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EDITORIAL

In the Shadow of Death

Completing this issue of the *Jerusalem Quarterly* has been a difficult task. The reasons for this are obvious, but worth stating: all of those involved in this issue, from contributors to editors to printers, have been impacted by the ongoing genocide in Gaza, the concomitant intensification of oppression throughout the West Bank, Jerusalem, and the '48 territories, and the concerted campaign to quash speech, scholarship, and activism on Palestine across North America and Europe. Time and energy have been directed toward the immediate, pressing concerns of the crisis we are living, making journal work at times a secondary priority. Still, the persistence of our contributors and editorial team has been admirable and reflects our belief that the struggle for Palestine is waged on many fronts, and that engaged scholarship has been and should continue to be a crucial component of the long fight to secure freedom, justice, and dignity for Palestinians.

There is no question that the genocide that continues day after day in Gaza casts a pall over every contribution to this issue of *JQ*, whether or not Gaza is their explicit focus. For example, Frances S. Hasso and Aisha Barghouti Saifi's compelling article on the politics of midwifery and childbirth evokes the plight of some sixty thousand pregnant women in Gaza, who must give birth in unfathomable conditions and in the near total absence of antepartum and postpartum care. At the same time, their work draws attention to broader trends, in which Palestinian midwifery as a community-based praxis has been superseded by biomedicalized reproductive healthcare in underresourced and understaffed

physician-led hospitals and clinics. Their article allows us to think about broader structural issues in Palestinian healthcare, not detached from nor reducible to Gaza's healthcare crisis.

Similarly, Chris Whitman-Abdelkarim's account of water theft in Kufr 'Aqab in this issue's Letter from Jerusalem inevitably evokes the water crisis in Gaza – the scarcity of fresh drinking water, the destruction of sanitation and sewage management systems, the lengths to which Palestinians must go (and the creativity that they must harness) to secure water for themselves and their families. Conditions in Kufr 'Aqab cannot be compared to those in Gaza, but again such an account illuminates the structural inequalities that undermine the most basic necessities for Palestinians, which produce a spectrum of effects that must be considered holistically rather than in isolation.

Indeed, several of the present issue's contents confirm that, although Israel's assault on Gaza may be unprecedented in its intensity, this extreme violence is part of a longer history and a broader geography of imperial-backed Zionist efforts to erase Palestinian life, culture, and history. Hamdan Taha details the large-scale destruction since October of Gaza's cultural heritage, including religious sites, historic buildings and landmarks, museums, and archives. Contributions from Penny Johnson and Karel Vriezen offer a more granular look at Palestinian culture. Johnson's meditation on three Palestinian productions of Romeo and Juliet, "Star-Crossed Lovers in a Star-Crossed Land," begins with an account of a 2016 staging of the play at Gaza City's Said al-Mishal Cultural Centre, which was destroyed by Israeli bombs in 2018. Vriezen's review of John Landgraf and Owen Rye's landmark volume on Palestinian traditional pottery, meanwhile, reaffirms the crucial contributions to our knowledge of Palestinian culture and history by archaeological projects that are not guided solely by a Jewish-supremacist political project. Vincent Lemire's *In the Shadow of the Wall*, reviewed here by Maissoun Sharkawi, is a reminder of just how much cultural heritage has already been lost. Lemire's book details the centuries-long history of Jerusalem's Mughrabi Quarter and its flattening by Israeli bulldozers just days after Israel's occupation of the Old City in 1967. Also during the 1967 war, Israeli forces ethnically cleansed the village of 'Imwas (along with the neighboring villages of Yalu and Bayt Nuba), severing the links between the local population and the Latrun monastery, as described by Father Louis Wehbe in Rawda Ghanayem's feature on Latrun in this issue. Israel's propensity for establishing radical new "facts on the ground" under the cover of war in 1967 can serve, as Sharkawi notes, as a heuristic for understanding Palestinians' present realities on the ground and future challenges.

When it comes to future challenges, it is no secret that scenarios for the "day after" the war on Gaza are already being formulated in Washington, New York, Geneva, Tel Aviv, and so on. Christopher Burnham's article on Ronald Storrs, the British military governor of Jerusalem in the immediate aftermath of World War I, revisits this crucial moment in which imperial interests, masquerading as even-handedness, indelibly shaped the future trajectory of Palestine and the Palestinians. Mick

Dumper's review of Anne Irfan's *Refuge and Resistance* offers insight into another example of international intervention on the "day after," exploring the Palestinian refugee question within the emergence of the international refugee system at large. Israeli-led and U.S.-backed efforts to dismantle UNRWA will inevitably give rise in the coming months and years to discussions about the suitability of this system and what kinds of alternatives may arise to meet (or not) the enormous needs of Palestinians in Gaza in the aftermath of this genocidal war.

The scale and intensity of the assault on Gaza is such that it can seemingly render thoughtful or measured analysis impossible or inadequate. There is a value in acknowledging this, in recognizing that academic work is insufficient to meet the moment. There is also a value in resisting it, in pressing forward with critical scholarship that highlights what Gaza has taught us and can teach us. As we do so, we must also keep in mind that the atrocities in Gaza result from a larger set of policies that aim to contain, imprison, silence, starve, humiliate, harm, and destroy Palestinians wherever they may be.

"Deserving of the Closest Attention": Ronald Storrs and the Communities of Jerusalem in the First Two Years of British Military Rule

Christopher Burnham

Abstract

This article explores the formative stages of Ronald Storrs's governorship of Jerusalem by focusing on the nascent years of British control in Palestine from 1917 to 1919. While much scholarship has concentrated on Storrs's patronage of the Pro-Jerusalem Society, his response to the Nabi Musa riots of April 1920, and his early relationship with the Zionist Commission, less consideration has been given to the establishment of his authority in Jerusalem during his first two years in the city. Drawing upon Storrs's personal papers and archival research, it traces the roots of his style of governing back to his childhood experiences and education, together with his early years as a colonial administrator in Egypt. In doing so, greater context is given to Storrs's initial perceptions of the city after his arrival in December 1917, and his subsequent relations with the communities of Jerusalem during the first two years of British rule.

Keywords:

Ronald Storrs; governor; personality; Jerusalem; military rule; OETA; education.

Few figures during Britain's ill-fated involvement in Palestine elicited as much fury and vituperation as the British administrator Ronald Storrs. As the first military governor of Jerusalem under British rule from 1917 to 1920, and the first civilian governor from 1920 to 1926, he succeeded in angering and alienating Palestinians and Zionists alike, while being lionized by

T. E. Lawrence as "the most brilliant Englishman in the Near East."[1] Discussion of Storrs's tenure in Jerusalem has often been reduced to the impact of Orientalism on his worldview or, more simplistically, that he was pro-Zionist and anti-Arab (or vice-versa).[2] Such approaches suggest he was a governor with little agency, his decisions dictated by dogma alone.

Unsurprisingly, Storrs saw things differently. In his memoirs, *Orientations*, Storrs famously asserted: "I am not wholly for either, but for both. Two hours of Arab grievances drive me into the Synagogue, while after an intensive course of Zionist propaganda I am prepared to embrace Islam."[3] Storrs clearly felt himself a neutral authority when governing Jerusalem. In doing so, he neatly exemplifies Rashid Khalidi's argument that the British in Palestine viewed themselves as "arbiter … above or outside a 'local' conflict, rather than as part of it, or even the creator of it, as they were in many cases."[4] Storrs's beliefs and their impact on the city and its inhabitants should not be underestimated, particularly given the "consistently personal approach" that has been identified as a hallmark of his time in Palestine.[5]

This article discusses the roots and impact of Storrs's personal approach during the nascent years of British control in Palestine from 1917 to 1919. While much has been written about Storrs's patronage of the Pro-Jerusalem Society, his response to the Nabi Musa riots of April 1920, and his relationship with the Zionist Commission, less attention has been given to the establishment of his authority with key communities in Jerusalem during his first two years in the city.[6] This article thus considers how Storrs wove the personal with the political in his dealings with the Muslim and Christian populations of Jerusalem at this time. First, however, it explores Storrs's formative years at school and university and his early career serving the British occupation in Egypt, identifying how these experiences influenced his initial perceptions of Jerusalem.

Civic Duty with an Imperial Predisposition: 1881–1917

Born on 19 November 1881 in Bury St. Edmunds, Ronald Henry Amherst Storrs was the eldest son of Anglican priest John Storrs and Lucy Anna Maria Cockayne-Cust (daughter of Henry Francis Cockayne-Cust MP). Both were to exert their influence on the young Storrs; his "Dearest Mother" was the main recipient of his correspondence while at Temple Grove and Charterhouse, while his father taught him to "cherish the Church of England [and] to work for it when in authority."[7] Indeed, as a student at Charterhouse he seriously considered following in his father's footsteps and becoming a vicar.[8]

Storrs's time at Temple Grove Preparatory School (1892–95) and, more significantly, Charterhouse (1895–1900) helped steer him away from this religious calling. The former sought to provide students with "training for … the acceptance of responsibilities all over the world," placing great emphasis on "patriotism and individual leadership,"[9] while at the latter Storrs fell under the influence of the Sixth

Form Master, Thomas Ethelbert Page, "one of the few," according to Storrs, "who could inspire as well as teach."[10] Page strove to understand the mentality and mindset of his students, just as Storrs would later attempt with Palestinian Arabs and Zionists in Palestine.[11] Most notably, Page believed in constant efforts to enable the oppressed and marginalized to fulfill their full potential.[12] Page's impact on Storrs's trajectory is clear. As he neared the end of his time at Charterhouse, Storrs encouraged his mother to look for jobs for him in the imperial or domestic service.[13] Temple Grove's emphasis on individual leadership across the empire met within Storrs a sense of civic duty provided by T. E. Page. Both would help formulate Storrs's outlook in Jerusalem.

In many ways, Charterhouse in the late nineteenth century provided the perfect breeding ground for a future colonial administrator like Storrs. The school maintained strong links with alumni serving in various roles across the globe, actively celebrating their achievements in the *Carthusian*, the school magazine for which every student paid sixpence a month as part of their school fees.[14] These salutations reached fever pitch during the Second Boer War, where the Old Carthusian Lieutenant-Colonel Robert Baden Powel was glorified in prose and verse for his actions.[15] The bond between alma mater and alumni transcended continents and oceans, creating a community where imperial duty and sacrifice was admired and aspired to.

This is not to suggest that Storrs always felt at ease at Charterhouse. Letters to his mother show that he often suffered from homesickness.[16] He experienced similar emotions early in his time in Egypt, expressing his loneliness in his new role at the Ministry of Finance in Cairo.[17] Such isolation was a far cry from his experiences studying Classical Tripos at the University of Cambridge from 1900 to 1904. While he found his college, Pembroke, lacked "*chaleur communicative*," Storrs's membership in the Decemviri, an elite ten-man debating society whose members at the time included John Maynard Keynes and Charles Tennyson, helped make amends.[18] Tennyson encapsulated much of the strength and vibrancy of Storrs's personality at Cambridge, describing the future governor of Jerusalem as "a strange figure of so vehement a personality that you cannot understand how even the dead weight of propriety amidst which he lives can have so long concealed him from you."[19] The absence of social stimulation, so keenly felt early in his time in Egypt after the opportunities provided at Cambridge, was not to be repeated when he arrived in Palestine. Soon after his arrival in Jerusalem, Storrs set about creating the networks and relationships that his new professional responsibilities required and his personality desired.

"Two and Seventy Jarring Sects": Storrs Arrives in Jerusalem

Storrs was in Cairo when he heard news of Jerusalem's surrender to British forces and General Edmund Allenby's subsequent entry to the city on foot on 9 December 1917. The city, and later Palestine as a whole, had entered a period of what Salim Tamari has described as "cultural liminality" between the Ottomans and the British.[20] With typical flourish, Storrs declared he would have given his soul to have been there. However, he did not have to wait long for this opportunity. On 15 December, Brigadier-General Sir

Gilbert Clayton, whom Storrs had worked with in the Arab Bureau in Egypt, requested his assistance in his new role of Chief Political Officer for Palestine. On 20 December, Storrs arrived in the city that had captured his imagination: Jerusalem.[21]

Yet Storrs did not come without preconceived political and personal ideas about Jerusalem. Issam Nassar argues that "a place … has more than one identity, each designating a particular experience in time."[22] Storrs's experiences in December 1917 were framed through prior visits to the city and his own personal faith. He had visited Jerusalem seven years before with his beloved uncle Harry Cust and Cust's wife, Nina. Viewing his trip in 1910 as a "pilgrimage," Storrs recalled "the brooding poignancy of the atmosphere," which, coupled with Cust's recitation of Tennyson's *In Memoriam* on the Mount of Olives, left a powerful impression.[23] This trip, together with Cust's sudden death in March 1917, undoubtedly impacted Storrs's early perception of the city. Indeed, Storrs's first diary entry after his arrival in December 1917 recalled his uncle's attempt to buy a Bible printed in Jerusalem.[24]

Storrs viewed the city as a location with deeply personal memories writ large through recent bereavement, and as a site of Christian veneration. British officials in Palestine and London were acutely aware of the religious implications of a Christian power taking control of the Holy City; at the same time they also expressed concerns about alienating Muslims around the world due to the occupation of Jerusalem and the Balfour Declaration. As such, they attempted to downplay the occupation of Jerusalem as a political, religious, or colonial maneuver, and instead emphasized its military nature. They did this not only to protect religious sensitivities and avoid local resentment, but also to avoid antagonizing European allies, in particular France and Italy.[25] But official policy is one thing, deeply held personal beliefs quite another. Biblical Orientalism, which used, and continues to use, carefully selected elements of religion to describe and control the "Holy Land," provided the cultural background to Storrs's own views of the city (he was, after all, the son of a clergyman). By defining the local residents of Palestine, whatever their religion, through the prism of the Bible, Palestine became suspended in biblical time, allowing tourists and imperialists to make direct links between ancient religious tales and twentieth-century Palestine.[26]

Storrs opens one of his chapters on the city in his autobiography, *Orientations*, with the first line of Psalm 122, "I was glad when they said unto me…," assuming that readers would recognize the biblical reference to the Holy City, and would also be aware of the psalm's call to "pray for the peace of Jerusalem."[27] Here religious and civic duty converges: the peace and prosperity of Jerusalem depends upon the prayers of the faithful. As governor – and as one of the faithful – Storrs believed he could deliver these aims.

Such lofty responsibilities seemed highly unlikely in December 1917. The incumbent governor, General William Borton, had not settled in the city, suffering from what Storrs described as "melancholia." Shortly after Christmas, Storrs was offered his post.[28] He was now a contracted employee of the newly formed Occupied Enemy Territory Administration South (OETA South). Possessing no military background, Storrs would instead rely on his knowledge of Arabic and administrative experience

in Egypt to establish himself in his new role, facets that made him somewhat of an exception in the nascent military government of Palestine.[29]

Storrs was quick to identify "the broad problems that faced the city" and to proffer blame for the situation. He had earlier suggested that his temporary role was to "help in restraining the two and seventy jarring sects" in the city.[30] Now, with a position of power and relative permanence, he appealed to general headquarters, claiming that:

> Jerusalem is as perfect a specimen of organized pauperism as you would wish to find … divided up into numerous and mutually hostile communities and subjected to centuries of organized pauperization … the Turks have not the reputation … of leaving much that is eatable or moveable.[31]

In letters home, Storrs blamed the "Turks" for the pitiable state of the city.[32] While conditions were undoubtedly poor in the city as a result of wartime pressures, such a narrow focus served a narrative of backward-looking, inept, and cruel Ottoman rule and competent, modernizing British rule. Jerusalem's modernization was thus viewed as a result of British benevolence, Zionist immigration, and European influence: a "limited perspective" that did not "take into account the internal dynamics within the city."[33] As a recent appointee of a newly occupying power, Storrs was unlikely to truly understand such dynamics.

Far from being a city of "organized pauperism" as described by Storrs, Jerusalem had been modernizing under Ottoman rule from the 1880s onward: from improved sanitation as a result of paving main roads to the establishment of a municipal hospital that could be accessed by all inhabitants regardless of their nationality or religion.[34] A deal for a new tramway, street lighting, and a modernized water system, which the Ottoman municipality had in 1914 with Evripidis Mavrommatis, a Greek Ottoman from Istanbul, had been placed on hold with the outbreak of World War I.[35] The geographic footprint of the city also increased under late Ottoman rule. Population increases, Jewish immigration, and sanitary conditions within the Old City led to new developments beyond the city walls.[36] Jews established new planned neighborhoods, and missionary projects such as the Russian Compound on Jaffa Road were erected, while Christians and Muslims also built private residences outside of the city walls.[37]

Estimating the population of post-war Jerusalem is difficult, but Roberto Mazza's careful corroboration of various extant sources, combining scholarly research and estimates by contemporary Western visitors to the city, suggests that the population of Jerusalem in 1914 was approximately eighty thousand, of which about fifty thousand were Jewish, fifteen thousand Christian, and fifteen thousand Muslim. By the end of World War I, the population of the city had dropped to between fifty-five thousand and sixty thousand, though Jews remained the largest community.[38]

Dividing Jerusalem's population into Muslims, Jews, and Christians, however, does a disservice to the sheer multiplicity of different faiths, rites, and rituals present. It also obscures differences in class, ethnicity, language and area of residence.[39] Within and between each community there existed divisions, and while relations could

become strained, they were far from the "mutually hostile" state of affairs presented by Storrs. Muslims were the largest community in Palestine but formed a minority in Jerusalem. According to Storrs, this community differed from the Christian and Jewish population as it was not "divided into rites, degrees, or denominations but into two great partisanships, the Husaynis and the Nashashibis."[40] The Jewish community was split primarily between Ashkenazi and Sephardi Jews. The former, who spoke Yiddish, emigrated mainly from Germany and Eastern Europe in two aliyahs from 1882 onward and between 1904–10, while the latter were subdivided into Yemeni, Bukharan, Kurdish, Damascene, Georgian, Persian, and Moroccan communities. The general identity of the Sephardim overrode these divisions and united them when necessary, whereas the Ashkenazim were further divided along religious lines between Orthodox, Ultra-Orthodox, Hasidic, and Agudist sects. Some secular Jews also formed part of this community.[41] Storrs was himself cognizant of this fragmentation, noting in *Orientations* that certain strands of Orthodox Jewry in the city were "not only not pro- but violently anti-Zionist," desiring only "to be left in peace and … practice … their religion." The governor would go on to forge a good relationship with the Orthodox Jews of Jerusalem, suggesting that their sympathies may have been stoked by Zionist attacks against him.[42]

Intercommunal relations prior to British control were fluid as opposed to binary in nature, shaped both by World War I and by the transition from Ottoman to British rule. Early attempts to provide aid for the local population in 1914 were led by the military governor of Jerusalem, Zaki Bey, culminating in a one-off meeting of Jews and Muslims in November 1914. This was important for two reasons: firstly, it represented Ottoman attempts to secure loyalty to their empire, and secondly, it demonstrated efforts by Jews and Muslims to create a united front against the Christians in the city, with the Sephardi community in particular concerned by Christian attempts to incite Muslims against the Jews.[43] Tensions also existed between the New Yishuv (Jewish immigrants to Palestine after 1882) and the Old Yishuv (those Jews who lived in Palestine prior to this date), and between Armenians who had lived for generations in Jerusalem and those refugees who arrived after the Armenian Genocide.[44] Meanwhile, intercommunal relief work was made possible through the auspices of the Red Crescent Society, when the locust plague of 1915 saw all residents of Jerusalem aged between nineteen and sixty commandeered by the municipality to collect locust eggs so that they could be burned.[45]

While confessional affiliation was undoubtedly important in late Ottoman Jerusalem, it was not the only form of self-identification. The diaries of Wasif Jawhariyyeh, a well-connected Jerusalemite musician, suggest that the *mahallat* or neighborhood unit, with substantial intercommunal cooperation within different *mahallat*s, primarily determined identity. This was especially the case during the city's numerous festivals, including Ramadan, Nabi Musa, Purim, and Easter.[46] The diaries of Conde de Ballobar, the Spanish consul in Jerusalem during World War I, also offer a revealing glimpse of community interactions. On Christmas Eve 1915, the Muslim Zaki Bey attended the service at the Church of the Nativity – a "thing

that they would surely not imagine in Europe."[47] The following November during the observance of a Day of Remembrance, Ballobar observed: "In the minaret of the mosque which is across from the Holy Sepulchre there were two Franciscans, various Armenians and two Jews. One does not see this anywhere but Jerusalem."[48] Thus, Storrs's assertion of centuries of organized pauperism and mutual hostility are tempered. While there was undoubtedly food shortages and great hardship in Jerusalem, they were the result of short-term decisions made by the Ottomans during the war, not the result of hundreds of years of mismanagement.[49] In making these judgments, the new governor was reflecting the dominant narrative that Britain had removed the Ottomans' "barbarous yoke" from Jerusalem. The reality of life in the city (and in Palestine more widely) prior to British rule was somewhat different to these initial impressions.[50]

Storrs and the Communities of Jerusalem: Where the Personal and the Political Entwined

As governor of a diverse city, Storrs came into contact with a variety of different groups and interests throughout the course of a working day. In a telling example, between 10:00 AM and noon on Monday, 3 June 1918, Storrs met with: police and gendarmerie officers; the grand mufti and qadi of Jerusalem, officials of the shari'a court, and ulema; the grand rabbi and other rabbis of the Jewish community; ecclesiastical heads of the different Christian communities; the mayor, along with members and officials of the municipality; officials from the law courts; the director-general and other officials of the waqf administration; the director of public education and other education officials; notables of Jerusalem; notables of villages around Jerusalem; and officials from the finance and public debt department of the administrative office.[51] This schedule highlights the multitude of interests Storrs had to consider when governing Jerusalem, although the tight timescale (each meeting was allotted approximately ten minutes) would suggest an approach to consulting the communities that was more performative than practical. The Zionist Commission is notably absent from the agenda on this day, but had a key influence on affairs in the city throughout the military administration.

Writing in early 1918, a somewhat surprised Storrs asserted that "all these sects, creeds, nations and communities, though mutually hating and hated, are in the ordinary relations of life so far as we are concerned, friendly, agreeable, and not unentertaining persons, deserving of the closest attention."[52] This was civic duty through an imperialist lens: the commendable attitude of the city's inhabitants toward the British made them worthy of assistance. In providing them with his attention, Storrs was to raise and dash the hopes of various communities throughout his time as governor, starting in the formative years of British military occupation.

Within days of his arrival in the city – and prior to his appointment as governor – Storrs had sought out two of the key notables of the Husayni family: Mayor Husayn al-Husayni who was president of the municipality and his cousin, Kamil al-Husayni

– mufti of Jerusalem.[53] His initial impressions of the mayor were that he possessed "honest and obliging weakness," while Storrs bonded with the mufti because of his knowledge of Egypt. Such visits were not mere pleasantries: Storrs's diaries note that throughout the course of his conversation with Kamil he was able to gather some "*faits divers*" regarding the waqf and Orphanage Treasury.[54] The necessity of knowledge and the pleasures of socializing were already coalescing in his approach to key Jerusalemites, but nonetheless it marked the start of what was for Storrs a period of "close and friendly contact" with the mufti.[55]

The occupation of Palestine by the British saw the imposition of martial law, halting reforms for mayoral elections that had been proposed by the Ottomans. When in early 1918 Mayor Husayn al-Husayni died, the role of appointing a new mayor therefore fell to the governor. Tradition dictated the appointment of a relative of the deceased and Husayn's older brother, Musa Kazim al-Husayni, was selected as the new mayor of Jerusalem.[56] With a background in provincial administration, Musa Kazim was one of the first urban notables to be integrated into the Ottoman administration.[57] This clearly impacted his approach to the mayoralty, with Storrs recalling that he had "all the dignity and some of the good qualities of the traditional Ottoman Governor."[58] However, the relations that Storrs cultivated with the Husayni family were not without their detractors. Palestinian intellectual and educationalist Khalil al-Sakakini tersely noted that Palestinian Arabs disliked Storrs because "the Husayni family are the only people he knows. He listens only to their opinion."[59] Indeed, British commitments to establishing a Jewish National Home as stipulated by the Balfour Declaration, and later adapted as part of the terms of Britain's Mandate in Palestine, saw their relationship deteriorate throughout the period of military rule, culminating in Storrs's removal of Musa Kazim as mayor following the Nabi Musa riots of April 1920 and the appointment of Raghib Bey Nashashibi as his successor. In doing so, Storrs would sow further discord among the notables of the city.

The aforementioned "cultural liminality" between the Ottomans and the British that Palestine had entered in 1917 would be played out in Storrs's approach to the celebration of Muslim ceremonies. The military governor placed great importance on this, viewing it as a "testing ground for the paradigm of British rule in Palestine." In particular, he viewed the Nabi Musa festival, held every April in Jerusalem, as "an opportunity to establish a patronage relationship with the Muslim elite and to demonstrate his respect for Islam, thus rendering the transition from Ottoman to European rule more palatable."[60] This promotion of "historical continuity with the Ottomans" was exhibited by various British officials during the Occupied Enemy Territory Administration (OETA) years in the hope that such stability would help reconcile Palestinian Arabs to British rule and their sponsorship of Zionism, while also demonstrating British accommodation of Muslim traditions within this new reality.[61]

The 1918 festival was the first to be held under British rule and Storrs took on a key role on the first day of festivities: the Friday of the Banners (*jum'at al-a'lam*). Greeting local notables and shaykhs at Government House, Storrs received the banners of the

Prophet, two banners of Nabi Da'ud (the prophet David), and two of the Haram al-Sharif, saluting the banners after prayers. In doing so, the new governor took on the mantle of his Ottoman successor.[62] Such an appearance was not merely an attempt at maintaining the much vaunted (but often vanquished) status quo. It represented an effort by Storrs to establish himself as an expert of Muslim and Arab tradition with the residents of the city, while also helping to establish relationships with key figures within the municipal and religious communities.[63]

These relationships were further cemented by the hosting of parties, an understandable pursuit given Storrs's initial isolation in Egypt, with many functions taking place at both the governorate and Storrs's private residence. As a noted poet and oud player, Jawhariyyeh played at several such events and would later aid the governor in the purchase of Eastern antiquities, as well as briefly working alongside Charles Ashbee, the secretary of the Pro-Jerusalem Society and civic advisor to Storrs.[64] He recollects in his memoirs how the registry room at Governorate House was often "turned into a celebration hall where singing, dancing, and acting went on during business hours in the presence of various local guests" who attended on Storrs's invitation.[65] He further recalls a gathering at Storrs's residence that was attended by Muslim notables and civil servants from the Jerusalem district, where the military governor impressed his captive audience with a political speech in classical Arabic. Jawhariyyeh himself was requested by Storrs to dress in traditional Arabic attire while playing the oud.[66] As Yair Wallach notes, it is as if Storrs himself believed that he understood "the Middle East better than its local inhabitants, so much so that he could dictate their suitable attire."[67] Likewise, Abdul Latif Tibawi questions Storrs's claims to linguistic expertise, arguing that the Arabic contained in *Orientations* belie a "pretentious amateur" in the subject.[68] In any event, the efforts Storrs took to demonstrate an appreciation of Arabic and Islamic culture – no matter how inaccurate this understanding was – placed him in a small minority of British officials, who, like his more illustrious friend T. E. Lawrence, used this knowledge to inform their attitudes and approaches to the region.

The strengths and limitations of this approach are exhibited in a further anecdote from Jawhariyyeh's diaries. Reflecting on a demonstration against the Balfour Declaration and the separation of Palestine from Greater Syria, the oud player described how the procession stopped outside of the governorate, demanding to hear what Storrs had to say:

> When the crowds saw the governor, they fell silent. Storrs then spoke in his rotund voice and said, "And make them ready for whatever you can of force," and went back in immediately. It was an extremely funny act but these comedies did not fool the patriotic Arabs that knew Storrs well.[69]

The military governor quoted to the assembled crowd verse 60 of the eighth chapter of the Qur'an, Surat al-Anfal (the spoils). Verses 60 to 66 instruct Muslims to be ready for war to defend Islam, but also to make peace if the other side wishes to.[70] In quoting

this verse, Storrs utilized his knowledge of both Arabic and Islam – together with his quick wit – to establish his position as a reasonable intermediary and defuse the concerns of the demonstrators. However, as Jawhariyyeh notes, such an act did little to dampen growing discontent at British rule, and Storrs's role within it.

Shortly after the first anniversary of the Balfour Declaration, Britain and France published the Anglo-French Declaration. It took the form of an official communique from the British and French governments, with copies given to the press and posted on public noticeboards in towns and villages across Palestine, Syria and Iraq. In a bid to allay Arab suspicions of imperialist intentions by the British and the French, the document declared that any new governments should be determined by the local populations themselves.[71]

The day after the declaration was publicized, Storrs arrived at his office to be greeted by Muslim and Christians looking for further clarification. In particular, they wanted to know whether Palestine was included as part of Syria in plans to establish "indigenous" government. In an example of the limited authority he had as governor of a city, as opposed to being part of the national administration, he "replied to them in general terms, and they left apparently satisfied." Expressing his concern at the timing and content of the declaration, Storrs declared he would "do his best to stifle the manifestation" but this would be a hard job as "they now consider themselves to have received a definitive mandate from the British and French Governments."[72]

With regard to shutting down any petitions to the French, Storrs sent for the mayor of Jerusalem, Musa Kazim al-Husayni. He informed the mayor that, "while everyone was free to hold what political opinions they desired, they could not, so to speak, take their stand upon a political platform and continue to remain in the service of a non-political Military Administration." Next Storrs turned his attention to the Latin Catholic members of the committee, having eliminated in his mind the "two chief members." He gave the Latin patriarch the names of his members who were on the committee, and warned those who continued to pursue the petition that "the British Government and the Allies were not in the mood for receiving sectional petitions on political matters at a time such as this."[73] In this way, Storrs was able to pick-off any potential troublemakers to the detriment of the Palestinians, Muslim and Christian alike, over whom he ruled.

In a similar vein to his approach to Muslim festivities, Storrs placed great symbolism upon the celebration of Christian ceremonies, with the various strands of Storrs's *Weltanschauung* demonstrated in his approach to maintaining order during the Greek Orthodox Festival of Sabt al-Nur (Holy Fire or, literally, Saturday of Light) before Easter. British antipathy toward the event long predated Storrs's arrival in Jerusalem, with Victorian Evangelicals viewing the ceremony as representative of the chaos and disorder endemic in non-Western Christian practice, not least after a tragic crush in 1834 led to the deaths of four hundred believers.[74] For Storrs, the son of an Anglican priest, Christian traditions and festivals as practiced by the Church of England were familiar territory. Celebrations in Jerusalem, although broadly following the same liturgical calendar, were a different matter altogether. While Eastertide "almost

throughout the world" was the "season when, if only for three days, the death of strife becomes the victory of peace," in the Holy Land and "most of all in the Holy City," Easter meant "for generations the sharpening of daggers and the trebling of garrisons."[75] With his awareness for trouble heightened following skirmishes between the Greek Orthodox and Armenian churches in the Grotto of the Nativity in Bethlehem during their respective celebrations of Epiphany and Christmas (which happened to fall on the same day), Storrs prepared with great trepidation for the 1918 Festival of the Holy Fire.[76]

The potential for trouble was further compounded by internal disputes within the Greek Orthodox Church. World War I had placed the patriarchate in severe financial difficulties, with Patriarch Damianos secretly permitting the sale of land to Zionists to help balance the books. Moreover, tensions existed between the Arab laity and the Greek hierarchy, with the former trying to wrest control of the patriarchate from the latter.[77] Finally, and of most immediate concern to Storrs in his preparations, the Orthodox Church possessed no priest in Jerusalem higher than an archimandrite, whose low status would preclude the ceremonies from taking place at all.

Ever aware of the politics of perception and sensitive to the fact that celebrations should take place with a "maximum of decorum," Storrs wrote to OETA headquarters expressing the negative impact of any cancellation on the Christian community. He also viewed the ceremony as an opportunity to show "fitting proof of the spirit of the new, as well as a contrast to that of the old administration" if the festivities could go ahead with "a minimum parade of armed force."[78] Keen to avoid following the Ottoman approach of deploying six hundred troops to maintain order, the military governor, on the advice of petitions from both the executive committee of the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate and the lay community, recommended the appointment of a high-ranking prelate to oversee formalities.

Unsurprisingly, the two proposed different candidates: the patriarchate advocated requesting a metropolitan from the patriarchate of Alexandria, while the lay community recommended Porphyrios II, archbishop of Mount Sinai. Storrs himself felt that Monseigneur Photios, patriarch of Alexandria, would be best placed to take on such a task, were it not for his dislike of Damianos, the exiled patriarch of Jerusalem and subsequent concerns that he would omit Damianos's name from the prayers. He also rejected asking Photios for a metropolitan from Alexandria on the grounds that permitting entry "to a high ecclesiastical dignitary of one denomination might involve similar concessions to other churches, which it is for the present undesirable to grant."[79]

Recognizing the impracticalities of involving the patriarch of Alexandria either directly or indirectly, Storrs requested that Porphyrios II be placed in charge of the ceremony. However, he was not simply following the advice of the lay community alone. The military governor knew the archbishop of Mount Sinai personally and professed to having "official and social relations" with him for the last ten years. Moreover, he was "equally well known to General Clayton, and has, I believe, had more than one conversation with the Commander-in-Chief."[80] Storrs also acknowledged

that Porphyrios "would be the first to see the advantage to his own prestige if these difficult weeks could pass off under his presidency without disturbances."[81] OETA accepted this proposal, with Porphyrios II being appointed locum tenens of the patriarch for the duration of the ceremony.[82]

The military governor's preparations for the Holy Fire in 1918 are illuminating. As the first observance of the festival under Christian authority for several centuries, Storrs was eager for celebrations to mark a departure from what he identified as an inelegant Ottoman approach. His disapproval of their methods, together with his perception of the city as a hotbed of sectarian violence and his strong beliefs in the sanctity and decorum of Christian festivities, led him to take an active role in preparations. Concerns surrounding the management of "two and seventy jarring sects" saw him utilize his knowledge of the internal affairs of the Greek Orthodox Church alongside his own existing social network, so important to Storrs after his lonely first years in Egypt. His appointment of Porphyrios II as locum tenens was a bid to ensure that the festival passed in a peaceable manner. Once more Storrs's approach entwined the personal and the political.

"Terms of Friendship and Confidence": Storrs's Personal Approach under Scrutiny

Storrs's handling of the first ceremony of the Holy Fire in 1918 was a success acknowledged at the highest levels of the administration. Writing to the chief administrator of Palestine, General Arthur Money, Allenby recognized that the military governor's "tact and skillful handling of a difficult and delicate situation could not have been surpassed. He has shewn [*sic*] himself to be an Administrator of a very high order."[83] With recognition came new responsibilities: following the advance of British troops into Syria in September 1918, Storrs was sent to establish a new northern branch of OETA in Haifa. In December, he was elevated to the rank of brigadier-general when he was appointed acting chief administrator during Money's annual leave.[84] His stock was so high that Money recommended Storrs for a Commander of the British Empire medal (which he subsequently received in January 1919) and confided that he wanted the military governor to be his successor as chief administrator.[85]

Storrs assumed these duties as some members of OETA were growing concerned with London's policy in Palestine. General Money was acutely aware of the problematic nature of Britain's commitment to the Balfour Declaration, arguing that both Muslims and Christians were apprehensive that Palestine was "going to be handed over to the Jews."[86] He strongly felt that the British government should clarify its position: that the declaration supported a Jewish homeland in Palestine, not a state or sovereign government. If Britain were to support a Jewish government "in any form," an Arab rising was guaranteed.[87] In response, Zionists lobbied Whitehall to pay no heed to arguments that aimed to soften Jewish expectations in Palestine. London subsequently pressured Money and Chief Political Officer Gilbert Clayton to amend their views.

Both refused and resigned their positions in 1919. Storrs, expecting to succeed Money as chief administrator, was passed over in favor of Major-General C. F. Watson on the suspicion that Storrs was not sufficiently pro-Zionist.[88] The relations Storrs had fomented with the communities of Jerusalem were now being used against him by the Zionist movement.

Watson's return to Jerusalem in August 1919 saw the military governor receive the strongest criticism yet of his administration of the city. On leave until early October, Storrs returned to find that the new chief administrator had on 24 September asked London to dismiss Storrs from his post. Accused of being too preoccupied with religious politics, and with allegations that Jerusalem was calmer in his absence, the governor "begged and was justly afforded, the opportunity of confronting the Chief Administrator."[89]

Successfully upholding his position and avoiding dismissal, Storrs noted that it was not stated in which direction he was influenced by religious politics. Disputing the charge that he had a tendency for "internal politics, whatever they may mean," he asserted pithily that:

> Jerusalem has seldom been in the past, and is unlikely to be in the future, and most certainly is not now, untinged by a certain interest in religion … And if by "internal" is meant an undue interference in the interior economy of religious establishments, I maintain, and can prove that this was never done in Jerusalem until my departure on leave.[90]

Defending his administration, Storrs maintained that his custody of Jerusalem had seen "constructive innovations, over and above the normal machinery of government, owing to my personal initiative," citing reforms to the Jerusalem prison, the regulation of food supplies, the establishment of a municipal library reading room, the founding of a chamber of commerce and a school of music, the refurbishment of the Ophthalmic Hospital, and the creation of the Pro-Jerusalem Society as proof of his interventions.[91]

On the second charge, Storrs reiterated his belief that Jerusalem in the spring was a tinderbox due to the confluence of Muslim, Jewish, and Christian festivals, making the city the "political and religious storm centre of Palestine."[92] Concluding his defense with what could be viewed as a subtle attack on the new chief administrator, Storrs accepted that:

> Unpopularity for a time in certain political circumstances and with certain political sections, would even if true, not necessarily be discreditable. But the terms of friendship and confidence on which I have lived with the various Communities of Jerusalem for the last two years have been attested by many public expressions of good will, these sufficiently known to any adequately informed person, able and willing to keep himself in direct contact with the public.[93]

In a position such as Storrs's, strong friendships with the various groupings of Jerusalem could easily be alleged as showing an undue interest in internal politics. The military governor's deep personal need for a wide social and cultural network borne of the intense loneliness and homesickness he experienced early in his administrative career meant that the lines between the personal and the professional could easily become blurred.

This commitment to fomenting a wide social and cultural network, coupled with the freedom to pursue his own initiatives and a strong belief in intercommunal cooperation, saw Storrs turn to his great loves forged during his time at Charterhouse and Cambridge: chess and music. He founded a Chess Club with a Jewish treasurer, a Latin Catholic secretary, and several Muslim members. As club president, he organized a tournament that saw the first four prizes go to Jews, with the fifth prize being taken by the military governor himself.[94]

Similarly, he established the Jerusalem School of Music, but his visions of music uniting Christian, Muslim, and Jew alike were soon halted. Becoming increasingly irate with the lack of engagement from all sectors of society, Storrs haughtily wrote in the *Palestine Weekly*, the English-language supplement to the right-leaning Hebrew newspaper *Do'ar Ha-yom*, that "it is for Palestinian audiences to show themselves worthy of the opportunity they have been given."[95] Despite his best efforts, 90 percent of the school's membership remained Jewish. With regret, he handed over the school to the Jewish community on the condition that it continued to be called the Jerusalem School of Music and that it should remain open "to all seeking instruction without distinction of race or creed."[96]

For Storrs, these enterprises were intended to be "international and non-political." He believed that:

> Music is purer than visual art, and offers less opportunity for the cruder and more obvious forms of nationalistic propaganda … It is my firm belief … that even a mixed Palestine audience could hardly extract political significance from a sonata, a quintet, or a symphony.[97]

Storrs's position as governor of an occupying force facilitating the Balfour Declaration meant that establishing a Western music school in the city was never going to be a "non-political" act. Moreover, his accounts of the music school and chess club in *Orientations* imply that Palestinian Arabs were not interested or capable of participating in cultural activities. As Ilia Xypolia argues, the "peer 'civilization' that could cooperate with the superior culture of the West [as Storrs perceived it] was only the Jewish one."[98] By pursuing his own personal interests, he implanted a Western musical culture in Jerusalem that would more likely chime with the Zionists given their European origins. These actions, together with his protection of the British position in Palestine, would lead to Storrs appearing to be increasingly disingenuous in his claims to be "not wholly for either, but for both" as his time in Jerusalem progressed.

Conclusion

Reflecting on his first years in Jerusalem, Storrs would describe his period as military governor as granting him "the bliss of arbitrary rule."[99] The freedoms he received as governor allowed him to involve himself in local politics and intrigue in a greater way than would later be possible following the establishment of a civilian administration in Palestine in July 1920. At this point Storrs had established the key hallmarks of his time governing Jerusalem: a deeply personal approach that melded the professional requirements of his job with a desire to create social and cultural opportunities for all the communities of the city *on his terms*, in order to fulfil his need for society and allay potential feelings of loneliness and homesickness. This style of rule was borne of his experiences as a student at Temple Grove, Charterhouse, and Cambridge, and his initial struggles in Egypt. When Storrs utilized a similar approach with the Zionist Commission during and after their inaugural visit to Palestine in April 1918, he succeeded only in placing himself in an even more difficult position. As a result of his desire to ingratiate himself with all parties, their hopes and expectations were raised in such a way that, throughout his time in Jerusalem, Storrs could never truly satisfy them.

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Endnotes

1 T.E. Lawrence, *Seven Pillars of Wisdom* (London: Wordsworth, 1997 [1926]), 40.

2 See Ilia Xypolia, "Orientations and Orientalism: The Governor Sir Ronald Storrs," *Journal of Islamic Jerusalem Studies* 11 (Summer 2011): 25–43; Noah Hysler Rubin, "An Orientalist in Jerusalem: Ronald Storrs and Planning of the City," in *The First Governor: Sir Ronald Storrs, Governor of Jerusalem, 1918–1926*, ed. Nirit Shalev-Khalifa (Tel Aviv: Eretz Israel Museum, 2010), 89–107. A. L. Tibawi contends that in Jerusalem "everything Storrs forbade the Arabs was allowed at least to the Zionist Jews." See: A. L. Tibawi, *Anglo-Arab Relations and the Question of Palestine, 1914–1921* (London: Luzac, 1978), 319. For accusations of anti-Zionism, see: Motti Golani, "An Engima – Sir Ronald Storrs and Zionism," in *First Governor*, ed. Shalev-Khalifa, 51–75; and Rory Miller, "Sir Ronald Storrs and Zion: The Dream That Turned into a Nightmare," *Middle Eastern Studies* 36, no. 3 (July 2000): 114–44. For accusations of anti-Semitism, see William B. Ziff, *The Rape of Palestine* (London: Longmans Green, 1938), 253.

3 Storrs, *Orientations*, 339–40.

4 Rashid Khalidi, *The Iron Cage: The Story of the Struggle for Palestinian Statehood* (London: Oneworld, 2007), 51.

5 Roberto Mazza, *Jerusalem: From the Ottomans to the British* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2009), 180.

6 For more on the Pro-Jerusalem Society, see Rana Barakat, "Urban Planning, Colonialism, and the Pro-Jerusalem Society," *Jerusalem Quarterly* 65 (Spring 2016): 22–34; Nirit Shalev-Khalifa, "Sir Ronald and the Knights of the Stone Order – Ronald Storrs, Architect of Jerusalem's Visual and Cultural Perceptions and the Pro-Jerusalem Society," in *First Governor*, ed. Shalev-Khalifa, 15–50; and Roberto Mazza, "'The Preservation and Safeguarding of the Amenities of the Holy City without Prejudice to Race or Creed':

The Pro-Jerusalem Society and Ronald Storrs, 1917–1926," in *Ordinary Jerusalem*, ed. Angelos Dalachanis and Vincent Lemire (Leiden: Brill, 2018), vol. 1, 403–22. For more on the Nabi Musa riots, see Roberto Mazza, "Transforming the Holy City: From Communal Clashes to Urban Violence, the Nebi Musa Riots in 1920," in *Urban Violence in the Middle East: Changing Cityscapes in the Transition from Empire to Nation State*, ed. Ulrike Freitag, Nelida Fuccaro, Claudia Ghrawi, and Nora Lafi (New York: Berghahn, 2015), 179-94. For exploration of Storrs's relationship with the Zionist Commission, see Golani, "An Enigma," 51–76.

7 Storrs, *Orientations*, 4. For examples of Storrs's correspondence with his mother, see Storrs Papers, reel 1, box 1, folder 1. Storrs rarely wrote dates on his letters from school, much to his mother's chagrin (see Storrs, *Orientations*, 6). Dates of letters will be cited where included, otherwise the reel, box and folder of the Storrs Papers must suffice.

8 Storrs to his mother, no date, Storrs Papers, reel 1, box 1, folder 1.

9 Meston Batchelor, *Cradle of Empire: A Preparatory School through Nine Reigns* (London: Phillimore, 1981), xiv.

10 Storrs, *Orientations*, 10.

11 Storrs, *Orientations*, 10.

12 Niall Rudd, *T. E. Page: Schoolmaster Extraordinary* (Bristol, UK: Bristol Classical Press, 1981), 45.

13 Storrs to his mother, no date, Storrs Papers, reel 1, box 1, folder 1.

14 *Carthusian* 7, no. 231 (April 1898); *Carthusian* 7, no. 245 (November 1899).

15 *Carthusian* 7, no. 247 (February 1900); *Carthusian* 7, no. 248 (March 1900); *Carthusian* 7, no. 250 (June 1900); and *Carthusian* 7, no. 252 (August 1900).

16 Several undated letters from Storrs to his mother highlight this homesickness. See Storrs Papers, reel 1, box 1, folder 1.

17 Storrs to his mother, 29 October 1904, Storrs Papers, reel 2, box 2, folder 1 – Egypt 1904–1909.

18 Storrs, *Orientations*, 14. See various undated Decemviri invitations in Storrs Papers, reel 1, box 1, folder 1.

19 He goes on to comment upon Storrs's sense of humor and musical ability. See Charles Tennyson, *Cambridge from Within* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1913), 185, 191–94. Despite the anonymity of this extract, Storrs confirms in a letter to his mother that a full pen-portrait of himself can be found in the chapter on the Long Vacation. See Storrs to his mother, 13 April 1913, Storrs Papers, reel 3, box 2, folder 2 – Egypt 1904–13).

20 Salim Tamari, "City of Riffraff: Crowds, Public Space, and New Urban Sensibilities in War-Time Jerusalem, 1917–1921," in *Comparing Cities: The Middle East and South Asia*, ed. Kamran Asdar Ali and Martina Rieker (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 302–11. See also Awad Halabi, "Liminal Loyalties: Ottomanism and Palestinian Responses to the Turkish War of Independence, 1919–22," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 41, no. 3 (Spring 2012): 19–37.

21 Storrs, *Orientations*, 272–76.

22 Issam Nassar, *European Portrayals of Jerusalem: Religious Fascinations and Colonist Imaginations* (New York: Edwin Mellen Press, 2006), 2.

23 Storrs, *Orientations*, 32.

24 Storrs, *Orientations*, 276.

25 Abigail Jacobson, *From Empire to Empire: Jerusalem between Ottoman and British Rule*, (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2011), 118–30.

26 Lorenzo Kamel, "The Impact of Biblical Orientalism in Late Nineteenth- and Early Twentieth-Century Palestine," *New Middle Eastern Studies* 4 (2014): 14–15.

27 Storrs, *Orientations*, 286. Psalm 122: 1–9, King James Version.

28 Storrs, *Orientations*, 285.

29 Jacobson, *From Empire to Empire*, 137.

30 Storrs, *Orientations*, 273.

31 Storrs, *Orientations*, 287.

32 Storrs to Nina Cust, 9 January 1918, Storrs Papers, reel 6, box 3, folder 1 – Jerusalem 1918–19.

33 Conde de Ballobar, *Jerusalem in World War I: The Palestine Diary of a European Diplomat*, ed., Eduardo Manzano Moreno and Roberto Mazza (London: I. B. Tauris, 2015), 5.

34 Mazza, *Jerusalem*, 22–23.

35 Sotirios Dimitriadis, "The Tramway Concession of Jerusalem, 1908–1914: Elite Citizenship, Urban Infrastructure, and the Abortive Modernization of a Late Ottoman City," in Dalachanis and Lemire, eds., *Ordinary Jerusalem*, 475–89.

36 Until the middle of the nineteenth century, Jerusalem consisted of the walled city. Within these walls, the city was divided

into neighborhoods based not solely on confessional affiliation but on the common shared features of its residents; be it religion, tribe, place of origin, ethnicity or group. Adar Arnon, "The Quarters of Jerusalem in the Ottoman Period," *Middle East Studies* 28, no. 1 (January 1992): 7–12.

37 Rochelle Davis, "Ottoman Jerusalem: The Growth of the City Outside the Walls," in *Jerusalem 1948: The Arab Neighborhoods and Their Fate in the War*, ed. Salim Tamari (Jerusalem: Institute of Jerusalem Studies, 2002), 10–29.

38 Mazza, *Jerusalem*, 36–40.

39 Yair Wallach, *A City in Fragments: Urban Texts in Modern Jerusalem* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2020), 15.

40 Storrs, *Orientations*, 401.

41 Mazza, *Jerusalem*, 41–42. Louis Fishman suggests that disparate strands of Palestinian Jewry at this time – Ashkenazi and Sephardi, Zionist and non-Zionist, secular and religious – united in the aftermath of the 1908 Young Turk Revolution under a banner of pan-Hebrew identity as part of the Ottoman Empire. Still, many members of the diverse pre-Mandate Jewish communities of Palestine remained largely ambivalent toward Zionism and its aims throughout the period of British rule. Yair Wallach posits that only by the 1930s did the Yishuv succeed in becoming a separate Hebrew-speaking Jewish society as per Zionist designs. See: Louis A. Fishman, *Jews and Palestinians in the Late Ottoman Era, 1908–1914: Claiming the Homeland* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2020), 134–71; Yair Wallach, "Rethinking the Yishuv: Late Ottoman Palestine's Jewish Communities Revisited," *Journal of Modern Jewish Studies* 16, no. 2 (2017): 275–94; and Thomas Philip Abowd, *Colonial Jerusalem: The Spatial Construction of Identity and Difference in a City of Myth, 1948–2012* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2014), 16*n*21.

42 Storrs, *Orientations*, 415.

43 Jacobson, *From Empire to Empire*, 32–34.

44 Jacobson, *From Empire to Empire*, 40–47.

45 Jacobson, *From Empire to Empire*, 35–37.

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52 Storrs, *Orientations*, 401.

53 Ilan Pappe, *The Rise and Fall of a Palestinian Dynasty: The Husaynis, 1700–1948*, (London: Saqi, 2010), 41.

54 Storrs, *Orientations*, 278–280.

55 Storrs, *Orientations*, 401.

56 Pappe, *Rise and Fall*, 167.

57 Pappe, *Rise and Fall*, 111–12.

58 Storrs, *Orientations*, 401.

59 Quote from Tom Segev, *One Palestine, Complete: Jews and Arabs under the British Mandate* (London: Abacus, 2001), 107.

60 Yair Wallach, "The Oud Player and the Governor: Jerusalem Arabs' Relations with Ronald Storrs and the British Administration," in *First Governor*, ed. Shalev-Khalifa, 79.

61 Awad Halabi, *Palestinian Rituals of Identity: The Prophet Moses Festival in Jerusalem, 1850–1948* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2022), 42.

62 Awad Halabi, "The Nabi Musa Festival under British-Ruled Palestine," *ISIM Newsletter* 10 (2002), 27. Footage exists of this rather stilted and awkward ceremony: see Imperial War Museum (IWM) Film Collection 45, *The NEBI-NUSA [sic] FESTIVALS: scenes and incidents en route,* Jury's Imperial Pictures, 1919, online at www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/1060022598 (accessed 2 November 2023).

63 Wallach, "Oud Player," 78–79.

64 Wallach, "Oud Player," 84.

65 Salim Tamari and Issam Nassar, eds., *The Storyteller of Jerusalem: The Life and Times of Wasif Jawhariyyeh* (Northampton, MA: Olive Branch Press, 2014), 122.

66 Tamari and Nassar, eds., *Storyteller of Jerusalem*, 126.

67 Wallach, "Oud Player," 78.

68 Tibawi, *Anglo-Arab Relations*, 69.

69 This quote is from the Qur'an verse 8:61. Tamari and Nassar, eds., *Storyteller of Jerusalem*, 126.

70 Qur'an 8:60–66.

71 Anglo-French Declaration, 7 November

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75 Storrs, *Orientations*, 304. Interreligious violence was rare in late Ottoman Jerusalem and tended to be intrareligious. See Mazza, "Transforming the Holy City," 180–81.

76 Storrs, *Orientations*, 304.

77 Mazza, *Jerusalem*, 60-61.

78 Storrs to OETA HQ, 17 March 1918, Storrs Papers, reel 6, box 3, folder 1.

79 Storrs to OETA HQ, 17 March 1918, Storrs Papers, reel 6, box 3, folder 1.

80 Storrs to OETA HQ, 17 March 1918, Storrs Papers, reel 6, box 3, folder 1.

81 Storrs to OETA HQ, 17 March 1918, Storrs Papers, reel 6, box 3, folder 1.

82 Storrs, *Orientations*, 306.

83 Allenby to Money, 5 May 1918, Storrs Papers, reel 6, box 3, folder 1.

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91 Storrs to unidentified recipient, 1 December 1919, Storrs Papers, reel 6, box 3, folder 1.

92 Storrs to unidentified recipient, 1 December 1919, Storrs Papers, reel 6, box 3, folder 1.

93 Storrs to unidentified recipient, 1 December 1919, Storrs Papers, reel 6, box 3, folder 1.

94 Storrs, *Orientations*, 316.

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97 Storrs, *Orientations*, 423.

98 Xypolia, "Orientations and Orientalism," 35.

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"Obstetricians Are Always Taking a Position against Us": The Politics of Contemporary Midwifery and Childbirth in Palestine

Frances S. Hasso and Aisha Barghouti Saifi

Abstract

Although until the late 1960s women's reproductive health care had been largely the domain of Palestinian women healers, midwives, and nurse-midwives, the contemporary reproductive healthcare system in Palestine is medicalized, masculinized, and commodified in an indigenous society already suffering from the brutality of Israeli occupation. Based on interviews with eight experienced Palestinian midwives, scholarly and field research, and field knowledge, this article examines ideological and practice differences among midwives, and between some nurse-midwives and traditional midwives (*dayat*), largely in contemporary Jerusalem and the West Bank. It highlights sharp gendered class contradictions in midwives' relations to obstetrician-gynecologists and the Palestinian Authority Ministry of Health; points to the rise and impact of a biomedical interventionist risk sensibility on the physician-led hospital shop floor; and considers the psychic and sexual dimensions of working with women seeking reproductive healthcare, including the impact of trauma and limited reproductive agency.

Keywords:

Obstetrics-gynecology; biomedicalized reproduction; childbirth risk; Palestinian midwifery; Palestine Ministry of Health; sexual and reproductive agency.

The professionalization of reproductive, childbirth, and maternal care since the nineteenth century has aligned with its masculinization and medicalization

the world over, and its commodification in capitalist societies. Two dimensions of medicalization are the "modern" rationalization of treatment and care (breaking the whole into discrete specialized parts) and substantial state legal interventions that have served the economic interests of the field of obstetrics-gynecology. Palestine today offers less a counterpoint to this trajectory than an important case study shaped in specific ways by Zionist settler-colonial rule in Palestine since 1948. The presence of the Palestinian Authority (PA), established by the Oslo accords in 1993 as an "interim" self-governing body for Palestinians in parts of Palestine occupied by Israel in 1967, has also been an influencing factor. Physicians have played a significant political role historically and in the present in Palestine, actively supporting and frequently leading Palestinian resistance movements, institutions, and political parties – nationalist, Marxist, and Islamist.[1] Reproductive healthcare, which had largely been the domain of women in Palestine as late as the 1960s, has since become dominated by male Palestinian obstetrician-gynecologists (ob-gyns) and highly medicalized.[2] As one Palestinian nurse-midwife explained, in Palestine today, "Most women do not feel safe delivering without the hospital complex behind them."[3]

This article is based on informant interviews conducted in June 2017 with a purposive sample of eight experienced midwives in Palestine, as well as scholarly and field research, and field knowledge. The research found ideological and practice differences among contemporary Palestinian nurse-midwives and between some nurse-midwives and traditional midwives, and clear gendered class contradictions in their relations to ob-gyns and the Palestine Ministry of Health, established in the mid-1990s.

The Palestinian nurse-midwives were divided as to whether they should have more independence in delivering reproductive healthcare. While most advocated and struggled for increased autonomy as holistic practitioners, including the ability to provide care such as suturing perineal or vaginal tears after birth, many have internalized a biomedical interventionist risk logic, common in physician-led reproductive care and a litigious environment. Holistically inclined midwives are challenged by the dominant realities in Israeli-occupied Palestine, which include medicalization and a male-dominated society, healthcare system, and political system. These problems are exacerbated by overwork, low pay, and understaffing. Some midwives discussed the psychic and sexual dimensions of working with women seeking reproductive healthcare, including the impact of trauma and limited reproductive agency. These concerns are not included in biomedical training and institutional practices focused on profit, technological interventions, the ideologically normative family, and international metrics of "development."

Most Palestinian families in Palestine have a limited income and live in segmented areas under layered regimes of racialized rule. Patchy healthcare is delivered in private and government hospitals and in outpatient clinics sponsored by individual physicians and physician groups, religious institutions, UNRWA, Israel, and the PA in a health system whose every dimension – funding, movement, accessibility, imports and access to materials and equipment – is ultimately controlled by Israel. This situation

has "direct implications for [Palestinian] quality of life and mortality" and powerfully shapes how reproductive healthcare is delivered to and experienced by Palestinian women and the work conditions of nurse-midwives.[4] Interviewed midwives and the authors took as axiomatic the violence and extreme mobility and health difficulties Israeli settler-colonial rule imposes on Palestinian medical staff and women seeking reproductive care. Walls and checkpoints, for example, produce travel delays and extra expenses, circuitous and exhausting routes, and closures.[5]

After methodological remarks, the article discusses conflicts between Palestinian nurse-midwives and physicians as gendered social classes, with the autonomy of ob-gyn and subordination of nurse-midwives reinforced by the PA Ministry of Health in public and private healthcare settings. This section also shows how the profit motive produces specific gendered class contradictions and consciousness on the hospital shop floor. The subsequent section discusses a divide among the midwives interviewed about their degree of treatment autonomy, with some accepting medical limits to the scope of their treatment practices and/or worried about increased litigious sensibilities among patients and their families. The final section considers sexual agency, knowledge, and trauma among patients as dimensions of reproductive care and overall wellbeing.

Methodological Remarks

This article is based on interdisciplinary qualitative research and takes seriously the analysis, experiences, and insights of midwives. Rather than a representative sample of all contemporary Palestinian midwives, it uses a purposive sample of informants – midwives who are also mentors, teachers, professors, institution builders and leaders in the field – in order to understand observed and experienced structural and institutional power differentials and tensions. Frances Hasso chose the midwives interviewed in 2017 guided by how other midwives reported their significance in maternal healthcare knowledge and practice networks in Palestine. The interview protocol was shaped by her interest in the transformation of midwifery and reproductive healthcare in modern Palestine. Some attention was paid to generational and regional diversity among midwives, although the latter was limited due to the apartheid grid of movement restrictions imposed by Israel. The interviewees, all women, included six nurse-midwives and two traditionally trained midwives, most of whom worked in the Jerusalem, Ramallah, and Bethlehem areas, but had trained and worked in multiple areas in Palestine and abroad. A strong tradition of Palestinian midwifery continues in Hebron, but no midwives were interviewed from that district because of travel difficulties. Gaza, too, was inaccessible because of the Israeli siege.[6] Hasso recorded all interviews and conducted Arabic-to-English translations.

In early 2023 on a visit to Palestine, Hasso invited Aisha Barghouti Saifi, one of the nurse-midwives originally interviewed in 2017, to co-author the paper given her analytical contributions and professional experiences and knowledge in the

field. Saifi's contributions to the empirical and analytical dimensions of the article are substantial and not placed between quotation marks unless they originate from the interview conducted by Hasso in 2017. Inviting her as a coauthor corrected and deepened the empirical and analytical dimensions of the article and provided a concrete way to name the degree to which the midwives interviewed are professional practitioners, historical and ethnographic observers and analysts, and theorists.

In the spirit of renegotiating consent, maintaining good relations with and in a small community of high-level professionals, and assuring accuracy, we shared a pre-submitted draft with the interviewed midwives and invited and incorporated their comments, including about their anonymity and association with direct quotes.[7] While one double-blind reviewer asked for all names to be anonymized, we did not follow this recommendation because this is an interdisciplinary ethnographic endeavor informed by feminist sensibilities that consider how gender and class determine which "experts" and "leaders" are named as analysts and informants in scholarship.

Given the forced segmentation of Palestinians, the fragmented and layered political regimes governing healthcare and healthcare workers, the plural healthcare systems, limited available archival documentation, and the importance of different periods and locations in colonized Palestine, we include information on the professional trajectories of identified nurse-midwives in endnotes at first mention. This information may be useful as a line of inquiry for other researchers. Rather than considering this article an exhaustive treatment, we hope it is taken as an invitation for especially Palestinian researchers and health practitioners to do further research and analysis.

Gendered Class Antagonisms in the "Ministry of Physicians"

The autonomy and preponderance of Palestinian midwives in treating women's sexual and reproductive needs and assisting with childbirth in Palestine has largely disappeared because of medico-legal and policy changes led by male ob-gyns in alliance with governments.[8] Rita Giacaman shows the increased biomedicalization of childbirth by the early 1980s in the Israeli-occupied West Bank.[9] She and her colleagues found medicalized pregnancy and hospital birth to be the most significant trend between 1967 and 1993 in the West Bank and Gaza, largely motivated by Israeli concern to improve the tracking of Palestinian birth rates. The trend intensified under the PA Ministry of Health established after the Oslo accords.[10]

The Palestinian Union of Nursing and Midwifery (*naqabat al-tamrith wa-l-qibala al-filastiniyya*) split from the Jordanian organization in 1988 to create an independent Palestinian body. In 1994, the Palestinian union created two branches, in the West Bank and in Gaza. After 2007, the Gaza branch became completely independent of the West Bank branch. The ruling Fatah faction in the West Bank does not allow the union to operate independently or hold elections and bans substantive representation for other political factions or non-affiliated midwives. In comparison, the Gaza organization, led by Hamas since 2007, represents all Palestinian political factions by

organizational quotas and includes a representative for midwives.

One nurse-midwife called the PA Ministry of Health a "Ministry of Physicians" that sets the rules in their favor, removes power from midwives and nurses, and pretends that "physicians know everything." The PA has "given all the authority to physicians," she added, a situation that only worsened over time. Palestinian men physicians are policymakers at all levels of the Ministry of Health and lead general directorates, hospitals, hospital wards, clinics, and primary healthcare centers. Physicians use these positions to influence ministers and other high-level stakeholders and to open doors to other opportunities, promotions, and career development.

A mid-1990s decree from the first PA Minister of Health, Riyadh Za'nun (1994–2002), banned traditional midwives and nurse-midwives from assisting in homebirths. The ministry partially reversed this position after the outbreak of the second intifada in 2000, allowing traditional birth attendants (*dayat*) to assist with homebirths because of heightened Israeli violence, closures, and invasions.[11] It remains difficult, however, for the ministry to exert control over all Palestinian women in need of pregnancy and childbirth assistance in a highly fragmented country with no meaningful Palestinian sovereignty, especially in villages and towns distant from the urban centers where medical support is concentrated.

The formal subordination of Palestinian nurse-midwives to physicians in the West Bank exists despite Sahar Hassan's establishment in 1997 of a training and licensing system for Palestinian midwives based on international criteria.[12] The Ibn Sina Nursing and Midwifery College she revitalized as dean used International Confederation of Midwives' "documents, recommendation, and criteria" to design its licensing requirements "because we didn't have anything else here to reference."[13] Nevertheless, using the Ministry of Health, Palestinian physicians weakened the authority of nurses, midwives, and medical lab technicians, groups that have recently begun to call for their rights. Rules established by Palestinian ob-gyns under the ministry decree that only physicians, no matter the experience and training of a midwife, can decide "who can and cannot suture," without "any criteria or system."[14] Nurse-midwives in Gaza are more likely to operate as nurses rather than caring for pregnant women from initial evaluation to childbirth–although the protocols for their scope of practice apparently would allow them to do so–because they are less likely "to want these responsibilities," according to a senior nurse-midwife and researcher in Gaza.[15]

Each Palestinian hospital in the West Bank and Jerusalem creates bespoke job descriptions for midwives designed by the leading ob-gyn, and some have no such scope of practice descriptions. Some hospitals require a physician to conduct the first pregnancy exam and take charge of a woman's first pregnancy. Some hospitals allow midwives to deliver preterm babies. Whereas there is some variety among Palestinian government hospitals, private hospitals give no authority to nurse-midwives, who must always follow the decisions of the physician in charge. In all cases, only physicians are authorized to suture vaginal tears. Ultimately, the scope of practice of a midwife is entirely dependent on what an individual physician cedes to her in a particular medical institution. The busier he is with other locations, the more he may

give the midwife a margin of freedom in her work. However, the same physician will immediately withdraw this scope of responsibility when he is experiencing a slowdown in business.

Vartouhi Koukeyan explained that having autonomy from physicians in treatment protocols and a holistic approach to the woman patient distinguishes midwives from nurses.[16] For holistically oriented midwives and nurse-midwives, the birthing woman should decide how she wants to give birth. Traditional midwives, she explained, knew "how to work with women in labor," 96 percent of whom do not fall into high-risk categories that require biomedical allopathic interventions in Palestine or elsewhere. Like Hassan, Koukeyan drew on international midwifery standards to make her forceful points: "If we speak of the International Confederation of Midwives directives, internationally midwives are women – I hope this job will stay as a women's job – who are autonomous in their ways of thinking and practice and very different from nurses, who are usually guided to do things…. Nurses may not take decisions and manage the case…. That's the difference between nurses and midwives."[17] She glossed further on the social power that accrues to successful midwives:

> Midwifery is known to have had strong women or else you cannot do it physically, mentally, or socially. You must have leadership character so that you lead the whole community you work within. Women in Eastern societies do take decisions, even when it may appear as a male decision. They often do it covertly [*taht batin*] and put the man in front; they have no problem with this system if they get what they want. Usually this was the role of midwives in local communities. That was their power, these women, whether they were dayat [traditional] or *qabilat* [institutionally trained and licensed]. This is why they were powerful and respected in their communities beyond childbirth and were involved in marriages, engagements, and so on. People kissed their hands when they saw them on the street. I remember daya Malakeh Wahbeh in Jerusalem, she probably birthed the entire Nasara area of the Old City. When she walked with shopping bags, she could demand of any man to carry her load home for her. He would say, "Thank you, Khalti," instead of her thanking him.[18]

Palestinian nurse-midwives regularly explained that pregnancy and childbirth healthcare is a substantial market and source of wealth for physicians, surgeons, and other medical "experts" (commenting, for example, "obstetrics makes you a rich man" or "obstetrics brings you money"), leading to competition with midwives. Obstetrician-gynecologists "do not want a midwife or daya around them who would be paid something quite symbolic anyway. So, it's good business to be an obstetrician even though most pregnant women require midwifery, not obstetrics."[19] Midwives allowed to practice within their full scope of training and experience would pose real competition to obstetricians not only as alternative sources of care, but by reducing the frequency of lucrative visits as women patients become more informed about their bodies and non-medical options. Miriam Shibli, a Palestinian nurse-midwife at the

EMMS (Edinburgh Medical Missionary Society) Nazareth Hospital, discussed similar power conflicts between midwives and physicians, and midwives and hospitals: "Israel rewards women for giving birth in hospitals and gives them money for doing so. They didn't want to give insurance to home birth midwives so there was a struggle because of economic self-interest, all on the backs of women."[20]

Huda Abu El Halaweh, a midwifery supervisor and professor at al-Quds University, also linked the subordination of midwives to the economic interests of ob-gyns, backed by the Palestinian Authority:

> Today in Palestine, midwives have not reached the independence we want for a variety of reasons. We are trying to develop curricular programs but need assistance from Palestinian health policies and institutions. The obstetricians want to keep the work. [They think,] This is a small country and if you get stronger as midwives you would take the work from us. Obstetricians and physicians are always taking a position against us. We had a proposal to allow nurse-midwives to make the cut to the perineum if needed, an episiotomy; we held workshops and trainings, but the doctors resisted. They said, we know what things midwives worldwide are capable of, but we don't want you to do them. There are medications we are allowed to prescribe but we can do more. We should be able to do internal physical assessments, but they don't allow us to do it. Pushing further requires fighting with the doctors and Ministry of Health about the limited job description for us. We are fighting for scope of practice – a more open approach related to our training. Do not delimit us this way.[21]

In her research with midwives and birth attendants working in al-Makassed Islamic Charitable Society Hospital in Jerusalem and with the Union of Palestinian Medical Relief Committees in the 2000s, Livia Wick found high class consciousness and resentment among midwives and birth attendants about their long work hours, low pay, and limited ability to be with their families or have leisure in comparison to the physicians who supervised them.[22] A male obstetrician complained to Wick that Palestinian midwives are "mutinous! It is not like Europe and America," where he presumed midwives are more agreeable.[23]

Palestinian nurse-midwives suffer the heaviest workloads and least respite and earn "the lowest salaries" among healthcare workers, according to a 2005 study at a large West Bank hospital.[24] Nurse-midwives and nurses reported they are frequently humiliated at work by patients and their families, managers, and physicians, often bearing the brunt of abuse for lack of staff, material support, and time for patient care in the hospital system.[25] Nurse-midwives in the European Hospital in Gaza similarly reported overwork, "low professional status," poverty, minimal support, and limited training as they provided maternal care during the Covid-19 pandemic.[26]

Gendered labor relations, the content of labor, capitalist commodification and profit logic, and medicalization divide nurse-midwives from ob-gyns and even from different-minded midwives in how they relate to the pregnant, birthing, and

postpartum woman. Ob-gyns' approach to profit and time are key. Midwifery requires giving patients the time necessary to allow them to understand the things that happen to their bodies and feelings during pregnancy and labor.

Most ob-gyn physicians in the West Bank and Jerusalem, however, are balancing work in multiple hospitals and their own private clinics, so when on shift, they want to finish quickly. When women are in labor, nurse-midwives recognize there is an unspoken race for physicians to deliver them as soon as possible. This dynamic is intensified because Ministry of Health policies in hospitals give physicians the first and last responsibility for the pregnant, laboring, and postpartum woman and fetus or newborn. A nurse-midwife explained the labor relationships to Wick, deliberately within the hearing of a physician, "Even with complicated births, we stay with the woman until she is fully dilated. Then, at the very end, the doctor comes in." To which the obstetrician defensively responded, "Doctors have other responsibilities such as operative deliveries, outpatient cases and gynecology cases."[27]

Overmedicalization in hospitals increases exposure to infections and unnecessary surgeries in comparison to home births, which also allow women to move around during labor to expand the space for a baby's head to emerge. Hospital methods anchor women patients to beds and are tied to the time and schedule concerns of physicians, management, and other hospital staff, greatly increasing the rate of surgical or Cesarean section births – around 32 percent overall and 37 percent in private hospitals in the occupied West Bank excluding Jerusalem in 2018.[28] Time pressures also impact the work of nurse-midwives in hospitals, irrespective of their sensibility and orientation. Overworked nurse-midwives in understaffed institutions cannot afford to spend individualized time with patients in labor because they "can barely keep up with the work."[29]

Biomedicalization and hospital conditions have other consequences. Traditional midwives immediately cleaned the mother after birthing and "put her baby on her chest" rather than taking it away to conduct examinations. They fed the postpartum mother, "sometimes with a nine- to ten-egg omelet," whereas in hospital settings they express "nurse-midwives fear feeding her because of the epidural." Saifi explained the differences to Hasso when interviewed in 2017:

> In the old houses, the room in which she gave birth was next to the kitchen, allowing her to eat and nurse at the same time. The daya would check the afterbirth and blood while the woman used the bathroom. She bathed the baby. It was continuous follow-up by one person. In the hospital, I will have finished my eight-hour shift and someone after me will take over. Each midwife has her own way. Some people now say that it's important not to immediately cut the cord, to wait five minutes, because there are many, many, many benefits. In hospitals today they are violently efficient to placentas. On the other hand, in the old days, they did not stitch a tear to the perineum, which is necessary, whereas today we help it tear and stitch it. People who say midwives were not hygienic

are wrong. They always had hot water, everyone had clean hands and there weren't many hands involved.[30]

Gendered class-based antagonisms between midwives on the one hand and ob-gyns, hospitals, and the Ministry of Health on the other align with the values of a capitalist, patriarchal, undemocratic society under Israeli occupation, and articulate in most homes and workplaces as well. Nurse-midwives' ability to improve their work conditions is limited by an ever-deteriorating economic situation and unstable job opportunities. The unpredictable day and night nature of the work combined with ubiquitous Israeli-imposed closures, crises, and delays also create drains on time, money, and emotions, especially for married midwives and midwives with young children. As a result, many midwives switch in and out of the field or a particular hospital to recover from unsustainable work conditions, or leave midwifery to work in medical administration or the beauty industry.

"Stopping at Our Limits:" Risk, Litigation, Documentation

By the late 1960s and increasingly since, the male physician-led biomedical childbirth experience in a hospital came to exemplify modernity and safety for Palestinians. Pregnancy and childbirth are now thoroughly medicalized processes that require pregnant Palestinian women in areas under PA administration to go to a hospital to establish a formal file for prenatal care and delivery.[31] A visit to an ob-gyn typically begins with an ultrasound to determine the gender of the fetus, "which plays a big role in our Eastern society," and take a woman's blood pressure.[32] Jerusalem is a different political field with overlapping jurisdictions where one nevertheless finds similar Palestinian pregnancy and childbirth dynamics. In this context, some Palestinian nurse-midwives expressed anxiety about the legal and professional consequences of decision-making autonomy in reproductive care. Some even argued that the ob-gyn on call should ultimately be in charge, even if midwives delivered most babies.

These anxieties were rooted in a number of factors: low healthcare information-seeking by most Palestinian patients, an increased litigious sensibility, the organization of the male-dominated physician and hospital legal-medical complex itself, and perennial understaffing/overwork.

A Palestinian obstetrician in Jerusalem alluded to the legal risk attached to being in charge when he explained to Wick, "The biggest problem for us is that in the end, we are responsible for everything that goes on in the labor room. If there is a problem or a mistake, the obstetricians are held accountable for it."[33] From a different angle, Abu El Halaweh connected the high rate of C-sections in Palestine to fear among nurse-midwives that something might go wrong with the patient under their care: "When nurse-midwives lack information on the problem with the woman in labor, we quickly send everything to Cesarean, Cesarean, Cesarean. As soon as we're a little afraid, we go for a Cesarean."[34]

Hasso came to realize the impact of fear of litigation in Palestine during repeated attempts to find archives of missionary hospitals serving Palestinians, most of which

continue to operate under their foreign sponsors based in the United States, Germany, Italy, France, and the United Kingdom. She was dissuaded, redirected, and blocked with every visit, phone call, and email, as were local Palestinian health professionals who tried on her behalf. When she asked a southern West Bank nurse-midwife about hospital medical archives in her area, the latter explained that the law does not require hospitals to keep medical records beyond twelve or at most fourteen years and thought that institutions actively got rid of them in case they might be recalled for lawsuits. Abu El Halaweh, who works in Jerusalem, also noted fear of litigation as a possible motive when asked why Palestinian-serving hospitals seemed to destroy historical archives and added that no Palestinian sovereignty exists in any case to establish archival protection and standards.[35]

Unwarranted perceptions of risk among midwives and obstetricians have increasingly led to "unnecessary intervention and surveillance" over low-risk women in labor in other parts of the world.[36] A valuable meta-analysis of fourteen articles published between 2009 and 2014 for six countries (UK, United States, Australia, New Zealand, Belgium, and Canada) found midwives increasingly likely to absorb a technocratic model of pregnancy and labor that "extols technology and anticipation of pathology" in obstetrician-led medical settings.[37] While practice guidelines encourage midwives and obstetricians to understand pregnancy and birth as normal events for low-risk women and babies, "women's confidence in their ability to have a normal birth is increasingly diminished," often because of "an increased focus on risk assessment and risk management with high-tech maternity units often viewed as the safest place to birth."[38]

The analysis found that neither obstetricians nor midwives working in such settings understood risk and "intra-partum uncertainty" as a part of life for low-risk pregnancies and labor or saw "technology as a servant and not a master."[39] Midwives have also absorbed "time restriction" logic and learned to fear litigation in hospital settings, leading to higher perceptions of risk despite similar perinatal outcomes for limited and high-tech intervention pregnancies among low-risk women.[40] Midwives in one study explained that given the nature of hospital settings, "where control is often taken from the woman," it can be very difficult to approach pregnancy and labor as a shared responsibility between midwife and patient where they both resist "the dominant obstetric discourse of risk."[41]

In June 2017, Hasso conducted an interview with a traditionally trained and experienced Palestinian midwife in her sixties while accompanied by an experienced Palestinian nurse-midwife in her thirties. Given the sensitive content of the conversation and the apparent disagreement that developed, each is given a first-name pseudonym (Amal and Zaynab).

As Amal discussed touch remedies she used to help women become pregnant, including massage and internal examination of the uterus, Zaynab explained, "It might be flipped a bit." Amal responded, "No, not turned, sometimes it has slipped." The younger midwife glossed, "Sometimes it is pushed to one side, we find in internal examinations," while Amal said, "Sometimes most of it is wrapped to the right side." When the younger midwife asked, "Have you ever done a *surra* [herbal remedy]

to help women get pregnant?", Amal said she had, but, "Today I suggest fertility products [*tahamil*] they can buy from the pharmacy. I used to make such mixtures of garlic or onion peel [wrapped into tightly wound cheesecloth]. A woman boiled it in a large pot of water and then stood over the steam for ten or fifteen minutes while she had her period, so if anything is closed, it will open." Zaynab seemed torn, declaring that some traditional infertility treatments are myths but that others work.

To Zaynab, what Amal knows "is not knowledge based on theory." Amal agreed, "Exactly. It's based on skills." Hasso added, "It's also based on experience, on whether or not something works." Zaynab explained, "The educated midwife knows the rationale of why to do, for example, a delayed cord clamp. There are people who use the same method but don't know the rationale – nevertheless, they are correct." Amal switched the framing, however, from abstract "knowing" to individualized and grounded "learning with" a particular woman's body:

> My goal is to learn with a given woman, does her uterus work or not? I examine it with my hands and listen for the beats, the pulse [in English], whether it is working or not. Sometimes it is not beating. I do a massage that lasts five or ten minutes with light oil, which activates the uterus [*bi shaghil al-rahm, ba'ti nashat*].

Zaynab agreed, using biomedical terminology instead, "Correct, it redistributes the blood [circulation]."

While they agreed that traditional and medically trained midwives provide great psychological and physical comfort to women in labor, the conversation became tense when Amal told us the story of delivering a breech birth at her home maternity:

> Amal: When I saw her, I realized she was breech. I said to myself that I can't scare her and I didn't tell her husband for the same reason. I ordered him to stay outside. Where are her clothes, I asked? He said, I can bring them. The woman was full, ripe [*mistawiyya*]. When I came out of the examination room, he asked, what do you see? He was suspicious because my face had changed.
>
> Zaynab: Breech births are scary.
>
> Amal: I told him everything is fine. He asked, are you sure? I said, yes. I wore gloves and delivered her.
>
> Zaynab: That means the breech was out [meaning, resolved].
>
> Amal: No, no, it was not out.
>
> Zaynab: Today, all breeches are Cesarean.
>
> Amal: Haram, haram [what a shame, shame].

> Zaynab (disapproving): I'm with us stopping at our limits. After fifteen years as a midwife and ten years of reading, I say we must know where to stop [*baqulik lazim inna ni'rif wayn inwaqif*]. Because a small accident, God forbid, burns all the good things you have done.
>
> Amal: That's true.
>
> Zaynab: This is *imkhatareh* [risky], two souls, the woman and the baby.
>
> Amal: I know where to stop.

Amal responded in the affirmative when Hasso asked, "If there is a rip, do you suture?" When asked if she had ever faced problems while assisting a childbirth:

> Sometimes, sometimes there is a bit of bleeding. But I know how to deal with it. I give her Methergine [*methylergonovine maleate*] or a shot of Syntocinon and I massage her. I wear sanitized gloves and I clean her entire uterus and with the other hand I massage her like this [on her thigh]. When I do this massage, everything ends, the uterus contracts. Before she even begins nursing, before everything, she must go to the bathroom to have a bowel movement after she gives birth. If she does this, she has no problems afterward. Nothing. I order her to go to the bathroom right away. Thank God. This is a rare event.

The conversation illustrates epistemological, knowledge, and sensibility differences based on generation and praxis, but Amal (like "traditional" midwives generally) integrated pharmaceutical interventions and scientific knowledge as she deemed necessary. In comparison, Zaynab, a nurse-midwife with university and hospital training and certifications, was much more constrained by a biomedical epistemology and legal and social fears that encourage risk-adverse methods (that are not necessarily less risky in Palestine, empirically) under the leadership of obstetricians. Amal worked mostly outside hospital settings and brought longer experience as a practitioner and a range of knowledge sets to the work, including in collaboration with Palestinian physicians in private practice.

Litigation is necessary for incompetent physicians. Many medical errors should be examined carefully and in some cases, autopsies conducted. Such errors are coded in ways that avoid investigation in hospitals run by the Palestinian Authority. In Jerusalem, this is less likely to occur because the Palestinian-serving hospitals are regulated by an intimidating Israeli colonial system. Palestinians have brought many valid malpractice lawsuits against Palestinian and Israeli hospitals. Physicians often do not take careful medical and surgical histories, which would improve patient care and protect them from liability if something they could not control goes wrong.

Hospitals and clinics are understaffed, health staff work under extreme time pressure, and pregnant women and their families can be deliberately non-transparent

when communicating medical histories. When a pregnant woman comes in for an appointment in a Palestinian setting in Jerusalem, there are typically thirty women waiting outside the exam room over the entire shift, making it impossible to conduct thorough histories. In the limited time afforded each patient, an ob-gyn must conduct an ultrasound, measure many other vital and health indicators, and speak with the patient about other problems. The situation is the same in PA-run health institutions: medical staff and time are limited. In addition, while parents usually know of a longstanding medical problem with a pregnant daughter, they do not always share the information with medical staff because they consider it taboo or the girl is afraid of her husband knowing and divorcing her. In such cases, complications during pregnancy and labor are more likely, but the family may still blame the hospital.

Jamilah al-Kawasmi, an experienced Jerusalem nurse-midwife, is among the few Palestinian nurse-midwives licensed by Israel to assist women in homebirths, although she does not do this. She linked litigation fears among nurse-midwives with biomedicalization and lack of knowledge-seeking and agency (for lack of better terms) among the typical young Palestinian women she treats. She believed that "for Palestinians today, childbirth is almost worse than it was in the past because it is both biomedicalized and women patients have given up all authority to the hospital." She explained:

> Midwives worry they will be blamed if anything goes wrong in a homebirth because now parents want to go to court to benefit materially or to blame someone else, even if they lose. Whereas if the same incident occurs in a hospital, people are more likely to accept it.[42] Even so, today's midwives know a lot more than traditional midwives and consider and prepare for many possibilities during childbirth. They know who to contact if there is any problem during a homebirth. Nevertheless, I do not have the courage to do homebirths here.
>
> The mentality differs between Arab and Israeli maternity patients. The latter read, know and ask more about pregnancy and childbirth based on my experiences of birthing both in hospitals. By the time she is twenty-two, the Palestinian *sitt* I see typically has two children and is usually not independently prepared for pregnancy and childbirth when she comes into the hospital. She depends for information on her mother and mother-in-law, who ultimately make the decisions even as she is sitting on the hospital bed. When I worked in the village of al-'Isawiyya, I would tell her, "This is your body, decide what you want for yourself. Do you want assistance with the labor or not? Take a course on pregnancy and childbirth." In comparison, Israelis take a complete course on pregnancy and childbirth and visit the maternity department and compare it with others.[43]

Al-Kawasmi explained, in addition, the implications of computer-based documentation within the dominant medico-legal system for pregnancy and childbirth care in Jerusalem:

> Now, every single thing must be entered into the computer. Before, you used to write *and* explain to patients. No, it is not like that today. If something a patient said or you said is not written into the computer, it is not considered to have occurred. In turn, whatever is written is what you are held accountable for. Nurse-midwives are very scared now. They say we must protect ourselves before the courts. I must think about how I would be held to account if I make a mistake. They may force me to leave my work or punish me, and I would lose my profession and livelihood. If I do not work, I cannot educate my children, eat or live. Our life here is very difficult economically.[44]

Class- and education-based differences surely divide most Israeli settlers from most colonized Palestinians seeking reproductive healthcare in Jerusalem, but so do comparatively more conservative attitudes and restrictions regarding marital relations, sexuality, and reproduction among Palestinians. The latter holds true even when comparing occupied Palestine to most other Arab countries, which indicates that Zionist settler colonialism exacts particular gendered and sexual cultural costs from Palestinians. The following section considers these and other dimensions as they shape the pregnancy, delivery and postpartum sensibilities and experiences of Palestinian women.

Hang-ups, Secrets, and Traumas

Hasso had not considered patient sexual agency, awareness, or trauma in relation to reproduction, reproductive care, and reproductive experiences until she interviewed Saifi. Sexual trauma, secrets, and social hang-ups came up in more than one of the interviews with midwives. This section considers these matters non-systematically. It further illustrates the health and social costs especially for women of a medicalized and fragmented capitalist healthcare system in a male-dominated society that is ultimately governed by a Zionist settler-colonial entity and a comprador Palestinian economic and political class. Moreover, external political forces, funders and institutions (including missionary and Western "gender-sensitive") are invested in maintaining and being involved in the existing system to sustain their material and ideological interests. In this sense, Palestinian healthcare differs little from other Palestinian social sectors suffering under the extraordinary weight of Western and especially U.S. imperialism and Zionist settler-colonialism.

Like pregnancy and labor, postpartum healthcare is medicalized, whereas most postpartum Palestinian women report they need emotional support. Postpartum quality of life is especially low for poor Palestinian women and those "who had an unwanted pregnancy."[45]

Abu El Halaweh shared her frustration that postpartum Palestinian women are less concerned with their own health than the health of the baby: "A very small percentage of women who deliver regularly return for examination for themselves even if it is important for their health, but 100 percent return five to ten times for examinations of

their baby. We really need to know about mothers' well-being in that period."[46]

Saifi in the 2017 interview explained the consequences of lack of postnatal checkups:

> We still do not have real statistics on morbidity and mortality rates during pregnancy, labor, and after childbirth in Palestine. Women can experience complications and die related to childbirth up until a year after giving birth. In this country's hospitals, such deaths are not recorded as related to childbirth but to other medical matters. They code them differently even if they are mostly related to pregnancy and childbirth.[47]

In a 2006 cross-sectional survey of 264 women who had delivered a baby within the previous fifteen months and were visiting one of three PA Ministry of Health clinics in Jenin, Ramallah, and Hebron for any reason, only 36.6 percent had obtained postpartum care.[48] The reasons they provided for not doing so were that they "did not feel sick and therefore did not need postnatal care (85 percent), followed by not having been told by their doctor to come back for postnatal care (15.5 percent)." The rates of obtaining postpartum care were higher among women who had had a difficult delivery, a C-section, or an "instrumental vaginal delivery," as well as those who had given birth in a private hospital or lived in Jenin.

Saifi argues that Palestinian nurse-midwives are too often part of the problem in hospital labor and delivery rooms, allowing the biomedical priorities of the hospital setting, as well as gossip, "religion, and personal hang-ups" to shape their responses to laboring women:

> If she wants to cry, let her cry. Sometimes she wants to put her head on my chest or for me to hold her hand. Too often our midwives are standing between her legs and forget the upper, most important part. They separate the baby from the mother when they should be taking care of the whole person, the physical, spiritual, environmental. The fact is that sometimes a baby is unwanted…. Some *sittat* are afraid of the baby that comes out, thinking it is an alien. That's one reason traditional dayat quickly dried an infant and gave them to the mother. Today, there is another woman waiting outside ready to give birth so there is no time as the baby is quickly taken away for exams.[49]

Koukeyan noted how autonomous midwives were more likely "to talk to the woman, teach her important things about pregnancy and her rights."[50] This requires "privacy," which is impossible for most Palestinian women seeking reproductive healthcare in Palestine:

> How much privacy is there in a doctor's office or a hospital? The local daya would first and foremost protect women's secrets. That's why they used to call her the keeper of the secrets of wombs and paternity [*katimat asrar al-arham wal-ansab*]. She really was a unique individual. By the way, in Islam it was required to have oaths from two women relative to

> one from a man. But the daya's oath was equal to a man's oath. Did you know that? Because she always knew whose baby it was and was the only one who knew and kept that knowledge.[51]

Abu El Halaweh similarly linked the intimate knowledge and skills of traditional midwives and their ability to protect women's secrets with their social power.

> The daya's skills in touching, feelings, and psychology made her like the mukhtar of the neighborhood. She owned all the family secrets. She could deal with all social matters, resolve problems, connect couples together and marry them, examine, confirm and successfully deliver pregnancies…. She probably also confirmed virginity. She used all her intelligence to understand the psyche of the people and impact the community. She was probably the highest status person in many communities.[52]

Palestinian nurse-midwives working in the capitalist and under-resourced hospital model under Israeli occupation cannot maintain a holistic treatment approach, although some try. Al-Kawasmi explained: "This is our problem right now as midwives. I help a *sitt* give birth and two hours after birth I transfer her to another unit and after that, I might see her and I might not. The point here is that if I had time, I would go up to visit her. Sometimes I contact her by phone. But I do not keep in touch with her much after that."[53]

When interviewed, al-Kawasmi was "studying alternative medicine, *al-tibb al-badil*," including reflexology, reiki, "Chinese medicine," and Korean Su Jok therapy, which is "based on working on the hands and feet to release healing energy. It's wonderful. I apply the skills in my midwifery and at home." She explained that "illness is not only bodily. Sometimes psychological or spiritual ailments can produce bodily illness."[54] Shibli had completed courses in psychodrama and psychoanalysis at Haifa University and was similarly alert to trauma for some pregnant women, "especially sexual abuse. Such women want a midwife to take care of them in pregnancy."[55]

Some of the psychological and spiritual ailments are produced as a result of Palestinian women's limited reproductive agency. In the 2017 interview, Saifi found in her practice that:

> Most Palestinian women do not take decisions in relation to their health or childbirth. If she wants tubal ligation, she cannot get it. If she has had girls and knows that her husband determines the sex of a child, she does not defend her rights if he chooses another wife. It is not right that we are always focused on women's health, women's health, women's health but do not acknowledge she's not the decision maker in most cases. The situation is much better in terms of health and sex education in other Arab countries.[56]

She called attention to psychic suffering during labor for women who marry young and have no sexual experience or knowledge, including about their own bodies and

sources of pleasure: "You must cover your head and body but suddenly you marry a guy you barely know and must undress and act like a whore [in English]. It's a shock." While most Palestinian women

> eventually learn they have a right to sexual satisfaction, they often do not know their bodies because they assume it is shameful to touch your breasts. But if they do not, they don't feel masses or understand that discharge from nipples indicates that cancer has reached third or fourth stage. They do not necessarily know how hymens work…, or why menstruation may be delayed in some girls or that a woman may not bleed at first intercourse…. Women's traumas during labor are often tied to these social hangups.[57]

Women patients are also affected by young men's lack of sexual experience or care. Saifi recounts:

> We've had many women come to the hospital to be sewn up because of the difficulty of first sexual intercourse. He did not prepare her, engage in foreplay…. She is afraid, doesn't know, or her body is not working or prepared. Her fear of pain controls everything. No one discusses it because it is considered shameful to discuss the bedroom. You should take it. You might be depressed, angry, lose weight, be broken, but the most important thing is to protect the secrets of marital relations.[58]

Reproduction, the quality of reproductive healthcare, and the well-being of healthcare providers and patients cannot be extracted from larger systems and communities or their priorities. Palestinians are situated in multiple violent carceral systems that ensnare them differently depending on class and gender positionalities, family, and hegemonic power relations. A radically reconstituted and liberated Palestine alert to the dignity and wholeness of each person would integrate every sector of society in its authorship. Its institutional design, including healthcare, would prioritize the wellbeing of the most disfranchised and address class, gendered, and sexual contradictions together.

* * *

This article examines tensions raised by leading contemporary Palestinian midwives, who were informants and analysts as much as subjects of analysis, and the conditions of reproductive healthcare for Palestinian women especially since the establishment of the Palestinian Authority. It is not guided by public health, demographic, or nationalist frames of analysis, which are more legible and apparent in scholarship on Palestine. It names the male-dominance that structures Palestinian political and health systems, considers the violence of the medicalization and commodification of reproductive healthcare, and challenges by its focus the sexual respectability politics that exact additional substantial costs on all Palestinians in a brutally colonized

society. At times intense gendered class tensions emerge between midwives and Palestinian obstetrician-gynecologists and the Ministry of Health. Ideological and practice differences also produce tensions among contemporary Palestinian midwives as workers shaped by their training, the risk logic and priorities of the health systems in which they practice, and the ever-present violence of Israeli settler-colonial rule. Palestinian midwifery is a community-based praxis and form of labor that indisputably interpellated tens of thousands of Palestinian women over generations, probably only superseded by women in the teaching profession. But this form of midwifery is now replaced by biomedicalized reproductive healthcare in the underresourced and understaffed male physician-led hospitals and clinics where most nurse-midwives work.

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Endnotes

1 Livia Wick, "Building the Infrastructure, Modeling the Nation: The Case of Birth in Palestine," *Culture, Medicine, and Psychiatry* 32 (2008): 328–57, especially 350.

2 Wick, "Building the Infrastructure," 342, n. 17; Yousef Mohammad Mustafa Jaradat, "Workplace Stress among Nurses: Stressful Working Conditions, Shift Work, and Workplace Aggression among Nurses in Hebron District, West Bank, Palestine" (PhD diss., University of Oslo and National Institute of Occupational Health, Oslo, Norway, 2017), appendix A.3, 92; and Saifi personal communication with Dr. Suha Ba'loushah, August 2023. In 2021, there were 11,494 registered nurses in the West Bank and 10,984 nurses in Gaza, according to the Palestinian Union of Nursing and Midwifery. About 1,500 of the West Bank nurses were nurse-midwives and 668 of Gaza nurses were nurse-midwives with four-year degrees (an additional 570 midwives in Gaza held two-year diplomas). More than 90 percent of Palestinian obstetrician-gynecologists working in the Palestinian territories are men and about 48 percent of registered Palestinian nurses are men (56 percent in Gaza and 38 percent in the West Bank), based on 2012 data.

3 Hasso interview with Miriam Shibli in 'Arab al-Shibli village on 14 June 2017. At the time of the interview, Shibli was a nurse-midwife and maternity ward supervisor in the Nazareth Hospital. She began her career as a nurse's aide and then a practical nurse at Nazareth Hospital between 1982 and 1986. When Israel passed a regulation requiring all such workers to be registered nurses to be promoted, Shibli studied intensively for two years and passed the Israeli equivalent of A-levels and then completed a "bridge course" to move from practical nursing to midwifery. In the mid-1990s, she completed in one year a three-year BSc program in maternity and midwifery at the University of Surrey and was appointed "in charge" of the midwifery ward when she returned in 1997. In 2007 she earned an MSc in midwifery at the University of Surrey and has been a supervisor of the labor and maternity wards at different times in the hospital since 2000.

4 Yara Asi, "The Conditional Right to Health in Palestine," *al-Shabaka: The Palestinian Policy Network*, 30 June 2019, online at al-shabaka.org/briefs/the-conditional-right-to-health-in-palestine/ (accessed 3 July 2024).

5 For more on this context, see Nadera

Shalhoub-Kevorkian, "The Politics of Birth and the Intimacies of Violence against Palestinian Women in Occupied East Jerusalem," *British Journal of Criminology*, 55 (2015): 1187–206.

6 In addition to Miriam Shibli, a prominent Palestinian nurse-midwife in the Nazareth region whose analysis is used in this article, Hasso interviewed Palestinian nurses, obstetricians, and traditional healers from other parts of Palestine for a separate research project.

7 Some direct quotes were already anonymized based on Hasso's judgment.

8 Frances S. Hasso, *Buried in the Red Dirt: Race, Reproduction, and Death in Modern Palestine* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2022).

9 Rita Giacaman, *Life and Health in Three Palestinian Villages* (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Ithaca Press, 1988), 12–13, 74–77.

10 Rita Giacaman, Laura Wick, Hanan Abdul-Rahim, and Livia Wick, "The Politics of Childbirth in the Context of Conflict: Policies or De Facto Practices?" *Health Policy* 72 (2005): 129–139, especially 133–35. A study on Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Palestine, and Syria from the early 1990s found over-medicalization of childbirth generally and especially in Palestine and Jordan. Oona M.R. Campbell and Gillian Lewando-Hundt, "Profiling Maternal Health in Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Palestine, and Syria," in *Reproductive Health and Infectious Disease in the Middle East*, ed. Robin Barlow and Joseph W. Brown (Brookfield, VT: Ashgate, 1998), 22–44.

11 Wick, "Building the Infrastructure," 353.

12 Hasso interview with Sahar Hassan in al-Bireh, 13 June 2017. Hassan had worked at Birzeit University since 2005, initially as a researcher in the Institute of Community and Public Health. She graduated with a nursing degree from al-Quds University in 1989 and MSc in nursing from the University of Pennsylvania in 1992. She worked as a midwifery and continuing education supervisor at Jerusalem's Makassed Hospital between 1994 and 1997. In 1997, Hassan left Makassed at the behest of the PA Ministry of Health to restructure the dated and neglected Ibn Sina College for midwifery and nursing that had previously been run by the Israeli "civil administration" on two campuses, Ramallah and Nablus. As dean of Ibn Sina, Hassan established the first four-year midwifery training program in the Arab world as well as a national Palestinian accreditation system. She earned a PhD in women's health from the University of Oslo School of Medicine in 2014.

13 Hasso interview with Sahar Hassan.

14 Hasso interview with Sahar Hassan.

15 Saifi personal communication with Dr. Suha Ba'loushah in late July 2023. It was difficult for us to study the reasons for this difference. We could not find *documented* language on scope of practice for nurse-midwives in the West Bank or Gaza despite significant effort.

16 Interview with Vartouhi Koukeyan in Jerusalem on 12 June 2017. When interviewed, Koukeyan was a professor of midwifery at al-Quds University for bachelor students. She studied at the Augusta Victoria (United World Lutheran) Hospital Nursing School in the 1970s (Mount of Olives) and completed a midwifery course in Jordan because the Occupied Palestinian Territories did not have a professional midwifery school. She graduated through the Ministry of Health in Jordan. She completed an additional bachelor's degree at al-Quds University, then a master's degree in mother and child health at Case Western University in Cleveland, Ohio.

17 Hasso interview with Vartouhi Koukeyan.

18 Hasso interview with Vartouhi Koukeyan.

19 Hasso interview with Vartouhi Koukeyan.

20 Hasso interview with Miriam Shibli.

21 Hasso interview with Huda Abu El Halaweh in Ramallah on 21 June 2017. Abu El Halaweh earned a BA in nursing and MA in maternal and child healthcare and has worked in a number of hospitals and primary healthcare centers, including Makassed Hospital in the 1990s. When interviewed, she had since 1998 been teaching nursing and midwifery at al-Quds University, where she directs the Midwifery Unit.

22 Wick, "Building the Infrastructure," 341.

23 Wick, "Building the Infrastructure," 343.

24 Sahar Hassan-Bitar and Sheila Narrainen, "'Shedding Light' on the Challenges Faced by Palestinian Maternal Health-care Providers." *Midwifery* (May 2009): 154–59, quote at 155.

25 Hassan-Bitar and Narrainen, "Shedding Light," 156.

26 Suha R. Baloushah, Nidal Abu-Hamad, Nooredine Mohammadi, Areefa S. M. Alkasseh, and Motasem S. Salah, "Gaza

Midwives' Experiences in Providing Maternity Care during COVID-19," *European Journal of Midwifery* 6 (August 2022): 1–7.

27 Wick, "Building the Infrastructure," 343.

28 Bara'a Samara and Anton R. Sabella, "The Knowledge and Attitudes of Palestinian Women towards Different Childbirth Delivery Options," *Clinical and Experimental Obstetrics and Gynecology* 48, no. 1 (2021): 138–43. Complications occur more frequently with C-sections than with vaginal deliveries. In a large study of Palestinian women during pregnancy, labor, delivery and up to seven days postpartum in Ramallah's public hospital over a three-month period in 2011–12, almost 27 percent had one or more maternal morbidities, with hemorrhage, preeclampsia or eclampsia, and infection being the most common. Of 1,209 women who gave birth, nearly 25 percent had a C-section and were almost three times more likely to experience morbidities. Sahar J. Hassan, Laura Wick, and Jocelyn DeJong, "A Glance into the Hidden Burden of Maternal Morbidity and Patterns of Management in a Palestinian Governmental Referral Hospital," *Women and Birth* 28 (2015): e148–e156.

29 Hasso interview with Huda Abu El Halaweh.

30 Hasso interview with Aisha Barghouti Saifi in Ramallah on 28 June 2017. Saifi completed a BSc in nursing and a high diploma in midwifery at Bethlehem University, an MA in social work, a diploma in training of trainers, and courses and workshops on pregnancy health, women's health, and breastfeeding. She worked as a nurse in Augusta Victoria Hospital (1986–89) and the Union of Palestinian Medical Relief Committees (1990–92) and as a nurse-midwife in the Dajani Hospital in Jerusalem (2002–6), the Red Crescent Hospital in Jerusalem (2007–8), Medicins du Monde France (2008–9), Dajani Hospital (2013–15), and St. Joseph Hospital (2015–16). Since then, she has been the clinical instructor of third-year nursing students at Bethlehem University who intern at the Red Crescent Hospital in al-Bireh.

31 According to Palestinian statistics from the areas governed by the Palestine Ministry of Health, 96.7 percent of women delivered in a hospital in 2004, and 99.99 percent of women delivered in a hospital in 2016. See: Rita Giacaman, Niveen M. E. Abu-Rmeileh, and Laura Wick. 2006. "The Limitations on Choice: Palestinian Women's Childbirth Location, Dissatisfaction with the Place of Birth, and Determinants," *European Journal of Public Health* 17, no. 1 (2006): 86–91; and Berit Mortensen, Marit Lieng, Lien My Diep, Mirjam Lukasse, Kefaya Atieh, and Erik Fosse, "Improving Maternal and Neonatal Health by a Midwife-led Continuity Model of Care – An Observational Study in One Governmental Hospital in Palestine." *EClinicalMedicine* 10 (2019): 84–91. For comparison, in Nablus in the 1970s, 70 percent of births occurred in women's homes attended by traditional or nurse-midwives, "and earlier it was a much higher rate." Hasso interview with Dr. Abdulraham Qasem Suleiman Shunnar in Nablus, 27 June 2017.

32 Hasso interview with Vartouhi Koukeyan.

33 Wick, "Building the Infrastructure," 343.

34 Hasso interview with Huda Abu El Halaweh.

35 Hasso interview with Huda Abu El Halaweh.

36 Sandra Healy, Eileen Humphreys, and Catriona Kennedy, "Midwives' and Obstetricians' Perceptions of Risk and Its Impact on Clinical Practice and Decision-Making in Labour: An Integrative Review," *Women and Birth* 29 (2016): 107–16.

37 Healy, Humphreys, and Kennedy, "Midwives' and Obstetricians' Perceptions," 107.

38 Healy, Humphreys, and Kennedy, "Midwives' and Obstetricians' Perceptions," 107.

39 Healy, Humphreys, and Kennedy, "Midwives' and Obstetricians' Perceptions," 107–8, 112–13.

40 Healy, Humphreys, and Kennedy, "Midwives' and Obstetricians' Perceptions," 108, 112.

41 Healy, Humphreys, and Kennedy, "Midwives' and Obstetricians' Perceptions," 113–14.

42 Obstetrician-gynecologists are legally liable in hospital births whereas midwives are liable in homebirths.

43 Hasso interview with Jamilah al-Kawasmi in Tur, Jerusalem on 26 June 2017. When interviewed, al-Kawasmi was a nurse-midwife working in the labor room and natural childbirth department at Hadassah Ein Kerem hospital in West Jerusalem. She has worked there or at Hadassah's hospital in Jabal al-Masharif, East Jerusalem since 2002. She graduated from the Augusta Victoria Hospital nursing school in 1975, which included three months of training in Nazareth Hospital. In 1980, she joined the first cohort of students in a one-year training course on midwifery at Makassed Hospital and between

then and 2002, she worked in Makassed's labor room as a midwife, Bekor Holim Hospital in West Jerusalem as a nurse (since Palestinian licensing is recognized only in Palestinian institutions), Israeli Kopat Holim outpatient clinics, and as an assistant director of the nursing department in Augusta Victoria Hospital. She studied Hebrew and completed a new certification in midwifery through the Israeli Ministry of Health in a hospital in Tel Aviv to acquire the Israeli midwifery license that allowed her to work in Hadassah.

44 Hasso interview with Jamilah al-Kawasmi.

45 Weeam Hammoudeh, Awad Mataria, Laura Wick, and Rita Giacaman, "In Search of Health: Quality of Life among Postpartum Palestinian Women," *Expert Review of Pharmacoeconomics and Outcomes Research* 9, no. 2 (April 2009): 123–32, especially 125, 127.

46 Hasso interview with Huda Abu El Halaweh.

47 Hasso interview with Aisha Barghouti Saifi. According to the World Health Organization, "maternal death" statistics include "female deaths from any cause related to or aggravated by pregnancy or its management (excluding accidental or incidental causes) during pregnancy and childbirth or within 42 days of termination of pregnancy, irrespective of the duration and site of the pregnancy"; "pregnancy-related death" and "late pregnancy-related death" are the deaths of women while pregnant or within forty-two days or twelve months of termination of pregnancy, respectively, irrespective of cause. World Health Organization, "WHO Guidance for Measuring Maternal Mortality from a Census" (Geneva: World Health Organization, 2013), online at apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/87982/9789241506113_eng.pdf (accessed 12 July 2024).

48 Enas Dhaher, Rafael T. Mikolajczyk, Annette E. Maxwell, and Alexander Krämer, "Factors Associated with Lack of Postnatal Care among Palestinian Women: A Cross-sectional Study of Three Clinics in the West Bank," *BMC Pregnancy and Childbirth* 8, no. 26 (2008): 1–9.

49 Hasso interview with Aisha Barghouti Saifi.

50 Hasso interview with Vartouhi Koukeyan.

51 Hasso interview with Vartouhi Koukeyan.

52 Hasso interview with Huda Abu El Halaweh.

53 Hasso interview with Jamilah al-Kawasmi.

54 Hasso interview with Jamilah al-Kawasmi.

55 Hasso interview with Miriam Shibli.

56 Hasso interview with Aisha Barghouti Saifi.

57 Hasso interview with Aisha Barghouti Saifi.

58 Hasso interview with Aisha Barghouti Saifi.

Destruction of Cultural Heritage in Gaza

Hamdan Taha

Abstract

Since the start of the 2023–24 war on Gaza, Palestinian cultural heritage has undergone widespread destruction from Israeli targeting of ancient sites, historic and religious buildings, museums, cultural and academic buildings, public buildings, and infrastructure. More than 100 archeological sites, 256 historical buildings, many museums, hospitals, libraries, cemeteries, and over 100,000 archaeological objects, were destroyed. This essay presents a brief summary of cultural heritage policies in Palestine, protections of cultural heritage guaranteed by international humanitarian law and the protective role of UNESCO and other similar organizations. It then gives a preliminary assessment of the war's destruction to cultural sites in Gaza up to early 2024, recommends future action for a comprehensive assessment of the damage, and proposes mechanisms for legal follow-up and a framework for plans and programs for recovery and rebuilding.

Keywords:

Gaza historical sites; Palestinian cultural heritage; cultural genocide; archaeological sites; destruction of cultural heritage; destruction of urban landmarks; war crimes.

Editor's Note

A longer version of this piece was published as Institute for Palestine Studies policy paper no. 31, and can be read in full at:
www.palestine-studies.org/sites/default/files/attachments/policypapers/Hamdan%20Taha%20ENG%20031.pdf

The name "Gaza Strip" is a new politico-geographical term for the much larger ancient area of Gaza. The term was first used after the Nakba of 1948 to describe a narrow Mediterranean coastal strip in southern Palestine (figure 1), forty kilometers long and six to eight

kilometers wide. Today, it is home to 2.3 million Palestinians, 70 percent of whom are refugees and their descendants, driven out of their homes and lands in western and southern Palestine by Israel during the 1948–49 war and its aftermath. Since 1967, the population has lived under the harsh conditions of Israeli occupation, most in overpopulated refugee camps; in 2007, a suffocating siege was imposed that severely limits entry and exit of people and goods.[1] Despite its small size, Gaza is rich in archeological and historic sites. Archeological surveys carried out over the last century indicate the existence of some one hundred and thirty sites (figure 2), in addition to remains of ancient cities and towns within Gaza, located in Gaza City, Khan Yunis, Dayr al-Balah, Rafah, and Bayt Hanun, and in tens of villages and eight refugee camps.[2]

Figure 1. Aerial photograph of the Gaza Strip before 7 October 2023.

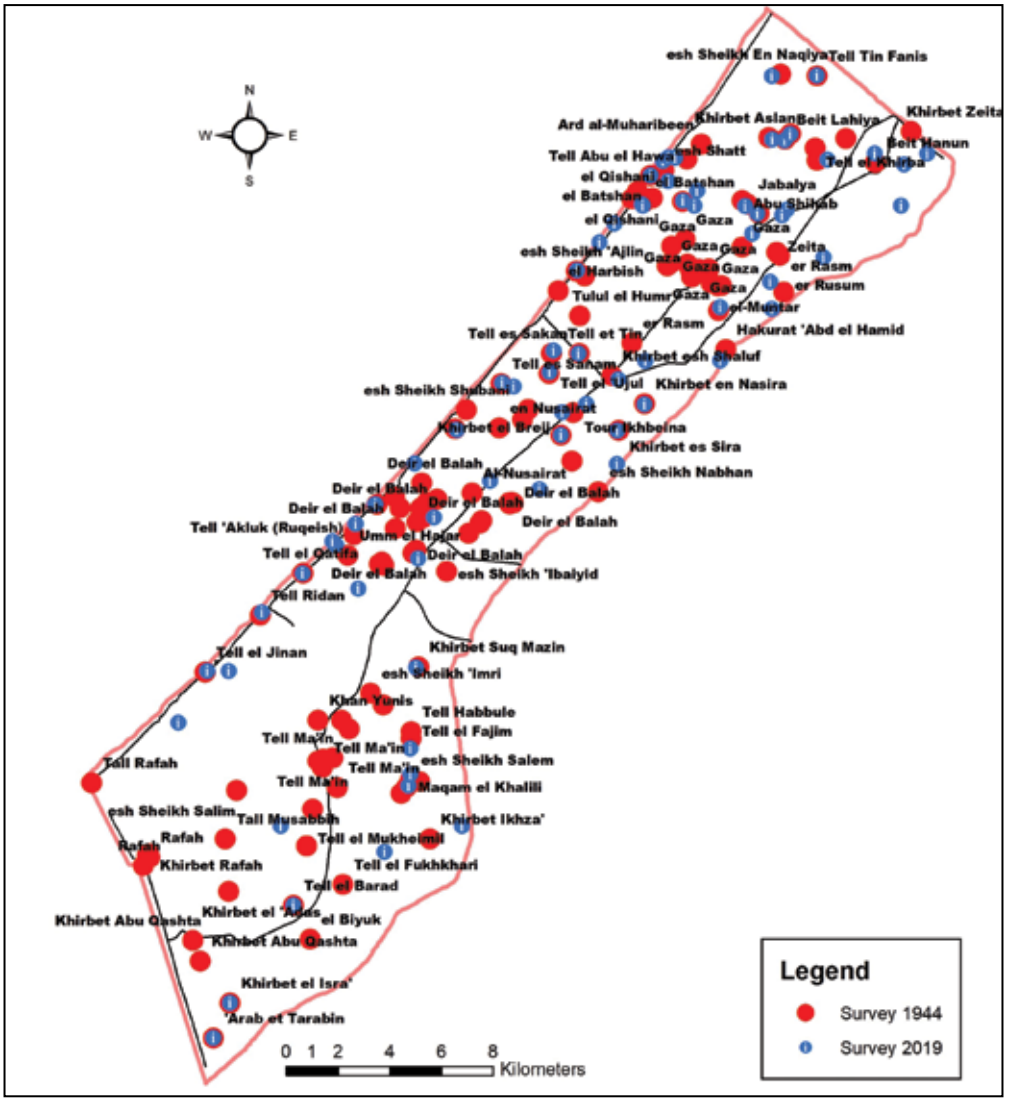

Figure 2. Map showing the distribution and density of archeological sites in the Gaza Strip.

The International Law Framework

According to international law, the occupied Palestinian territories – the West Bank including Jerusalem, and Gaza – are occupied land and Israel, as an occupying power, must comply with the laws that stipulate member states' obligation to protect cultural and natural heritage under their control. The following conventions specifically apply: the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, 1948; the Fourth Geneva Convention and its annexes, 1949; the Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural

Property in the Event of Armed Conflict, 1954; and the UNESCO Recommendation on International Principles Applicable to Archaeological Excavations, 1956.

Further, article 27, paragraph 4 of the fourth annex of the Hague regulations of 1907 specifies the duty of armed forces in siege situations is to take all measures necessary not to damage places of worship and other buildings that house artistic, scientific, or charitable institutions or historical artefacts. Article 56 of the 1954 Hague Convention forbids any damage done to places of worship, charitable institutions, and historical sites, while article 5 of the Hague Convention obligates all parties which occupy any region or subdistrict thereof to offer support to the party whose land was occupied in order to take all necessary measures to protect cultural property. The protocols attached to the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1977, namely articles 53 of the first protocol and 16 of the second protocol, forbid the commission of any destructive acts directed against any historical sites, works of art, or places of worship that embody the spiritual heritage of a people. A number of other international agreements also apply to occupied territories: UNESCO Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property, 1970; World Heritage Convention, formally the Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage, 1972; UNESCO Convention on the Protection of the Underwater Cultural Heritage, 2001; UNESCO Declaration Concerning the Intentional Destruction of Cultural Heritage, 2003; UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage 2003, and tens of resolutions issued by UNESCO.[3]

The current assault on Gaza constitutes a flagrant violation of international humanitarian law, most seriously, the 1948 Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide. Nevertheless, international political will has been much quieter concerning the current assault on Gaza in contrast to its vocal activism elsewhere. Previously, UNESCO played an effective role in following up on destruction to cultural heritage in the recent wars in Iraq and Syria. It also raised a case with the International Criminal Court in the aftermath of the attack by armed gangs on shrines in Mali, called "war crimes" by the ICC, and advocated not to leave these attacks unpunished. Subsequently, a multipurpose international delegation was entrusted with protecting cultural and historic sites in Mali, in coordination with UNESCO. Irina Bukova, UNESCO Director General at the time, considered that the consensus achieved regarding Security Council Resolution 2347 (2017) on the protection of cultural property being important to security indicated that "a new cultural landscape" was being built, and "a new global awareness" was emerging "to protect culture for peace and security."[4] History shall record that UNESCO, which had played a principal role in this major achievement has, under its current leadership, failed in its responsibility to preserve Palestinian cultural heritage in Gaza. The only measure it adopted was to register the site of Tell Umm 'Amr on UNESCO's list of sites requiring additional protection, on 14 December 2023, during a special meeting to discuss the Convention of Protecting Cultural Property in cases of armed conflict.

International reactions to what could arguably be considered war crimes committed against Gaza's cultural heritage have been muted; the absence of any effective role by UNESCO has been stark regarding the destruction of that heritage. Other European cultural institutions remained similarly on the sideline, an attitude demonstrated by the lukewarm statements issued by the World Heritage Council, ICOMOS, which came close to supporting the assault.[5]

The Systematic Destruction of Palestine's Cultural Heritage

The acts of heritage destruction during this current war are a sequel to similar acts committed by Israel over the past seventy-five years, beginning with the obliteration of more than four hundred Palestinian towns and villages and the expulsion or genocidal cleansing of a million Palestinians from their homes and properties.[6] Despite the blatant horror of these well-documented crimes, the Palestinians have been unable to inscribe them into the collective memory of mankind.

Figure 3. A main street in Gaza City in late 2023.

Since the start of the most recent war on Gaza in October 2023, Israeli shelling and air bombardment has brought catastrophic destruction to all areas of life (figure 3) resulting in the deaths, until this writing, of more than thirty-four thousand people and the wounding of more than seventy-six thousand Palestinian civilians, overwhelmingly children, women, and the elderly. Israel further destroyed basic infrastructure and vital institutions, targeted hospitals and health care personnel,

totally demolished entire city quarters, wiped out entire families by bringing homes and residential towers crashing down upon their inhabitants, dislocated the population and forced them to seek refuge in southern Gaza and other regions lacking water, food or shelter – without the bare minimum to sustain life – and bringing about a massive humanitarian catastrophe.

Preliminary Estimates of the Damage

Several local Gaza organizations began to make initial assessments of the damage based on testimonies and reports from the field and information from satellite imagery. Information from an internal memo of the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities that recorded the destruction of a large number of archaeological sites and historic buildings is also included below. Heritage for Peace (November 2023) and ICOMOS-Palestine (January 2024) managed to assess damage to twenty-three out of one hundred sites.[7] The security situation did not permit a more thorough and comprehensive assessment of damage done to sites of cultural heritage; information was obtained with great difficulty due to danger from air strikes, tank shelling, and drone and sniper targeting. Nevertheless, available documentation provides evidence of damage done to archaeological sites, historic towns, mosques, churches and religious shrines, museums and libraries, manuscript centers, cultural and artistic centers, universities and academic institutions. Photos obtained of these archaeological sites, historic buildings and cultural centers in Gaza portray systematic destruction of five thousand years of cultural heritage, ancient sites in many cases reduced to piles of rubble.[8]

Archaeological Sites

The targeting by Israel of a large number of archaeological sites began at the start of the war. Most prominent of these sites is Tell al-Sakan to the south of Gaza, which archaeologists dated to the early Bronze Age (3200–2300 BCE). Preliminary reports indicate that Tell al-‘Ajul was also targeted, a site that represents Gaza’s history during the Middle and Late Bronze Age (2300–500 BCE), while the sites of Tell al-Mintar and the shrines of Shaykh ‘Ali al-Mintar and Shaykh Radwan suffered extensive damage.

Targeted also was the al-Balakhiya site (figure 4) which represents the ancient port of Gaza, the Anthedon, constructed during the Greco-Roman period and active until the twelfth century. Shelling caused severe damage to a Byzantine-era church in Jabaliya, with the probable loss of its very rich mosaics of figures of humans, animals, plants, and scenes from mythology (figure 5). The historic cemetery in Jabaliya was also destroyed where hundreds of tombs dating to the Roman and Byzantine periods had been excavated. The mosaics in ‘Abasan al-Kabira dating to the same period were previously destroyed in the 2014 war.

Figure 4. Al-Balakhiyya, the site of the ancient port of Gaza, before and after destruction.

The Saint Hilarion Monastery at the archaeological site of Tell Umm ʻAmr (figure 6), near Nusayrat camp, was shelled and indications are that the historic Dayr al-Balah cemetery on the coast of the town suffered widespread damage. This is a cemetery where excavations from 1972 to 1982 revealed anthropoid coffins dating to the twelfth century BCE, making it a site of exceptional importance.

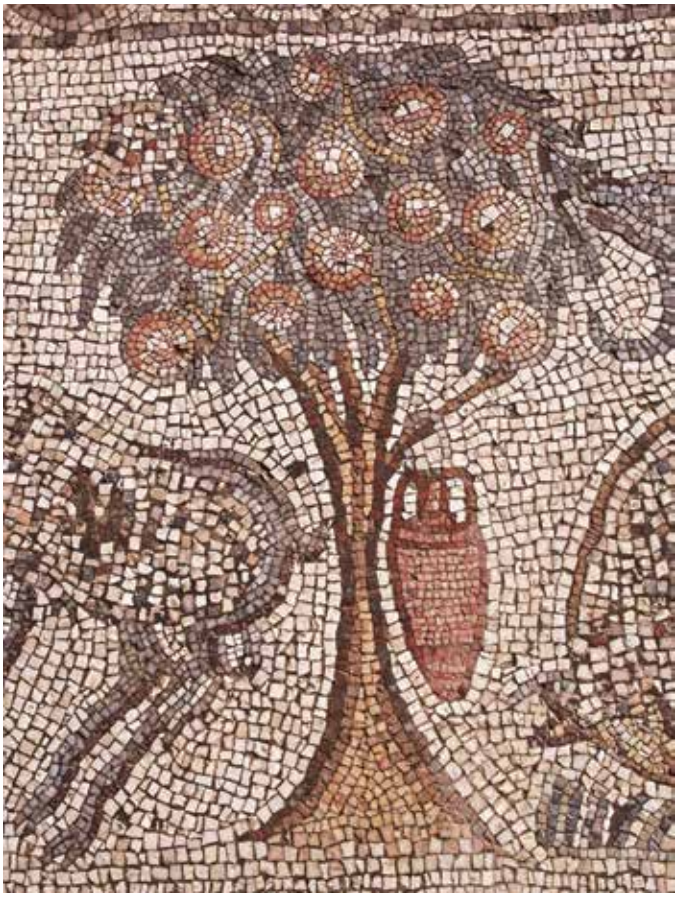

Figure 5. Jabaliya Byzantine church mosaics, likely destroyed by shelling.

Figure 6. Mosaics of Saint Hilarion Monastery, likely destroyed by shelling. Bottom photo online at www.travelpalestine.ps/en/Tag/8/Gaza (accessed 2 August 2024).

Historic and Religious Buildings

Historic and religious sites were systematically targeted by aerial strikes and shelling in 2023 and early 2024, causing massive damage to the cultural heritage of Gaza City, Bayt Hanun, Dayr al-Balah, Khan Yunis, and Rafah, a heritage that included historical buildings, mosques, schools, mansions, shrines, and public fountains. Among the most significant and celebrated historic and religious buildings targeted in Gaza was the Great ʻUmari Mosque (figure 7), in the central Daraj quarter of Gaza City, which was totally destroyed. The oldest and the largest mosque in Gaza with an area of 4,100 square meters, it is believed that the mosque was built on the site of the Roman period temple of the god Marna and the Byzantine church of Eudoxia and dates to the Ayyubid and Mamluk periods. It is especially noted for its Mamluk and Ottoman inscriptions.

Figure 7. ʻUmari Mosque before and after destruction.

The Church of Saint Porphyrius (figure 8) in the Zaytun quarter in Gaza City was also almost totally destroyed. The ancient church includes the tomb of the saint, who was bishop of Gaza in 425 CE; the church was rebuilt in the twelfth century CE. On 19 October 2023, the church was bombarded, which destroyed its walls and floors and led to the collapse of the building that housed church caretakers and caused the death of many people from the area who had sought refuge there, with entire families wiped out.

Figure 8. The Orthodox Church of Saint Porphyrius in Gaza City, after the 19 October 2023 bombardment.

All of Gaza's seven-century-old historic mosques suffered partial or total destruction. The most notable of these is the Katib Wilaya Mosque in the Zaytun quarter in the Old City of Gaza, the oldest part of which dates to 1334 CE, in the Mamluk period. The western portions of the mosque were built during the Ottoman period by Ahmad Bey, the *katib wilaya* (chief secretary of the province), in 1586 CE and its minaret stands next to the bell tower of the Church of Saint Porphyrius. Also destroyed is the Mosque of al-Sayyid Hashim (figure 9), one of the most beautiful historic mosques in the Daraj quarter in Gaza. Built in the Ottoman style with a surface area of around 2,400 square meters, it has an open courtyard (*sahn*) surrounded by porticos. Beneath the western portico is a tomb believed to be that of al-Sayyid Hashim ibn ʻAbd Manaf, grandfather of the Prophet Muhammad. The historic Qashqar Mosque as well as the ʻUmari Mosque in Jabaliya built in the Mamluk period were also destroyed, as was the 600 square-meter Mamluk-era Zafardamri Mosque in the Shujaʻiyya quarter, built by Shihab al-Din Ahmad Azfir ibn al-Zafadamri in 1360 CE. The Mamluk-era Mahkama Mosque also in al-Shujaʻiyya had been destroyed in the 2014 assault.

Figure 9. Photo of the Mosque of al-Sayyid Hashim before its destruction, from the official website of the Gaza Municipality.

A large number of religious shrines were also destroyed including, for example, some in Tell al-Mintar and al-Shaykh ʻAjlin, and the *maqam* (shrine) to the legendary figure al-Khidr in Rafah, which encompasses the tomb of Saint Hilarion. The Ottoman-era shrine of the prophet Yusuf east of Jabaliya was destroyed in the 2014 assault on Gaza.

Historic buildings include public buildings such as schools, mansions, private residences, and public baths. This current war is unlike its predecessors in that it has been systematically targeting the historic centers of Gaza City, Bayt Hanun and Khan Yunis (figure 10). Notable in this regard is Qasr al-Basha **(**figure 11) in the Daraj quarter in Gaza, which was a large palace with two floors and dates to the Mamluk era. Its decorations include the *rank*, or heraldic emblem, of Sultan al-Zahir Baybars. It had been used as the residence of the governors of Gaza in the Mamluk and Ottoman periods. The palace was named after the Radwan family who owned it at the beginning of the Ottoman era. Napoleon Bonaparte spent three nights at the palace during his campaign against Syria in 1799, and the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities had recently restored the palace and refurbished it as a museum.

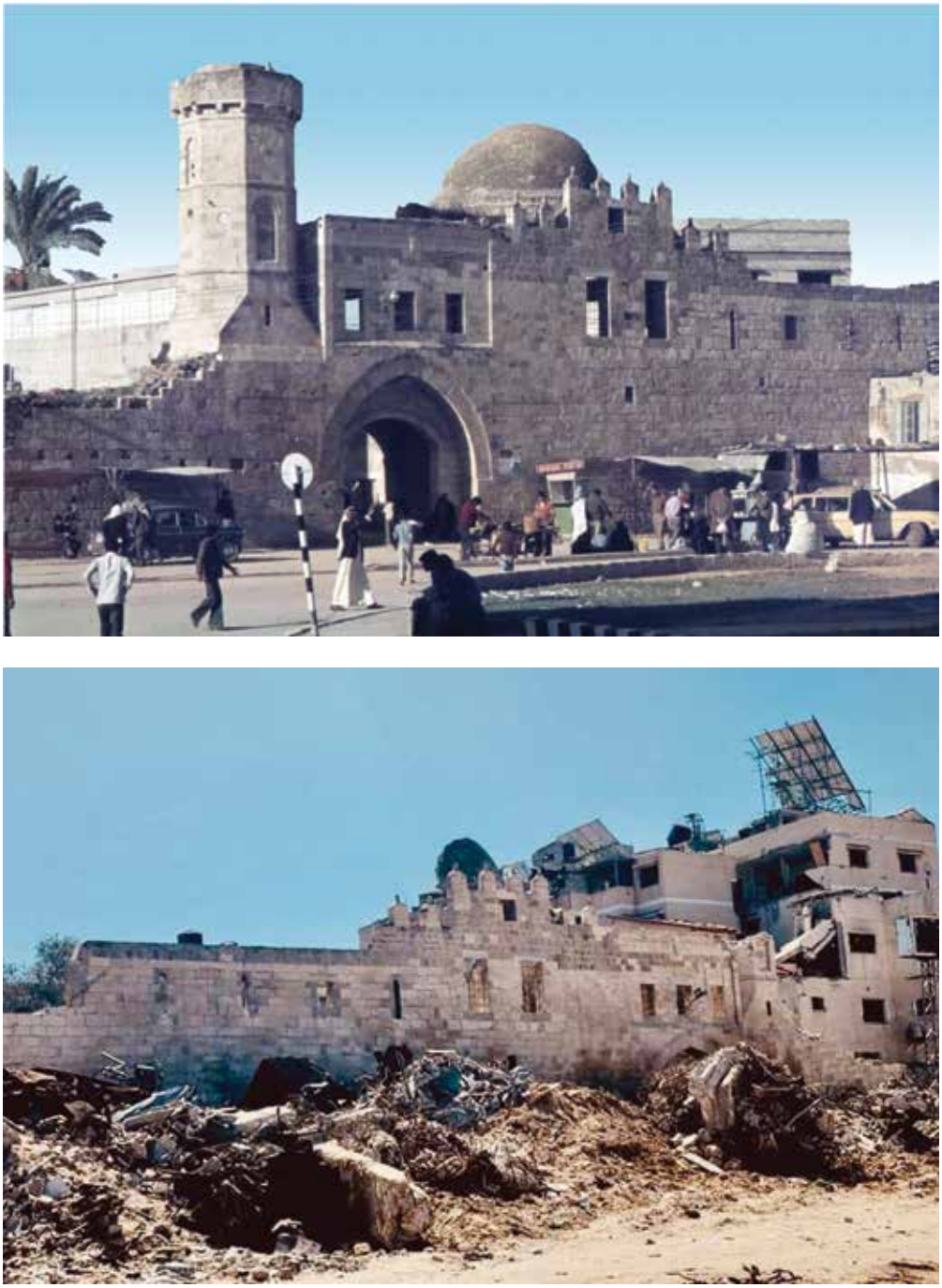

Figure 10. Khan Yunis castle, or Qalat Barquq, a Mamluk fortress built in 1387 CE, here before and after its destruction. Top photo online at virtualmuseum.tourism.ps/en/article/80/Khan-Yunis (access 2 August 2024).

Figure 11. Qasr al-Basha, after its restoration and below, after its destruction.

Also completely destroyed was al-Kamiliya Madrasa in the Zaytun quarter of Gaza city, named after the Ayyubid Sultan al-Kamil who built it in 1237 CE. It has

two floors and a surface area of 537 square meters with a central courtyard. This madrasa was used for teaching and to house poor students and travelers, and was used continuously over the centuries until 1930. It was the last madrasa standing in the city.

The destruction includes the almost total demolition of Dar al-Saqqa in the Shuja'iyya quarter (figure 12) which had been built in 1661 CE by Ahmad al-Saqqa, a prominent Gaza merchant. The mansion has two floors and a total surface area of about 700 square meters. The al-Saqqa family had recently restored it and refurbished it as a cultural center. Targeted too was the Tarazi House, a distinguished Ottoman era structure, and extensive damage was done to the 'Alami House and the adjoining arcade in the Daraj quarter, one of the city's ancient gates, and situated near the 'Umari Mosque and Qasr al-Basha. The Ottoman-era Hammam al-Samra (figure 13), recently restored, was also destroyed along with the Ottoman-era Rifa'iyya public fountain, constructed by Bahram ibn Mustafa Pasha in 1568 CE.

Figure 12. Dar al-Saqqa, after restoration and after destruction.

Figure 13. Hammam al-Samra, after restoration and after destruction.

The al-Ahli Arab Hospital (called al-Ma‘madani) in the Zaytun quarter, built in 1882 CE – operated by the Anglican Diocese in Jerusalem and the only Christian hospital in Gaza – was comprised of thirteen buildings. It suffered extensive shelling on the evening of Tuesday, 17 October 2023, resulting in the massacre of some 471 civilians who were sheltering there, including patients who were with their families.

World Heritage Sites

There are three archaeological sites registered on the preliminary list of cultural sites in Palestine that are in the Gaza Strip.[9] These are al-Balakhiyya or Anthedon, the Tell Umm ‘Amir or Monastery of Saint Hilarion and Wadi Gaza (coastal wetlands) as a natural heritage site.

Al-Balakhiyya (Anthedon)

This site lies on the coast northwest of Gaza city and was the ancient port of Gaza during the Greco-Roman period. Islamic sources call it *Tida.* The site is one kilometer from the ancient port city, Maiuma. Joint Palestinian and French excavations have revealed traces of neo-Assyrian, Babylonian, Persian, Hellenistic, Roman, Byzantine, and early Islamic remains. The site also revealed the city walls and quarters housing craft workers and the city’s population, some of which were decorated with frescoes. The site reveals floor mosaics, storage areas, and fortified structures, and was listed on the Palestinian preliminary list of world heritage prior to its inclusion on the list of world heritage. This site was shelled extensively in 2023 and 2024.

Tell Umm ‘Amir (Monastery of Saint Hilarion)

The Monastery of Saint Hilarion was revealed to occupy the site of Tell Umm ‘Amir, near the Nusayrat camp, and is known as historic Tabatha, a site which appears on the Madaba map. The site was excavated by the Palestinian Department of Antiquities in conjunction with a French archaeological mission and excavations revealed the remains of a large monastery dating to the Byzantine and early Islamic periods. The monastery consists of two churches, a baptismal and reception area, in addition to other facilities like wells, a hammam and housing for pilgrims. On the floor mosaics, Greek inscriptions were found that mention St Hilarion who was born in Gaza in 291 CE and died in Cyprus in 371 CE. Saint Hilarion was the founder of Palestinian monasticism and his biography was written by Saint Jerome. His fame spread throughout the eastern Mediterranean; his saint’s day is celebrated in Cyprus on 21 October. The site was included on a preliminary list of World Heritage in 2005 as a cultural site and was inscribed formally on the UNESCO World Heritage list during the 46th World Heritage session in New Delhi, India, July 2024.

Wadi Gaza (Gaza Creek)

The Gaza Creek originates from the hills of the Naqab desert and the heights south of al-Khalil (Hebron), and runs from the 1949 armistice line east of Gaza to the coast where it flows into the sea. After it enters Gaza, it is seven kilometers long. This creek is considered one of the most important coastal wetland regions on the eastern basin of the Mediterranean Sea and is rich in geographical and biological diversity, including being a station for migrating birds. Due to its importance as a nature habitat, it was included in the Palestinian list of cultural and natural sites of world value, and listed as a nature reserve site that includes threatened or rare species. Since the start of Israel's latest assault on Gaza, this site has been a major locus of Israeli military operations despite its high environmental value as a stopover for migrating birds and its biological diversity.

Museums and Archaeological Storage Centers

At least twelve local museums and numerous antiquities collections were systematically destroyed in the aerial and land bombardments. Notable is the Qasr al-Basha, a Mamluk period building, which was restored and refurbished as

Figure 14. Qarrara Museum.

an archaeological museum. On exhibit were artifacts from most of the important excavations carried out in the Gaza Strip over the past two decades. Tens of thousands of archeological objects are now buried under the rubble. The Dayr al-Balah Museum was also destroyed and with it its collection of archeological and heritage items, and the Qarrara Museum (figure 14), which housed a varied collection of ancient objects dating to various historical eras. Private collections such as the Jawdat al-Khudari collection in Gaza (figure 15) and the ʻAqqad collection were also destroyed, and many other family-held or private collections of antique objects have been lost due to the extensive heavy bombardment of Gaza.

Storehouses belonging to the Gaza Department of Antiquities and housing tens of thousands of archeological objects were broken into, and reportedly ransacked. These stores include Palestinian and international archeological excavations still under study and are estimated to hold tens of thousands of figurines, earthenware, glass and metal utensils and coins. Forcible entry into museums and stores is a clear violation of the 1954 Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property during Armed Conflicts.

Figure 15. Jawdat al-Khudari's extensive collection of artifacts, housed in the hotel-museum al-Mathaf, north of Gaza city, was used as an Israeli barracks in late 2023 and then destroyed by fire and bulldozers.

Figure 16. A Gaza storeroom full of antiquities from Palestinian and international excavation sites was broken into by Israeli soldiers and photos and video later posted on Instagram by the director of the Israeli Antiquity Authorities, along with a photo of stolen items exhibited in the Israeli Knesset.[10]

Destruction of Mosques and Cemeteries

In addition to the historic mosques mentioned above, a systematic campaign of destruction targeted mosques in Gaza in a manner unprecedented in modern history. A report from the Palestinian Ministry of Awqaf (religious endowments), dated 22 January 2024, cites the total or partial destruction of at least 1,000 of a total of 1,200 mosques. Cemeteries were also targeted, for example, the Christian Baptist cemetery in Gaza City and the World War II Commonwealth soldiers' cemetery in the Tuffah quarter of Gaza were extensively damaged, while the cemetery in Bayt Hanun was destroyed (figure 17) and large sections were excavated.

Figure 17. Bayt Hanun cemetery, after destruction.

Targeting the City's Landmarks

A report by the Gaza Municipality concluded that the occupation forces were targeting the city's main cultural landmarks that represent its collective identity. In addition to historic buildings, mosques, and churches, destroyed landmarks included the Municipal Garden, the Monument of the Unknown Soldier, the Rashad al-Shawwa Cultural Center (figure 18), the al-Katiba Garden, the Public Library building (figure 19), the Is'ad al-Tufula (Happy Childhood) building, the Municipal Promenade, the Central Archives building, the Manuscript Restoration Center (figure 20), and the city's universities (figure 21), as well as private hotels, tourist resorts, service and commercial centers, and municipal infrastructure such as roads, water treatment stations, and wells.

Figure 18. The Rashad al-Shawwa Cultural Center, before and after destruction.

Figure 19. Gaza Municipal Library, before and after destruction.

Figure 20. Gaza Municipal Manuscript Center, after destruction.

Figure 21. Gaza's Faculty of Law, before and after destruction.

The International Genocide Convention

The 1948 Convention for the Prevention and Punishment of Genocide was signed in the wake of the horrors of World War II, due in no small part to Polish-Jewish jurist and refugee Rafael Lemkin, who argued for the term "genocide" for the physical and cultural destruction of a national, religious, or racial group, and then worked to see it codified within international law.[11] Although this definition was adopted unanimously in a UN General Assembly resolution in 1946, the element of cultural genocide was dropped from the final text of the treaty convention (Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, or Genocide Convention) following objections by states with an imperialist history of decimating native populations – namely,

Australia, the United States,[12] the United Kingdom, France, and Canada. Therefore, actions committed with the intention of destroying the language, religion and culture of a human group are not specifically proscribed under the genocide convention. Many scholars today, however, view that the intended end result of cultural genocide is indeed genocide. As Canadian sociologist Andrew Woolford argues, the destruction of the collective identity of native populations and theft of their lands to enable settlers to dominate them should be considered genocide, as it deprives the group of their means to exist.[13]

Raz Segal, a Jewish American expert on the Holocaust at Stockton University in the United States, described the current war in Gaza, on the sixth day of the war, as typical of genocidal wars intentionally aimed at the destruction of a human group. That intention was clearly expressed in numerous statements made by Israeli political and military leaders and is directly connected with military operations such as shelling, destruction of infrastructure, a very tight siege, forcible eviction, and the use of famine, then "justifying violence by a shameful exploitation of the anniversary of the Holocaust."[14] Their purpose is to disengage the conflict from its political context as a struggle against occupation, to compare Palestinian victims to the Nazis and the terrorist ISIS, and to revive the dehumanizing notion of fighting barbarism. This last, according to Franz Fanon, was a favorite imperialist discourse and always preceded waging a criminal war.[15] The targeting of historic centers, archaeological sites, cultural institutions, and museums is yet another indicator of a deliberate scheme to destroy the collective identity of a human group, as defined in the Genocide Convention. John Hocking, a member of the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia, described the destruction of cultural heritage as tantamount to cultural genocide and stated that wherever there is cultural destruction genocide must be suspected.

The Case Raised Before the International Court of Justice

With the efforts exerted thus far to end the war on Gaza having failed, and despite the UN General Assembly resolution and the U.S. veto of any UN Security Council resolution to stop the war, the Republic of South Africa submitted a case of eighty-four pages to the International Court of Justice against Israel, holding that it had and is committing genocide in Gaza.[16] The ICJ is considered the highest judicial authority of the UN. The South African case, supported by a large number of other states, is based on the 1948 Genocide Convention, which outlaws the most heinous crime in international law. On 11 and 23 January 2024, South Africa presented its case and urgently demanded that a decision be issued to stop acts of genocide, based upon objective evidence, whether with respect to intention or to the five actions classified as constituting genocide. Many international law experts hold that the crimes committed by Israel in Palestine are a normal consequence of the immunity granted to Israel by the West over the past seventy-five years of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Clearly, efforts must be intensified to stop the war and bring in adequate

humanitarian aid. Whatever the verdict of the ICJ may be, it will not restore the lives of the victims nor the heritage that has been lost. But enforcing justice and punishing the criminals will stop the continued commission of these crimes against humanity and prevent their future recurrence. This call is addressed to all institutions concerned with cultural heritage, both local and international, and urges them to act forcefully to estimate the damage done and the rebuilding process. The Palestinian heritage does not belong solely to Palestine but is inseparable from world heritage, and its destruction is a loss to the whole of humanity.

Hamdan Taha is an independent researcher and a former deputy minister of the Palestinian Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities and director general of the Department of Antiquities and Cultural Heritage (1995–2014). He is coeditor with Ingrid Hjelm, Ilan Pappe, and Thomas L. Thompson of A New Critical Approach to the History of Palestine: Palestine History and Heritage Project 1 *(Routledge, 2019).*

Endnotes

1 Unless noted otherwise, the source for all images is the Palestinian Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities.

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Star-Crossed Lovers in a Star-Crossed Land: Romeo and Juliet in Palestine

Penny Johnson

My only love sprung from my only hate!

Too early seen unknown, and known too late!

Prodigious birth of love it is to me

That I must love a loathed enemy.

– Juliet in William Shakespeare, *Romeo and Juliet*, 1.5.138–41.

Abstract

Reflecting on a 2016 production of *Romeo and Juliet in Gaza* at Gaza City's Said al-Mishal Cultural Centre – destroyed two years later in a targeted Israeli air strike – the author turns to two other stagings of *Romeo and Juliet* in embattled Palestine, a joint 1994 production by the Israeli Khan Theater in Jerusalem and the Palestinian Kasaba Theater in Ramallah in the aftermath of the Oslo accords, and *In Fair Palestine*, a film made by students at the Friends School in Ramallah during the second Palestinian intifada with an initial screening in 2008. All three productions tell much about the times in which they were created.

Keywords:

Palestinian theater; Gaza theater; Shakespeare staging; *Romeo and Juliet*; cultural destruction; film and drama under occupation.

I try to imagine myself there, waiting for the actors to come onto the modest stage at the al-Mishal Cultural Center in Gaza City, a city now in ruins. It is 2016, two years after Israel's "Operation Protective Edge" killed over two thousand Palestinians and eight years before the current murderous assault on Gaza and Gazans.

The play being staged at al-Mishal is *Romeo and Juliet in Gaza*. Shakespeare's iconic play has been performed innumerable times in many languages and often with local twists to the star-crossed lovers and the feuding families that lead to their demise. As part of the 2012 World Shakespeare Festival,

Romeo and Juliet in Baghdad contained overtones of the Sunni–Shi'i divide. In a beloved Turkish production staged in Istanbul and London in 2015 – entitled *Mahmud and Yezida* – Romeo is Muslim and Juliet is Yazidi. As I imagine the Gaza production, my thoughts turn to two other stagings of *Romeo and Juliet* in our embattled country: a joint production of the Israeli Khan Theater in Jerusalem and the Palestinian Kasaba Theater in Ramallah in 1994, and *In Fair Palestine*, a film made by students at the Friends School in Ramallah in 2008. All three productions tell us much about the times in which they are created.

For eight nights at al-Mishal, after the Palestinian national anthem, *Romeo and Juliet in Gaza* opens onto a crowded café in a refugee camp, young men at tables whiling away the time playing cards. Yusuf, the son of a Hamas leader, falls deeply in love with Suha, daughter of a doctor who is a Fatah notable. When the fathers enter the café, they clash and come to blows. The café owner – a Gazan everyman figure – throws them both out. "Don't reconcile! Keep cursing at each other!" the owner yells at them.[1] The audience, obviously critical of the poisonous split between the two organizations, applauds.

Directed by Ali Abu Yaseen and written by Atef Abu Saif, the seventy-minute performance ends neither with the two dead young lovers entwined in a tomb nor with the reconciliation of their feuding families. Despite Suha's pleas, Romeo leaves Gaza on an illegal migrant boat. His fate is unknown, but the ending evokes a 2014 shipwreck off the coast of Malta when hundreds of Gaza migrants were lost at sea. Crucially, the play offers no reconciliation between the warring fathers – the fervent wish for such a resolution was left to the full capacity audience of more than three hundred. Director Abu Yaseen said the play gave "a space for love and for youths to dream of a beautiful future away from the current state of Gaza."

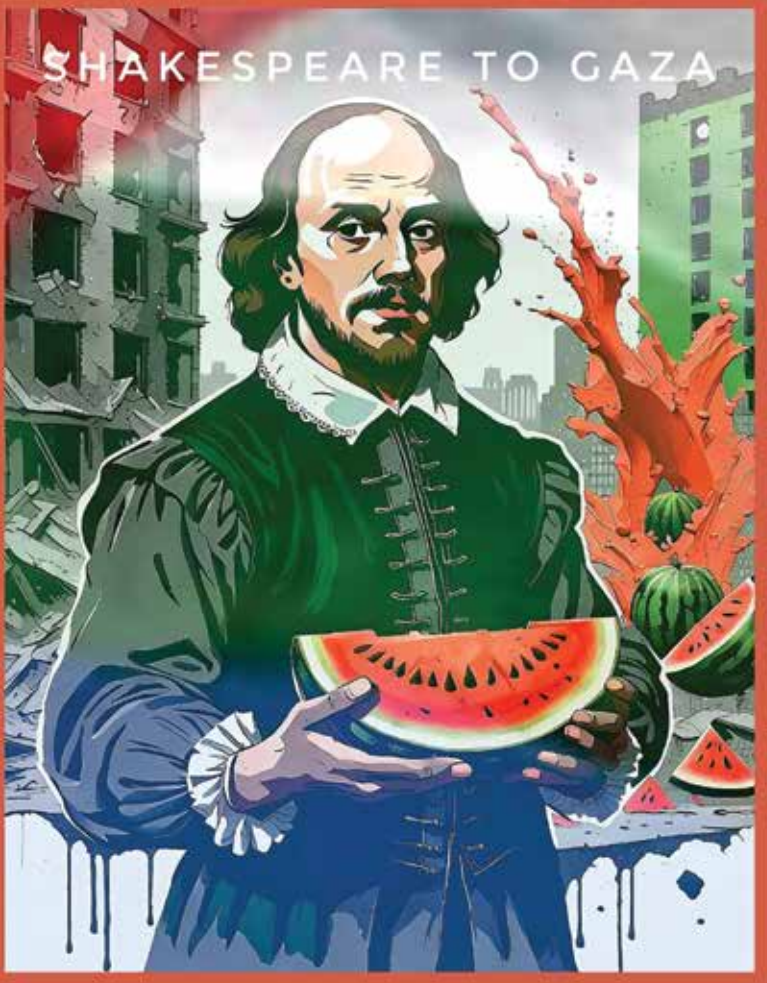
Two years afterward, on 9 August 2018, those dreams were demolished when an Israeli air strike destroyed al-Mishal Cultural Center, leaving only a pile of debris. Although artists and performers gathered the next day to stand on the rubble in an act of solidarity and fourteen prominent directors and playwrights in the United Kingdom penned a strong letter of protest, the broken stones remained the only witness to a once vibrant cultural site. Abu Yaseen mourned – "We have lost the only home for artists in Gaza." The head of the center's dance troupe added that even "our memories have vanished now."

In his 2022 poetry collection, Gazan poet Mosab Abu Toha reflected on the destruction, remembering:

> Dreams of children and their parents, of listening to songs, or watching plays at Al Mishal Cultural Center. Israel destroyed it in August 2018. I hate August. But plays are still performed in Gaza. Gaza is the stage.[2]

The next year, Gaza was indeed a "stage" as Abu Toha and his family endured Israel's brutal assault on Gaza. His home in northern Gaza, his precious personal library, and the Edward Said libraries he founded were destroyed, and several relatives

Performed by an Ensemble in Solidarity with Palestine



31st December 2023 at 16:00

Theatre Arts

Methodist Church Hall

cnr Milton Rd & Wesley Str, Observatory

Donations to Ashtar Theatre, Ramallah & Gift of the Givers

were killed. Abu Toha and his family left for Rafah from where, by virtue of his son having U.S. citizenship, they were scheduled to leave. However, he was detained by the Israeli army at a checkpoint along with several hundred other men and was reported missing for several days before being released and continuing his onward journey out of Gaza. All the world's a stage, indeed.

It is perhaps not surprising, but is certainly telling, that about three decades earlier, the first performance of *Romeo and Juliet* after the signing of the Oslo accords in 1993 was a joint Israeli-Palestinian production, bringing together the Khan Theater in Jerusalem and the Kasaba Theater in Ramallah. It was supported by an international partner, the Lille Theater in France, a sign of the optimism of the early post-Oslo times. In the production, a Palestinian Romeo from the Montagues loves an Israeli Juliet from the Capulets. But just as all does not go well for the two lovers in Shakespeare's play, the players themselves faced multiple problems as the Oslo optimism crumbled, sharp antagonisms flared, and the Israeli occupation tightened its grip. On the Israeli side, codirector Eran Baniel received two death threats shortly before the play opened, from extremist members of his own clan for daring to stage a play that "encourages interfaith marriage."[3] On the Palestinian side, codirector Fouad Awad and the Palestinian actors were discouraged by the cancellation of rehearsals and of the play performance itself in Jerusalem's Old City because of opposition from Palestinians living there – a poll indicated that very few would attend.

Just as rehearsals began in West Jerusalem, an event occurred that brought not only fear and discord to the players but a major shift in relations between occupier and occupied in the country. On 25 February 1994, Israeli-American settler Baruch Goldstein gunned down Palestinian worshippers inside Ibrahimi Mosque in Hebron, leaving twenty-nine dead. Violent clashes ensued as the Israeli army cracked down on Palestinian protestors – followed by the first string of suicide bombings carried out by Hamas. The stated aim of the two theater directors – "to remind all that the cost of hatred between fathers is the death of their children" – had an increasingly desperate ring.[4]

In the wake of the Hebron massacre, Palestinian actors boycotted the rehearsals and three Israeli actors dropped out. The Israeli army's new checkpoints and barriers blocked Palestinian actors with West Bank identity cards from entering Jerusalem. After several long and painful meetings, Israeli actors reportedly said, "We are ashamed." The two troupes decided to continue and the play opened in Jerusalem in June 1994.

Even though I was in Ramallah at the time, could have attended a performance, and knew some of the Palestinian performers, I find it harder to imagine this Romeo and Juliet in Jerusalem than Romeo and Juliet in Gaza. I also cannot remember any friends or colleagues in the West Bank who were in the audiences in West Jerusalem, despite the popularity of Kasaba's Ramallah productions. Trying to view the stage and actors through the fog of time, I could locate only one photo of a dress rehearsal and none of the actual performances. The staging seems to have been largely traditional. The players wore Renaissance dress and the Israeli director told National Public

Radio that "all our history comes onto the stage without [taking] one word away from Shakespeare."[5] However, these words are themselves important. When the Palestinian Montagues speak among themselves, they speak in Arabic while the Israeli Capulets speak to each other in Hebrew. But when the two sides speak to each other, it is in Hebrew. Actor and Kasaba stalwart George Ibrahim, who played Mercutio, had hoped that the audiences would include both Palestinians and Israelis, but this wish seems to have been thwarted by the profound unease felt by many Palestinians at a joint production in highly unequal and oppressive times.

One change from the text is highly significant. Like the Gaza production, this Romeo and Juliet does not end with reconciliation, but with the chorus repeating the prologue:

> Two households, alike in dignity
>
> In fair Verona where we lay our scene
>
> An ancient grudge breaks to new mutiny
>
> Where civil blood makes civil hands unclean.

The failure to reconcile is certainly a gesture to the conflicts on the ground. But Ghassan Abbas, who played the Duke of Verona – the moral arbiter of the play who encourages the two sides to reconcile – had an even more bitter comment. He said he "feels like a hypocrite when he delivers those lines" promoting reconciliation between the warring factions. "'In my role I speak peace," he says, "… in my life I am at war."[6] The Khan-Kasaba production went on to a successful tour in Europe, although Arab audiences largely boycotted it, noting not only the coproduction but funding from the Israeli government.

Romeo and Juliet lived on, however, in Palestinian high schools and universities throughout this period. Just down the street from the Mishal theater and at roughly the same time as the staging of *Romeo and Juliet in Gaza*, Jehan, an English teacher at al-Rayyes High School for Girls, waged a campaign against the play's inclusion in the curriculum. Donald MacIntyre, in his wide-ranging book on Gaza, describes Jehan's successful "mini-uprising" against the required teaching of *Romeo and Juliet*, in which she argued that *Romeo and Juliet* was the "wrong play at the wrong time," not only contradicting Islamic values but encouraging "suicide and disobeying parents."[7] Ultimately she succeeded in having it replaced by a play about a king's descent into madness – *King Lear*. It is a bit hard to see *King Lear* as a great improvement in terms of moral uplift, as Jehan herself admits, it's "full of misery" and everyone dies. However, her excision of *Romeo and Juliet* led me to think further about the fate and transformations of this iconic play in Palestine.

In his book *Romeo and Juliet in Palestine: Teaching under Occupation*, Tom Sperlinger describes holding a class on Shakespearean drama at al-Quds University in 2013 and asking his students "how the play might be adapted to a film in Palestine."[8] One young woman placed the two lovers in a famous feud of Jerusalem families in the

1950s, while others saw a more contemporary dilemma separating the pair – only one had a Jerusalem identity card. When Sperlinger asked his class if Romeo and Juliet should escape into exile, there was resounding agreement. When he proposed "To Gaza?" the students roared with laughter. A student named Qais offered my favorite reinterpretation, however, setting the play toward the end of the second intifada, where Rami, from Ramallah, and Juwayda, from a Palestinian village inside Israel, can only meet on the internet. Instead of hearing of Juliet's death, Rami is told by his friend, in a mixture of "Shakespearean verse, Arabic, and Scouse" (the latter being the slang of Liverpool, as Rami and his friends are fanatic Liverpool football fans) that "Your Ju was with a smile next to a soft lad with a Merc…" This Juliet had transferred her affections to a rich Palestinian from Israel.

Students at the Friends School in Ramallah began working on their version of *Romeo and Juliet* in 2006, encouraged by a teacher there, and produced the film *In Fair Palestine* in 2008. This staging of *Romeo and Juliet* in Palestine opens with a scene that the young actors clearly enjoyed. In the original Shakespearean text, a Capulet servant bites his thumb and a clash ensues when a Montague servant says, "Do you bite your thumb at me?" This scene is enacted by the Friends School actors through a car chase that involves spinning cars and much youthful exuberance. The biting of the thumb seems more a bit of teenage one upmanship rather than the beginning of a blood feud and indeed the young actor relishes the line "I do but keep the peace."

In Fair Palestine had an enthusiastic audience and hundreds packed the Ramallah Cultural Center for the opening of the 58-minute film, applause breaking out frequently when sons, daughters, and neighbors appeared on the screen. This viewer was particularly taken with her friend and colleague Rita Giacaman's delivery of the spicy speeches of Juliet's nurse – although Rita told me that her young colleagues were often exasperated because she forgot her lines. Long-time Friends School teacher Don Hutchison was also good as Shaykh (not Friar) Lawrence.

But it was the youthful vision of the codirectors and scriptwriters (Faris Giacaman, Yazan Nahhas, and Tarek Knorn, among others) that informed the play. The Friends School team had a mission to explain their lives and their communities and "to express ourselves in a manner different from the way the news represents us," as Tarek told a Reuters reporter.[9] Thus the story of the two star-crossed lovers is interspersed with male students walking along the Wall – built as they grew into adolescence and shadowing their lives and ability to move. (The school's student magazine at the time was called *Behind the Wall*.) The teens explain the occupation's oppressive measures as well as telling their audience that Palestine, its "villages, camps and cities" encompassed people of all classes in a spirit of "social solidarity," a message that sits somewhat uneasily with Shakespeare's warring world in *Romeo and Juliet*. In a modern vein as well, the film contains discussions among the team on characterization – and crucially on the issue that greatly concerns them, arranged marriage and the rights of young people to freely chose who they love.

In a film of less than an hour, this is quite a load of diverse material and the twists of the plot can be confusing. Audience interest, I think, was held by the vitality of the

young actors – so close in age to Shakespeare's Juliet "who hath not seen the change of fourteen years." Romeo in this version is slight and wears glasses, in many ways a classic nerd, and his vulnerability touches the heart. And, with another contemporary touch, he does not receive the message of Juliet's faked death because the messenger is turned back at an Israeli checkpoint. The film ends with the two young lovers holding each other in death, not in a tomb but in a grove. The abrupt ending gives no time for a reconciliation of their elders but the perils and hopes of teenage life – from Verona to Ramallah – lie with them.

In March 2019, actors, musicians, and Gaza municipal officials again congregated on the ruins of al-Mishal Theater. Clowns reenacted the airstrike and Yasser Farouk's "Sad Ney" played from the sound system. Artists brought their work to paste on the rubble. With the cooperation of al-Ashtar Theater in Ramallah, artists vowed to continue performing, but the theater itself could not be rebuilt.

The author of the text for *Romeo and Juliet in Gaza*, Atef Abu Saif, now the Minister of Culture for the Palestinian Authority, returned to Gaza with his teenage son in early October 2023 to attend a Natural Heritage Day in Khan Yunis. He was looking forward to a last autumnal swim in the sea. Abu Saif and his son remained in Gaza – moving from his home in Jabaliya to Khan Yunis and then to a tent in Rafah – until late December, when they made the journey to Egypt through the Rafah crossing. Abu Saif vividly recorded his war experiences in WhatsApp messages and voice mails, now published by Comma Press under the title *Don't Look Left*.[10]

Romeo and Juliet's director Ali Abu Yaseen remained in Gaza. In a post to the *Gaza Monologues*, an ambitious project of the Ashtar Theater in Ramallah recording voices from the many wars in Gaza, Abu Yaseen spoke to Shakespeare, posting his words on his Facebook page on 5 November 2023, as the bombing of northern Gaza intensified:

> How could you, William Shakespeare, write us in *Romeo and Juliet* and warn us of the ugliness of conflict and war between cousins and that everyone will pay the price? The vision has changed, my friend. It has become much more difficult. The sound of rockets makes the heart jump in fear. The smell of gunpowder and carcinogenic smoke forcibly penetrates your lungs. Phosphorus bombs, which are banned internationally, burn the green and dry land. Seeing your loved ones in pieces. Your heart that is torn a thousand times every day as if it were a piece of rubber. Get up, Shakespeare. Help me, my friend. I'm really tired. Resist with your wise pen, full of love, joy, revolution, humanity, hope, and freedom, openly, maybe we will all become brothers under that blue sky.[11]

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Endnotes

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Latrun and Its Monastery: A Sanctuary

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Abstract

The Latrun area is known for its rich history and natural beauty. This paper explores the scenic and historical significance of Latrun, tracing its evolution from Roman times to its current state. The study highlights the area's strategic importance, the transformation of the Latrun Monastery, and the impact of historical conflicts on the local population and landscape. Through interviews and personal reflections, the paper delves into the enduring legacy of the region and the lives of its inhabitants, particularly focusing on Father Louis Wehbe and the displaced residents of 'Imwas.

Keywords:

Latrun; historical significance; Latrun Monastery; Palestinian villages; Father Louis Wehbe; 'Imwas; displacement; strategic importance.

Spring is the most beautiful season for hiking and walking in Palestine, both in the mountains and along the coast. I often spend time contemplating in nature during this season, especially on weekends. Green dominates vast swaths of land, while distinct colors and scents of flowers, lilies, almond orchards, green corn, wheat fields, and the like, fill the air.

The Latrun area is one of the most beautiful places in Palestine, with a history extending over two millennia, from the Roman period onward. It is the site of a strategic convergence of roads, from Gaza in the south, from Jaffa in the west, from Bab al-Wad in the east, and from Ramallah in the northeast. The region has been strategically important since

Roman times; its hilltop location is midway between coastal Jaffa and Jerusalem, and overlooks the main east-west land route (the ancient Roman east-west road lies just to the north).

History of Latrun

The name Latrun may originate from either the Latin (*Latro*) or Old French (*La Toron*) names given the twelfth-century Crusader fortress built on the site, with ruins visible to this day.[1] In the late nineteenth century, under Ottoman rule, a small Palestinian hamlet was built by peasants from ʻImwas village, consisting of mud brick houses within the walls of the fortress and on nearby lands of less than four dunums. In 1890, encouraged by the Latin Patriarchate in Jerusalem, French Trappist monks purchased land from ʻImwas Christians, established a monastery a short distance from the ruins and began cultivating the area.[2] By 1922, fifty-nine Palestinians lived in the al-Latrun hamlet, and by 1945, the village's population had reached 190.[3] According to Khalidi, the monks bought the villagers' old houses within the fortress walls and their land (al-Latrun al-Qadima) and compensated them by building twenty new houses for the villagers in an area to the south (al-Latrun al-Jadida).[4]

Figure 1. Ruins of the headquarters of the Arab Jordanian Army and the embrasure openings. Photo by author.

The location of al-Latrun village on a high hill overlooking all sides gave it strategic and military importance. In the 1948 war, the Jordanian army evacuated the residents of al-Latrun to the village of ‘Imwas, set up its headquarters inside the walls of the fortress and built trenches and defensive embrasures in the walls, still visible today. In that year, the Zionist militia Haganah made six attempts to overtake Latrun and seize control of the road to Jerusalem from the Jordanian army.[5] The Jordanian army’s fortifications, however, remained strong on all sides (and included the abandoned British army “Tegart” headquarters)[6] and the Haganah had heavy casualties. In the end, the Zionist forces made a makeshift dirt bypass road to the south of the Latrun area, called the “Burma Road,” to access Jerusalem.

The village of Latrun is located northwest of Jerusalem. Neve Shalom/Wahat Salam (Oasis of Peace) village was built in 1969 on lands belonging to the Latrun Monastery. After the Nakba in 1948, Latrun remained under the control of the Jordanian army within the Restricted Zone,[7] until the area was occupied by Israel in1967 and its three villages – ‘Imwas, Yalu, and Bayt Nuba – were depopulated and destroyed.[8]

Latrun Monastery

In recent years, I began to visit the area of the Latrun Monastery often, not only for its stunning beauty, but also to buy seasonal olive oil from the monastery store. The monks produce it from the olive trees cultivated on its vast expanses of land and press it in their own olive press. They also produce and sell red and white wines and vinegar from their large vineyards and can olives, turnips and other types of pickles. On Saturdays, special stalls dot the olive fields selling various items to local and foreign tourists.

The Latrun Monastery is built on the lands of the village of ‘Imwas, west of Jerusalem. Its entrance was on a steep Ottoman road connecting the cities of Jaffa and Jerusalem, which opened in 1869 but by 1888 was replaced by an easier-to-navigate bypass road built south of the monastery.[9] During the British colonial period, it was the main road to Jerusalem and continued to be until 1978 when a new road was built.

In 1927, the new Latrun Monastery that we know and visit today was constructed. Designed and supervised by the first abbot of the monastery, Abbot Paul Couvreur, its construction was carried out by men from the village of ‘Imwas. An underground tunnel was built, connecting the old monastery to the modern monastery, to facilitate the movement of monks between the monasteries. Latrun Monastery consists of a church and residences for monks, while the front section is designated for visitors to the monastery.[10] It contains an olive press, a winery, a carpentry workshop, a metal workshop and some warehouses. In the past, the monastery also included a hospital that operated until 1967, and a boarding school and an orphanage until 1963.

To learn more about the story of the Latrun Monastery, and its relationship with the people of the village of ‘Imwas, I interviewed a longtime monk at the monastery, Father Louis Wehbe.[11]

Figure 2. The old monastery building, built in 1890. Photo by author.

Father Louis Wehbe and the Life of the Monks

Father Louis Wehbe was born in 1938 in the village of Bcha'leh, in Batroun in Lebanon, and spent his early childhood in the village with his four brothers. At the age of eleven and a half, it became clear to him that he wanted to devote his life to serving the Lord through monastic life. Father Louis told me about Saint Cherbel, whose miracles the people of the village used to speak about, and said that this drew him closer to the Lord.

One day, he went with his father to visit the tomb of Saint Cherbel. When they returned home, his father jokingly said to him: "What do you think about becoming a saint or a monk like Saint Cherbel?" Father Wehbe recounted: "It was like an arrow of love had entered my heart and it brought me great joy and a desire for monasticism." When he took up the matter seriously, his relatives and family at first boycotted him. He describes what happened as a battle that lasted a year and a half, and resulted in two camps: one that included all of his family and relatives, and another that was him alone, "under the care of the Lord Jesus." Their rejection and opposition strengthened his determination to take the path of monasticism and in the face of his stubbornness, his family eventually relented.

In 1951, at the age of thirteen years and three months, Father Louis arrived at Latrun Monastery where, he says, he found true happiness: "Although monastic life is difficult, love and inner calm overcome the difficulties that are like tests for the inner person." Fortunately for him, there was a school at the monastery that accommodated him, and

he studied there until he was eighteen years old, the age when he was allowed to enter the monastic order and receive monastic education.

When he first arrived at the monastery, he used to correspond with his family. In 1960, his mother, father and one of his brothers traveled from Lebanon to visit him at the monastery. They came to appreciate their son's way of life and to understand his noble mission in life. Father Louis recalls that the letters his father sent after his visit had a positive effect on his morale. His father wrote to him, "You are my treasure," after he had been sad because his father, at the beginning of his journey, rejected his path and preferred his brothers over him. He studied philosophy at the monastery and in addition to his mother tongue, Arabic, he became fluent in French, Latin, Italian, English, Greek, Syriac, and Hebrew. In 1963, the monastery sent him on a mission to study theology in France for four years.

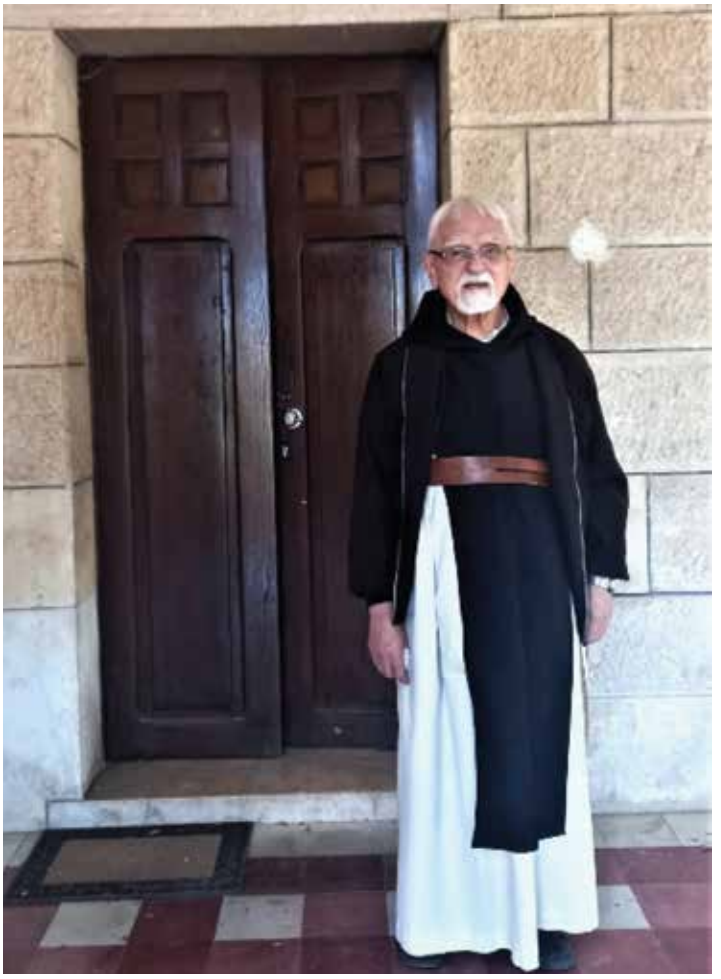


Figure 3. Father Louis Wehbe outside the visitors' room, Latrun Monastery. Photo by author.

There are sixteen monks in the monastery today, a decline from previous times when more than thirty-five monks were in residence at any given time. According to Father Louis, it is mainly due to "the changes of the modern world. People are more interested in materialism than in spirituality, more attracted to worldly pleasures than religious devotion."

The daily life of a monk is a fixed routine. It begins at four or even three in the morning with prayer. Every day they perform seven prayers, between meals. During meals there is also reading from books. Their food is modest, based on vegetables and grains. They do not eat meat, and they live a life of austerity and simplicity. They

dedicate time to studying, reading, retreating, contemplating and doing manual work in the monastery. The monastery's library contains more than 30,000 books in French, Arabic, English, Latin and other languages.

The monks are considered temporary residents of the monastery because they live in Area C, according to the Oslo accords' designation.[12] Anyone who came to the monastery before 1945 is subject to a temporary residency regime by Israel, and must renew their residency year by year, which is what Father Louis does after paying a renewal fee.

The June War … A Return to Empty Villages

When Father Louis finished his studies in France, and days before his scheduled return, the 1967 war broke out. He was scheduled to return on 12 June 1967, but geopolitical changes after the war made it difficult for him to return because he was a Lebanese citizen. After negotiations, his return was agreed, but it was a sad return for him.

He recounts that when he returned, he went to inspect the village of 'Imwas to see what had happened to it. He remembers: "The great wound and shock remain with me to this day, and I have not recovered from it." He was deeply saddened by what happened to his neighbors in the village. When he left, he had said goodbye to them, leaving the village full of its people, but when he returned, he found it destroyed and empty. In one day, an entire village ceased to exist, and Father Louis was the only monk remaining out of those who came to the monastery before 1967.

Figure 4. Al-Hilu Well in 'Imwas. Photo by author.

Father Louis says that the monastery hospital operated until 5 June 1967. The people of 'Imwas and the neighboring villages received treatment there. The hospital

building faces the monastery's storeroom and is now used as a private space for the monks. Until 5 June, patients treated in the hospital were recorded, and hospital records are kept in the monastery archives. After that date, no patient was registered in the hospital records. They no longer exist at all. For some, graves have become their homes, while others are displaced inside Palestine and abroad.

In 1967, during the June war, the Jordanian army was defeated, and the Israeli occupation army took over the West Bank. The monastery fell into a disputed zone east of the Green Line, which Israel then took over. They immediately began issuing orders to expel the people of the villages, including the village of 'Imwas, where some of its residents took shelter in the monastery tunnel. After the village was evacuated, its homes were destroyed. But to this day, there is communication between the displaced people of 'Imwas who reside in Baytuniya, Ramallah, and Jerusalem, and in Jordan.

Father Louis showed me the memoirs of the Lebanese monk Guy Khoury, one of the monks who lived at the monastery between 1936 and 2005. He wrote about the 1967 war in the Latrun region, and the destruction of its three villages. He described how the people of 'Imwas resorted to the monastery for shelter and how the monks provided assistance to them, how the Israelis then displaced them from the monastery and the relationship of the people of 'Imwas with the monks.[13] The Israeli army expelled everyone and declared the area a military zone. Before demolishing the houses in the village, they ordered them to be evacuated, but a few of the elderly were unable to leave, so their homes were demolished on top of them. The monks had snuck into 'Imwas after the demolition to rescue whomever they could, and they saw with their own eyes the elderly people under the rubble. Father Louis keeps the names of thirteen elderly people who died during the demolition operations.

'Imwas … and the Invaders' Fear of Memories

Before 1967, the Latrun region included three Palestinian villages: 'Imwas, Yalu and Bayt Nuba. The history of 'Imwas, located southeast of Ramla, goes back thousands of years. It is an ancient town whose name in the Roman period was "Nicopolis," meaning "city of victory."[14] Among the antiquities in the village are a Byzantine church, mosaics, rock tomb vaults, a Roman bath,[15] al-Hilu Well and water spring, the village cemetery and the shrine of the Companion [of the Prophet] Mu'az bin Jabal. In 1922, the population of 'Imwas was 824, and in 1931 it rose to 1,021, living in 224 houses. In 1945, its population rose to 1,450. By 1961, its population was 1,955.[16]

I conducted a telephone interview with Haydar Ibrahim Abu Ghosh, who was born in 'Imwas in 1953 and now lives in Jerusalem. He told me about the 1967 war, and how they left the village. Haydar said that when the war began, the Jordanian army commander came to the village and told the village mayor: "We will withdraw, and you have to manage your situation." He said how chaos and terror prevailed during that period, and the villagers got on a bus headed to the Latrun Monastery to seek shelter and refuge. In the morning, the Israeli army told them to leave the monastery for Ramallah. Haydar was fourteen years old at the time. He told me about

a report published in an Israeli newspaper on 14 June 2022, about the displacement and destruction of the three villages of the Latrun region in 1967.[17] The newspaper published several photos showing the displacement of the people of the villages and Haydar discovered he was in one of the photos.

Figure 5. The displacement of the residents of ‘Imwas in 1967. Haydar Abu Ghosh is in the center of the photo. *Haaretz*, 14 June 2022. Photo by Benaya Ben-Nun.[18]

Haydar left the village for Ramallah, leaving behind his dreams and memories. He had studied at the boys’ school in ‘Imwas, which taught up to the ninth grade of middle school, after which the students completed their secondary education in the city of Ramallah. There was also a girls’ school in the village, teaching up to the sixth grade of primary school. Haydar recalls that there were several shops in the village, two bakeries, traditional taboon ovens, a café owned by Saleh al-Hajj, and al-Hilu spring.[19]

Today, Haydar accompanies foreign and local teams to the village of ‘Imwas and tells them its story. Since 1967, the lands of Latrun and ‘Imwas are considered West Bank lands. But in real terms, they are under the jurisdiction of the State of Israel, administered illegally. Despite the land being occupied, “Ayalon Canada Park” was established in 1973 on the lands of ‘Imwas, with the support of a Canadian Jewish fund, and in cooperation with the Jewish National Fund, which forested it to hide the war crimes committed against this beautiful village.

While I was finishing this article, I visited the village, and there I met a family from the village of Abu Ghosh, but their origins go back to Imwas before 1948. We talked about the village and past times, and we parted ways. They walked toward al-Hilu Well, and I walked toward the cemetery. Demolition is an agony created by colonialism to erase the features of a place and deprive its owner, not only of returning to it but, perhaps even more difficult, of their memories and visual recollections of the place.

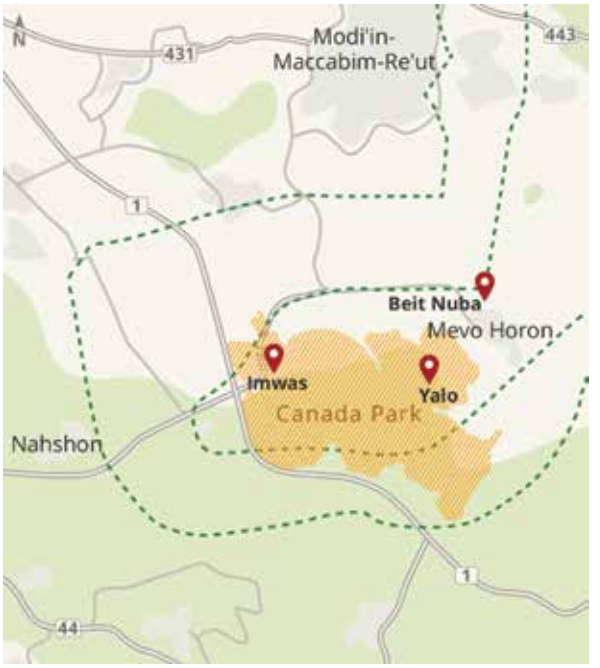


Figure 6. Map of Latrun area showing location of the three destroyed villages and Israeli settlements established since 1967. *Haaretz*, 14 June 2022.

Rawda Ghnayem lives in Haifa where she is a researcher and writer of Palestinian social history, documenting oral history, and leading narrative historical tours of the city. She is the author of Haifa fi al-dhakira al-shafawiyya: Ahya' wa buyut wa nas *(Haifa in oral memory: neighborhoods, houses, and people), published by the Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies, Qatar/Beirut, in 2022, and has written articles across various platforms.*

Endnotes

1 Sixteenth-century writers referred to the fortress by the Latin *castellum boni latronis* (castle of the good thief), according to Edward Henry Palmer, *Survey of Western Palestine, Arabic and English Name Lists* (London: Palestine Exploration Fund, 1881), 322. Other accounts mention the name's origin as Old French for Tower of the Knights, *Le Toron*. Its exact date of construction is also not clear; previously thought to be between 1150 and 1170 CE, recent research now puts its construction earlier, as 1137-41 CE.

2 See the official website for the Cistercian Order of the Strict Observance at Latrun, online at ocso.org/monastery/latroun/ (accessed 7 July 2024).

3 Mustafa Murad al-Dabbagh, *Biladuna Filastin* [Palestine, our homeland] (Kafr Qar': Dar al-Huda, 2002), 515.

4 Walid Khalidi, ed., *All That Remains: The Palestinian Villages Occupied and Depopulated by Israel in 1948* (Washington, DC: Institute for Palestine Studies, 1992), 392–93.

5 For more about the Battle of Latrun, see: Arieh Itzchaki, *Latrun: ha-ma'arakhah 'al ha-derekh li-Yerushalayim* [Latrun: the battle for the road to Jerusalem] (Jerusalem: Kanah, 1982); Khalidi, ed., *All That Remains*, 392–93.

6 During the Great Arab Revolt (1936–39), British Mandate police sent engineer and anti-insurgency expert Charles Tegart to design and supervise the building of fortified British police stations later known as "Tegart fortresses." Sixty-two such buildings were

established throughout Palestine, one of which was in Latrun. Some are still in use today by Israel as police stations, for example, in ʻAkka.

7 In the text of the Armistice Agreement between Jordan and Israel in 1949, four restricted zones were created; three in Jerusalem and the fourth was an agricultural plot of land in Latrun.

8 For an oral history of the events in 1967, see A Voice from Palestine, "The Tale of 3 Palestinian Villages," online at archive.org/details/youtube-5iViW5zh2hs (accessed 5 July 2024).

9 Benjamin Z. Keydar, *Mabat ve-ʻod mabat ʻal Eretz-Yisraʼel: tatslume-avir mi-yeme milhemet haʻolam ha-rishonah mul tatslumim bene zemanenu* [A look and another look at the land of Israel: aerial photographs from World War I versus contemporary photographs] (Jerusalem: Yad Ben Zvi, 1991), 106.

10 The Order of Cistercians of the Strict Observance, or Trappists, have ninety-two monasteries throughout the world.

11 Interview by author, Latrun Monastery, 11 March 2023.

12 From 1949 to 1967, the monastery was within a disputed zone between Israel and Jordan. After 1967, Israel took over the area where the monastery is located, along with the rest of the West Bank. In 1993, the Oslo accords categorized the area as within Area C, meaning that Israel has administrative, civil, and military control until a final peace agreement (which never came about). The monks in the monastery are considered as "temporary residents" because they now live in Area C. Anyone who came to the monastery before 1945 can obtain a temporary residence permit to be renewed annually. Father Louis every year renews his residency for a payment fee. They were also eligible for Israeli health insurance services until the early 1990s when it was stopped for the new monks. They are now insured through an insurance company in France, which is very expensive for them.

13 Father Guy Khoury's private memoirs, *The Private Memoirs of a Lebanese Monk of the Zionist Destruction of the Palestinian Villages of Latrun*, translated into Arabic from French in 2008, by Father James Connolly.

14 Al-Dabbagh, *Biladuna Filastin*, 510.

15 Three domes were added to the building (the Roman Bath), common in the Ottoman period to repurpose a place into an Islamic landmark. The people of the village believe and circulate the story that the bath is a shrine of the Prophet's Companion Abu ʻUbayda al-Jarrah, who fought in the region with his soldiers. The villagers believe that he died there along with a large number of his soldiers of the plague. However, while Abu ʻUbayda was known to have stayed in the Palestine province during the Islamic period, his actual tomb is in Jordan.

16 Al-Dabbagh, *Our Country Palestine*, 512.

17 Ofer Aderet, "55 Years Later: A Censored Kibbutz Decision about Arab Land Is Revealed," *Haaretz*, 14 June 2022; online at www.haaretz.com/israel-news/2022-06-14/ty-article-magazine/.premium/55-years-later-a-censored-kibbutz-decision-about-arab-lands-is-revealed/00000181-6218-d76c-a7b9-679ce2990000 (accessed 7 July 2024).

18 Aderet, "55 Years Later."

19 Telephone interview by author, 8 March 2023.

LETTER FROM JERUSALEM

Follow the Drop: Water Theft in Kufr ʻAqab

Chris Whitman-Abdelkarim

Abstract

This article delves into the intricate issue of internal water theft in the densely populated and neglected area of Kufr ʻAqab. Despite being under Israeli jurisdiction, water in Kufr ʻAqab is primarily supplied by the Palestinian Authority, leading to unique challenges. The article highlights various methods of water theft and the socio-political implications of such acts, emphasizing the vulnerability and resilience of the residents. Through a combination of personal experience and community insights, the author sheds light on the pervasive issue of water theft, its impact on daily life, and the broader context of water politics in Palestine. The article underscores the need for a deeper understanding of localized water struggles within the larger framework of Palestinian resistance against settler colonialism.

Keywords:

Water theft; Kufr ʻAqab; Israeli jurisdiction; water politics; community resilience; greater Jerusalem.

A panoramic view of Kufr ʻAqab, 2024. Photo by author.

On an ordinary Wednesday afternoon in the middle of the summer in 2022, my wife and I were casually sitting in our Kufr ʻAqab apartment, watching a TV show and pondering what to order for dinner. Suddenly, I heard a subtle but audible sound of water coming from an unused extra bathroom. I immediately ran to the bathroom, took the tank cover off and saw water pouring into the central pipe. I was extremely confused. We never use this bathroom, yet water was rising in the tank and into this pipe. None of it made sense. I immediately shut the pipe valve to the toilet and called my father-in-law, who excitedly called the plumber.

When both arrived at the apartment, they asked for a retelling of the story and then began their investigation. The plumber quickly stated that the *ʻawama* (floater arm, standard in every toilet) was broken. This was mystifying, as Abu Thaʼir had replaced the old ones when we moved in and we never used that bathroom. We then realized the ʻawama was a casualty of "the water thief." We might have also been onto his game, since that week we lost only half of our water: I had closed off the water network branch oriented to that bathroom and there was no thievery. The next week, after we had the ʻawama replaced, I reopened the water valve and we had our water stolen. The following week, I closed the network branch off again and left it closed for three months. In those three months, we never had our water stolen. We had conquered the water thief!

How did we get here you ask?

The issue of water domination, control, and usage in Palestine is an oversaturated market. Every year, hundreds of university students invade their libraries and make research trips to Palestine to meet with leading NGOs and scholars, to make some landmark observation like "Israel's water policies are apartheid." Rarely do these researchers endeavor past the numerical and a minor case study (usually in a small herding community in the south Hebron hills or Jordan Valley), thereby allowing their readers to continue to treat Palestinian experiences with settler colonialism as a passive or isolated incident.

In this article, I seek to highlight what water domination, control, and usage mean in the Palestinian neighborhood of Kufr ʻAqab, in northern Jerusalem. For those who did not read my piece in *JQ* 94 (2023), Kufr ʻAqab is an extremely overcrowded and neglected neighborhood between Bayt Hanina and Ramallah. Drawn into the municipal map of Jerusalem by the State of Israel since 1967, and cut off by the Wall since 2003, Kufr ʻAqab contains upward of 125,000 Palestinians in an area of 3.2 square kilometers. Nondescript beyond its towering high-rises built in extremely close proximity, it is what I have called home since I purchased an apartment there in mid-2022. Neither this article nor I claim to be or achieve an all-knowing authority on every drop of water in Kufr ʻAqab. But I do want to present my personal experience in navigating the pervasive yet delicate issue of internal water theft in my neighborhood.

First, it is important to define what I mean by internal theft. I mean simply the deliberate stealing of water among Palestinians, on an unofficial and individual level.

While this problem exists all over Palestine, the pervasiveness of it in Kufr ʻAqab, and people's vulnerability as a result, seem unique. Although Kufr ʻAqab is claimed as part of (illegally) annexed Jerusalem and therefore Israeli territory, water is almost exclusively provided through the Palestinian Authority, and the theft is exclusively Palestinian-on-Palestinian. As well, unlike Palestinian-on-Palestinian water theft in other parts of the West Bank, where thieves make high profits by moving water to poor water-scarce or wealthy water-greedy areas, this stolen water remains within Kufr ʻAqab.

Driving through Kufr ʻAqab, you will notice ubiquitous large water tanks and water-related infrastructure crowding the roofs, but these tanks are an average 50 to 100 percent larger than those elsewhere in Jerusalem and the West Bank. The reason for this oversizing will be addressed later.

Despite being forced under the jurisdiction of the Israeli Jerusalem municipality, almost no one in Kufr ʻAqab receives their water from the Israeli national water carrier, Mekorot. In the first three decades of occupation after 1967, Kufr ʻAqab was an ignored and sparsely populated area, with no Israeli settlements in the vicinity to prompt connection to the Israeli national network. In the two decades since Israel built the Wall in the early 2000s, separating Jerusalem from its periphery, many tens of thousands of Palestinians poured into Kufr ʻAqab in order to maintain official Jerusalem residency. The Palestinian Authority was pressured to act and provide water to the neighborhood. The Jerusalem Water Undertaking (JWU) even opened an office in the middle of Kufr ʻAqab, mostly for registering new pipes and allocating meters.

When we bought our apartment two years ago, my father-in-law, Abu Hussam, reminded me numerous times that we would need to register our name at the JWU and to retain every payment receipt (to prove to Israeli authorities that Jerusalem is our continuous center of life). He also warned me many times to keep an eye out for water thieves and to let him know if anything came up.

Admittedly, I was perplexed by this at first. I imagined a gang of big scary men in ski masks, running around with guns and giant water tanks, threatening people in the street. Like most residents in the neighborhood, my apartment came with two fifteen-hundred-liter tanks on the roof, one for cold water for all uses and the *hammam shams* heated by solar panels for sinks and baths. My father-in-law gave me a tour of the water system on the roof and in the apartment and even went so far as to spray-paint my initials on the tanks belonging to us, I guess as a warning sign to the gangs of thieves roaming the neighborhood. He hired a plumber to check everything and ensure there was no blockage or potential problems.

Our first week, my father-in-law called every couple days asking if we had any water issues, which we did not. But during our second week, on Wednesday afternoon, our cold water disappeared. Now, I should probably mention that water is replenished once a week, typically on Saturday mornings when the JWU turns the pumps on and the water refills. So, this meant that we would have no cold water for at least three days, until Saturday morning. No water in the toilet, none for washing clothes, no temperature control for a shower, and, I would argue most importantly, no water for

the bidet. So, I called Abu Hussam and informed him. He and I went over the system again and suggested minor tweaks I could do to make life tolerable until Saturday morning. This included opening up the pipe network in the bathroom and using the main line for filling up buckets to put into the tank of the toilet for flush, and turning the hose for the hammam shams tank to the cold water tank on the balcony. None of these fixes offer much more than a little bit of a reprieve.

Like any other couple who has just lost all their water, my wife and I started to recount every liter of water we had used since Saturday, trying to figure out what we did wrong to be out of water so quickly. "How many loads of laundry did we do?" and "maybe we showered too long," became common refrains in our house in the subsequent days. Abu Hussam even came over and started inspecting every piece of water infrastructure, acting like Sherlock Holmes. After finding no irregularities, he shrugged his shoulders and said, "It might be a thief, but I cannot tell yet."

As Saturday rolled around, we got our water back and my wife and I were excited to be able to use the bidet again and do some laundry. Unfortunately, by Wednesday afternoon, we noticed our water had again been stolen. Abu Hussam was pissed. He immediately called Abu Jamal, the head of the *lajna*, to ask if others were suffering from a water shortage or if there were any problems with the main line. At this point, I should probably explain what the lajna is and how it works. Every apartment building in Kufr ʻAqab has a building association, for which you pay a monthly fee. They are almost always residents of the building and they take the burden on themselves to listen to everyone's problems in the building, in addition to paying communal bills such as electricity for the common areas, dealing with the elevator, making sure the lobby and stairwell are cleaned regularly, and deal with issues about the garage.

Abu Jamal assured my father-in-law there were no issues with the main water network and he had received no complaints about a water thief in months. He then gave a five-minute lecture about how we must have used too much water and not understood the limited water supply in Kufr ʻAqab. "How many showers a day are they taking?" Then, "maybe they did too many loads of laundry. Is their washer old?" became common refrains we would hear from people on the issue.

Here we were, another week without water. I know what you are thinking, "Well, you have a *hammam shams* tank, why not just use that for showering?" The problem is, in the summer, without a cold water tank, you have just one temperature with the *hammam shams* tank – scalding hot. So, I became an expert (not for the first time) on bucket showers with a sponge. I also started asking friends to use their washing machine when needed.

When the third week with the same situation came around, admittedly, I got pissed. Every week, same thing at the same time. Abu Hussam decided to message the building's WhatsApp group to air grievances, and I decided to start my own investigation on the roof. I saw no evidence of any theft, no drops of water, no hose hanging out of our tank, no fingerprints on the pump, nothing! Again, we were told by Abu Jamal and the group, "You must be doing something wrong, maybe you have a leak." So we called our plumber to come by and help us figure out this mystery. Abu

Tha'ir inspected everything, from the main line to the individual pump, to both our tanks, to the network inside the apartment, to the toilets and showers, and found no leaks.

After checking everything he could, he and Abu Hussam elaborated about the different types of water thieves there are in Kufr 'Aqab and their various methods. They started with the laziest and easiest to detect and went all the way to PhD-level water thievery. I shall break it down:

1. The Water Siphoner: This is the most basic form of water theft and the easiest to repel. This involves a single guy, a hose, and maybe a ladder. He opens the desired tank from the top, inserts one end of the hose and sucks on the hose until water comes and sticks the other end in his tank. This method takes forever, leaves vast evidence, and is easily catchable.
2. Mid-Tier Thief: This involves one guy with a strong and long pipe, running up to the roof and connecting it to the individual pump or the bottom of the tank, and running it to his tank through the top. This method is faster but leaves ample evidence as well (fingerprints on the pump and water from the tank).
3. The Y-Cable Thief: Every building has at least two main pipe distribution sites, one is usually outside and the other on a mid-level floor to give more power to the pumps. The Y-Cable Thief simply attaches a pipe to your pipe and reroutes it to his, the power of the pressure ensures a very fast transfer with no evidence.
4. The Top-Tier Thief: This involves a master thief who knows how a water distribution network actually works and simply reroutes it from the source and ships it to his tank. This method is the fastest and leaves absolutely no evidence.

After discussing this over multiple rounds of coffee and cigarettes, Abu Tha'ir and Abu Hussam determined we must be dealing with type #3 or #4. They came to this conclusion based on the lack of evidence and the speed with which they were doing it. Siphoning from one tank to another can take an hour or more (I tried it later on and found out).

The next week, the same thing happened, and Abu Hussam sent another message to the WhatsApp group to try and discover if anyone else was dealing with theft. This time, one other person said it also happened to him. He said he was just going to siphon water from his hammam shams tank and deal with it that way. We even called the person who previously owned the apartment to figure out if he had any insight. He said he had occasionally dealt with a water thief from within the building during the summer, but it was never obstructive enough to cause him much of a headache.

The next week, I had a long trip to Gaza and my wife would be staying at her parents' for the whole week, so no one was in the house from Saturday until Wednesday night. This was the ultimate test: were we really using too much water as the lajna and other tenants made us believe, or was it a thief? We got to our apartment Wednesday late afternoon and within an hour of being in the house the water was gone.

I was irate, four weeks of water thievery and I was fed up. I decided: next week, I am going to hang out on the roof at the time that it happened and wait for the person, hoping they were type #1 or #2, and catch them in the act. Needless to say, when the day and time rolled around, Abu Hussam's theory was correct: the water was stolen without anyone on the roof but me, standing there bewildered. I was being confronted with a PhD-level water thief.

I should mention as well that through this month I complained, a lot, to anyone who would listen. My neighbors, people in the neighborhood in general, the guys who run the juice bar I frequent, the pharmacist, and the grocer. All had different theories and ideas of how to deal with it, but they also had a similar experience at one point or another with water theft. Some had useful tips and tricks to stop the thievery, others had suggestions for coping in the meantime. Regardless, it was stunning to me at the time that water stealing was such a widespread phenomenon. I mean, really, of all things to steal, water? Kufr ʻAqab has a reputation of being a lawless area where supposedly massive and widespread crime happens (although, personally, I think it is extremely exaggerated and levels are very low). Despite this, water stealing did not seem a prime market, but here we are. I was warned as well by everyone to keep bringing a plumber in to check things because water theft impacts the water infrastructure in apartments, and it can break down parts and materials.

After four weeks of having my water stolen, I was also hit with the monetary reality of this. What should have been a 64-shekel bill for two months of regular water use was a 128- shekel bill. Now thankfully, this sort of difference is not a big deal for us financially, but we are very fortunate in a neighborhood where most families are struggling and live paycheck to paycheck. "It was not enough our water was being stolen and we had to take sponge baths. Now we have to pay more money," I grumbled as I paid the bill at the local store.

There I was, a defeated man. I resigned myself to the fact that I was going to be dealing with a weekly water thief, intent on making my transition into Kufr ʻAqab both authentic and as annoying as possible.

Since then, we have had only one more experience with having water stolen. It occurred in mid-May 2023, when the first real heat hit Palestine. It was a familiar sight, about ten of us on the roof trying to figure out what was wrong, going through all the tired scenarios, noticing who had how much water and if any evidence was left behind. Thankfully, that was the last time I dealt with the water thief and because I was a seasoned enough professional at dealing with it, I simply grabbed a hose and siphoned water from my hammam shams tank to my cold tank and said *khalas*.

Now, as I end this account, I am sure you, the reader, may have plenty of questions. I assume your first is, "Where does all the stolen water go?" I have absolutely no idea. I know some people in Kufr ʻAqab keep an additional tank or two on their balcony, especially if they're a big family and need lots of water. The average amount they were stealing from us was about nine hundred liters a week, which would have to be stored somewhere until it was used. I simply have no good answer to this. I would like to think my water was hanging out in a lovely home being taken care of and used well, but I have no idea.

Additionally, you may be wondering, "Is there no one to stop this?" The short answer is no. While Kufr 'Aqab gets its water from the JWU, their authority for such a thing is extremely limited in capacity and authority, and since everything is illegal in Kufr 'Aqab already, they don't wish to get involved in water politics. Hundreds and potentially thousands of families deal with a similar issue weekly. With no legal mechanism to confront it, they are instead forced to silently cope. I, a very tough guy (sarcasm), fantasized about what I would do if I actually caught the water thief in the act. The reality is, they would probably have the backing of friends and/or family, which makes it near impossible to really stop them without a legal mechanism or authority to take them on. Probably lost in this article is the legal reality that Israel should not only be providing water to Kufr 'Aqab, but also fighting theft, in its "eternal, undivided capital." But as we know, it is more than content to encourage divide and rule among isolated and vulnerable Palestinian populations and not above using something like water to achieve its goals.

Lastly, you could be thinking, "Why does the thieving happen on Wednesday, more or less at the same time every week." I do not have a solid answer to this. Both my father-in-law and the plumber say this is typical and that it could be due to a mechanical setting they install in their pump, or it could just be a scheduled time they think is best to do it.

Honestly, I dread the day the water thief decides to target me again. The amount of time and energy my father-in-law and I dedicated to trying to catch this guy is enormous. While I feel sorry if he started targeting someone else, I am also relieved. Living in Kufr 'Aqab with all its problems is enough; being without water further exasperates this anxiety and discomfort for the many families living there.

Chris Whitman-Abdelkarim is the representative for Medico International in Palestine/Israel. He obtained his MA from Hebrew University in Jerusalem in Islamic and Middle Eastern studies and has worked at a number of Palestinian and Israeli NGOs since 2011 on issues such as labor rights, the Jordan Valley, settlements, and human rights.

FACTS AND FIGURES

Severe Water Shortages in Kufr ʻAqab: Adalah Petitions Israeli Supreme Court

Adalah - The Legal Center for Arab Minority Rights in Israel

Editor's Note

JQ is reprinting the press release of Adalah's petition, with their permission. The original is available online at www.adalah.org/en/content/view/11156 (accessed 20 August 2024).

Adalah Petitions Israeli Supreme Court over Severe Water Shortages in Kufr ʻAqab, the Palestinian Neighborhood in Occupied East Jerusalem. The petition, filed on behalf of 204 residents, argues that the Israeli authorities' failure to provide a continuous and adequate water supply undermines the petitioners' right to health, as well as their right to life and bodily integrity.

> Today, 19 August 2024, Adalah – The Legal Center for Arab Minority Rights in Israel, petitioned the Israeli Supreme Court, demanding the immediate provision of a regular, continuous, and adequate water supply to Kufr ʻAqab. The petition was filed on behalf of 204 residents of Kufr ʻAqab, the largest Palestinian neighborhood in East Jerusalem.
>
> (See HCJ 44918-08-24 *Zgayar v. The Government Water and Sewage Authority* (in Hebrew) at www.adalah.org/uploads/uploads/Petition_Kufr_'Aqab_water.pdf)

Israel annexed Kufr ʻAqab in 1967, in clear violation of international law, and incorporated it into the jurisdiction of the Jerusalem Municipality, thereby applying Israeli law. Today, the approximately 100,000 residents of Kufr ʻAqab lack reliable access to water. Although Kufr ʻAqab falls within the Jerusalem Municipality, it does not receive water from the municipal supplier, Hagihon Company. Instead, it is supplied by the Palestinian Water Authority, similar to other Palestinian

communities in the occupied West Bank, which purchases water from the Israeli national water company, Mekorot.

Since mid-May, supply of water to Kufr ʻAqab sharply deteriorated resulting in a water crisis. In May, residents received an average of just 12 hours of water per week. As of mid-July, residents were supplied with a weekly average of only a day and a half to two and a half days of water.

The petition, filed by Adalah's Legal Director, Dr. Suhad Bishara, argues that the inadequate water supply to the residents of Kufr ʻAqab infringes upon their fundamental human rights. The failure to provide a continuous and adequate supply of water undermines the petitioners' right to health, as well as their right to life and bodily integrity.

The right to water is recognized in international human rights instruments such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, and the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights has emphasized in General Comment 15 that "*The human right to water entitles everyone to sufficient, safe, acceptable, physically accessible and affordable water for personal and domestic uses. An adequate amount of safe water is necessary to prevent death from dehydration, to reduce the risk of water-related disease and to provide for consumption, cooking, personal and domestic hygienic requirements*."

The right to an adequate water supply is also enshrined in Israeli law and has been upheld by the Israeli Supreme Court on various occasions.

The petition outlines the residents' ongoing and relentless struggle to secure water for essential needs, including drinking, bathing, cooking, cleaning, and hygiene. Due to the lack of running water for most days of the week, households, schools, clinics, and other facilities are compelled to purchase water from private sources. The privately purchased water is then pumped to rooftops using electric pumps and stored in large plastic tanks. This method not only costs more than ten times the standard rate set by the Israeli Water Authority and the national water company, Mekorot, but also involves unregulated and potentially hazardous practices. Supported by research and World Health Organization (WHO) guidelines, the petition highlights that storing water in plastic containers poses significant health risks.

The petition follows multiple correspondences from Adalah since June 2024 that flagged the issue and demanded immediate action from the Jerusalem Municipality, the Water Authority, and Mekorot. In a letter dated 27 June 2024, Israel's Water Authority responded that the water supply is managed by the Palestinian Water Authority and noted that Mekorot is making efforts to maintain the agreed-upon water quantities. The petition argues that this response indicates the Water Authority's awareness of the crisis, but shows a disregard for its legal obligations to ensure a continuous, adequate, and reasonably priced water supply as required by law.

Adalah added: "The water crisis in Kufr ʻAqab during the height of summer clearly demonstrates Israel's systematic violation of Palestinians' fundamental rights.

For decades, Israel has consistently failed to meet its obligations as an occupying power to provide water to Palestinians in the occupied Palestinian territory, and at times has even deliberately prevented access to these essential resources. Even in territories Israel considers to be within its jurisdiction, such as Kufr ʻAqab – which was unlawfully annexed by Israel in 1967 – Israel evades its responsibility under both international and its own domestic laws for the most basic necessity for survival: water. Israeli authorities are fully aware of the crisis and refuse to act, forcing Palestinians to resort to hazardous and unsafe practices that jeopardize their health."

BOOK REVIEW

Palestinian Refugees and Their Love-Hate Relationship with UNRWA

Review by Michael Dumper

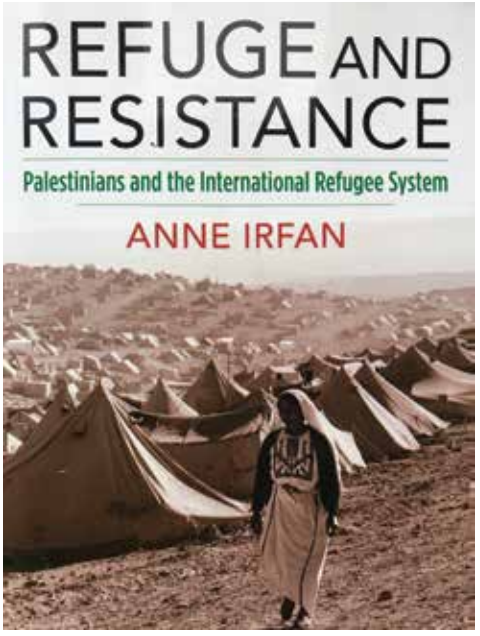
Abstract

Anne Irfan argues in this book that the relationship between Palestinian refugees and UNRWA is complex and multilayered and that Palestinian agency has contributed to the transformation of UNRWA, a point overlooked by many studies. The author examines the establishment of UNRWA and its expansion within the five areas of operation – Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, West Bank, and Gaza. Based on a comprehensive and diverse range of sources, this interdisciplinary study considers the way in which UNRWA has played a dual role – mitigating the disaster of their dispossession and expulsion in1948 but also containing Palestinian refugee frustrations at the lack of international support for their rights.

Keywords:

UNRWA; United Nations; Palestine refugees; international aid; education.

Refuge and Resistance: Palestinians and the International Refugee System, by Anne Irfan. New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2023. 328 pages. $140.00 hardcover; $35.00 paperback; $34.99 ebook.



Tragically, this book is well-timed. Following the genocidal actions carried out by Israel in Gaza since October 2023, Israel has been directing its formidable diplomatic and public relations firepower at the UN organization responsible for Palestinian refugees, the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA). In so doing, it is complementing its destruction in Gaza of what is the largest Palestinian refugee community with an assault on whatever international material support and diplomatic infrastructure the refugees have left. Unintentionally,

Israel's actions have brought back the Palestinian refugee issue, including the long and almost symbiotic relationship between Palestinian refugees and UNRWA, to front and center of the world's attention. Anne Irfan's clearly written and careful analysis of the role that this vital, but much unloved, organization plays in the politics of Palestine, the Palestinians, and the Arab-Israeli conflict will be very welcome to specialist and general reader alike.

The first three chapters of *Refuge and Resistance* serve as an extended but thoughtful introduction to the main objective of her study: how Palestinian refugees demonstrated resistance, among other forms of agency, to the catastrophic upending of their whole society following the Nakba in 1948. These chapters cover the genesis of the refugee issue, its subsequent transformation into a nationalist platform as a result of the defeat of Arab armies in 1967, and the rise of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) as an independent military and political force, as well as the establishment of UNRWA and its emergence as a key nonstate actor in the region, and its relations with the refugee "host" states of Lebanon, Syria, and Jordan, and with Israel as the occupier of the West Bank and Gaza.

To some extent these chapters restate much that is already known to scholars of the refugee issue. What makes Irfan's contribution significant and noteworthy, however, is the meticulous and comprehensive research that she brings to her text. Each point and development of her argument is superbly referenced, opening up vistas of data and new areas to consider. (There are sixty-one pages of notes!) Her approach is interdisciplinary, drawing on autobiography, interviews, UNRWA archives, photographs, and a wide range of academic works, weaving the nuggets she has gleaned into her material and giving it both depth and helpful accessibility. Two wonderful quotes I must share: one by Palestinian writer Fawaz Turki who referred to UNRWA as "our contemptuous stepmother"; and the other by senior PLO leader Salah Salah who lamented, "The Jews got Israel and we got UNRWA." As a result of this approach, Irfan's style is relaxed and highly readable, with academic vocabulary deployed judiciously.

The second part of the book, also three chapters (and an epilogue), examines the part UNRWA plays in the international refugee regime and the related field of humanitarian assistance studies, with the Palestinian refugees as a case study. It is a deft and sharply delineated analysis of the complex relationship between Palestinian refugees and one of the biggest UN agencies in the UN family. (Save for the UN peacekeeping forces, it has the largest number of direct employees in the UN.) Irfan demonstrates how, due to the geographical spread and disparate political systems in which the refugees live, the relationship with UNRWA is highly variegated, dynamic, and multilayered. She writes: "Refugees saw UNRWA as 'their' agency but did not have the financial leverage to call it to account, fueling the notion that the agency was really a foreign implant controlled by the West" (137). Irfan clearly shows how UNRWA simultaneously plays two roles: first, as a symbol of the refugee dispossession of their land and homes in the area that became Israel and, second, as a vehicle for the mitigation of that dispossession. She unpacks the painful irony of how Palestinian national identity is partly forged through refugee resistance to UNRWA as a tool to

pacify their demands and as the channel through which the international community, dominated by reluctant Western donors, has sought to reduce its commitment to the Palestinian refugees.

This is not, in essence, an international relations study and its strengths do not lie in contributing to the large corpus of literature on the study of international organizations. Irfan's approach is much narrower and inductive. Despite some passing attempts at theorizing concepts such as "hybrid internationalism" (92), the author does not develop the insights drawn from the data she collects on UNRWA itself as a regional actor. This aspect of her work is eclipsed by her focus on Palestinian refugees as actors. Given the largely historical and archival nature of her data, this is the appropriate emphasis. So while flagging the international context and constraints under which UNRWA operates in the region, Irfan sidesteps the temptation to drift into international relations theory and evaluate the relationship between UNRWA and Palestinian refugees through those lenses.

This empirically grounded research serves Irfan's argument well. For example, in elaborating on the theme of resistance as a manifestation of refugee agency, she identifies the Palestinian refugee espousal of education as key. It has been both popular and a valued form of empowerment. Irfan cites a striking political tract written by a Gaza-based NGO in the 1970s which declares:

> We are not fighting the treacherous enemy with words void of action and work. Education is first necessary requirement [*sic*]. It is the lamp which lights the way for us and makes us reach our holy aim successfully with all security and certainty … Also, you who claim you are patriots when at the same time you throw stones at schools and glass bottles at walls. The grounds of patriotism have no room for such things. (159)

As a result of such sentiments, Palestinian refugee input into the content and forms of services delivery has been quite significant. The standardization of the UNRWA schools and curriculum across the five areas of UNRWA's operation led to the perception of the UNRWA education system as a Palestinian "national system of education" (161). Pressure from Palestinian teachers, UNRWA unions, and PLO leaders led to the incorporation of more Palestinian-specific issues and narratives into the curriculum, albeit unevenly and only gradually across the UNRWA system.

Often overlooked in studies of the work of UNRWA is the impact of the gender-blind basis of UNRWA's education. As Irfan spells out, schooling was available "free of charge to *all* registered refugee children, regardless of sex. This meant that families did not have to choose which child they could afford to send to school" (161). While Irfan is at pains to point out that this did not eradicate the social conservatism and misogyny prevalent in both UNRWA and Palestinian society, the widespread and effective participation of women in Palestinian resistance can be partly attributed to the universality of UNRWA's education system. Methodological purists may quibble at the lack of a systematic framework in Irfan's presentation of this important data on the part that education played in Palestinian refugee agency, but here again Irfan's

accumulation of sources and citations demonstrate the strength of her insights and observations.

In an ironic twist, part of the Israeli argument for the dissolution of UNRWA – its role in consolidating Palestinian nationalism – confirms Irfan's thesis. The political engagement of many teachers and former students of UNRWA schools is indisputable. Many PLO leaders and activists in the Palestinian resistance – from the cofounder of Fatah Salah Khalaf, to the communist activist Mu'in Basisu, to the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) figure and writer Ghassan Kanafani – were teachers in or graduates of UNRWA schools. At the same time, this Israeli complaint misses an important point: given the absence of alternative options for refugee families, it is not so surprising since the greater proportion of refugee children were graduates of UNRWA schools.

There are numerous studies on UNRWA – government reports, donor evaluations, journal articles, think tank studies, in-depth media articles, theses and dissertations, and edited volumes – to the extent that the study of UNRWA verges on constituting a subdiscipline of its own in the overlapping fields of the Arab-Israeli conflict, Palestine studies, and forced migration studies. Surprisingly, however, there are very few single-authored books, and none in the past few years, which incorporate both new archival material and the findings of the most recent publications on UNRWA. Irfan's *Refuge and Resistance* is a thoughtful and nuanced contribution to this work. While recent challenges to UNRWA will demand yet another evaluation of its checkered role in the Palestinian refugee situation, this book is likely to stand the test of time and has set down a marker by which those that follow will be judged.

Tragic though the timing of this publication may be, it is also very opportune for advocates. The current diplomatic and financial assault on UNRWA by Israel and other grossly misinformed states is one of the most serious of UNRWA's seventy-five-year existence. If you want to understand why UNRWA exists, why its relationship to those in its care is one of both love and hate, why it has both served and undermined Palestinian refugee resilience and independence and why it is unlikely to be replaced until Palestinian refugee rights are to some measure addressed, then you should read this book.

Michael Dumper is emeritus professor in Middle East politics, University of Exeter, UK, where he worked since 1986. He has acted as a consultant on Middle East politics for the UK and Canadian governments, UNRWA, UNSCO, the European Commission Task Force on Refugees, and think tanks and research centers in North America, Europe, and the Middle East. His research and teaching has largely focused on Jerusalem and on Palestinian refugees. He is the author of Power, Piety and People: The Politics of Holy Cities in the 21st Century *(Columbia University Press, 2020);* Jerusalem Unbound: Geography, History, and the Future of the Holy City *(Columbia University Press, 2014); and* The Future of Palestinian Refugees: Toward Justice and Equity *(Lynne Rienner, 2007). His most recent research project explores ways in which Palestinian refugee voices can be strengthened in debates concerning the future financing of UNRWA (see mas.ps/en/publications/7047.html).*

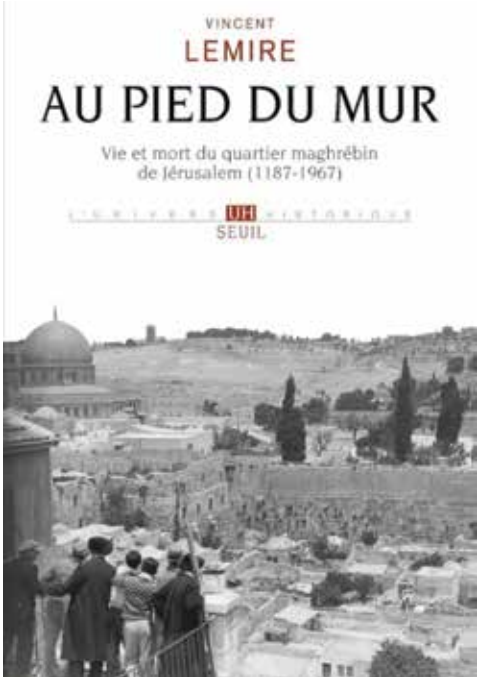
BOOK REVIEW

The History of the Mughrabi Quarter: Wiping Out Eight Centuries of Presence in Jerusalem

Review by Maissoun Sharkawi

Au pied du Mur: Vie et mort du quartier maghrébin de Jérusalem (1187–1967), by Vincent Lemire, Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 2022. 390 pages. $54.24 paperback; $19.99 ebook.

In the Shadow of the Wall: The Life and Death of Jerusalem's Maghrebi Quarter, 1187–1967, by Vincent Lemire, translated by Jane Kuntz. Redwood City, CA: Stanford University Press, 2023. 400 pages. $95.00 hardcover; $32.00 paperback; $26.63 ebook.



Abstract

In the Shadow of the Wall by Vincent Lemire explores the Mughrabi neighborhood's proximity to al-Buraq Wall[1] and its significance in the history of the city of Jerusalem. Through a meticulous examination of events such as the 1929 Buraq Wall Uprising and the Great Revolt that followed, Lemire highlights the resilience of the Mughrabi community against multiple colonial powers in order to protect their deep-rooted historical presence in Jerusalem. Drawing on a variety of historical sources and personal testimonies, the narrative not only provides a retrospective account, but also offers insights into the ongoing colonial project in Palestine. Lemire's analytical approach sheds light on the enduring challenges faced by Palestinians and other communities closely linked to the history of Palestine. These challenges include forced displacement and the destruction of key historical landmarks that act as links between communities and the land, all aimed at reshaping and reconstructing a new historical narrative. Ultimately, the book interweaves archival evidence with broader historical contexts, providing readers with a valuable perspective on the intricate tapestry of Jerusalem's history.

Keywords:

Jerusalem; Mughrabi neighborhood; al-Buraq; archives; multifaceted colonial powers; destruction of historical sites.

The original French title of this book, *Au pied du Mur*, directly translates

to "At the foot of the wall," symbolizing its proximity to al-Buraq; in the city of Jerusalem, al-Buraq is the site of the western wall of al-Aqsa Mosque. The French title can also mean a situation of being trapped and helpless. In contrast, the new English title emphasizes being overshadowed by the presence of the wall. Both titles evoke the aura behind the intangible presence of the Mughrabi neighborhood in Jerusalem.

I am reviewing Lemire's book while a turbulent period of profound genocidal warfare unfolds in Gaza, and in other regions of Palestine. This book transports readers to another time, when the stark realities of conflict first erupted in vivid details. It confronts readers with the atrocities and horrors that Palestine and Palestinians have endured in this contemporary era since the twentieth century, under both British colonial rule and the ongoing Israeli settler-colonial project. The Buraq Wall Uprising, which took place during the summer of 1929 under British rule, holds significant importance in this work. It signified the onset of widespread unrest that engulfed most major cities in Palestine, along with numerous Arab villages and Jewish colonies. To suppress the unrest, the British Army deployed air and armored weaponry and sought assistance from military units stationed at British bases outside Palestine.[2] The Buraq Uprising also sheds light on the importance of the Mughrabi quarter and the involvement of the Mughrabi community in the uprising, which ultimately paved the way for the Great Revolt from 1936 to 1939.

The Western Wall of the Haram al-Sharif, the Noble Sanctuary, in the city of Jerusalem is evident as the center of this historical narrative. The site holds religious significance for Muslims and Jews alike and carries particular historical importance for Mughrabi Muslims (originating as migrant pilgrims from North Africa) who resided for centuries in the western courtyard of the Buraq Wall. French Islamic scholar Louis Massignon attributed special importance to this neighborhood. He proposed that the western wall symbolized the wall of the *westerners*, referring to the presence of the Mughrabi community of Jerusalem (19–20).[3] Today, the city of Jerusalem remains a focal point of historical and religious significance, and currently endures intensive violence from Israeli state-backed Jewish colonization in the Old City and elsewhere.

In the Shadow of the Wall delineates the events that have shaped Jerusalem's modern history, with particular attention on the Mughrabi quarter that once stood at the foot of the Buraq Wall. Lemire's methodology for examining these historical events is both meticulous and engaging, providing an analysis of past events that offers a forward-looking perspective on the ongoing colonial project in Palestine. In addition, the book sheds light on possible future developments that Palestinians may face, including the threat of forced displacement and the continuing destruction of villages, towns, cities, and historical landmarks.

The book offers an exploration of the Mughrabi quarter from the early twelfth century to the late 1960s. It uncovers a detailed narrative of enduring conflict, showcasing the resilience of communities against successive imperial powers, from the Ottoman Empire to British colonialism, the Jordanian administration, and the current Israeli colonial rule. Lemire enriches the narrative of the Mughrabi quarter and the intricate history of Jerusalem and Palestine by drawing on a diverse range of

historical records from various primary sources. Each archival source is meticulously identified and analyzed, providing an understanding of past and present-day events. The archives include those of the Islamic Court of Jerusalem, the Awqaf in Abu Dis, the Jordanian-Jerusalem Municipality, the French archives in Ankara, the diplomatic archives in Nantes, the records of the Directorate for Algerian Affairs in the French National Overseas Archives, the Royal Archives in Rabat, and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) archives. In addition, the archives of the League of Nations, UNRWA, and UNESCO contribute significantly to a broader contextual understanding of the subject. The author delves into personal archives of individuals involved in the events and a few testimonies of former residents of the Western Wall area offer valuable insights into the history of Jerusalem and its Mughrabi quarter. The involvement of the International Court of Justice in The Hague adds another layer to the narrative, particularly in light of current circumstances and Israel's dismissive approach to international law and UN resolutions.

Three fourths of the book are dedicated entirely to the Mughrabi quarter, providing a detailed account of the Mughrabi presence within the city's walls. In his insightful exploration of medieval Jerusalem's philanthropic landscape, the author highlights the central role of an Islamic charitable foundation (*waqf*) in promoting the welfare of the Mughrabi community: the establishment of the Waqf Abu Madyan, dating back to the early fourteenth century, initially seeded by a donation from the great Ayyubid ruler, Salah al-Din, in the late twelfth century. This foundation, along with the establishment of the Madrasa Afdaliyya by Salah al-Din's son Afdal, underlines the deep religious roots of the Mughrabi community (153–91). This institution appears to have played a pivotal role, beyond the provision of religious education, in shaping the cultural and intellectual landscape of the Mughrabi community within and beyond the city walls. An exploration of this waqf foundation's legacy, documented in manuscripts and historical records, could provide scholars with valuable insight into its influence on the Mughrabi community and its broader import within the historical narrative of Jerusalem and Palestine.

In a pivotal moment of history, Ibrahim Pasha, the Khedive of Egypt during the reformation era of the Ottoman Empire in 1840, breathed new life into the legacy of Salah al-Din's charitable foundation. With his confirmation of its legal validity, the enduring assets of this foundation gained newfound protection and recognition. At the same time, a tantalizing opportunity emerged for colonial France in relation to its recently conquered territories in Algeria, beckoning them to explore their role in the power dynamics of Jerusalem and the region. This opportune moment invites readers to delve into the complex transition period between Ottoman rule and the rise of European colonial influence in Palestine. The book devotes much attention to the influx of North African refugees into the Levant in the wake of France's conquest of Algeria in the 1830s, and later its colonization of Tunisia and Morocco. Lemire's lack of emphasis on the Algerian presence in other regions of Palestine may be due to his primary research focus being on Jerusalem as a "global city." However, readers may have found it compelling to explore the presence of other Mughrabi communities,

particularly in the northern Galilee, and their links with the Mughrabi community and the Waqf Abu Madyan in Jerusalem.

The period of British colonial rule over Palestine (1917–48) brought further political changes that affected the Mughrabi communities. Following World War I, and the defeat of the Ottomans, France and Britain vied for control over the Middle East, leaving local residents (the "orphans of the Ottoman Empire" as Lemire refers to them) subject to two competing colonial powers. During this period, Algerians, who held a different status to Moroccans and Tunisians under French colonial rule, sought to demonstrate their position as French subjects under the Palestine Mandate. This was done to protect their property and land from the pressures associated with the onset of the Zionist project, which aimed to expropriate their land and historical legacy in the city of Jerusalem. Following the end of British colonial rule, France eagerly sought to regain control over this miniature version of French Algeria in the Middle East, as expressed by Lemire. Furthermore, France engaged in negotiations with the Israeli authorities for the restitution of Mughrabi property, arguing its status as belonging to French citizens. Louis de Massignon frequently cited the rights of ownership of the Tlemcanian Waqf, aiming to imply its Algerian roots and thus justify France's claim to protect this heritage.

During the Algerian War of Independence, the FLN (Front de Libération Nationale) wielded influence even in distant Jerusalem, as evidenced by the assassination of Hajj Lounis, a waqf inspector from French Algeria. Lounis was targeted and killed in Setif in 1957 upon his return from Jerusalem, highlighting the reach of geopolitical tensions at the time. In the pan-Arab era and the struggle for independence, the Mughrabi quarter became a secret battleground, witnessing tensions between France and North African colonies, as well as between France and Jordan. (Currently, a new administrative body has emerged in Jerusalem with the principal goal of positioning Jordan as the "Holy Land" and initiating investments in religious tourism projects.) During this period, France made efforts to preserve the waqf lands and the Mughrabi quarter as a gesture to strengthen confidence between France and the North African presence, at least in Jerusalem.

Following the independence of Algeria, the file of Waqf Abu Madyan was transferred by France to Algerian authorities in 1962. Notably, in 1965, Mohammed Boukharouba, a prominent figure in Algerian politics, assumed the presidency and adopted the name *Houari Boumediene*, symbolizing Algeria's enduring presence in the Middle East.

Lemire examines how, after the June 1967 war and the capture of Jerusalem, religious Zionists sought to translate their messianic aspirations into tangible political goals. It is important to understand the decision-making behind this process, especially as it relates to heritage and conservation. The operational Israeli cabinet held well-organized meetings that brought together the military authority, the Ministry of the Interior, the Ministry of Religious Affairs, the West Jerusalem Municipality, and the National Park Authority, in coordination with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The aim was to provide advice on the appropriate decisions for the efficient destruction of the

Mughrabi quarter. This destruction was principally carried out on the night of 10 June 1967, immediately following the ceasefire that ended the war. Lemire's treatment of this traumatic moment unveils the perspectives of key Israeli figures, including Moshe Dayan and the "Old Lion," David Ben-Gurion (193–245). As a guide to Jerusalem's history and challenges, Lemire's insightful analysis and compelling narrative make this work essential for anyone seeking to understand the complex factors influencing Palestine's present and future. His poignant narrative serves as a crucial reminder of the imperative to bear witness to history's darkest moments. It is essential reading for anyone seeking to comprehend the complexities of modern warfare and the resilience of those who endure its trials. However, further exploration into the testimonies of individuals who inherited the memories of this place from their ancestors, as well as those who returned to their second home countries while carrying the legacy of this site, would have added valuable depth to the narrative. Such perspectives could have enriched our understanding of the lasting impact of historical trauma and the ways in which individuals continue to carry these legacies forward.

Maissoun Sharkawi is an associate professor in the Faculty of Applied Arts at the Palestinian Technical University–Kadoori in Ramallah. She is a research associate for the French Institute of the Near East (IFPO) and is currently researching Algerian exile and migration to northern Palestine between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

Endnotes

1 In Islam, al-Buraq Wall is believed to be where the Prophet Muhammad tied his winged horse, al-Buraq, when he made his night journey to Jerusalem.

2 Maher Charif, "Ninety Years after the Buraq Uprising," Institute for Palestine Studies blog, 6 September 2019, online at www.palestine-studies.org/en/node/236017.

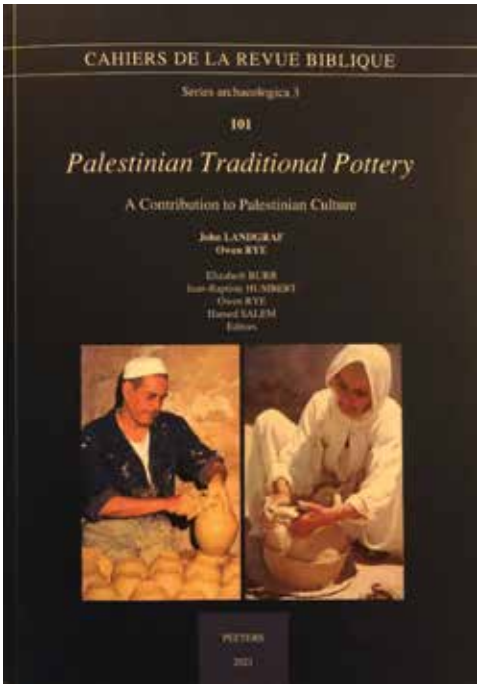
3 Page numbers in this review refer to the original French publication.

BOOK REVIEW

Palestine Traditional Pottery: Craft and Commerce

Review by Karel Vriezen

Palestinian Traditional Pottery: A Contribution to Palestinian Culture, by John Landgraf and Owen Rye, edited by Elizabeth Burr, Jean-Baptiste Humbert, Owen Rye, and Hamed Salem; foreword by Jean-Baptiste Humbert, introduction by Hamed Salem. Cahiers de la Revue biblique, Series archaeologica 3. Leuven: Peeters, 2021. xxxii + 329 pp. €88 (paperback). ISBN: 9789042947085



Abstract

This book stands out as a scholarly testimony to the disappearing craft of traditional pottery making by Palestinian women and men potters. The material it assembles, both textual and pictorial, is based on field research completed in the 1970s by two very different, yet complementary, researchers and authors. For various reasons, this material lay dormant over four decades until it was retrieved and returned to the light of day. The publication of this book followed the death of one of the authors, John Landgraf in 2017 in the U.S. Fortunately, his co-author, Owen Rye in Australia, still had most of the written material in his possession, which was then digitized, arranged, and edited. The graphic material, especially the black and white and beautiful color photographs, taken by the authors, was also gathered and cataloged for reproduction in the book, with outstanding results. The volume invites readers into the two distinct worlds of Palestinian women and men potters at work in the 1970s: the women in their village homes, and the men in their mostly urban workshops. With Palestinian culture under siege, the study presented here aims to record and preserve a key part of that culture. It also memorializes the life and work of John Landgraf, who lived in Jerusalem from 1965 to 1980, and dedicated himself to archaeology, ethnography, and social work.

Keywords:

Palestinian traditional pottery; women potters; men potters; Palestinian villages; pottery-making centers; pottery workshops; clay and temper; pot building; pot throwing; pot firing.

Palestinian Traditional Pottery may be compared to the reference works on the culture of Palestine by great folklorists like Taufiq Canaan, Khalil Ra'd, and Gustaf Dalman, not only because of its noteworthy text but also because of the hundreds of beautiful color photographs that accompany the text. It is published as a memorial volume to John Elsemore Landgraf, remembered as a most modest yet striking personality among the archaeologists in Jerusalem in the 1970s. Following his death in 2017 in his homeland, the United States, his wife, Elizabeth Burr, and several former colleagues decided to edit his written notes from the 1970s on women potters in ten West Bank Palestinian villages and their home-crafted pottery. When Australian potter Owen Rye was contacted, he agreed to participate in the project by sharing his contemporaneous written notes on the Palestinian male potters, and thereby became the co-author of the book. Rye visited Palestine in 1973, 1974, and 1977 to study the work of the male potters and during those seasons Landgraf and Rye worked together. This volume presents the field studies of both: in the first half, Landgraf's studies of the women potters, and in the second half Rye's studies of the male potters. Both groups made utilitarian vessels but were distinct from one another.

John Landgraf, after earning a PhD in molecular biology, entered the field of Palestinian archaeology when preparing a dissertation on the Late Bronze Age pottery of Tell Taanach (Ti'inik) on the West Bank. In 1970, he visited Franken's and Kalsbeek's ceramology institute in Leiden, Netherlands. There he became acquainted with the various pottery-building techniques and with the relation between archaeology and ethnography. Owen Rye also came into Palestinian archaeology through the excavations at Tell Taanach. There, together with archaeologist Albert Glock, he attempted to establish correlations between the excavated ancient pottery and the modern traditional potters' craft and commerce.

In their common introduction to the book, Landgraf and Rye address the impact of their ethnographic approach and the meaning of "tradition." In the course of time, they had realized the profound differences between the traditional pottery made by women and that made by men. The women made pottery by hand, in the villages, according to need – vessels for food preparation and consumption and for water storage – in the period between the spring and the autumn harvests. The men made pottery on the wheel and had a wide repertoire, in or near towns in a year-round, commercial industry.

In the first part of the book, Landgraf opens his contribution by investigating the "End of a Tradition: Palestine's Women Potters," starting with the origin of both traditions and concluding that they have existed side by side since at least the Mamluk period (ca. 1250–1517 CE). He continues with a survey of the consecutive phases of the pot-making process: from collecting and preparing the clay and temper, to the stages of building pots, and finally the firing of the pots. It is made clear that all of these phases are interrelated: there is a coherence between the clay, the kind of temper used, the wall thickness, the end product, and the firing process.

The two types of vessels most produced by women were water storage jars and cooking pots. Cooking pots were distinctive because of the temperature resistance needed, as cooking was done over an open fire, so their formation required the use of

calcite temper, a raw material mainly found in the area of al-Jib.[1] For water jars, usually grog and crushed straw were used as the temper, both ingredients being widely available.

In the main part of Landgraf's contribution, the various elements of his introduction and survey are described in detail in his overview of the craft, titled "Women Potters in Ten West Bank Villages." Here history, ethnography, and ceramic techniques are discussed, in addition to some discussion of geology and trade. The villages reviewed are grouped by region: in the southern Dura district (Fuqayqis and Bayt ʻAwwa); the central regions between Jerusalem and Nablus (Bayt ʻAnan, al-Jib, Baytuniya, Sinjil, Qusra, Qabalan); and the area north of Nablus (Kafr al-Labad and Yaʻbad).

The historical information covers the introduction of modern equipment during the twentieth century, which profoundly changed the set of household goods that were needed. The ethnographic information demonstrates the division of work between women and men, and between women potters and their women clients, including the use of house and yard. In addition to meticulously measuring and documenting the material preparations, pot building stages, and firing stages of these potters, Landgraf describes the finishing of the vessels, for example, the relation of painted pottery decoration to the embroidery patterns on Palestinian dresses in the Ramallah area. He also offers "cameo" portraits of several potters with whom he became personally acquainted in the course of repeated visits to their villages.

In the second part of the book, Owen Rye opens his contribution by investigating the "Survival of a Tradition: Palestine's Male Potters," starting with the concepts of tradition and workshop. Here the work location, availability of materials, pot building on the wheel, and scope of the end products, in addition to the types of fuel and firing processes, and the marketing of pots**,** differ profoundly from the women's pottery craft. Specific to Palestine is the Tijlis technique, that is, pot throwing on the wheel in two stages: first throwing the base closed upside down, and letting it dry, followed by turning the pot right side up, placing it in a chuck on the wheel, and finishing the upper half of the pot. Open pot forms, like bowls, are made right side up in one stage. The construction of the traditional Palestinian wheel, and the layout and use of the tower-like Palestinian *tabun* oven, are also discussed broadly.

In the main part of Rye's contribution, the various elements of his introduction and survey are described in detail in his overview titled, "Male Potters at Eight Centers in Palestine." The centers discussed are grouped in the central area of Ramallah, including al-Ramla, Jericho, and Jordan; the western area of ʻIrtah; the northern area of Jabaʻ; and the large production centers of Hebron and Gaza. Here the historical developments of demarcation and migration after the 1948 and 1967 wars are taken into account. Therefore the "central area" is extended, and the potters' workshops still existing in 1977 in Nazareth, Haifa, and ʻAkka (Acre) are also considered.

In Jabaʻ, the limited group of potters produced utilitarian vessels of the usual Palestinian repertoire comparable to those produced at Hebron and Gaza. As special items the multiple-spouted wedding jar, the "duck"-like jug, and the candlestick with five candle holders may be mentioned.

The pottery craft in Hebron and Gaza is extensively reviewed, since in the 1970s

the number of workshops in these two centers far exceeded the number of workshops in other centers: ten in Hebron and fourteen in Gaza, based also on information drawn from the memories of informants reaching back to the 1930s.

Of these two centers, Hebron witnessed several changes during the twentieth century. Whereas before 1948 the full repertoire of Palestinian pottery types was still being produced in this city, later several types went out of use and ceased production because of the import of metal, plastic, and glass containers. For fuel, the traditionally used agricultural waste and wood were replaced by rubber. For temper, sand and salt came into use, which shortened firing times, enabled the addition of white-fired ware to the repertoire, and resulted in glazed ware falling out of the repertoire. In the mid-1960s, some potters changed from making utilitarian vessels to the production of miniature vessels and replicas of antiques, and began to work with electric ovens. After 1967, a market for flowerpots opened in Israel; a press was then introduced to produce flowerpots.

In Gaza over the past century, the number of workshops diminished drastically – from fifty workshops in 1907 to five in 2013, although Gaza workshops were still producing the full traditional repertoire of Palestinian pottery as late as 1977. Most workshops produced only black-fired ware (and reportedly had done so since the eighteenth century), while others also made red- or white-fired ware. Their fuel source was mainly waste from the furniture industry. Except in the case of white ware, no sand was incorporated into the temper, which made the firing process take longer. The ovens all differed in their measurements, with different rates of heating and different maximum temperatures. Half of the production was sold in the Gaza market; the flowerpots went to Israel, and the remainder to the West Bank market. White-fired ware was produced only in limited quantities, with salt being added to the clay.

In his descriptions, Rye provides overviews of the clays and the fuels needed and their costs, as well as calculations of the loss of waste pottery and of the final yield per firing session. He and Landgraf also provide a list of the Gaza pottery forms produced in 1975.

The five appendixes – lists of toponyms, numbers of potters' workshops by location, potters' names by location, a glossary of technical terms, and Palestinian census figures for 1967 and 1997 – along with over 550 photographs and diagrams, and the text they illustrate, altogether make this book a treasure for the study of Palestinian traditional pottery and culture in the twentieth century.

Karel Vriezen holds a PhD in archaeology from Leiden University and has served as assistant director of the German Evangelical Institute in Jerusalem (1972–75), and senior lecturer in the Department of Old Testament Studies, Utrecht University (1975–2005). He was co-director of archaeological excavations at the Muristan, in the Old City of Jerusalem (1972–74), and at Umm Qays (1974–97) and Tal Zar'a (Zira'a), in Jordan (2001–2).

Endnotes

1 Due to transliteration differences, place names mentioned in this review appear differently in the book under review, namely: Fuqeiqis, Beit 'Awwa, Beit 'Anan, al Jib, Beitunia, Kafr al Labad, al Ramla, and Akka.

Submissions General Guidlines
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The *Jerusalem Quarterly* accepts author submissions of original contributions about Jerusalem, its social and political history, and its current realities. Occasionally personal memoirs or works of fiction are accepted. Submissions are received throughout the year; specific deadlines for special thematic issues may also be announced.

JQ sends all manuscripts to designated readers for evaluation. Authors may also specifically request that their article be peer-reviewed. Authors should allow four to eight weeks from the date of submission for a final evaluation and publication decision.

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Material submitted to *JQ* for consideration should adhere to the following:

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- **Spelling**: American English according to Merriam-Webster.
- **Text style**: Refer to *Chicago Manual of Style* (CMOS) for all questions regarding punctuation, capitalization, and font style.
- **Transliteration** of names and words in Arabic, Hebrew, and Turkish should follow the style recommended by the *International Journal for Middle East Studies*, but modified for Arabic transliteration by omitting all diacritical marks except for the ʻayn (open single quotation mark) and hamza (closed single quotation mark). No right-to-left letters are allowed, except for very limited instances of crucial need.
- **Citations** should be in the form of endnotes and written in full (CMOS), as in the original source, with transliteration as needed.

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- **Visual material**: Any photos, charts, graphs, and other artwork should be of high resolution. For details, please see the section below.

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The *Jerusalem Quarterly* encourages the inclusion of visual material, wherever possible, for articles, essays, and for other sections submitted for publication. Visual material can be photographs, scans, charts, diagrams, graphs, maps, artwork, and the like (hereafter called "figures").
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- **Captions**: Authors should provide full captions (including, when applicable: source, credits, dates, places, people, explanation of content, etc.).
- **Color Figures**: Thus far, *JQ* has been more inclined to publish photos in black and white mainly because of the subject matter of the articles and essays, but for some time now we have been accepting both options. Since printing in full color is more costly, we sometimes opt to publish in black and white figures submitted in color. If this is not acceptable in the case of a specific figure, we kindly ask authors to notify us in writing.

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for her essay titled

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The essay will be published in a forthcoming issue of the

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Mezna Qato: Contributing Editor - the *Jerusalem Quarterly*

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Ibrahim Dakkak Award for Outstanding Essay on Jerusalem is an annual award launched by JQ in 2017 to commemorate the memory and work of Ibrahim Dakkak (1929–2016), former chairman of the Advisory Board of JQ. The deadline for submissions is 15 January of each year. A committee selected by the Jerusalem Quarterly will determine the winning essay, which will receive a prize of $1000, and will be published in the journal.
For more information, and for submissions:
www.palestine-studies.org/en/journals/jq/Ibrahim-Dakkak-Award

The Ibrahim Dakkak Award for Outstanding Essay on Jerusalem

The Ibrahim Dakkak Award for Outstanding Essay on Jerusalem is an annual award launched by the *Jerusalem Quarterly* in 2017 to honor the memory and work of Ibrahim Dakkak (1929–2016), Jerusalem engineer, activist, political leader, and former chairman of the Advisory Board of the *Jerusalem Quarterly*.

It is awarded to an outstanding submission (in English or Arabic) that addresses either contemporary or historical issues relating to Jerusalem. A committee selected by the *Jerusalem Quarterly* determines the winning essay. The author will be awarded a prize of U.S. $1,000, and the essay will be published in the *Jerusalem Quarterly*.

Essays submitted or nominated for consideration should be based on original research and must not have been previously published or submitted for publication elsewhere. Essays should be 4,000 to 5,000 words in length (including endnotes), preceded by an abstract of no more than 200 words, and up to 10 keywords.

If the submitted or nominated essay is in Arabic, the abstract and keywords should be in English.

Preference will be given to emerging/early career researchers and students.

Please submit or nominate essays and a short bio (including current or previous affiliation with a recognized university, research institution, or non-governmental organization that conducts research) via email to **jq@palestine-studies.org**, mentioning the Award. In the case of nomination, please provide a contact email address for the nominated author.

Any images should be submitted as separate files with a resolution of 600 dpi minimum, if possible. Submitted images must have copyright clearance from owners, and have captions that are clear and accurate.

The deadline for submissions and nominations is **15 January** of each year.

Cover photo: “Wreckage of the Maghrebi Quarter,” June 1967. Source: © Marylin Silvertone, Magnum.

Back cover: “Lorca – Jerusalem,” acrylic on canvas, 180 x 130 cm, 2017. Mohammed Joha.