

Youth and Education in Jerusalem

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Building Common Visions for the Future
of Jerusalem: A Bottom-Up Approach



Executive Summary

This paper is part of the “Building Visions for the Future of Jerusalem: A Bottom-Up Approach” project, which engages Israeli and Palestinian residents of East and West Jerusalem and aims to dignify diverse voices, enhance the knowledge of the complexity of Jerusalem, and contribute toward constructive public and civil society engagement on the future of the city. The paper focuses on the question of youth and education, and it is based on discussions that took place among three groups—Palestinian, Israeli, and mixed—of young Jerusalemites.

The median age in Jerusalem is low: twenty-four years old. The ultra-Orthodox and Arab population groups have a young age structure due to the large number of children per family. The education system in West Jerusalem is divided into ultra-Orthodox, state, and state-religious educational systems. The education system in East Jerusalem is divided into public schools, which include official schools and “recognized but unofficial schools,” and private schools, run mainly by The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) or the Waqf (Islamic Endowment). There are various problems and challenges in terms of the city’s education system. In East Jerusalem, the problems are especially severe, there is a serious lack of informal educational frameworks, and the dropout percentage is very high.

The participants of the Palestinian group discussed the problems of sexual harassment on public transportation and bullying at school. They also complained about the lack of facilities in schools, such as science laboratories and libraries, and also about the impact of the separation wall and the checkpoints on their daily lives. The Israeli group talked about restrictions in terms of dress and behavior, mainly regarding women, imposed by religious groups, and they complained about the lack of leisure facilities for young people to spend their time using. The mixed group discussed the problems of hate, racism, and violence on a political and national basis.

When they were asked about their vision for the future of the city, the young participants described a city with free movement and without checkpoints and with better public transportation. In their vision, the girls and the women feel that they are protected and that everybody shares the responsibility for fighting against violence. They also envisaged a green and clean city, with more trash cans, trees, and parks.



The paper raised a few policy recommendations on education in Jerusalem, such as creating more informal frameworks for youths, building new schools and classrooms in order to solve the problem of overcrowded classes, establishing social programs to support poor families that push their children to leave school and go to work, and building centers for professional guidance.

About the Project

“Building Visions for the Future of Jerusalem: A Bottom-Up Approach” is a *Leonard Davis Institute* (The Hebrew University of Jerusalem) and *Israel-Palestine: Creative Regional Initiatives* (IPCRI) collaboration funded by the European Union. The project engages residents of East and West Jerusalem, urban planners, students, women, youths, and local leaders to work together to shape the current and future reality of their neighborhoods and the city as a whole. Urban planning and formal negotiations in Jerusalem have generally ignored the voices of the residents, in particular those from marginalized and diverse communities.

This project aims to dignify diverse voices, enhance knowledge of the complexity of Jerusalem, and contribute toward constructive public and civil society engagement with respect to the future of the city. The project includes surveys of residents of Jerusalem, the mapping of local needs, community projects, and the increased efficacy of local residents of Jerusalem in shaping the future of the city. In its first stage, the project engaged residents from different Jerusalem neighborhoods in generating equitable solutions to local problems. The project provided and utilized capacity-building and participatory techniques to empower local communities and work with residents to create small interventions that would improve their reality. The community projects were decided on by the residents and included the creation of green spaces, public gardens, and libraries, as well as the beautifying of neighborhoods and any other initiatives or actions they prioritized. We believe that focusing on current inequalities while building partnerships at the neighborhood level can empower marginalized communities and answer some of their needs.

In the final stage of the project, Jerusalem residents working in thematic groups discussed wider issues of concern. Israeli, Palestinian, and mixed thematic groups gathered to talk about four main themes: 1) Youth and Education, 2) Infrastructure and Public Spaces, 3) Political Leadership and Representation, and 4) Safety and Protection. . We also asked



them to imagine and create new visions regarding what they wish their reality to look like. The results are a baseline for the following policy papers, which will hopefully contribute to local input toward short- and long-term solutions in Jerusalem. In the end, the participants' visual visions, the leaders' verbal visions, and the policy papers will be presented in a traveling exhibition that will uncover some of Jerusalem's wishful future. Through this approach, we aim to engage and inspire residents, policy designers, and other activists to work on local creative initiatives, increase the knowledge of the complexities of Jerusalem, and contribute toward a negotiated solution for the city.

Photo-Voice: The Work Process

Photo-voice is a visual methodology used in participatory research to document reality using images or videos and to reflect on them. During the process, participants take photos of their environment and/or topics they have agreed upon in advance. The photos are then brought to the group to initiate discussion. They help participants share their interpretation with other members, gain new insights about what they see, and communicate their findings to larger circles. Each participant shared their photos with the group and explained why they thought the photos were important and representative, and the presentations were followed by a group discussion. While each group had a slightly different selection process, each had to eventually collectively choose three photos that represented the main issues in the neighborhood, and these photos were later used to come up with a future vision. You can see the selected photos and the visual visions of the groups in the annex.

Background: Youth and Education in Jerusalem

During the 2017–2018 school year, there were 282,300 students in Jerusalem's education system: 65,800 students in the Hebrew state and state-religious education systems, 107,900 students in the ultra-Orthodox education system, and 108,600 students in the Arab education system.¹ The education system in West Jerusalem is divided into ultra-Orthodox, state-secular, and state-religious components. The education system in East Jerusalem is also

¹ Choshen, Maya and Michal Korach, *Jerusalem: Facts and Trends*, JIPR, 2019, 82.



divided into public schools (84%), which include official schools and “recognized but unofficial schools,” and private schools (16%), run mainly by UNRWA or the Waqf. Most Palestinian high-school students study for the *tawjihi* (the Palestinian matriculation exam), but in some schools in East Jerusalem, the students study the Israeli *bagrut* (the Israeli matriculation exam). The diversity mentioned above reflects different educational and cultural backgrounds in the different sectors in Jerusalem.

Jerusalem residents are young. The median age in Jerusalem (according to the data in 2017) is twenty-four years old; it means that half the population is younger than twenty-four and the other half is older. By comparison, in Tel Aviv, the median age is thirty-six, and in Haifa it is thirty-eight, whereas in Israel as a whole, the median age is thirty. The explanation behind this difference in the median age in different cities compared to Jerusalem is the large proportion of two groups in Jerusalem: the ultra-Orthodox and Arab populations, both with a large number of children per family.²

The youth population suffers from many problems in Jerusalem, such as violence, drugs, and insufficient educational and cultural places to spend its free time. In East Jerusalem, the problems are especially severe. There is a serious lack of informal educational frameworks for the youths in East Jerusalem, and the dropout percentage is very high at 33%, meaning that a third of students do not finish their first twelve years of education. Moreover, students who go on to study in higher education do not find a job that is appropriate to their level of education. Despite the diversity in the city, there are common needs and problems that the various groups share but also unique problems, which are only relevant to specific groups.

Analysis: The Main Problems

The voices of the youth in the various groups reflect the different realities of young residents in the two parts of the city but they also show some similar concerns. Young Palestinian girls from Al-Abdallah School discussed a few problems and difficulties. Two main issues were raised: The first was sexual harassment on public transportation. The participants shared stories of sexual harassment, where, in some cases, the perpetrators were bus drivers or

² Choshen, Maya and Michal Korach, *Jerusalem: Facts and Trends*, JIPR, 2019, 25.



other passengers during the ride. The second was bullying at school. Some of the participants shared their stories of being bullied and complained that this was not addressed by the school management and that the bullies were not punished.

The participants also raised problems that relate to the education system, such as a lack of interactive activities during the school year; a lack of facilities in schools, particularly a science laboratory; and a lack of neighborhood libraries. In addition, the education system is much too rigid, lacking flexibility and the freedom of choosing one’s own courses. They also complained about problems that are connected to the political context, such as the separation wall, and having soldiers and checkpoints between Shu’fat refugee camp and Jerusalem (Figure 1).

As a result of the separation wall in Jerusalem, a third of the Palestinian population found itself beyond the wall with barriers and checkpoints when traveling inside Jerusalem. This makes life very complicated and difficult for people—young and old—in these areas. Many of the school students from these neighborhoods need to cross the checkpoints every day in order to get to school, and this affects their daily lives. The traffic when going or coming back is very heavy, with lots of traffic jams, and overall, it is unbearable. The participants also discussed the problem of public transportation and traffic and complained that sometimes they have to wait fifty minutes for the bus.



Figure 1: A checkpoint in Jerusalem: “A blurry image of my daily frustration passing through checkpoints. The image is blurry but the reality is very strong and clear”

The following are the main issues that were raised by the Israeli group. The first is problems with public transportation. This topic was discussed among both young Israelis and young Palestinians, and it seems that both sides were bothered by it and had similar problems concerning public transportation. The Israeli participants explained that they are dependent on public transportation in order to get to school, and they complained that the buses arrive late, that there are always delays and overcrowding on the buses (Figure 2), and that the traffic causes them to be late to school. They also complained that public transportation is not available at night and on Saturdays.



Figure 2: Overcrowded bus

The second issue is restrictions in terms of dress and behavior, mainly for women. The participants claimed that they sensed the enforcement of certain dress codes that were being imposed by religious and ultra-Orthodox groups. They feel that these restrictions place limitations on their freedom. They also complained about the pressure to close shops and restaurants on Saturdays. The third issue is the lack of places for young people to spend their leisure time and to hang out. Because of that, many young people spend time on the streets drinking, and this leads, in many cases, to violence (Figure 3).



Figure 3: Street drinking in Jerusalem

The Israeli participants also mentioned that there is no football team for women in Jerusalem. They argued that the girls deserve to have the opportunity to play in a football team like men. Another topic that was raised is the garbage in Jerusalem. They claimed that the city is full of trash, and this bothers them and damages the city. The analysis of the Palestinian and Israeli groups shows that even though their situations are very different and some of their problems are unique to their specific contexts (for example, the issue of checkpoints for the Palestinians and the issue of secular-religious rifts on the Jewish side), there are also topics that were raised by both sides, such as public transportation and violence.

The joint group from the “Kids for Peace” organization also pointed out these issues. They discussed the problems of traffic, public transportation, and checkpoints and also talked about violence. They especially mentioned violence against women and girls. In addition, they discussed the problems of hate, racism, and violence on a political and national basis. In addition to this, they argued that garbage and pollution are also major problems in the city and are especially severe in the Palestinian neighborhoods, where there are very few trash cans and irregular waste collection.

The project's survey³ show that education was one of the five most chosen issues by both Israelis and Palestinians in the city when they were asked about what issues need to be improved in Jerusalem. But, when they were asked open questions regarding the main problems in the neighborhood, the Palestinians focused more on education-related issues (crowded classrooms, the level of education, dropout percentages) while the Israelis scarcely referred to them. Figure 4 also shows the differences in residents' levels of satisfaction with educational facilities.

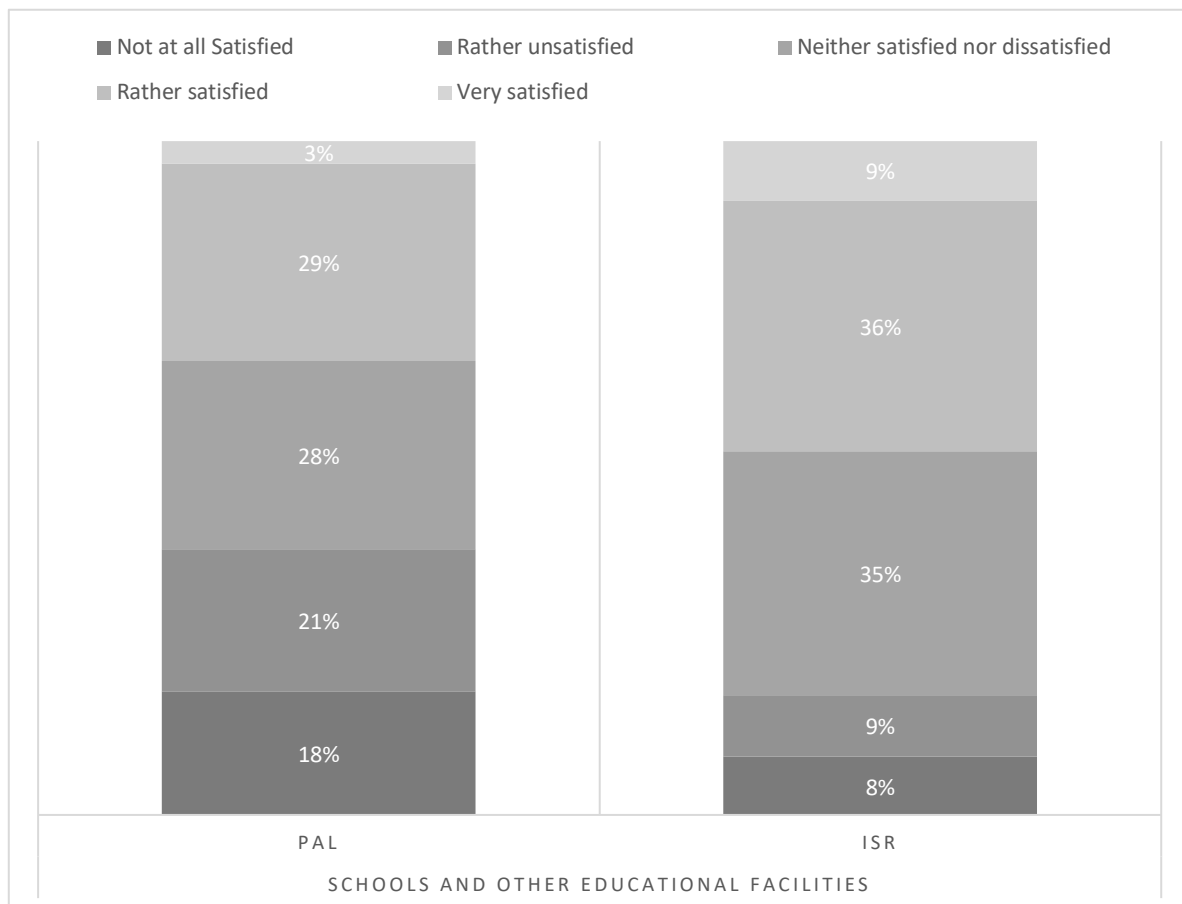


Figure 4: Jerusalem residents' opinions of educational facilities.

³ The public opinion survey included 612 Palestinian residents East Jerusalem and 516 Jewish residents of West Jerusalem. The Surveys were fielded, and responses were collected during January 2018. Full methodological information about the survey and results are available here: <https://jerusalemvisions.huji.ac.il/book/survey-report>

The Vision for the Future

The participants in the various groups regarding youth and education outlined a vision for the city that will address the main problems and change the current situation. They described a city with free movement and no checkpoints (or at least, until that happens, a more efficient and quicker checkpoint system). They also hoped for better public transportation and the placement of screens in bus stations to display real-time bus arrival data and to report if there are any delays. The Palestinians mentioned that these screens only exist in West Jerusalem. The vision also included a situation in which women and girls feel that they are protected and are not alone. The participants in the joint group clarified that everybody shares the responsibility for stopping the violence and that it is possible. In addition to that, they envisaged a green and clean city, with more trash cans on the streets, especially in East Jerusalem, and more trees and parks. The participants also hoped for a better education system with modern science laboratories in schools (Figure 5).



Figure5 : The vision - A science laboratory in school: “Having a modern science laboratory at school would allow me to practice science and not see it only as theory. Maybe I would become a scientist one day”

Conclusions and Recommendations

We would recommend the following steps in the field of youth of education:

1. Creating informal frameworks for youths in East Jerusalem and West Jerusalem and joint youth activities for both sides.
2. Creating educational programs that deal with violence among youths and also spaces where young people will be able to release their anger and stress.
3. Building new schools and classrooms in order to solve the issue of overcrowded classes.
4. Assigning professional social workers to conduct a study on the problem of high dropout rates from schools and to outline suggestions to address this problem.
5. Improving the quality of education and the teachers.
6. Creating programs to attract students to stay within the school system.
7. Involving families in school matters.
8. Establishing social programs to support poor families that push their children to leave school and go to work instead.
9. Building social groups and clubs for youths that will allow them to develop their skills and hobbies.
10. Building support programs and centers for professional guidance.



Youth And Education Group

Building visions for the future of Jerusalem: Bottom-up approach

בונים חזון לעתיד ירושלים: הסכמה מלמטה-למעלה
بناء رؤى لمستقبل القدس: نهج من أسفل إلى أعلى



الواقع | מציאות | Reality



In many places in the city, we sense enforcement of certain forms of dress, coming from specific populations

במקומות רבים בעיר אנו חשים כפייה לגבי סוג הלבוש או ההתנהגות, ביחוד על ידי קהילות מסוימות
 في العديد من الأماكن في المدينة، نشعر بالإلزام تجاه نوع الملابس والسلوكيات، لا سيما في بعض المجتمعات

الرؤيا | חזון | Vision



Restrictions are replaced with invitation. Instead of division we are open for integration and multi-cultural learning.

ההגבלה מוחלפת בהזמנה. במקום שיסוע אנו רוצים להיות פתוחים לשילוב ולמידה רב-תרבותית
 يتم استبدال القيود بالدعوة والترحيب. بدلا من الانقسام نحن منفتحين على الاندماج والتعلم من الثقافات المتعددة

الواقع | מציאות | Reality



"Life stinks". Jerusalem is full of trash, and this is not pleasant. It bothers me as a person who lives in this city, and also as a person who wishes that tourists would want to visit here and see how beautiful our city is.

"החיים מסריחים". ירושלים מלאה באשפה וזה לא נעים. זה מפריע לי כאדם שחי בעיר הזו, וגם כאדם שרוצה שתיירים ירצו לבקר כאן ולהתרשם כמה יפה העיר שלנו
 "الحياة نتنة" القدس مليئة بالقمامة، وهذا ليس لطيفا. هذا يزعجني كشخص يعيش في هذه المدينة، وأيضا كشخص يتمنى أن يرغب السياح في زيارته هنا وبرون كم هي جميلة مدينتنا

الرؤيا | חזון | Vision



We care, and we will do something about it.

אכפת לנו ונעשה משהו בקשר לזה
 نحن نهتم ونفعل شيئا حيال ذلك

الواقع | מציאות | Reality



There isn't a football team for women in the city, not through our schools, and not in other places.

אין קבוצת כדורגל לנשים בעיר, לא דרך בתי הספר שלנו ולא במקומות אחרים

لا يوجد فريق كرة قدم نسائي في المدينة، وليس من خلال مدارسنا أو في أي مكان آخر

الرؤيا | חזון | Vision



"The Jerusalem's lioness" women football club.

מועדון הכדורגל לנשים "לביאות ירושלים"

نادي كرة القدم للسيدات: لبيئات القدس



الواقع | **مציאות** | Reality



If you think that it only happens in movies, then you are not living in Jerusalem. As an adolescent living in Jerusalem, going out at night, can change your life in a moment.

אם אתה חושב שזה קורה רק בסרטים, אתה לא גר בירושלים. כמתבגר המתגורר בירושלים, יציאה בלילה, יכולה לשנות את חיך ברגע.
 إذا كنت تعتقد أن هذا يحدث فقط في الأفلام، فأنت لا تعيش في القدس. كمرافقاً يعيش في القدس، فإن الخروج ليلاً يمكن أن يغير حياتك في لحظة.

الواقع | **مציאות** | Reality



Mainly on this side of the city (East-Jerusalem), streets are smelly. There are very few trash cans, so people throw their trash on the streets, and no one takes care of keeping the streets clean.

בעיקר בצד זה של העיר (מזרח-ירושלים) הרחובות מסריחים. יש מעט מאוד פחי אשפה, כך שאנשים זורקים את האשפה שלהם ברחובות ואף אחד לא דואג לשמור על ניקיון הרחובות.
 بشكل رئيسي في هذا الجانب من المدينة (القدس الشرقية)، الشوارع كريهة الرائحة. يوجد عدد قليل جداً من سلات القمامة، لذلك يلقي الناس النفايات في الشوارع، ولا أحد يهتم بالحفاظ على نظافة الشوارع.

الواقع | **مציאות** | Reality

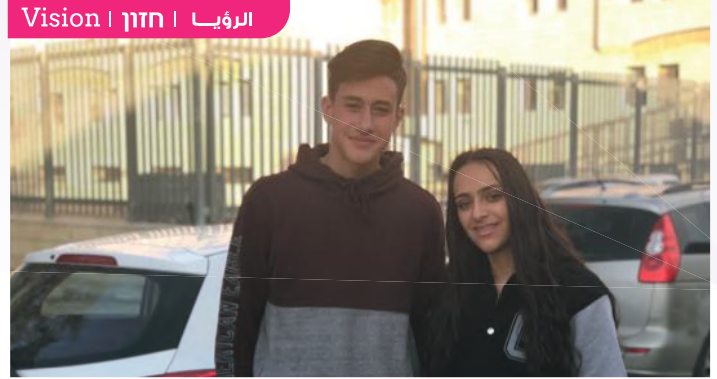


Every Thursday I take the bus trying to reach K4P office. I exit the house at 2PM, to skip traffic, but it still takes me more than an hour to get to Damascus Gate, and this is if I am not stuck in the checkpoint.

כל יום חמישי אני נוסעת באוטובוס ומנסה להגיע לתנועת הנוער. אני יוצאת מהבית בשעה 14:00, כדי לדלג על העומס, אך עדיין לוקח לי יותר משעה להגיע לשער שבם, וזה אם לא נתקעתי בנקודת הבדיקה.

כל יום חמישי ארכב הצافلة ואحاول الوصول إلى مكتب أطفال من أجل السلام. أخرج من المنزل في الساعة الثانية ظهراً لتخطي حركة المرور، لكنني ما زلت بحاجة إلى أكثر من ساعة للوصول إلى بوابة دمشق، وهذا إذا لم أعالق على الحاجز.

الرؤيا | **חזון** | Vision



Women and girls have to feel like they are not alone. We share the responsibility to put a stop to this violence. It is not something we can't do.

נשים ונערות צריכות להרגיש כאילו הן לא לבד. אנו חולקים את האחריות לעצור את האלימות הזו. זה לא דבר שאנחנו לא יכולים לעשות.
 يجب أن تشعر النساء والفتيات بأنهن لسن وحدهن. ونحن نشاطر المسؤولية لوضع حد لهذا العنف. إنه ليس شيئاً لا يمكننا القيام به.

الرؤيا | **חזון** | Vision



The municipality should put more trash cans in East-Jerusalem's streets, so people can use them, and keep our streets clean.

על העירייה לשים יותר פחי אשפה ברחובות מזרח-ירושלים, כך שאנשים יוכלו להשתמש בהם ולשמור על ניקיון הרחובות שלנו.
 يجب على البلدية وضع المزيد من سلات القمامة في شوارع القدس الشرقية، حتى يتمكن الناس من استخدامها، والحفاظ على نظافة شوارعنا.

الرؤيا | **חזון** | Vision



In an ideal world, checkpoints should not exist, and people should have the freedom to move. But until that happens, more checkpoints should be open so I would not stand for hours waiting in the only one available in my area.

בעולם אידיאלי, מחסומים לא צריכים להתקיים, ולאנשים צריך להיות חופש לנוע. אבל עד שזה יקרה, יותר מחסומים צריכים להיות פתוחים כדי שלא אעמוד שעות בנקודת המעבר היחידה באזור שלי.
 في العالم المثالي، لا ينبغي أن توجد حواجز، ويجب أن يتمتع الناس بحرية الحركة. لكن إلى أن يحدث ذلك، يجب فتح المزيد من الحواجز، لا يتعين علي الوقوف لساعات عند نقطة العبور الوحيدة في منطقتي.



الواقع | מציאות | Reality



My daily routine passing through checkpoints. Its ugly, and frustrating

השגרה היומית שלי במחסומים. זה מכוער ומתסכל
 הרוטין היומית מרורא בנקאט התנפיש. אנה קביכה ומחבטה

الرؤيا | חזון | Vision



I believe I should see green trees on my way to school rather than grey cement walls

אני מאמין שעלי לראות עצים ירוקים בדרך לבית הספר ולא קירות בטון אפורים
 اعتقد أنني يجب أن أرى الأشجار الخضراء في طريقي إلى المدرسة بدلا من الجدران الأسمنتية الرمادية

الواقع | מציאות | Reality



I wish we had a modern science laboratory at school where we can learn science and practice it rather than memorize it

הלוואי והייתה לנו מעבדת מדע בבית הספר בה נוכל ללמוד מדע ולתרגל אותו ולא רק לשנן אותו
 אتمنى أن يكون لدينا مختبر علوم حديث في المدرسة حيث يمكننا تعلم العلوم وممارسته بدلا من حفظه

الرؤيا | חזון | Vision



Having a modern science laboratory at school would allow me to practice science and not see it only as theory. Maybe I would become a scientist one day

מעבדה למדע מודרני בבית הספר תאפשר לי להתנסות במדע באמת ולא לראות בו רק תיאוריה. אולי אהיה מדען יום אחד
 وجود مختبر علمي حديث في المدرسة سيسمح لي بممارسة العلم وعدم رؤيته ك نظرية فقط. ربما أكون عالما ذات يوم

الواقع | מציאות | Reality



If I can walk home I would rather do it. Traffic and public transportation in this country would cause you to immigrate. A 50 minutes wait for a bus is not worth the 15 minutes ride.

אני מעדיף ללכת ברגל מאשר להשתמש באוטובוס. התחבורה הציבורית במדינה הזו תגרום לכם להגר ממנה. 50 דקות המתנה לאוטובוס לא שוות נסיעה של 15 דקות
 إذا كان بإمكانني المشي إلى المنزل ، فإنتي أفضل ذلك. المرور والنقل العام في هذا البلد من شأنه أن يسبب لك الهجرة. الانتظار لمدة 50 دقيقة للحافلة لا يستحق ركوب 15 دقيقة

الرؤيا | חזון | Vision



I just want to see a digital screen with the time left for my bus to arrive just like on the Israeli side

אני רק רוצה לראות מסך דיגיטלי שמציין את הזמן שנותר לאוטובוס שלי להגיע. ממש כמו בצד הישראלי
 أريد فقط أن أرى شاشة رقمية مع الوقت المتبقي للوصول إلى الحافلة مثلما في الجانب الإسرائيلي

