund (JNF); and portions of the Hebrew University campus. Even the ancient Jewish cemetery on the Mount of Olives might be affected.

“My grandparents, great-grandparents, and great-great-grandparents, going back seven generations, are buried on the Mount of Olives,” Washington, D.C.-based attorney Alyza Lewin told JNS.org. “Does the U.N. propose to ban Jews from using the oldest and largest Jewish cemetery in the world? The notion that Israel is violating international law by burying its dead on this sacred spot is unthinkable.”

Could members of the British family find themselves accused of fostering the “illegal occupation” of eastern Jerusalem? Princess Alice of Battenberg, a great-granddaughter of Queen Victoria, is buried in a small Christian cemetery at the foot of the Mount of Olives. A number of British royals have visited her gravesite over the years, including Prince Charles during his trip to Israel last October.

There also are Arab residents in a number of across-the-line Jerusalem neighborhoods, including Givat HaMatos, Gilo and Neve Yaakov. “Some of my neighbors [in French Hill] are Arab Israelis,” Halevi noted. “Are they occupiers too, or is it only the Jewish Israelis? Now that I am officially outside of the law according to the U.N., I imagine that anything can happen.”

**Effects across denominational lines**

Possible international action against those sections of Jerusalem would cut across Jewish denominational lines, affecting Orthodox and non-Orthodox institutions alike.

The Masorti movement—the Israeli branch of Conservative Judaism—sponsors a school and synagogue in French Hill, a school in Gilo, and synagogues in the Ramot neighborhood and the Jerusalem satellite community of Ma’ale Adumim. “The U.N. resolution is indiscriminate and historically obtuse,” said Rabbi David Wolpe of Sinai Temple in Los Angeles, who is one of the most prominent Conservative rabbis in the U.S.

Wolpe told JNS.org, “Many of the areas the U.N. purports to ‘return’ are historically and by rights Jewish territory recognized de facto by the parties themselves. For the Masorti movement in Israel, enacting such a resolution would have terrible consequences religiously, economically and to the spirit of religious pluralism in Israel.”

The Women of the Wall group, which demonstrates for egalitarian prayer rights at the Western Wall, is operating in an area that the U.N. has designated as “occupied territory,” the Old City section of Jerusalem. Hypothetically, even the Orthodox Union’s Yachad program of sending pizza to Israeli soldiers could be jeopardized, since some of those soldiers are stationed in post-1967 sections of the capital.

The religious Zionist social service organization AMIT is planning a “Yom Yerushalayim Mission” to Israel in May, which will include a number of events and activities in post-1967 parts of Jerusalem, including the Old City area. AMIT Executive Vice President Andrew Goldsmith told JNS.org the U.N.’s action will not interfere with his organization’s work. During the past century, “we have witnessed many different political statements and efforts, none of which have had an impact” on AMIT’s work, he said, adding that the U.N. resolution “will not have an impact on our ability to serve our students.”

**‘Oom-Shmoom’**

Venerated Zionist institutions could also be affected. There are JNF-sponsored forests or housing projects in various Jerusalem neighborhoods beyond the 1967 lines, such as Neve Yaakov, Givat HaMatos and Ammunition Hill, as well as in nearby Ma’ale Adumim. Portions of Hebrew University’s Mount Scopus campus, including one of its dormitories, likewise are located in the post-1967 areas of the city. Spokespeople for JNF and Hebrew University declined to comment on the matter.

"David Ben-Gurion (Israel’s first prime minister) coined a phrase which accurately sums up how most Israelis feel about the United Nations," said Mordechai Nisan, a professor of Middle East studies at Hebrew University. "The phrase was ‘Oom-Shmoom’—‘Oom’ is how the abbreviation for the U.N. is pronounced in Hebrew, and ‘Shmoom’ was Ben-Gurion's way of dismissing its relevance.”

Nisan, who resides in the Jerusalem neighborhood of Ramot Bet, parts of which are beyond the 1967 lines, told JNS.org, “Nobody is going to chop apartment buildings or streets in half in Ramot Bet or any other Jerusalem neighborhood. More than 250,000 Jews reside in parts of Jerusalem past the 1967 lines, and they are here to stay. The supporters of the recent U.N. resolution are delusional—they are living in their own little echo chamber, with no connection to reality."

**Hoping for a new position**

Under the Obama administration, the U.S. took a position similar to that of the U.N., branding the post-1967 parts of Jerusalem as “occupied territory.” Many observers are hopeful that U.S. policy will change under President Donald Trump. “It's hard to imagine any American government being less favorable to Israel on Jerusalem-related issues than the Obama administration,” Yossi Klein Halevi said. “I expect the new administration to be better—perhaps significantly better.”

Alyza Lewin said it is “imperative” for the Trump administration to “promptly recognize Israel's sovereignty over Jerusalem.” Lewin and her father, Nathan Lewin, were the attorneys in a recent suit by a Jerusalem-born American citizen concerning his request to have his passport state “Israel” as his place of birth, instead of “Jerusalem,” which has been the State Department’s practice because the U.S. does not recognize any part of Jerusalem as being in Israel. The Supreme Court turned down that request in 2015, on the grounds that the American president has the exclusive authority to recognize foreign sovereigns.

“Since that is the position of the Court’s majority,” Alyza Lewin said, “President Trump should use his authority to promptly recognize Israel's sovereignty over all of Jerusalem.”