

Israeli Confiscation of Qalandiya's Lands for a Waste Facility

Executive Summary

Israel is advancing a Waste-to-Energy (W2E) facility on lands belonging to Qalandiya al-Balad, involving the expropriation of approximately 130 dunams, eviction orders for Palestinian families, and the planned relocation of the Separation Barrier. Although the project has not yet received statutory approval, governmental decisions, tenders, and on-the-ground actions demonstrate that implementation is already underway. The project raises significant concerns regarding international law, environmental justice, and the disproportionate impact on surrounding Palestinian communities.

Background

On January 21st 2025, the Government of Israel adopted Decision 2025/3067, "Encouraging and Improving Waste Treatment in the Metropolis and Strengthening the Resilience of Jerusalem." Issued by the Israeli Prime Minister and coordinated with the Israeli Ministers of Environmental Protection, Finance, and Defense.

It builds on Decision 1836 (June 5th, 2024) to accelerate a Waste-to-Energy (W2E) facility in the Atarot Industrial Zone, bordering the Palestinian town of Qalandiya¹ in occupied East Jerusalem.

In November 2025, the Israel Land Authority delivered eviction orders to Qalandiya's residents, demanding they vacate within 20 days to allow the construction.

The project, led by the Jerusalem Municipality's Eden Company² and funded by the Ministry of Environmental Protection, involves confiscating ~130 dunams of Palestinian land and relocating the Separation Barrier to place the site within Jerusalem's municipal boundaries.

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1. Qalandiya al-Balad, located northwest of Jerusalem, is the historic core of the Palestinian village of Qalandiya. Although it lies behind the Separation Wall on the West Bank side, parts of its land remain within the official municipal boundaries of Jerusalem.
 2. Eden is a municipally owned company established by the Jerusalem Municipality to plan, develop, and manage urban projects in the city – particularly in East and Central Jerusalem.



Government Decisions and Legal Basis

- **Finance Minister's Expropriation Notice – May 27th 2025**

Signed by Minister Smotrich under Section 19 of the 1943 Land Ordinance, this notice reactivated three old expropriation orders from 1970 and 1982

The Confiscated Blocks: 29509 ,29508 ,29506 (as shown in Figure 1)

- **Government Decision 3012 – May 2025**

Authorized the project, allocating ≈12 million (ILS) from the Cleaning Fund and instructing the Defense Ministry to shift the Separation Barrier northwards while the Eden Company prepared detailed plans and tenders.

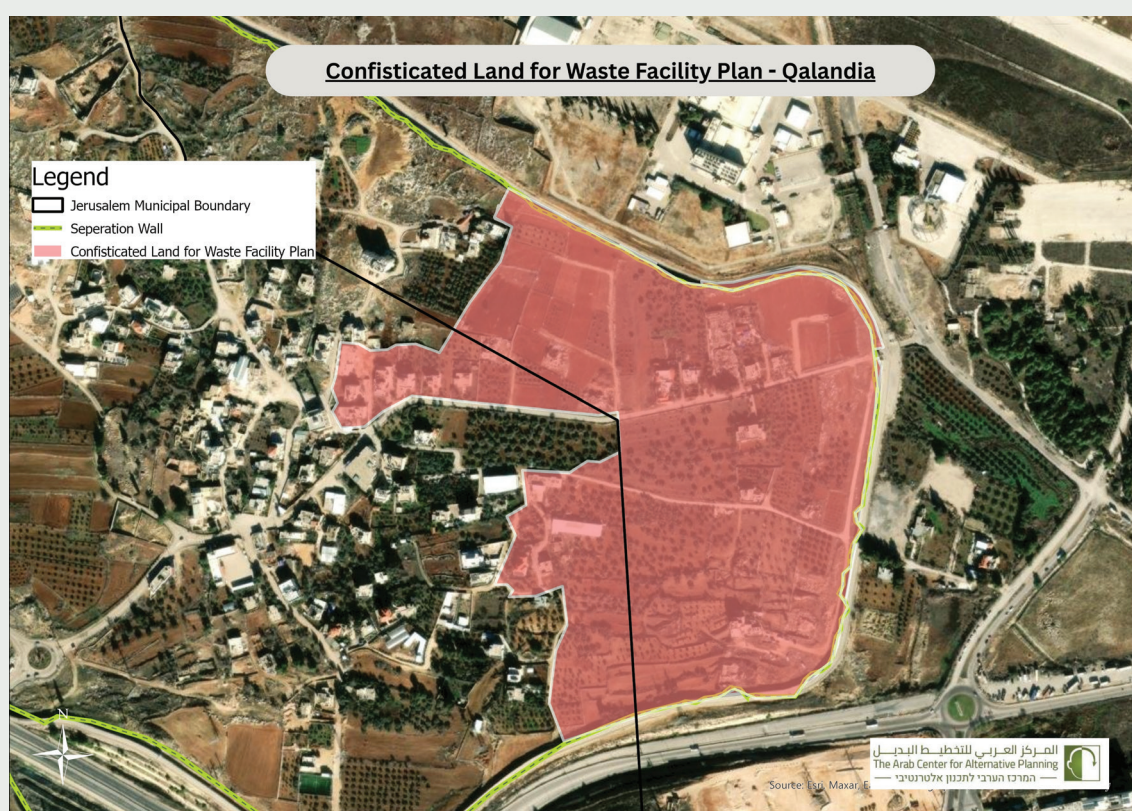


Figure 1. Distribution of the Confiscated Area of Qalandia al-Balad

Land Ownership

The accompanying map shows the land-ownership pattern within the area now targeted for confiscation in Qalandiya al-Balad. A significant share of the outlined parcels remains privately owned by Palestinian families, while other sections are registered under the Israeli Land Authority (ILA)—representing land previously taken from local residents.

Importantly, ILA-held land in this area has not been used to serve or benefit the local Palestinian community; rather, it has been managed in ways that further restrict local development and facilitate Israeli planning priorities. The combination of newly threatened private lands and earlier ILA seizures illustrates the cumulative erosion of Palestinian property rights and highlights the unequal distribution of land use and benefits in the area.

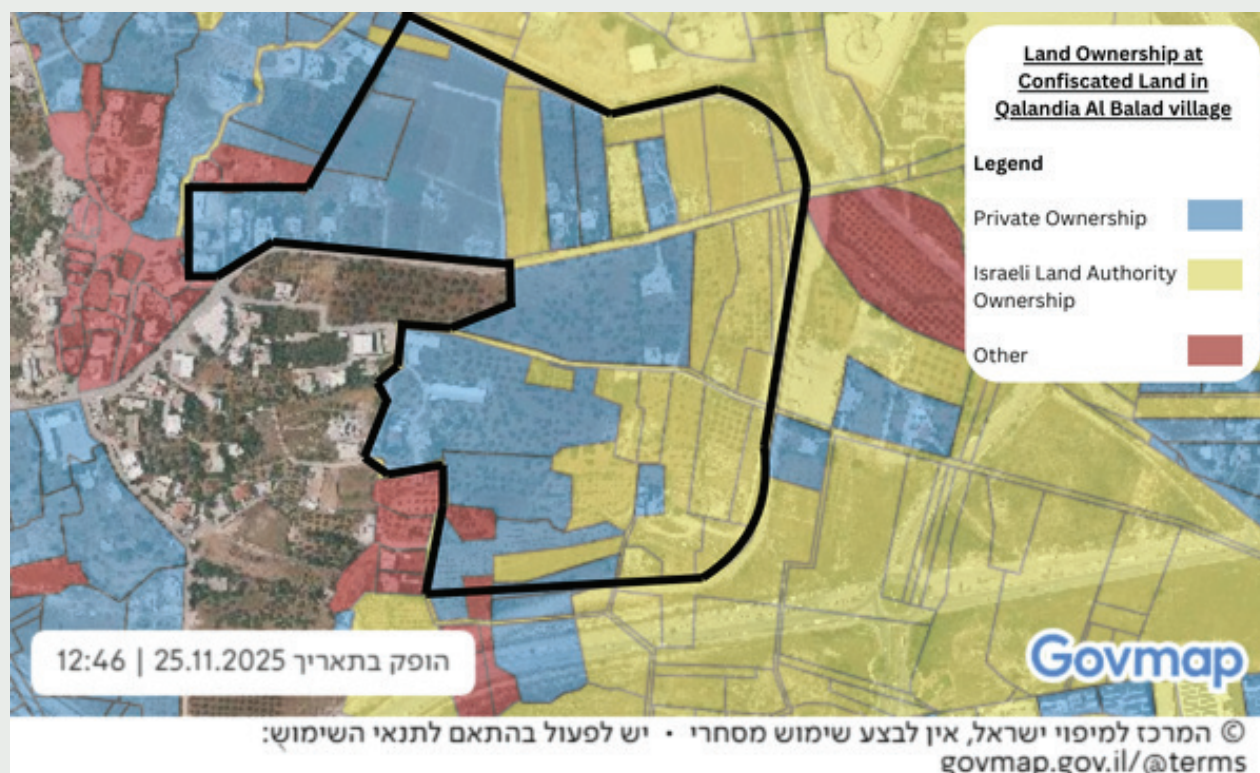


Figure 2. Land Ownership in the Confiscated Area of Qalandia al-Balad. Source: GovMap (2025).

Current Planning Status and Timeline:

The official tender outlines a structured 40-month planning track for the Waste-to-Energy facility, beginning with a four-month stage for analyzing and selecting the preferred site, followed by the preparation and submission of all statutory documents to the National Infrastructure Committee. A detailed plan is scheduled for completion by month 18, while a full Environmental Impact Assessment is prepared between months 30–18. The plan is then formally published around month 30, followed by a three-month objections period and final revisions, leading to committee and governmental approval around months 40–37, particularly given the required relocation of the Separation Barrier. Although the plan has not yet been approved, the process is already fully activated: Eden has issued the planning tender, inter-ministerial teams are assessing the new barrier route, and state authorities have begun issuing land-expropriation and demolition notices. This sequence—advancing implementation steps prior to statutory approval—is highly unusual in standard planning practice and reflects the exceptional political prioritization of the project.



Legal and Humanitarian Concerns

- The process violates international humanitarian law, which forbids an occupier from using occupied land for its own population's benefit.
- The land had been expropriated decades ago for "security" purposes; its conversion to a municipal waste facility serving Israelis changes the purpose unlawfully.

Impact on Qalandiya Al Balad Village

The impact on Qalandiya is severe. In Qalandiya al-Balad, a community of approximately 1,200 residents, entire families face eviction and the loss of privately owned farmland due to the planned expropriations. At the same time, the siting of a highly polluting waste-to-energy facility directly adjacent to Palestinian residential areas exacerbates existing environmental inequality, exposing the community to heightened health risks and further diminishing their quality of life.

Escalating Environmental Pressures on Northern Jerusalem Neighborhoods

ACAP has been closely monitoring the Atarot Settlement Plan (Plan No. 0764936-101), which proposes approximately 9,000 Israeli housing units on the former Qalandiya Airport site. Although the plan has been repeatedly advanced since 2020, it remains under discussion to this day (2025\11\19), with planning committees continuing to examine its security, environmental, and infrastructural components. Positioned between Kufr Aqab, Al-Ram, Beit Hanina, and Qalandiya al-Balad (See Figure 3), the project would create a large Israeli-only urban block at the northern entrance of Jerusalem, further tightening spatial restrictions on surrounding Palestinian neighborhoods.

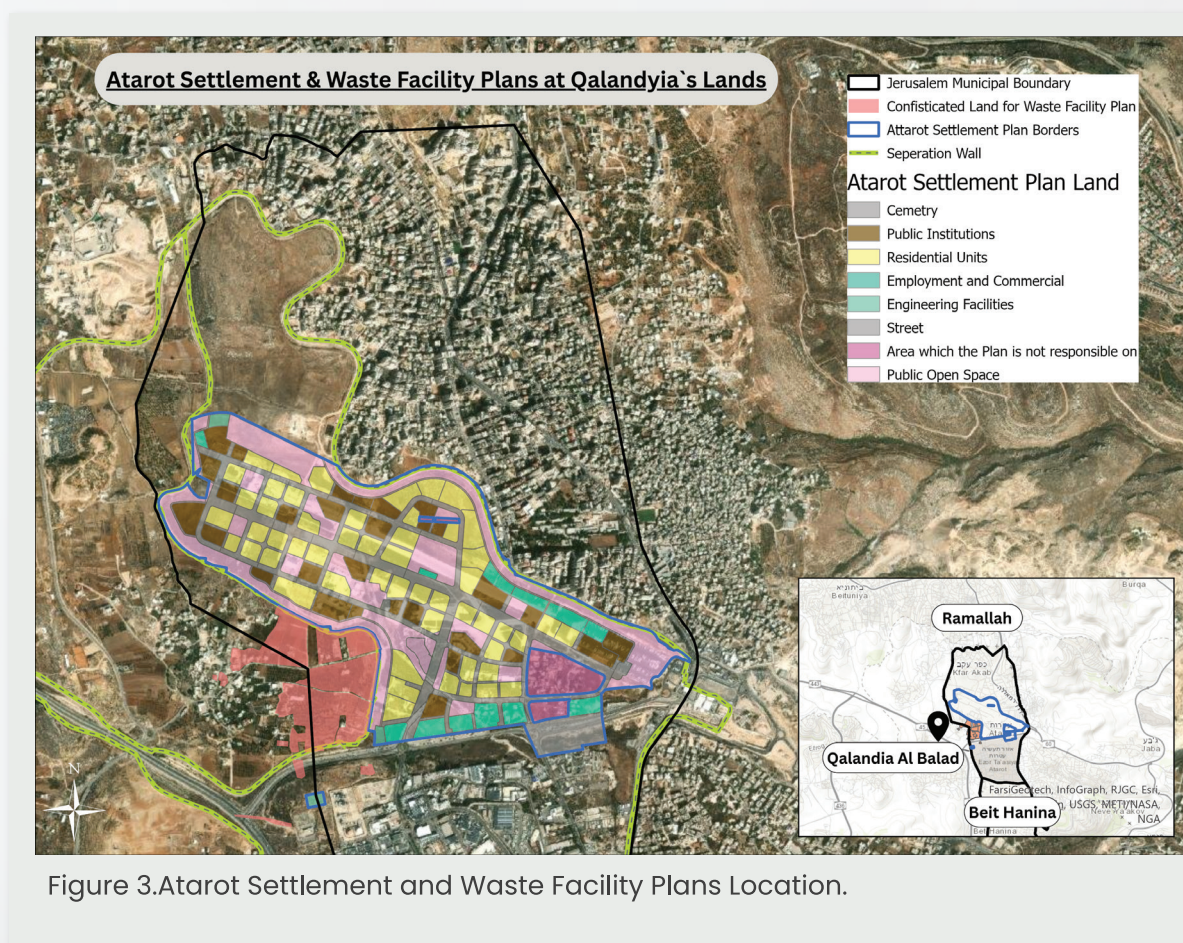
The establishment of a Waste-to-Energy (W2E) facility on Qalandiya's lands must be understood within this broader context, as the Atarot region already endures some of the highest pollution levels in the Jerusalem metropolitan area. Official environmental data presented to the Jerusalem District Planning Committee in January 2025 revealed that PM10³ concentrations repeatedly surpassed the regulatory ceiling of 130 µg/m³, with peaks reaching 153 µg/m³,⁴ during active industrial hours.

Levels drop sharply on Fridays and Saturdays when the industrial zone is closed confirming Atarot's industrial operations as the dominant pollution source.

3. PM (Particulate Matter) refers to microscopic solid or liquid particles suspended in the air. PM10 includes particles with a diameter of 10 micrometers or less, which can penetrate the respiratory system and pose serious health risks.

4. Eden is a municipally owned company established by the Jerusalem Municipality to plan, develop, and manage urban projects in the city – particularly in East and Central Jerusalem.





Against this backdrop, constructing a major waste-incineration facility immediately adjacent to an already overburdened area significantly amplifies existing environmental risks. Rather than alleviating the pollution crisis, the project adds a new source of industrial emissions to a region already saturated with particulates, traffic pollution, and by-products of metal and cement production.

Moreover, recent environmental inspections documented severe soil contamination on the lands designated for the settlement, including Cobalt levels that exceeded legal thresholds by nearly 100-fold, alongside dangerously elevated concentrations of Manganese and Thallium. These findings raise serious concerns regarding long-term soil safety, water quality, and public health—particularly for Palestinian communities living immediately downwind.

Despite these clear red flags, Israeli planning authorities continue advancing both the Atarot settlement and the W2E project without assessing cumulative impacts on nearby Palestinian neighborhoods. Communities such as Kufr Aqab, Al-Ram, Beit Hanina, and Qalandiya al-Balad already live with chronic exposure to industrial emissions, inadequate infrastructure, and limited municipal services. The introduction of a high-temperature waste facility—combined with land confiscations, planned demolitions, and intensified settlement expansion—deepens the pattern of environmental inequity.

5. Data Source: The District Committee Meeting to discuss Atarot Settlement Plan at January 2025 ,20.



In practice, the W2E project extends a long-standing policy of environmental externalization, in which the benefits of waste management flow to Israeli urban centers while the environmental burdens—air pollution, odors, toxic residues, and increased heavy-vehicle traffic—are imposed almost exclusively on Palestinian communities.

The planned rerouting of the Separation Barrier to include the facility within Jerusalem's municipal boundaries reinforces this unequal arrangement: the environmental risks remain on the Palestinian side, while the infrastructure serves Israeli municipal needs.

These developments collectively mark a sharp escalation of environmental pressures on northern Jerusalem's Palestinian neighborhoods and underscore the urgent need for equitable environmental protections and meaningful oversight.

Policy Implications

- **Forced displacement and land expropriation** are occurring prior to statutory approval, contradicting basic principles of due process and protection of civilians under occupation.
- **The rerouting of the Separation Barrier** for a civilian Israeli project constitutes a de facto annexation measure with long-term geopolitical implications.
- **Placing a polluting waste facility next to densely populated Palestinian areas** raises concerns under international environmental justice and public health frameworks.
- **The project is tightly linked to settlement expansion in Atarot**, underscoring the need for scrutiny of cumulative impacts on Palestinian spatial rights and freedom of movement.

Conclusion

The advancement of the Waste-to-Energy facility in Qalandiya—despite the absence of statutory approval—demonstrates a coordinated governmental effort to implement irreversible measures, including land expropriation, eviction of residents, and the planned rerouting of the Separation Barrier. These actions, undertaken before completing the required planning procedures or environmental assessments, raise substantial legal, humanitarian, and environmental concerns. They also form part of a broader spatial strategy that includes the proposed Atarot settlement, cumulatively reshaping the urban and demographic landscape of northern Jerusalem to the detriment of surrounding Palestinian communities.

In this context, ACAP plays a critical role in monitoring these developments, documenting their implications, and providing evidence-based analysis to international partners. By systematically tracking planning processes, environmental data, land-ownership patterns, and on-the-ground implementation, ACAP ensures that policymakers receive accurate, timely, and context-sensitive information.

This enables informed engagement with the relevant authorities and strengthens efforts to safeguard Palestinian communities' rights, urban continuity, and environmental well-being.