

Hebron’s qasabah is at once one of the richest historical urban centres in the Arab east, and one of the least examined in the scholarly literature. Chiara De Cesari’s study in this issue of JQ explores what she calls “heritage politics in a lacerated space,” examining the colonial project of dismemberment (settler attempts to establish an Israeli enclave in the heart of the city) as well as the revitalization scheme undertaken by the Hebron Rehabilitation Committee aimed at restoring the urban and social fabric of the city. The result is a microcosm of the Israeli- Palestinian conflict fought within a city.

Rema Hammami’s pioneering work on Qalandia (the Palestinian Tora Bora) takes an ethnographic look at Israel’s regime of checkpoints and barriers within a global context of ‘policing inequalities’. In particular she examines the politics of security, which “creates myopia, blindness to the very facts it engenders”. Her essay also examines the creative forces of survival among its victims. In her work the carnivalesque atmosphere of market and circus that permeates ‘border’ zones like Qalandia (and Surda before it), both camouflage and underscore the misery created by the security regime behind it.

In “Dining Out in Time of War” Roberto Mazza continues his saga of Antonio de la Cierva, Conde de Ballobor, who served as the ambassador of the Spanish Court in Jerusalem during WWI. Mazza focuses on dinner parties in wartime Jerusalem (which was suffering from famine and deprivation during the second half of the war years), as a conduit for politics—as a means for gathering intelligence, sending messages, negotiating deals, and for soliciting favours. We discover that much of the diplomatic activities undertaken by European powers

in Jerusalem were conducted over consular meals. In addition we get a closer and intimate look at the psyche of Cemal Pasha (Governor of Syria and Palestine), Enver (leader of the CUP and Minister of War), as well as the German commanders of the Yeldrim forces in Palestine, Kressen and Falkenhayn.

Jacob Nammār's "Remembering Haret al Nammamreh" is a poignant reminder of what it means when a member of a majority suddenly becomes a minority in their own homeland. He belongs to those rare and exceptional Palestinian families, whose numbers can be counted on one hand, who managed to stay in West Jerusalem after 1948. The recollections of the harsh days of scavenging a living in the immediate aftermath of the war, when those families who remained behind were basically hostages in a war zone, and the fate of the Nammāris during the fifties in the heart of the city is a rare document from that period. It should be added to the two exceptional memoirs of Palestinian Arabs and Armenians who experienced this predicament, John Rose, and Issa al Salti.

Bassem Ra'ad's "Cats of Jerusalem" is a special journey into the lives of sacred felines. As it turns out, they are not sacred at all, but a cruel reminder that Jerusalem's holiness disguises an oppressive reality in which not even cats are spared. *"The solitariness of cats in Jerusalem, their scruffiness, their wariness, the mode of their survival in a city that is holy and not holy, how they mirror the old city's insular nature, its current predicament, and the people's life in that situation—all tell us about the city and the particularly peculiar nature of human relations within it. They are also a sign of our time."*

In the first months of 2010, Jerusalem's current predicament escalated as ideologically-driven and well-financed Israeli settlers spearheaded further moves to dispossess Palestinians in East Jerusalem and to create what the Israeli organization Ir Amim ("City of Nations") terms "Israeli and Jewish strongholds in the historic basin surrounding the Old City" including Sheikh Jarrar, the Mount of Olives and Silwan – a powerful and dangerous example of "heritage politics in lacerated space" in full-throttle operation. The grandly-named and US-financed settler organization, Nahalat Shimon International, filed a new claim on April 6 2010 to evict more Palestinian families from Sheikh Jarrar in order to build an exclusively Jewish neighborhood named after, in a melancholy irony, for Simon the Just, while plans to build apartments at the Shepherd Hotel, owned by settler financier and U.S. magnate Irving Moskowitz were also announced.

Settler organizations in Jerusalem (also including Ateret Cohanim and Elad in Silwan) may be fanatic but they are certainly not acting alone. It is the potent mix of settler activism, international (mainly United States) private funding, and Israeli government and institutional support, particularly from the Israeli Lands Authority, the Netanyahu government and the Jerusalem municipality that needs to be challenged. Indeed, the Netanyahu government announcement of an additional

1600 Jewish housing units in East Jerusalem (during the visit of US Vice-President Biden) overshadows settler initiatives. And the secular right-wing mayor of Jerusalem, Niri Barkat, who recently announced plans for a “mini-Tuscany” of public parks and entertainment complexes near the Old City on the ruins of the Al Bustan neighborhood in Silwan.

That these plans are now “on hold” and that a temporary freeze on Israeli construction in East Jerusalem is being discussed attests to the other development in the first months of 2010: the cautious speaking out of the U.S. administration and, in train, the European countries. The less cautious and constant acts of solidarity and protest by Jerusalemites – and by those trying to reach the city – are perhaps more encouraging.

*This issue of JQ welcomes Issam Nassar as co-editor of the Quarterly. Nassar is a prominent historian of modern Palestine, and 19th century Jerusalem. His recent book **I Would Have Smiled** (2009) is a tribute to the photographer Myrtle Winters, and the Palestinian refugee experience in 50 years.*