

Editorial

Since the beginning of 2011 the Middle East has witnessed major changes pointing in new, promising directions. Tunis, Carthage, Cairo, Alexandria, Benghazi, Manama, Aden and other cities in the region were shaken. Protesters took to the street – in some cases successfully, in some cases met with lethal force – to protest the autocratic regimes under which they lived. “The people want the fall of the regime,” was the cry from the Gulf to the Maghreb, often by youthful demonstrators who had lived their lives under a single dictatorial leader.

Jerusalem, however, remained at the margins of these seminal events. In the city, business went on as usual. Israeli settlement construction proceeded unabated while the neighborhood of Sheikh Jarrah suffered violent land-grabbing measures by the Israeli government against Palestinian residents. Demolition of Palestinian homes in Jerusalem went on as usual, while the wall around the city – with its fortified checkpoints – still prevent hundreds of thousands of Palestinians from entering it. Israeli intransigence and complete disregard of international demands regarding illegal settlement was another constant; it even found support from the Obama administration in the form of a veto against a UN security council resolution asserting the illegality of settlements. The position of the US administration, although no surprise to many, constituted a blow to Palestinian demands in these hopeful days in the region.

The Shepherd Hotel in Sheikh Jarrah, once the home of Jerusalem’s Mufti Hajj Amin al-Husseini, was demolished, and will be replaced by a massive new colony of settlers. This development will complete the process of encircling East Jerusalem with a ring of Jewish settlements. Israeli right-

wingers demonstrating in support of the demolition raised posters showing the Mufti side by side with Hitler during WWII, suggesting some sort of connection between the demolition of the building and the relationship between the two men. Meanwhile in the western part of Jerusalem the desecration of the Mamila cemetery continued with the building of the so-called “museum of tolerance” on top of tombs that have lain there for centuries.

Israeli policies aimed at “Judaizing” Jerusalem are at an all time high. A talk given by Edward Said in the mid 1990s, and published for the first time in this issue, delves into these policies that have been in place since 1967. Said shows a deep understanding of Israeli aspirations in Jerusalem and of the systematic ways in which those aspirations have been transformed into a number of plans carried forward since 1967. Most important among them are the construction of carefully situated Jewish settlements and endless measures to strip the city of its Palestinian character, icons, inhabitants and centers of life. In another essay, Helga Tawil Souri presents her personal reflections on Qalandia, the site of a massive checkpoint that keeps out of the city Palestinians from Ramallah and from the north. While she already wrote on the “historical geography” of the checkpoint in question and described it as a non-place (*Jerusalem Quarterly*, 42) her essay in this issue takes a different angle altogether, focusing on the thoughts and images that rush to her mind while stands at the checkpoint, and including photographs taken on location.

Falestin Naili contributes an essay on an understudied period in the history of the village of Artas near Bethlehem. Known for its lettuce festival since the 1990s, Artas was the first Palestinian village to become home to a millenarian settler group from Europe and America around the middle of the nineteenth century. Naili’s contribution expands our horizons by focusing on a particular locality where millenarian Zionists had an impact. Although the subject of nineteenth-century European settlements in Palestine has been tackled in previous issues of *Jerusalem Quarterly*, this is the first time it is discussed in relation to village life. Noha Tadros Khalaf offers an essay on ‘Issa al-‘Issa, editor of *Falastin* newspaper, which was published in Jaffa. Al-‘Issa was a journalist and poet. With his cousin Yousef, he established *Falastin* in 1911. He held leading roles in Arab politics, including serving in Damascus as the chief of the royal court of Amir Faisal’s government. He was a member of the 7th Congress of the Arab Executive Committee in June 1928 for Jaffa and a member of the oppositional al-Difa’ Party in the Arab Executive Committee in 1932. Focusing on the first decade of British Mandatory rule, the essay highlights the role of *Falastin* and al-‘Issa in exposing the dangers of Zionism to Palestine and its indigenous people.

Jacob Norris’ contribution deals historically with the issue of control over Dead Sea minerals. Norris highlights the role of Ibrahim Hazboun, a Palestinian who lived in Haiti until 1913, when he returned to Bethlehem. Hazboun was the first in the Ottoman state to show a sustained interest in the Dead Sea as an economic resource and as a conduit for trade. He would become an early advocate for the economic benefits of investing in Dead Sea resources for the Arabs of Palestine. His dream came to an abrupt end when the British authorities granted the rights to Dead Sea

exploitation to a Zionist entrepreneur. The history of the Dead Sea wars has not been adequately studied and Norris' essay draws attention to that history from the Palestinian Arab perspective.

All in all, this issue brings together essays on various aspects of the early stages of Zionist appropriation of Palestine. The settlement in Palestine by millenarians is an activity that continues to this day in its Zionist form with significant support from similarly-minded ultra-Right Christian groups. The process of colonizing Jerusalem – by recreating it along certain selective biblical narratives – commenced, essentially, on the level of the imagination. But it has long since been transformed into an actual political reality. Policies continued to be designed and implemented with such a vision in mind. Closing the city off from the rest of the West Bank is only the latest stage in this process of recreating an imagined social and physical landscape. But Palestinians were aware early on of such designs on Palestine and on Jerusalem in particular. Their awareness manifested itself in a number of ways: in the context of considerations of the natural wealth of the country (i.e., the Dead Sea) and in the publishing of a newspaper devoted to alerting its readers to the dangers Zionism posed to the indigenous population. The essays in this issue weave together but a part of the Palestinian story, with glimpses of hope and failure that come out of them. It is hope, as unfounded or elusive as it may appear at times, that sustains Palestinians in their daily lives, especially when stirred by the changes currently taking place in our region.

Alex Baramki joins us with this issue as the new managing editor of the Jerusalem Quarterly. He is an avid researcher with a background in teaching and scholarship, and we in the editorial committee are excited by his joining our team, and look forward to working with him as he takes up his Jerusalem exile in Malta.