

From the Editor



THE ELIMINATION OF PALESTINE and its replacement with Israel have long been the dream of some. U.S. president Donald Trump's administration, in close coordination with Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu's government, has taken major strides to make that dream a reality. It has done so by instituting radically new policies on the questions of Jerusalem, Palestinian refugees and aid (via UNRWA), PLO representation in the United States, and, most recently, its recognition of the occupied Golan Heights as Israeli territory—a move that has profound implications for the ongoing, creeping annexation of the West Bank. Absurdly, while some still await the unveiling of the administration's much-trumpeted "peace plan," the plan is already in plain view: Jerusalem is to belong exclusively to Israel, the refugee issue no longer exists, there will be no sovereign Palestinian state, and Israel will be allowed to annex what it will and to rule over the rest of Palestine as it pleases. In the framework being constructed by Trump, Netanyahu, and their Arab allies—with complete disregard for international law and for established U.S. policy—the Palestinians, their interests, and their rights are to be ignored, and Palestine will simply cease to exist.

However, this colonial war is not over, and the ascendancy of the Trumps and Netanyahus of this world will eventually reach its limit. Less than six million of the thirteen million people under Israeli control between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea have the vote in Israel (and with it a say in their fate), and some 20 percent of them are second-class Palestinian citizens of Israel. However Trump and his Israeli and Arab allies package the apartheid arrangement they are cooking up, it will remain a case of putting lipstick on a pig. Some governments will overlook or even applaud the racist ethnocracy that this plan would consecrate, making permanent arrangements whose roots go back to the dawn of political Zionism, but the grotesquely discriminatory structure is at odds with the values of all democratic states. It will never be accepted by Arab public opinion—whatever the autocratic regimes in most Arab capitals say in order to keep on the right side of their patrons in Washington—and it will never be accepted by the Palestinian people. The Palestinians constitute a majority inside historic Palestine, with millions more of their number outside of Palestine, and they have never stopped resisting the assault on their national existence that amounts to the last colonial war in the modern world.

This issue of the *Journal of Palestine Studies* includes a cluster on contemporary Palestinian literature consisting of two articles, by Amal Equeiq and Nora Parr, together with an introduction by Refqa Abu-Remaileh, that illustrate the vibrancy of Palestinian society and culture in spite of the current grim political circumstances. Abu-Remaileh frames the discussion by describing the dilemma of producing a national literature without a national state, one of several paradoxes faced by Palestinian writers. Equeiq explores the work of two Palestinian writers, Adania Shibli and Ibtisam Azem, tracing the roles of the city and border crossings in their writings, and particularly the connections between Haifa and Ramallah, which defy the colonially imposed borders within Palestine. Parr examines a nine-volume series of novels by Ibrahim Nasrallah, *Al-milhat al-filastiniyya*, or the Palestine Comedies, making the case for viewing the series as the long-awaited Palestinian national novel. Parr argues that the series reflects what she

describes as the Palestinian “nation constellation” and transcends the imposed boundaries that Palestinians are constantly forced to navigate.

More directly political is an article by Perla Issa, who shows how the distribution of humanitarian aid in Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon, notably in Nahr al-Barid, is predicated on a system of surveillance of camp residents enforced by their fellows and neighbors. Like other efforts ostensibly meant to aid Palestinians, these arrangements serve to hinder the possibility of collective political activity. Also in this issue, Mandy Turner offers an analysis of the important and courageous work of international lawyer and academic Richard Falk in his capacity as UN special rapporteur on human rights in the occupied Palestinian territories from 2008 until 2014, in spite of constant obstruction from the Israeli occupation authorities.

As part of the *Journal's* continuing series of commentaries on the conflation of criticism of Israel with anti-Semitism, Shir Hever offers a survey of the obstacles that the movement for Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) against Israel has faced in the specific context of Germany. He stresses both the unique nature of the hostility to BDS and the considerable achievements of this movement.

Finally, the *Journal* includes an essay by Victor Kattan, who examines the U.S. administration's most recent decision on the Arab-Israeli conflict, namely to recognize Israel's 1981 annexation of the Golan Heights. Describing the move as a “testament to our times,” Kattan lays out how both Israel and the United States justify the action on the basis of misty biblical references and grotesque distortions of history while ignoring principles of international law that absolutely forbid the acquisition of territory by force.

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