



## WASHINGTON REPORT ON MIDDLE EAST AFFAIRS

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Music & Arts

### "Jerusalem in Exile"—An Invitation to Palestinians

THE "JERUSALEM in Exile" project is searching for the mental image of Jerusalem that exists in the minds of the Palestinian people in the Diaspora. (The Diaspora now seems to include Palestinians in Palestine, who are barred from traveling to Jerusalem.) This mental image will be later transformed into a photographic image.

The project seeks to create a new perception of Jerusalem—liberating it from clichés and slogans, and reconstructing a relationship to it that is more alive, real and intimate.

Through artistic means, the new images of Jerusalem will be replenished and charged with ways that transcend the forced reality on the ground.

"Jerusalem in Exile" was initiated by the Palestinian artist Steve Sabella, who is executing it along with poet Najwan Darwish. In this project, Palestinians can share and explore different views and experiences of Jerusalem. Sabella writes that "Jerusalem needs visual liberation. This can only be achieved if a new dimension is added to the photographs. This dimension exists in us—deep in the imagination. Reaching that dimension requires a deep look, a journey into the minds of many people; where they will all unite to 'rebuild' and 'reconstruct' Jerusalem."

It is interesting to see how a Palestinian boy or girl from Brazil, for example, who has never seen Jerusalem, acquires that mental image. His or her image of Jerusalem is developed through media, books or through narratives from parents or grandparents. This is an indication that occupation cannot annul the memories of Jerusalem nor can changing facts on the ground nor forcing different narratives. It is not the stones that make the city live—it is the people who remember it.

Palestinians from all over the world are encouraged to take a few minutes to visit the Web site <[www.jerusalem-in-exile.net](http://www.jerusalem-in-exile.net)> (the Web site exists in five languages); and check out the world map where one can see and read different images.

Check which countries are not lit up and if you are now living in these countries, send your mental image in order to light it. If the country is already lit, also feel free to send your mental image, which will be added to the Web site. "It is not simply about lighting the whole world, but also about each and every one of you," according to the initiators of the Jerusalem in exile.

—Courtesy Jerusalem in Exile

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Steve Sabella's "Old City of Jerusalem" (Courtesy Jerusalem in Exile).