

## From the Editor



FOR DECADES, we have heard the mantra endlessly repeated that Israel was and could be both “Jewish and democratic.” Today, the contradictions inherent in this formulation have become ever more apparent. Israeli leaders must admit (indeed, some declare it with pride) that when forced to choose, as they now are, the Jewish aspect takes precedence, while democratic equality and the rights of non-Jews are relegated to second place. Ayelet Shaked, the justice minister who was a sponsor of the Nation-State Bill enacted into law by the Knesset in July 2018 bluntly stated: “There are places where the character of the State of Israel as a Jewish state must be maintained and this sometimes comes at the expense of equality.” With refreshing candor, she added: “Israel is a Jewish state. It isn’t a state of all its nations. That is, equal rights to all citizens but not equal national rights.”\* This is a revealing statement in view of how many crucial rights, privileges, subsidies, and inducements the law already accords exclusively on a national basis to Jews living in Israel and in the Palestinian territories under Israel’s control.

Besides institutionalizing statutory inequality among Israeli citizens, and infringing on the national minority rights of Palestinian citizens of Israel and residents of areas like East Jerusalem and the Golan Heights that have been annexed to Israel, this law has another important aspect. It is its assertion that while all of the land of Israel—“Eretz Israel”—is the national homeland of the entire Jewish people, wherever they may reside, only the Jewish people have the right of self-determination in the state of Israel. This provision infringes on the right of national self-determination for Palestinians in the rest of Palestine, because the state of Israel has been progressively annexing, either de facto or de jure, most of the abovementioned areas, which have been under military occupation for over fifty years. The new law declares that within that state only one people has the right of national self-determination: the Jewish people, and none other. Ergo, as that state inexorably expands, the Nation-State Law rules out a Palestinian state, a binational state, or a single state with one people with equal rights anywhere in Palestine; it allows for only one big Jewish state in an area that today already has a Palestinian majority. This is much more than a statute. It is a declaration of complete victory for a maximalist version of Zionism, which in effect rules out all solutions to the conflict other than exclusive Jewish national supremacy in the entirety of Palestine.

Meanwhile, as this issue went to press, the death toll continued to rise in the Gaza Strip with Israeli snipers routinely killing and maiming participants in the weekly protests known as the Great March of Return. There has been minimal international reaction to these atrocities. There was also little media pushback as the Israeli propaganda machine and its U.S. affiliates falsely described as “terrorists” unarmed civilians asking for the right of return to the homes and lands across the border from which they, or their parents and grandparents, were expelled in 1948.

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\* Revital Hovel, “Justice Minister: Israel Must Keep Jewish Majority Even at the Expense of Human Rights,” *Haaretz*, 13 February 2018, <https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/justice-minister-israel-s-jewish-majority-trumps-than-human-rights-1.5811106>.

The media typically fail to remark on the utterly lopsided casualty tolls (over 150:1 so far in these protests) that have been characteristic of Israel's repeated "shooting fish in a barrel" assaults on Gaza.

This issue of the *Journal* carries several contributions regarding the tragedy of Gaza. One is an interview by senior Institute for Palestine Studies researcher Perla Issa with the noted plastic and reconstructive surgeon, Dr. Ghassan Abu Sitta, who recounts his latest trip to Gaza to treat some of those injured by Israeli sniper fire. This interview is required reading for anyone who wants to know how, since 30 March, Israeli snipers have been picking off one by one young and old, women and men, all of them unarmed and incapable of hurting the marksmen hidden behind barriers—"purity of arms" indeed. Abu Sitta is a highly experienced surgeon who has performed reconstructive operations on war wounded in Beirut and Gaza for a decade. Given the crucial place of the Gaza Strip historically in the Palestinian struggle, and in view of the possibility of a major new Israeli attack on Gaza as well as the territory's centrality to any proposals for the resolution of the conflict, it will continue to be a focus of interest for the *Journal*.

The other is a report by Jihad Abusalim based on extensive conversations with Ahmed Abu Artema, the progenitor of the Great March of Return idea. The report provides extensive details on the genesis of the protest as a grassroots popular endeavor. The author explains what the march's civil society organizers and participants intended, and how that differed from the political agendas of Hamas and other political factions. He also makes clear how the actions and intentions of the participants were poisonously mischaracterized by the media spin emerging from Israel and its amen chorus in the United States.

In addition, this issue carries a review by Nubar Hovsepian of the important book by Norman Finkelstein titled *Gaza: An Inquest into Its Martyrdom*. This is a searching, carefully researched and comprehensive look at the premeditated and cruel punishment over many years of two million people incarcerated in the world's largest open-air prison. The language used by Finkelstein is harsh, but as Hovsepian points out, deservedly so.

Meanwhile, after eighteen months in office, the Trump administration has yet to unveil the "deal of the century" touted as the ultimate solution for the conflict between Palestinians and Israelis. According to copious leaks about its contents, however, the deal appears as little more than a sordid attempt to liquidate the Palestine question via bribery, economic inducements, and stealthy population transfers to Sinai, rather than a serious effort to arrive at a just resolution. Since those in charge of producing the so-called deal—two of Trump's personal lawyers, David Friedman and Jason Greenblatt, and son-in-law Jared Kushner—are fervent Zionists and financial supporters of the Israeli settlement movement, it is highly unlikely that their plan will diverge from the Netanyahu government's well-established policy of permanent occupation and colonization of Palestinian lands. However, until the Trump administration formally releases its plan, it is pointless to speculate further about its details.

It is possible, however, to analyze an important change that has taken place in the regional scene, one that may have an impact on the reception of this plan, whenever it is finally released. This is a change in the posture of key Arab Gulf states toward Israel, which Kristian Coates Ulrichsen analyzes in this issue of the *Journal*. In an essay titled "Palestinians Sidelined in Saudi-Emirati Rapprochement with Israel," Ulrichsen examines the growing and increasingly overt alignment of

Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates with Israel since 2011, ascribing the rapprochement to these Arab Gulf states' fear of perceived threats from Iran and from the ascent of Islamist politics in the region. An apparent result of this realignment was discreet Saudi and Emirati endorsement of the U.S.-Israeli "peace plan" being cooked up by Kushner, Greenblatt, and Friedman, wherein the two Arab Gulf states would underwrite the deal's economic aspects and pressure the reluctant Palestinians to accept it. Going along with such an overtly anti-Palestinian plan may have been a bridge too far, however, as indicated by reports that senior Saudi leaders have reaffirmed their support for the kingdom's traditional position on Jerusalem, refugees, and Palestinian rights. Nevertheless, given the wealth, power, and influence of the two Gulf states, and the potential impact of such a possible shift on the Palestine question, the *Journal* will also be watching this phenomenon in future issues.

In another essay in this issue, Moshé Machover examines the accusations of anti-Semitism leveled against him and other members of the British Labour Party because of their critical stance toward Israel's policies. Machover, one of the founders of the Israeli leftist group Matzpen in the 1960s, places his analysis within a critique of Zionism itself, showing how some of the propositions underlying the accusations are themselves anti-Semitic. Charges of anti-Semitism against supporters of the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions movement, and indeed against even the mildest critics of the suffering inflicted by Israel on the Palestinians, have been growing steadily in Israel, the United States, and Europe. They are perhaps the heaviest artillery in the Zionist propaganda arsenal. Resort to them in a wide range of circumstances where what is at issue is clearly no more than criticism of the policies of the Israeli nation-state—and not Jew hatred—is an indication of how desperate Israel and its apologists are to stanch this criticism. The identical nature of these smears, and of the tactics used in a variety of countries and contexts, make it clear that this is a concerted, well organized, lavishly funded, and centrally directed campaign. Moshé Machover's essay is the first of several essays and articles on different aspects of this campaign that the *Journal* will be publishing.

This issue contains two substantive contributions, both of which treat the conditions of the Palestinian population of the occupied West Bank. Paul Kohlbry's article focuses on efforts to defend Palestinian land from encroachment by the Zionist settlement project, which started in the 1970s and 1980s as a campaign to protect Palestinian agriculture from the inroads of market forces drawing laborers into wage labor inside Israel. Kohlbry examines the ways in which this process has become intertwined with the growth of the Palestinian real estate market over the past two decades, and notes the limitations of such efforts in terms of defense of Palestinian lands from Israel's colonial stranglehold. Meanwhile, Jeremy A. Siegman examines the circumstances of Palestinians working in an Israeli settlement supermarket and how they are affected by the contradictory logic of settler colonialism, which both requires their labor and simultaneously yearns for their disappearance. His ethnographic study reveals not only how these workers resist the pressures to which they are subjected but also how their labor serves to normalize and facilitate settler presence in the occupied territories.

Rounding off the issue is another interview, this one by former *JPS* assistant editor Brittany Dawson with Gabriel Schivone, who has studied U.S.-Israeli collaboration in border control and

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surveillance technology, as well as regarding other aspects of “homeland security.” The interview also touches on Israel’s testing in Palestine of security technologies that are then marketed worldwide, and on Israeli cooperation in these same spheres with right-wing governments in Latin America.

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## Errata

In the *Journal of Palestine Studies* 47 (3) (Spring 2018), the letter from the editor described Roundtable contributors as “queer-identifying,” a gravely erroneous assumption for which we apologize. That description marked particular individuals and bodies of knowledge production by their sexuality, while the “normal” remains unmarked. We recognize this kind of marking as constituting an epistemic form of homophobia.