



Journal of Palestine Studies

ISSN: (Print) (Online) Journal homepage: <https://www.tandfonline.com/loi/rpal20>

From the Editors

Rashid I. Khalidi & Sherene Seikaly

To cite this article: Rashid I. Khalidi & Sherene Seikaly (2021): From the Editors, Journal of Palestine Studies

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/0377919X.2020.1865757>



Published online: 22 Jan 2021.



Submit your article to this journal [↗](#)



Article views: 17



View related articles [↗](#)



View Crossmark data [↗](#)



From the Editors

TEMPORAL SUSPENSION has come to constitute a new, global normal. This time vortex exists at the intersections of the Covid-19 pandemic and the closing days of a U.S. administration committed to white supremacy, racism, misogyny, and voter suppression. Since the pandemic struck in the spring of 2020, time has moved faster and slower. Temporal deviations both express and intensify multiple reckonings such as economic upheaval, relentless climate catastrophes, unending wars waged by the U.S. military, and the almost daily state-sanctioned murder of Black men and women in the United States. Rolling and overlapping crises lay bare settler imaginaries of land and territory, of time and the future.

These imaginaries became national and global preoccupations during the months of electoral fever in the United States. Time was at once elongated and condensed, mobile and static. The map of the United States took on the character of an abstraction. Fixation on a shared dread of another four years of the Trump administration entailed a global crash course in U.S. political and electoral geography: Maricopa County in Arizona, and the demographics of cities in Pennsylvania, Michigan, and Wisconsin became universal topics of discourse. Slavery's afterlives as institutionalized in the Electoral College's formidable grasp on the U.S. map were seared into the memory of millions of daily consumers of news and social media. Geographic representations color coded the country: blue for Democrat and red for Republican.

On the earlier side of the election time loop, 4 November, a social media influencer on Twitter asked, "Is it too late to return the Louisiana Purchase?"¹ Thousands on her thread pleaded to remain: those blue spots in Louisiana, the blue state of Colorado, and even the newly turned Minnesota. Only a handful pointed out that you cannot return what was never yours. A palimpsest of maps came into view. It was as if crisis had peeled away the layers of dispossession. Temporal suspension mapped directly onto territorial sovereignty, Indigenous dispossession, the living present of enslavement, and Jim Crow's enduring sequels. The constantly modulating fortunes of the U.S. map are not simply a reminder of political divisions; they calibrate the Indigenous present into political vision.

Facing a persistently shrinking map is something Palestinians know intimately. As we have suggested in the past two issues, the permanent temporary has been the condition of Palestinian life since the inception of British colonial rule in 1917. Perhaps it was for this reason that Dana Muaddi, a Palestinian American social psychologist and "a Palestinian inspired by US foreign policy," suggested another way of seeing the U.S. map.² In the face of a deeply divided political reality, Muaddi took to social media to recommend the "Deal of the Century 2.0," a partition of the United States with bridges between Democrat states and the possibility of "transfer" between red and blue states to form "majorities."

Two days after the U.S. elections concluded, Israeli forces razed the Palestinian village of Khirbat Humsa on 5 November. This was the largest forced displacement of Palestinians in more than four years, and one of the largest demolitions of the last decade. In the midst of the year's first heavy rain, seventy-three villagers searched the wreckage, a bed here, a blanket there, gathering what they could from the intimacies of everyday life shattered by Israeli military

vehicles.³ This was just one of a series of Israeli moves, including multiple announcements of settlement expansion, under the cover of Trump-inspired chaos and election fever.

The election of Joe Biden and Kamala Harris has produced a sense of relief the world over. This is true among Palestinians as well. As Noura Erakat wrote in an op-ed two weeks after the election results were incontrovertible, “In the past four years, the United States dropped the descriptor ‘occupied’ to describe the Palestinian territories, ended all aid to UNRWA, issued an executive order that makes plausible equating criticism of Israel with anti-Semitism, closed the PLO mission, blessed Israel’s acquisition of the Syrian Golan Heights, and facilitated Israel’s normalized relations with the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain and Sudan without a single enduring concession for Palestinian rights.”⁴ A Biden-Harris administration will not end the ongoing dispossession of the Palestinians. It is a return to polite imperialism and discreet intervention on behalf of Israel at the expense of the Palestinians. But, as Erakat points out, this return to centrist policy buys Palestinians some respite from the rapid-fire destruction, policing, silencing, and erasure to which the Trump administration has subjected us, as well as time to regroup and respond.

Palestinians now have some space to strengthen a “progressive insurgency.”⁵ They know well that dispossession is an attempt to vanquish the past, besiege the present, and foreclose the future. In ways parallel to what scholar Kyle Whyte has described about Indigenous experiences in North America, Palestinians “inhabit what our ancestors would have likely characterized as a dystopian future.” They “consider the future from what [they] believe is already a dystopia.”⁶ They know how to stand firm in the face of the permanent temporary, of suspension and abeyance, of a prolonged and fragmented state of waiting. They know how to fight for shrinking returns and to plan not for but against that future of looped crisis, suspension, foreclosure, and dispossession.

Endnotes

1. Kellyn (@CAROLINASDREAM), “Is it too late to return the louisiana purchase,” Twitter, 4 November 2020, 10:30 A.M., <https://twitter.com/CAROLINAKISSY/status/1324011102515154946>.
2. See Dana Rm, “Instead of a civil war, I recommend the establishment of two separate states, a democratic one and a republican one,” Facebook, 2 November 2020, <https://www.facebook.com/12da.na>.
3. Oliver Holmes, “Israeli Forces Leave 41 Children Homeless after Razing Palestinian Village, UN Says,” *The Guardian*, 5 November 2020, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/nov/05/israeli-forces-leave-41-children-homeless-after-razing-palestinian-village-un-says>.
4. Noura Erakat, “Biden May Offer Some Key Opportunities for Palestinians and Their Allies,” *Washington Post*, 17 November 2020, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/2020/11/17/biden-may-offer-some-key-opportunities-palestinians-their-allies/>.
5. Erakat, “Biden May Offer Some Key Opportunities.”
6. Kyle Powys Whyte, “Our Ancestors’ Dystopia Now: Indigenous Conservation and the Anthropocene,” in *The Routledge Companion to the Environmental Humanities*, ed. Ursula K. Heise, Jon Christensen, and Michelle Niemann (London: Routledge, 2017), p. 207.

Rashid I. Khalidi
Sherene Seikaly