



“Khalil (Hebron) at Night”

Courtesy of Stephen Bulger Gallery

Rita Leistner

This photograph is from Leistner’s ten-year-long visual investigation of systems of living in conflict, [Levant Trilogy: Lebanon, Israel, Palestine, 2006–2015](#). It is a composite panoramic view from the rooftop of the Siege family home in Khalil, where Leistner stayed for a month in the winter of 2015. Khalil is one of the principal economic centres in the Palestinian West Bank and home to over 200,000 Palestinians. It is also home to the Tomb of the Patriarchs and to some 700 Jewish religious extremists who live there in the only Jewish settlements situated immediately inside a Palestinian city.

At night, you can see the bright lights of the settlements dotting the cityscape. The settlements have superior access to electricity and other infrastructure amenities, so they are more brightly lit and have better heating in the many cold winter months.

The settlements are like fortresses inside the city, cutting off main thoroughfares that have been in use for millennia with maze-like barricades and ubiquitous armed sentry towers. You cannot walk 500 metres in Khalil without hitting a wall, and you get used to having Israeli guns pointed in your direction at all times. Taking these photographs was unnerving. My large camera might be mistaken for a weapon, and I would be a justifiable target.