

Editorial

Donald Trump's Generous Offer on Jerusalem

We write this editorial as Israel celebrates, and the rest of the world condemns, Donald Trump's declaration of U.S. recognition of Jerusalem as the capital of Israel. It is pertinent to recall on this issue Arthur Koestler's famous quip, made a century ago in reference to the Balfour Declaration, that "one nation solemnly promised to a second nation the country of a third."

Two unintended consequences emerge from the new U.S. position: first, it brings the status of Jerusalem back to the limelight, after it was pushed to the back burner by the Syrian and Yemeni wars; and second, it has clearly placed the United States outside of the international consensus with regard to any future peace process over the status of the city, or indeed within the Arab-Israeli conflict. This has opened the door to other global and regional actors, particularly Europe, Russia, and Turkey, as future mediators. In fact, some of the earliest responses to Trump's declaration came from these quarters. Turkish prime minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan voiced the possibility of severing diplomatic relations with Israel, and French president Emmanuel Macron announced his total rejection of the "unilateral" U.S. move, which he described as "regrettable" and "against international law and all the resolutions of the UN Security Council."¹ German foreign minister Sigmar Gabriel described Trump's decision as "counterproductive" to the peace process.²

The debate over Jerusalem status happened when Palestinians were commemorating the thirtieth anniversary of the first intifada – which some observers will recall exploded over control over Jerusalem's public space:

The battle for control over the streets of Jerusalem was the most protracted and perhaps due to the centrality of the city in the Israeli

strategy of control over the territories, the most crucial. It was sparked by General Sharon's transfer of his residence to the Old City of Jerusalem on December 14th, 1987, with the onset of the major demonstrations in Gaza. A commercial strike commenced in Jerusalem and continued unabated for forty-one days, igniting a series of solidarity strikes in other West Bank townships, most notably in Nablus and Ramallah.³

Jerusalem was then, as it is today, the beginning and end of the intifada. The pacification of Jerusalem as an arena of rebellion during the 1990s did not last, despite Israel's continuing efforts – including rezoning the city's Arab periphery, residency regulations, and demographic policies of exclusion – to suppress its Palestinian Arab population and sever it from its Palestinian Arab milieu, for whom it lies at the heart of the question of independence.

Logistically, the U.S. decision brings back the thorny issue of the location for the prospective Jerusalem embassy. One of the likeliest places, it appears, remains the contested territory of the so-called Allenby Barracks, which was sequestered from the Jerusalemite Arab Khalidi, 'Alami, and Ansari families over the last half century (for the details on the ownership of the proposed embassy site, and further discussion of the proposal, see *Jerusalem Quarterly* 71). However, this is a minor detail in a larger issue that concerns the future of the occupied territories and the status of Jerusalem as the capital of two sovereign states. Underlying the objections of the majority of countries, including the United States until recently (that is, until Trump's election), to Israeli control of Jerusalem has been UN General Assembly resolution 181, which affirmed the partition plan for Palestine and the creation of an international zone in Jerusalem known as the *corpus separatum*. That notion established in the city a special international regime in which both Palestinians and Israelis would have a dual national identity in the city. Given the slow death of the peace process and the de facto withdrawal of the United States from a mediating role, is it time – seventy years later – to revive this plan for Jerusalem?

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“Jerusalem: Fifty Years of Occupation,” Nazmi al-Jubeih's overview of the last five decades of Israeli rule, provides a succinct framing of this issue's contents. It deals with changes in Israeli legislation over the city; the creation of new expanded municipal boundaries; the plundering of property and zoning ordinances; demographic policies; and the creation of settlement blocs to encircle the city and remove it from its West Bank hinterland.

This issue of *JQ* also contains three submissions to the inaugural Ibrahim Dakkak Award for Outstanding Essay on Jerusalem: Kenny Schmitt's “Ribat in Palestine” deals with the growth of the militant movement in defense of al-Aqsa led by those known as *murabitin* and its connection to Northern Branch of the Islamic Movement. Schmitt finds that the *murabitin* have “fused innovative religious practices and discourse with the symbolic power of sacred space to redefine how Palestinian Muslims understand and articulate their resistance” to Israel's practices in Jerusalem. In “Revocation of

Palestinian Residency in Jerusalem,” Tamara Tawfiq Tamimi refers to the advantages and disadvantages of utilizing international human rights law and international criminal law in dealing with the issue of residency revocations in Jerusalem: “The abundance of legal instruments and bodies monitoring compliance with international human rights law standards is one of its strongest assets,” Tamimi claims. “Notwithstanding its lack of enforceability – possibly its strongest disadvantage – legal advocacy within this avenue could serve strategically to transform international public opinion. In contrast, international criminal law is enforceable and presents a clear vision on promoting access to justice and remedy for victims. However, politicized processes of referral, investigation, and prosecution, and highly limited temporal jurisdiction pose serious considerations as to the nature of justice served by this avenue.” Finally, the architect and urbanist Mahdi Sabbagh has contributed an essay on Shaykh Jarrah: “The Husayni Neighborhood in Jerusalem: Space of Self-Invention.” The essay deals with the evolution of a number of Husayni residences and semi-public spaces. Referring to Shaykh Jarrah as the “Husayni Neighborhood” would most likely raise the ire of the Nashashibi and Jarallah families, not to mention the Budayris, but we offer it here as a testimony and a provocation.

As recent debates during the commemorations of the one hundredth anniversary of the Balfour Declaration have shown, Arab reactions to the fateful British commitment to Zionism have not been uniform or clear from the beginning. In “*Filastin’s* Changing Attitude to Zionism before World War I,” Emanuel Beška shows that in the four years of its pre-World War I existence, the Jaffa-based newspaper *Filastin’s* “perspective vis-à-vis Zionism went through a radical transformation. Initially, its editors adopted a neutral attitude while considering Zionism potentially beneficial for the rural areas of Palestine. In the following years, their attitudes changed in two phases and by the end of 1913 *Filastin* became, alongside *al-Karmil*, the most outspoken anti-Zionist periodical in Palestine.”

Bernard Sabella’s “Jerusalem and Bethlehem Immigrant Families to Chile in the Early Twentieth Century” utilizes the *Guía social de la colonia árabe en Chile*, a compendium of Palestinian and Syrio-Lebanese social life in the new world, to examine patterns of early migration to Chile. The recent plethora of Palestinian migration studies usually focuses on early migrations from the Bethlehem and Ramallah regions. This is one of the very few studies looking at migration from Jerusalem itself.

Edward Said called Jerusalem “the city of death.” Cemeteries provide a great archival source for examining scandals and lineages of the living. Yfaat Weiss’s “Resting in Peace in No Man’s Land” examines the contested status of the British War Cemetery on Mount Scopus. This is where British and Commonwealth soldiers – including a number of Australians and New Zealanders, as well as twenty-four non-Commonwealth combatants, both allies and belligerents – from World War I were interred and where, periodically, ritual battles are fought over who can pray for whom, especially since Israel insists that the souls of Jewish soldiers who died fighting for Britain have been re-designated as Israeli. Britain, meanwhile, insisted on its sovereignty over the cemetery, which it deemed as belonging to the Commonwealth War Graves Commission.

Şerife Eroğlu Memiş, a Turkish historian and foundation expert at the Archive of the General Directorate of Foundations (*awqaf*) in Ankara, has written a fascinating study of

women and charities in Jerusalem. “Benefactresses of Waqf and Good Deeds: Charitable Women in Ottoman Jerusalem, 1703–1831” shows that our obsession with the work of Queen Roxalana and her Jerusalem Haseki Sultan endowments is not unique. Memiş examines 85 properties endowed by women in Jerusalem in one century alone. She notes that in several cases, the endowments stipulated that the administration of the management of the waqf, known as *tawliya*, should be held in the hands of female family members. Among those *mutawaliyat* were Safiyya bint Shahin and Latifa bint ‘Abdallah, wives of Qasim Bey al-Turjman – whose family fortunes have been chronicled previously in this journal.

Endnotes

- 1 “Turkey Could Break Off Ties with Israel over Jerusalem: Erdogan,” *Reuters*, 5 December 2017, online at www.reuters.com/article/us-israel-usa-turkey/turkey-could-break-off-ties-with-israel-over-jerusalem-erdogan-idUSKBN1DZ13R (accessed 7 December 2017); “France’s Macron Regrets Trump’s ‘Unilateral’ Jerusalem Decision,” *Reuters*, 6 December 2017, online at www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-trump-israel-france/frances-macron-regrets-trumps-unilateral-jerusalem-decision-idUSKBN1E02PN (accessed 7 December 2017).
- 2 Noa Landau, “Germany Urges Against U.S. Recognition of Jerusalem: ‘We Must Spell Out Limits of Our Solidarity’,” *Haaretz*, 5 December 2017, online at www.haaretz.com/israel-news/1.826987 (accessed 7 December 2017).
- 3 Salim Tamari, “The Revolt of the Petit Bourgeoisie: Urban Merchants and the Palestinian Uprising,” in *Intifada: Palestine at the Crossroads*, ed. Jamal R. Nassar and Roger Heacock (New York: Praeger, 1990), 163.