

Editorial

Jerusalem in the Shadow of Gaza

This issue of *Jerusalem Quarterly* opens with two powerful and poignant letters from Jerusalem exploring the politics of fear and defiance that has invaded the city in the wake of the brutal murder of sixteen-year-old Mohammed Abu Khdeir from the Jerusalem neighborhood of Shu‘fat and before and during Israel’s brutal invasion of Gaza. Jerusalem, marginalized and indeed neglected in Palestinian politics since the Oslo agreements and relatively quietist during the last intifada named after its most important Islamic site, al-Aqsa, was this time the focus of confrontations. This is how Nadera Shalhoub-Kevorkian and Sarah Ihmoud describe the situation on 11 July:

A “culture of terror” has infiltrated the spaces of everyday life in occupied Jerusalem. Our streets are filled with soldiers and police, in numbers unusually large even for this highly militarized zone under Israeli occupation. Military police on horseback cruise the tight, small paths of the Old City. Flying checkpoints are set up on every street corner. Each morning they invade homes, waking parents from sleep, arresting children without explanation. Yesterday, a young man from Silwan called, describing how four of his neighbors, all teenage boys, were taken by soldiers at 4:30 in the morning. Their parents had not been allowed to accompany them, he says, their lawyer is still uncertain where they are being held and under what charges, if any. “It was like they had just disappeared,” he

says ... For what reason, one might ask? Being Palestinian is enough.

Young people in Shu‘fat, Silwan, the Old City, Ras al-‘Amud, the Mount of Olives, and other areas of occupied Jerusalem rise up to confront such dehumanizing conditions, to oppose military incursions into their neighborhoods, and in solidarity with our people in Gaza. Every evening the city is flooded with soldiers, the sounds of helicopters circling above, police cars and ambulance sirens, then silence ... a trapping silence, as if death is approaching. Yet amidst the death zones, one can clearly notice Palestinian women challenging security personnel, men and women working hand in hand to safeguard children from abuses and arrests, and elderly people sitting on street corners, helping, informing, and discussing the “situation” (*al-wad‘*).

Indeed, as we go to press, the city’s predicament has been overtaken by the invasion of Gaza, with the number of deaths exceeding the 2,000 mark – most of them civilians, including a heart-breaking hundreds of children. We join the global call for an end to Israel’s culture of impunity, just as we share the understanding that only an end to the siege on Gaza can bring this devastating violence to an end. But it is also important to address the underpinnings of Israel’s policy of separating Gaza from the West Bank and the pervasive racism that allows Palestinian death and injury to be inflicted without accountability and even, in some terrible instances, celebrated. The events of this terrible summer have certainly re-linked Gaza and Jerusalem in suffering and solidarity and struggles against their separation must be high on any Palestinian political agenda.

In a diary published in the *Guardian* newspaper on 29 July, Atef Abu Saif vividly conveys not only the public horror of Gaza under fire, but the intimate details of families struggling to survive and assist each other: his father, responsible now for several families sheltering in his building “spends most of his day watching the level in his water tank, obsessively”; Atef, without telling his worried wife, detours as he takes his children to his father’s house, for the kids to breathe fresh air – and play one computer game at a still functioning internet café. Later, he and his friends quietly smoke a *nargileh* as Gaza once more plunges into darkness. These small acts, perhaps, constitute yet another instance of Palestinian *sumud*, or steadfastness.

The concept of *sumud* has had a long, and often troubled, life in the Palestinian dictionary: from staying on the land to everyday actions to assert national rights to the receipt of funds from the Jordanian steadfastness fund in the 1980s, a much-criticized form of buying *sumud*. Alexandra Rijke and Toine van Teeffelen, in an essay that ranges over key historical periods and meanings for *sumud*, argue that a more dynamic form of *sumud* is emerging in the everyday resistance of Palestinians under occupation. Based on their interviews with activists in the Bethlehem area, they find that “today’s meanings projected onto the concept have become more plural, ‘democratic,’ and closer to people’s experiences in daily life.”

Part II of Sami Hadawi’s memoirs in this issue address his recollections of the 1948 war and its aftermath. In *Jerusalem Quarterly* 53, we published “Sodomy, Locusts, and

Cholera,” a selection from these memoirs about his early childhood in Jerusalem. Hadawi, who passed away a decade ago in Canada at the age of one hundred, was a prominent authority on land issues in Mandate Palestine and the author of *Palestinian Rights and Losses* (1988). His memoirs have yet to be published in full.

Reflecting on the yet unpublished memoirs of ‘Isa al-‘Isa, the combative publisher and editor of the leading Palestinian newspaper *Falastin* (founded in 1911 in Jaffa), Salim Tamari locates ‘Isa and *Falastin* at the center of the struggle for the Arabization of the Orthodox Church. But Tamari’s detailed analysis of the political and social environment from which ‘Isa emerged – including, for example, the growing independence of the professional middle-class from Orthodox patronage and charity – also illuminates shifts in the “formation and recasting of local identities in Bilad al-Sham,” and their specific Palestinian inflections. ‘Isa’s “unorthodox Orthodoxy” included a rejection of the “minority status” of Christians and an assertion of Christians’ indigenous identity, which was allied with his growing commitment to Arab independence and his suspicions of Ottoman support for Zionism in Palestine. Tamari probes the fluidity of these various identities, finding “an eclectic secular mix of residual Ottomanism with nationalism.” He gives a lively account of ‘Isa’s staging of the wedding of Khalil al-Sakakini to Sultana Abduh in Jaffa, after the marriage was banned by the Orthodox Patriarchate in Jerusalem. ‘Isa reported the event in *Falastin* under the headline “What Is Banned in Jerusalem Is Permitted in Jaffa.”

In “Political Opposition to Zionism in Palestine and Greater Syria,” Emanuel Beška examines the years 1910–1911 as a defining moment in the crystallization of new public attitudes to Zionism in greater Syria. This turning point resulted from the conflation of several factors: increased Jewish immigration to Palestine; increased Zionist land purchases and the perceived threats they posed to the tillage rights of Palestinian peasants; and the emergence of a vigorous oppositional campaign on the part of Arab deputies in the Ottoman parliament. But the crucial instrument of this opposition was the nascent Arabic press in Damascus, Haifa, and Jaffa. Two key figures – Shukri al-‘Asali writing in the Damascene *al-Muqtabas* and Najib Nassar in *al-Karmil* (Haifa) – are examined in depth.

Kamal Moed’s “Educator in the Service of the Homeland” throws new light on the career of Khalil al-Sakakini as the foremost Arab educator in Mandate Palestine. He concludes that Sakakini spoke with two languages to his audience: a patriotic and anti-Zionist discourse addressed to his Arabic readers, and a tolerant humanist dialogue to the Jewish side. “Sakakini himself was more pragmatic and more practical than the message he transmitted to Arab society.” This duality evolved over the several decades of his pedagogic activities during the Mandate and persisted in the last few years of his life when he retreated from public activities.

Sameeh Hammoudeh’s essay on the origins of Ramallah and its population is extracted from his forthcoming book on the town’s Ottoman history, based on original research including Jerusalem court records. The study challenges the established history of Ramallah (written by Yusuf Jiryis Qaddura, ‘Aziz Shahin, Khalil Abu Rayya, and others) based primarily on oral sources, and traces the town’s complicated web of migrations tracing their paths from and through Mount Hebron, Bayt Jala, and Ma‘in in the Madaba

area of Transjordan. This demographic history is enriched by examining the significance of Sultanic estates and public endowments in agricultural lands. Hammoudeh's study also contributes to the rethinking of Christian-Muslim peasant relations in the context of tribal politics of the imperial Ottoman state.

Kimberly Katz's "A Flâneur's Jerusalem" reviews the recently published English edition of Wasif Jawhariyyeh's memoirs (*The Storyteller of Jerusalem*) and his adventures in the alleys of the Old City and the boulevards of Jerusalem's western neighborhoods. She highlights the hybrid and cosmopolitan character of the pre-War city celebrated by the author.

[Jawhariyyeh's memoirs] demonstrate the ease with which members of different religious and ethnic communities mixed, a stark contrast to the deep divisions and fissures, particularly among religious groups, that characterize Jerusalem today. One of the most interesting aspects of Wasif's account is his familiarity with the traveling Jewish musicians who came to Jerusalem to play. One finds oneself lost in Arab cultural references with Wasif's tales, as when he shares the story of the famous Jewish singer Zaki Murad, originally from Aleppo, whose daughter Layla Murad would go on to become a major film star in Egypt in the 1940s. Wasif notes the beauty of Zaki's voice, particularly when he sang Egyptian composer Sayyid Darwish's *zuruni kull sana mara*.

How would the spirit of Sayyid Darwish react to the city's present predicament?