

The Jerusalem Center for Social & Economic Rights (JCSER) welcomed a recent proposal by Ahmad Qrei' (Abu Al-Ala'), General Negotiator of Fateh Lobbying & Organization Affairs Office, to establish a Palestinian council for the development of Jerusalem.

In a statement issued by JCSER, it notes, 'the proposal, although late, is welcome and supported given the serious dangers facing the Palestinian presence in Occupied East Jerusalem and the intensification of Israeli judaization plans in the Holy City.'

JCSER Director General noted, 'any committee or council formed should have all necessary financial abilities, given that hundreds of millions of US dollars are spent by the Israelis on a yearly basis with the aim of changing the geographical and demographic reality in Jerusalem, and imposing further control over the economic, commercial, health and educational sectors in the city.'

He noted that the Israeli work plan in Jerusalem is going in more than one direction, including the financial direction. It invests huge amounts of money in building settlement neighborhoods expected to severely hit the life of Palestinian Jerusalemites, including house demolitions, tax raid campaigns, and taking entire neighborhoods out from the center of Jerusalem.

He confirmed that the first duty of the proposed council is to re-open the Palestinian Jerusalemite institutions - a decision to close the institutions was originally issued in August 2001. They were closed on the ground that they are funded and supervised by the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) - and to force institutions that moved outside the city to return and to secure their financial needs.

He added, 'the council can work within the legal framework of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO). Under the Oslo Accord, PLO institutions & departments are given the right to practice their work, and Israel is forced to respect this right.'

He noted that the national reference that may emerge from the council will institute a real work that responds to the needs of citizens and their aggravating problems.