

East Jerusalem Bus Drivers Strike Over Crossing Delays

1 It was reported this week that some Arab bus lines in eastern Jerusalem were "striking." The drivers and/or their bosses are apparently protesting the stricter policies that have been put into effect at the security-barrier crossings, between the neighborhoods "behind" the barrier and the rest of the city. Many workers – not only drivers, but also sanitation employees and others – have complained of increased waiting times, even up to three hours, at the crossings.



Bus in Jerusalem | Illustration

2 Tik-Tok videos have been disseminated encouraging workers not to come to work, in protest. Some of the videos feature one or more spokesmen for the "Committees" – which is actually one local neighborhood committee that represents the residents vis-à-vis the city authorities. The "Committees" often refer to official PA or Fatah committees that are officially active in the city.



3 We have reported here on the economic downturn in the Old City of recent months. One reason that businesses have been harmed is, to a certain extent, that many employees provide their employers with incorrect residential addresses, particularly in the Old City and surrounding areas. They do this in order to avoid harming their chances of being hired, if employers find out that the applicants live behind the security barrier. The employers are apparently wary of precisely the delays mentioned above, which occur when security dangers increase, leading to longer delays at the crossings.

4 The Red Crescent has withdrawn its intention to offer infant and baby care at Family Care centers (Tipat Halav) in the Shuafat refugee camp and other eastern Jerusalem neighborhoods. This service was provided until now by the now-outlawed UNRWA organization, whose offices are due to be officially closed later this week.

In contrast with what was reported in the local Arab press, the Red Crescent did not win a "Replace UNRWA" tender – which does not exist – but rather a tender for only one of the services that UNRWA provided. However, because of the fake news, the Red Crescent became alarmed and issued an announcement saying it would never harm the Palestinian nation, etc., and that it would not offer the Family Care services. This decision supports the PA propaganda that Israel wishes to harm the Arabs of Jerusalem by outlawing Hamas-supporting UNRWA – some of whose employees were directly involved in the war against Israel.

In actuality, the Red Crescent, which is essentially an official PA body, very much wanted to win this tender, for various reasons - including money. However, the international and local Arab campaign against Israel's outlawing of UNRWA, together with the reports implying that the Red Crescent was profiting from Israel's "anti-Palestinian" policy, put the Red Crescent into a form of panic. Its leaders therefore chose to give up the expected monetary and diplomatic profits that would result from their taking over the Family Center services.

5 Stores and businesses in the Old City and in the business center opposite Damascus Gate have received warnings from the Execution Office (responsible for collecting debts), regarding debts of tens of thousands of shekels and more.

Though the Execution Office serves such warnings on a frequent basis throughout the country, some in the Arab community attribute sinister motives to the authorities, suspecting that their ultimate goal is to Judaize the Holy City by confiscating the stores and then selling them to Jews. As we have reported here, some in the Arab populace feel in general that they are losing on both ends, in having withheld their support from Hamas during the war while still facing strict law enforcement by the Israeli authorities.

6 The released terrorists: Demonstrations in favor of Hamas were held in Ramallah. At the same time, we must note the following act taken by supporters of Hamas and Hizbut-Tahrir [an international Islamic fundamentalist organization working to re-establish the Islamic caliphate, headed by Jerusalem Arab Azam Amira (an Israeli Interior Ministry pensioner), and outlawed in most Arab countries]: They have once again banished the Mufti of Jerusalem, who is identified with Jordan and the PA, from the Temple Mount and prevented him from delivering the Friday sermon there.

This incident is yet another proof of the weakened stature of the official Arab elements on the Mount – the PA, Jordan, and the Waqf – and the strengthening there of extremist Islamists who are supported by Turkey and Qatar.

7 In total, some 54 Jerusalem Arabs, all with Israeli ID cards, have been released in the current hostage release deal. These include mostly women and minors. Among them, 24 are to be expelled from Israel for their heinous deeds, including murder. On the other hand, nine of them, including a female Israeli citizen, who were imprisoned on charges of "attempted murder" – meaning just that they failed to realize their goal of killing Jews – will remain in Jerusalem.

8 Israel's security forces strictly enforced the ban on celebrations and parties in honor of the released terrorists, especially in the neighborhoods where some of the freed terrorists live, such as Silwan (Shiloah), Shuafat, and Ras al-Amoud. However, in at least one case - in Kafir Aqeb - a Hamas procession was held for some of the released terrorists, including appropriate clothing and flags.

