

7 March 2011

Press Release

Temporary Injunction Issued against Tender for Building Plots in Lifta Village

Coalition to Save Lifta

Administrative Petition: 8661-03-11

Following a petition submitted yesterday (6 March), Judge Yigal Marzel issued a temporary injunction today ordering the Israel Land Administration to freeze publication of the results of a tender to lease plots for building in the village of Lifta. The petition was submitted by Attorney Sami Arshid on behalf of Jerusalem activists, including descendents of Lifta, the Bnei Lifta Association, Rabbis for Human Rights and the Jafra Association.

In their petition against the Israel Land Administration, the petitioners requested court intervention to prevent the transfer of assets and property in Lifta to private hands for the establishment of an exclusive real estate project and to halt destruction of the village, which represents a final testimony to the Arab villages and culture of scenery that were widespread in Israel throughout history until the early 20th century.

According to the petitioners, "in the given situation and according to which the village of Lifta is an abandoned village and its original inhabitants live as refugees at a distance of only a few hundred metres from their village, it would have been befitting to abstain from all construction in the area and certainly to prevent building that would result in destruction of the village and the complete dispossession of the rights of the original inhabitants of the place". The petitioners further write that the "marketing of plots for building in the village of Lifta and furthermore the construction of new buildings on the village lands and in place of the existing village could thwart the ability to preserve the existing village and foil any possibility of reconstructing the historic structure of the village, and everything that is derived from this."

The petitioners requested that the court order an annulment of the tender to sell plots in Lifta and order the Israel Land Administration to desist from any action that would damage the physical and cultural heritage of the place, until an inclusive planning process is completed that includes the area of Lifta, and which will include planning for preservation of the site in accordance with professional standards and with public participation.

A professional opinion of five senior architects and preservation and planning professionals in Israel was attached to the petition, concerning serious preservation defects in the tender. In the opinion it was determined that the ILA tender does not meet the preservation criteria accepted in Israel and throughout the world, and that full data does not exist that would permit the marketing of the plots and issuance of building permits. Authors of the opinion determine that the tender process must be frozen until completion of the detailed documentation of Lifta, preparation of a building and development plan and conclusion of a development agreement between the ILA and the Jerusalem Municipality.

For additional details:

Petitioners:

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