

## From the Editor



THE *JOURNAL OF PALESTINE STUDIES* has devoted sustained attention to three critical issues of late: the passage in July 2018 of the so-called Jewish Nation-State Law by the Israeli Knesset, the conflation of anti-Zionism with anti-Semitism, and what one author has called “the idolatry of force” to describe the ethos of the Israeli state. As the reverberations continue to be felt from the adoption of the law arrogating exclusive rights to the Jewish majority in Israel; and as the global campaign to tar critics of Israel and of Zionism with the brush of anti-Semitism has gone into high gear in the United States with attacks on new members of Congress who have expressed views diametrically opposed to those of establishment U.S. politicians who endorse Israel unequivocally; and as Israel maintains the slaughter of unarmed protesters in Gaza in an ongoing demonstration of “the idolatry of force;” the current edition of the *Journal* delves deeper into all three topics.

The Jewish Nation-State Law, the latest Israeli Basic Law in a series that comprises the constitution of the state, is the subject of a Special Document File that includes: an article by Hassan Jabareen and Suhad Bishara, experienced litigators with Adalah – The Legal Center for Arab Minority Rights in Israel; the English text of the law itself; and the introduction to the petition contesting the law, which Adalah and the core of the Palestinian political leadership in Israel have brought before the Supreme Court. (The law was also the topic of an analytical essay by U.S.-based Adalah experts Sandra Samaan Tamari and Nadia Ben-Youssef in *JPS* 189, the previous issue of the *Journal*.)

What is clear from an examination of these materials is that the Jewish Nation-State Law is no ordinary piece of legislation. Beyond formally instituting inequality of citizens’ rights in constitutional form, the law measurably advances the idea that only one people has the right of self-determination in the “*Land of Israel*” (Eretz Israel). It does so by stating that within the “*State of Israel*,” this right is to be enjoyed exclusively by the Jewish people. Were Israel a normal state with clear, defined borders, that would be bad enough—and the law would be no more than a discriminatory measure directed at the 20 percent of the state’s citizens who are not Jews. But Israel is not such a state. It is a polity that has been steadily expanding its frontiers since its existence was first delineated by UN General Assembly Resolution 181, the partition resolution of 1947. The process, accelerated since 1967 by means of creeping annexation, reached its apex in the years following 1977 as a succession of Likud-dominated governments imbued with the philosophy of the Greater Land of Israel movement came to power. Thus, in the eyes of its current rulers, the State of Israel, where only one people has national rights, is meant to encompass the entire Land of Israel, that is, all of the territory between the Mediterranean Sea and the Jordan River. The implications of this measure are profound: with the borders of the state expanding indefinitely, what is in effect a constitutional law denies Palestinians the right of national self-determination anywhere in their own homeland.

In the United States, the furious attacks by Republicans and Democrats on newly elected U.S. congresswomen Ilhan Omar and Rashida Tlaib—both outspoken defenders of Palestinian rights—rely on what has become the main feature in the playbook of those seeking to shield Israel from any criticism by equating such criticism with anti-Semitism. In recent issues, the *Journal* has

published essays by Moshé Machover and Dominique Vidal on the ways in which this all-purpose smear has been deployed in the United Kingdom and France. The current issue includes a contribution by Barry Trachtenberg and Kyle Stanton that extends the analysis of the conflation of anti-Zionism with anti-Semitism to the United States. The next issue of the *Journal (JPS 191)* will run a similarly themed piece on the situation that obtains in Germany. In a related peer-reviewed article here, “Deciphering Germany’s Pro-Israel Consensus,” Leandros Fischer details the complex history that has informed Germany’s Middle East policy and, more specifically, its stance on Israel.

Also in this issue is the second and final installment of Paul Gaston Aaron’s two-part report on the “idolatry of force” long embraced by the Israeli leadership. In addition to the first installment, published in *JPS 184*, Aaron provided a lengthy review in *JPS 187* of *Rise and Kill First: The Secret History of Israel’s Targeted Assassinations* by Ronen Bergman—a damning book that is required reading for those seeking to understand the philosophy guiding Israel’s dealings with the Arabs from its very beginnings. And last but not least is an article by Anna Kensicki titled “Smart’ Colonialism and Digital Divestment: A Case Study” that offers our readers a study about the use and deployment of information and communications technology to cement the discriminatory regime of settler colonialism imposed throughout historic Palestine.

Among the book reviews in this issue is one by Mouin Rabbani of Seth Anziska’s important new diplomatic history, *Preventing Palestine: A Political History from Camp David to Oslo*. As Rabbani acutely points out, Anziska’s book demonstrates the links between the 1978 Camp David Agreements, the 1982 Israeli invasion of Lebanon, and the Oslo Accords, and explains that they constituted a chain of events intended to prevent rather than enable Palestinian self-determination.

The current issue concludes with a remembrance of the eminent Palestinian scholar, Butrus Abu-Manneh, one of the first Palestinian academics to establish himself within the Israeli university system. A student of Albert Hourani’s at Oxford, Abu-Manneh was a prolific historian of the Ottoman Empire and Islam, and a respected academic mentor over several generations.

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