



EDITORIAL

Of Significant Lives, and Better Days

Since the end of the Great War in 1918, the region known today as the Middle East has been plagued by political instability. The area's colonial partition in the aftermath of that war, in particularly the partition of the Syrian region, produced a number of difficulties relating to borders and identities. The end of colonial rule in the post-World War II period did not reverse what had occurred—rather, it made it permanent. The emergence of the new regional state system required of its newly-christened leaders that they impose further restrictions and regulations that would enhance the national identities of the new states. Palestine, however, was left entirely out of this process.

Not only was Palestine not reunited with the rest of the Levant or *Bilad al-Sham*—as was the case with Lebanon, Jordan and Syria—rather, it was severed from them through the creation of Israel and the closure of its borders. Israel, as a Jewish state in Palestine in 1948, was premised upon cleansing the land from as many non-Jews as possible, which in turn resulted in mass expulsions

and the flight of Palestinians. These Palestinians found themselves refugees in the newly-created neighboring states' whose governments were already obsessing over how to carefully define territorial and citizenship boundaries. The Palestinian presence in those countries was involuntary by all standards. Neither they nor their hosts were prepared for such a mass migration. The Palestinian refugees were essentially the product of a state that did not want them.

The neighboring states wound up entangled in a series of Israeli-Arab wars. The Palestinians in those states would also find themselves entangled not only in those wars, but in those states' internal conflicts. This latest Israeli war on Lebanon is symptomatic of more than half a century of regional conflict. Once again, Israel demonstrated its inability to respect its neighbors as legitimate countries, thereby acting in the most barbaric manner and destroying an entire country over a border skirmish. At the same time, Israel continues to show its inability to incorporate non-Jewish Arab citizens within its boundaries or under its control. News stories describing how Palestinian citizens of Israel were barred from the bomb shelters by their Jewish counterparts filled the media. And it is clear that Israel is still trying to minimize its population of Palestinians and maximize its land holdings in the West Bank through land confiscations and the construction of the apartheid-like separation wall. Its siege and war on Gaza is another clear example. In all of these cases, it is clear that Israel is engaged in policies of national discrimination where Palestinians, no matter where they are, cannot be treated as equals or enjoy common human rights.

The wholesale bombing of Lebanon also reflects the mentality of categorizing people between those who deserve to have peace, security, dignity and the right to life, and the rest, who are seen as 'collateral damage'. Lebanon was already tense after the assassination of former Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri. In fact, there has never been so much tension between the region's states since their creation after the San Remo conference in 1920 (when the partition of *Bilad al-Sham* was officially adopted and the mandate system was born). The tensions inside Lebanese society, and between Lebanon and Syria, Syria and the Palestinian Authority, and among Palestinians themselves are all reminders of the failed colonial policies of previous decades. This region's predicament is rooted in days predating most of the current players—whether the Israeli prime minister, Hizbullah or the president of the United States.

The war against Lebanon filled our lives and TV screens, overshadowing smaller sad events—reminders of better times. This summer, as the Israelis were bombarding Beirut, a historian whose life stood witness to another forgotten reality passed away quietly. Nicola Ziyadeh, who died in July, lived a Levantine life *par excellence*. Born a few months short of a century ago in Palestine, he lived his life first as an Ottoman from Syria, and later as a citizen of Lebanon who identified himself also with Syria and Palestine. His historical research emphasized this point tirelessly.

Palestine felt a great loss this summer in the premature death of Mamdouh Noufal, a leading figure in the Palestinian national movement, who had many things yet to

offer. Mamdouh was a founding member of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, and later, of the Democratic Front and the Palestinian Democratic Union, FIDA. After the 1995 return to Palestine of many cadres, Mamdouh devoted himself to political analysis and charting the turbulent history of the national movement from an eyewitness perspective. His most recent work, *Maghdousha*, is a unique document on the war of the camps in Lebanon. Mamdouh lived through the region's various wars and participated in many of them—whether in Palestine, Jordan or Lebanon. He lived an existence of Palestinian exile and in his personal history, one could argue, he embodied the history of the modern Palestinian national movement in the same way that Ziyadeh's life embodied the modern history of *Bilad al-Sham*.

We will greatly miss Mamdouh at *Jerusalem Quarterly*. His regular visits to the office in Ramallah and political insights and sense of history will be sorely missed. We will also miss Nicola Ziyadeh. His recollections about his life in times past will continue to serve as a reminder that we are not trapped in today's limitations. Meanwhile, we continue to live in our increasingly scattered homelands, with our cities separated from each other, and Jerusalem—the subject of our journal—besieged and severed from its natural habitat and social hinterlands. And nothing on the horizon suggests that better times are ahead of us.



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