

From the Editor



ANYONE FAMILIAR WITH THE ACTUAL HISTORY of Palestine knows of the crucial importance of Britain's actions during the Mandate; of the ethnic cleansing of Palestine in 1948; and of the United States' role in the elaboration of the Camp David agreements, the Oslo Accords, and their sequels. Absent the support of the British Empire, its troops and air power, its intelligence service, and its supercilious politicians and civil servants, the Zionist project could not have established itself successfully in Palestine in the decades after the Balfour Declaration. Only via the expulsion of most of the Arabs of Palestine, and the theft of their property in 1948 and afterward, could a majority-Jewish state have been created in a country with a 65 percent Arab majority. Without the heavy-handed intervention of the United States, the ideas originally generated by Menachem Begin for preventing the emergence of an independent Palestine could never have been transmuted into the iron cage for Palestinian aspirations that the Palestinian Authority (PA) has become.

True though these broad statements may be, the granular details—the refinements and specifics involved—are vital to a full understanding of how the history of Palestine has unfolded. It is through such a prism that this issue of the *Journal* touches on each of the themes enumerated.

Laila Parsons examines the newly declassified secret testimony to the Peel Commission in 1936–37 as the commissioners moved for the first time toward recommending the establishment of a Jewish state in Palestine and the expulsion of the Arab population from it (under the deceitfully genteel rubric of “transfer”). Carefully examining the statements of Zionist and British witnesses, she reveals the meeting of minds between the Zionist movement and the Mandate government, and the explicit racism of British officials toward both Arabs and Jews, albeit in forms that had very different consequences for the two groups. She thereby uncovers some of the specific ways in which Britain's support was crucial in the dismantling of Arab Palestine and the erection of a Jewish state in its place.

Two items in this issue deal with the ethnic cleansing of Palestine. The first is an article by Dan Tsahor that details how the residents of the village of Zakariyya were expelled from their homes in 1950, long after the 1948 war had ended. Showing that the Nakba has in fact been an ongoing process of depopulation rather than a singular happening, the author further confirms the accuracy of Patrick Wolfe's observation that settler colonialism is a structure, not an event. Linked to this article is a suppressed Israeli intelligence report from the period, originally revealed by *Haaretz* and the Israeli NGO Akevot, which outlines in stark detail the process of depopulation and ethnic cleansing carried out by Zionist military formations (and later by the Israeli army) from late 1947 until June 1948. Along with excerpts from the English translation of this document, the *Journal* offers its readers an introduction by Seth Anziska that contextualizes the intelligence report and examines the troubling way in which incriminating documents are being systematically “disappeared” from state archives by the security department of Israel's Defense Ministry.

An article on U.S. supervision of the PA's military formations by Jeannette Greven completes this historical triptych. It examines how the United States has turned Israel's anti-Palestinian aims and objectives into the guiding principle of security coordination. Greven shows that the PA has been

subsumed not only into the security shield that protects Israel's ongoing occupation and colonization of Palestine (becoming, in effect, part of what Vladimir Jabotinsky, the founder of Revisionist Zionism, called the "iron wall" of bayonets without which the Zionist project would not survive and prosper) but also into the "U.S.-led 'global War on Terror.'"

Three other valuable contributions are included in this issue. One is an analysis by Munir Fakher Eldin of developments among the Arab population of the occupied Syrian Golan Heights, whose annexation by Israel was recognized by U.S. president Donald Trump in March 2019. Fakher Eldin analyzes the changing power dynamics in the community, and especially the social and political repercussions from the region's annexation by Israel in 1981. A second is a testimonial by Khalid Farraj on his experiences as an activist during the First Intifada, notably as a student leader at Birzeit University during the hotly contested 1994 student council elections. The third is a review essay by Rana Barakat in which she highlights the contributions to Palestine studies of Jasbir K. Puar's *The Right to Maim: Debility, Capacity, Disability* and the ways in which the book also disrupts that field.

Finally, this issue of the *Journal* includes a remembrance of Eugenio Chahuán Chahuán, Chile's acknowledged dean of scholars of the Arab world. The Palestinian Chilean's influence was widely felt both in academia, in his capacity as founding director of the Centro de Estudios Árabes at the University of Chile, and among the country's large Palestinian community. The *Journal* will be publishing a special tribute to artist, painter, and scholar Kamal Boullata, who died in August of this year, in its forthcoming issue.

Rashid I. Khalidi