

After the suspension ("imposition of a closure" in the words of the media, as if a closure had not previously existed), a gradual process of slowly easing up on the closure and awarding new permits began-until the next suspension. Despite the various ups and downs, the overall trend over time was to tighten the closure.

One of the criteria for receiving a permit to enter Israel was that of "divided families." In the divided families directive, periodic entrance permits to Israel, including overnight stays, were given to residents of the territories who were married to residents of Israel. The procedure occasionally changed- in the beginning, residents were required to submit documents attesting to the center of their life in Israel, similar to those required by the Ministry of the Interior. As of May 1995, this permit was given on the basis of a certificate from the Ministry of the Interior that the FARE request is in their care.

Since the "imposition of the closure," (in other words, making the closure total) at the end of February this year, the divided families procedure has yet to be renewed. Family members who are residents of the territories are prevented from entering Jerusalem and in other words, the families have been divided since February 1996.

### **Confiscation of Identification Cards**

Parallel with the change of policy in the beginning of 1994 was a wave of confiscations of identification cards from residents of East Jerusalem whom the Ministry of the Interior decided had moved the center of their life from the municipal boundaries of Jerusalem. It must be noted that the Ministry of the Interior had implemented, since March 1994, a passive policy in this regard, a sort of spider waiting for its prey; one who arrives at the office of the Ministry of the Interior in East Jerusalem to receive various services is liable to find him or herself without an identification card, which means that the person is erased from the population registry of Israeli residents.

Among those who lost their residency are many of the same women whose family reunification requests submitted years ago on behalf of their husbands have yet to be answered. These women turned to the Ministry of the Interior to inquire as to the status of these pending requests and found themselves suddenly without identification cards or residency. The Ministry of the Interior refuses to publicize the number of persons whose identity cards were taken away or who were erased since 1994 from the population registry.

Many factors, whose source is the continued policy in East Jerusalem, indeed brought many women to (in the words of the Ministry of the Interior) "follow their husbands." These factors, already mentioned, include a refusal to permit new building or programs for neighborhoods in East Jerusalem, the policy which discriminated on the basis of gender in the matter of family reunification which was practiced until 1994 and more. It is unknown today what length of residing outside the municipal boundaries of Jerusalem results in a decision by the Ministry of the Interior to negate the residency. For those who return to live in Jerusalem, it is

unknown how many years they must live in the city, after leaving it for various periods of time, in order that their right to be considered as regular residents will be acknowledged with no threat of losing residency.

The form on which requests for the registration of children are approved suggests that according to the approach of the Ministry of the Interior, there is no period of limitation; the form suggests that if during any period from June 1967 to today the place of permanent residence of any resident was not under the jurisdiction of Israel, the residency would be cancelled, and with it the right of residency of his or her children and grandchildren. The situation is uncertain, but everyone who at any time leaves the city is under a constant threat of losing his or her residency.

### **Petitions to the High Court**

Numerous cases of rejection of requests for family reunification have been brought before the Israeli High Court by HaMoked during the past year. All of the petitions are currently pending, and for the majority of them the State has not submitted a response. In this situation the High Court is not an effective means of pressuring the authorities, and there is no assurance as to what the High Court's position will be.

### **Conclusion**

The interpretation of the Ministry of the Interior of the essence of blue identification cards held by residents of East Jerusalem wraps the city in an invisible cover. The passage through this cover is in one direction only: outside the city. In the other direction the cover is almost completely impenetrable.

The beginning of this one-directional cover was the High Court petition 282/88 Mubarak v Prime Minister and Minister of the Interior (P.D. 424), in which the High Court provided legitimacy to the legal interpretation on which the Ministry of the Interior based its policies. In the past year, HaMoked has witnessed how the Ministry of the Interior has thickened and improved this "cover," and how it uses it to significantly decrease the number of Palestinians in the city who hold blue identification cards.

Many residents are slowly discovering, one after the other, that the line demarking the jurisdiction of Jerusalem, which is not obvious on the ground, whose crossing never required a permit of any type and which did not change the behavior of the Ministry of the Interior toward them, has suddenly become an uncrossable wall when trying to pass it in the other direction. This wall often separates between spouses and between parents and their children. Also, one who has never left to live outside of Jerusalem discovers that his or her residence in the city is conditional and that he or she must once again present packets of documents to the clerks of the Ministry of the Interior-often for naught.

We are not discussing migrants or those who only recently arrived: we are discussing people who were born in Jerusalem, they and their forefathers, and for whom Jerusalem is their only city.