

From the Editor



THE RENOWNED AUSTRALIAN ANTHROPOLOGIST Patrick Wolfe has often been quoted as saying that settler colonialism was “a structure, not an event.” In line with this definition, the Nakba—which precipitated the mass dispossession of the Palestinian people—is increasingly seen as an ongoing process, rather than solely an event occurring at a specific point in time. This sense of the ongoing nature of Palestinians’ lived experience since 1948 is reflected in all the contributions to this issue of the *Journal*, examining both the resilience and steadfastness of the Palestinians, on the one hand, and the unrelenting campaign of dispossession against them, on the other.

A special issue titled “1948 and Its Shadows,” with an introduction by *JPS* editorial committee member Beshara Doumani and Alex Winder, includes articles by Mezna Qato, Nasser Abourahme, and Dotan Halevy—three young scholars who focus on material aspects of everyday life to cast an unusual light on the traumas of the Palestinian experience. In their introduction to the issue, Doumani and Winder explore how the commemoration of 1948 became central to Palestinian self-narration alongside growing reliance on the trope of settler colonialism. They argue for a more expansive reading of Palestinian history to encompass both the low points of traumatic experience and the high points of resistance, framing the times in between the highs and lows as “shadow years” that underline the everyday response of ordinary Palestinians to the challenges facing them.

While in his article, Nasser Abourahme examines the meanings of Palestinian refugee camp life through the lens of three Palestinian novels, in hers, Mezna Qato explores how Palestinian geography was rendered in the first texts produced by the newly formed Jordanian state in the aftermath of the Nakba. Finally, Dotan Halevy looks at Gaza from a different perspective than that usually taken, examining its ruination between the two world wars, and the ways that ruins can be the beginning—rather than the end—of a national story.

In addition, this issue also includes four contributions that highlight ongoing campaigns against the idea of Palestine, its propagation, and its material presence. One is an essay on the conflation of anti-Zionism with anti-Semitism in France as a tactic to stifle mounting French criticism of Israeli violations of Palestinian rights. This is one of an ongoing series of essays in the *Journal* on the exploitation of this trope the world over, by supporters of Israel who are increasingly desperate to block such critiques.

Two reports, one by Michael R. Fischbach and the other by Nazmi Jubeh, chronicle two very different long-standing assaults against the Palestinians, their narrative, and their presence in their homeland. The former examines Palestinian initiatives to tell their story in the United States since the 1940s, and the efforts by the U.S. government and friends of Israel to prevent that from happening, down to the recent closure of the Palestine mission in Washington. The latter reveals the decades of encroachment on, and desecration of, Jerusalem’s largest and oldest Muslim cemetery—Bab al-Rahmah—by the Israeli authorities. These depredations, following the systematic desecration of the ancient Mamilla Cemetery in West Jerusalem, form only part of an effort to erase from the city’s history and built geography anything that does not conform to the religious-nationalist narrative Israel seeks to impose with regard to Jerusalem.

Finally, this issue of the *Journal* includes an analysis by Nadia Ben-Youssef and Sandra Samaan Tamari of Israel's new Nation-State Law, which is, in some sense, the capstone of a more than century-long effort to make Palestine, in Chaim Weizmann's words, "as Jewish as England is English." By this law, only the Jewish people have the right of national self-determination in the state of Israel, or by extension in the "land of Israel," meaning that Palestinian national rights do not exist in the entirety of Palestine/Israel, from the Jordan River to the Mediterranean Sea.

Slanderously silencing Palestinian and pro-Palestinian voices in France, preventing these voices from operating in the United States, extirpating the very bones and tombstones of the ancestors of Palestinians in Jerusalem, or denying that this people has any national rights in its homeland, all of these efforts are of a piece. However, while the campaign to eradicate the Palestinians from their homeland and to erase them from history and geography goes on unabated, so does the resistance to it, as the contributions in this issue show.

Rashid I. Khalidi