

Editorial

Words and Deeds in Jerusalem

Standing on the southern flank of Mount Scopus near Jerusalem's Augusta Victoria Hospital on a sunny February morning and looking eastwards as the hills roll down to the Jordan Valley, we could see the arid slopes of a two hundred square meter area of the West Bank which now bears the sterile name of E1. Israeli settler youth would hold a massive march and song fest there later in the afternoon demanding the continuation of the Israeli settlement project in E1 which aims to sever any link between East Jerusalem and the remaining West Bank, and indeed between Ramallah and Bethlehem as well, while creating territorial contiguity between the Old City and the mega Israeli settlement of Maale Adumim.

But perhaps even more insidious was the more pleasant sight of a green area encircling East Jerusalem. While international attention, including from the United States, has put some pressure on the Israeli government to stop building in E1, the Israeli National Parks Authority has gone ahead with a string of "national parks" with the same aim of encircling East Jerusalem and disrupting Palestinian territorial contiguity. The latest of these parks is the Mount Scopus Slopes National Park in the northeast, developed on land from the East Jerusalem neighborhoods of 'Issawiya and al-Tur. Both had submitted plans for using the land for much needed expansion. The sustained protests of their Palestinian residents and a court battle supported by the Israeli organization for a shared Jerusalem, Ir Amim, were unable to stop what a 3 October 2013 *Ha'aretz* editorial ironically termed "nature conservation – a continuation of the occupation by other means." In a March 2014 report, *From Territorial Contiguity to Historical Continuity*, the Mount Scopus Slopes Park is described by Emek Shaveh, an alternative Israeli archaeological organization,

as the “final stage in the seizure of areas around the Old City.”

And the Israeli grip on the Old City and East Jerusalem – led by settlers and settler organizations – continues to tighten. Indeed, as the lengthy tenure of Saul Goldstein, a former head of the Gush Etzion settlement bloc, as director-general of the Israel Nature and Parks Authority demonstrates, settlers have moved into key positions in most areas of land use planning not only in the remaining West Bank, but also in Jerusalem. So perhaps it is no surprise that on 3 April the Jerusalem Regional Planning and Building Committee approved the proposal by the extremist right-wing settler organization Elad, which operates the City of David National Park in Silwan (to the great detriment of Silwan residents) for a massive visitors complex some twenty meters from the Old City walls and one hundred meters from the Wailing Wall. The approval came despite the protests of a coalition of notable public figures in Israel: Jerusalem architect and scholar David Kroyanker, for example, warned in the Israeli newspaper *Ha'aretz* on 3 April that in forty-five years of following Jerusalem planning, he had never encountered a plan with such “fatal potential.” The failure of this protest – except perhaps for a few changes in the final specifications – attests not only to the congruence of government and settler ideological projects, but also to the signal role of the funding that Elad receives from donors abroad, largely through the U.S. tax-exempt Friends of Ir David Foundation. Bingo billionaire Irving Moskowitz is perhaps the most famous known funder of settler activities in East Jerusalem, particularly those of Ateret Cohanim – such as the takeover of the Shepherd Hotel in East Jerusalem’s Sheikh Jarrah neighborhood. Elad, however, generally refuses to disclose the names of its funders, although there are credible reports of at least a scattering of Russian oligarchs among them.

It is disheartening but illuminating to contrast this systematic takeover and makeover of East Jerusalem in deeds rather than words with the word-filled but action-less negotiations for a peace settlement over the past twenty years since the signing of the Oslo accords. At this writing, the zigzag of the current talks initiated by U.S. Secretary of State Kerry have zagged to a seeming dead end, variously described by U.S. President Obama as a “pause,” by Secretary Kerry as a “holding pattern,” and by Israel’s Netanyahu as a “suspension,” while the Israeli government wages a vitriolic campaign against the 23 April Palestinian unity accord. In fact, this particular dead end in the negotiations was dictated by deeds a month earlier when the Netanyahu government reneged on the scheduled release of Palestinian prisoners and reverted to more housing tenders “across the green line” in Jabal Abu Ghneim/Har Homa between Jerusalem and Bethlehem and several other sites.

Nothing strange about these Israeli moves – similar initiatives deliberately torpedoed the Obama administration’s other ventures into peacemaking, particularly in 2011. However, it might seem bizarre that the Palestinian Authority’s response – to ask to become a signatory to fifteen human rights conventions, such as the Convention to Eliminate Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and the Convention Against Torture – is also viewed by the United States as an “obstacle” to peacemaking, although perhaps a lesser one. And at least from leaked reports, the stalled framework agreement proposed to the two sides by Secretary Kerry contained a settlement freeze – but excluded occupied Arab Jerusalem where the most dangerous of such activities is taking place. *Jerusalem*

Quarterly will be following this development in subsequent issues.

Several contributions to this issue explore people and places on Jerusalem's excluded margins. Candace Graff writes of two Palestinian neighborhoods "in limbo," Kufr 'Aqab and Shu'fat, both within Jerusalem municipal boundaries but behind the Wall. Her probing analysis of the dilemmas of Palestinians in both locations bereft of services, legal protection and indeed secure identities lead her to conclude that "these neighborhoods have become literal manifestations of a metaphorical Palestinian identity in Jerusalem – they belong nowhere." Urban geographer Christopher Harker and researchers Reema Shebeith and Dareen Sayyad, working in the Ramallah neighborhood of Um al-Sharayet, provide an intimate essay on the paradoxes of life at the edge of Jerusalem. Um al-Sharayet is just a few minutes drive away from Kufr 'Aqab and the Jerusalem boundary but the journey, as they write, "is at once both utterly banal and freighted with geographical complexity." They describe Um al-Sharayet as a neighborhood "where Jerusalemites used to live," before the Israeli government's "center of life" policy propelled them over the invisible border to keep their residency. But Harker and his colleagues also argue that continuing relations with former neighbors, family, and community go beyond a "binary geography of inclusion-exclusion, there is also what can only be described as the haunted landscapes of Ramallah. This is a geography of ghosts, beings who are partly there, partly not."

Penny Johnson reviews two books by international visitors spending a year in the complicated geographies of Jerusalem and its margins. Graphic novelist Guy Delisle lived in the Beit Hanina neighborhood of East Jerusalem, taking care of two young children while trying to draw and understand everything from armed settlers at the zoo to the dilemmas of young Palestinian cartoonists. Literary scholar Neil Hertz's year is largely spent in the wearying travel from Ramallah to the Abu Dis campus of al-Quds University where he teaches – a year in Jerusalem largely spent behind the Wall. Hertz and writes an essay that reflects the complex environment in which he lives and works, a "dark pastoral" of exclusion.

Glenn Bowman also explores exclusion in a thoughtful and wide-ranging contribution on the history of Rachel's Tomb near Bethlehem – a shrine venerated (and shared) at different times by Muslims, Jews, and Christians and now a site of spatial segregation and violent conflict, declared an Israel National Heritage Site in 2010. A fascinating account of the alleged "purchase" of the tomb in 1841 by Moses Montefiore (it in fact remained a *waqf* property until 1918) and Montefiore's "restoration" of the Tomb is particularly valuable. Bowman's analysis is complex: the possibility of "sharing" is largely undermined by national conflict (and its religious symbolism) and Zionist appropriation, but he also notes social shifts in Palestinian life that undermine inter-religious community.

Excerpts from a memoir of a Mandate-era Jerusalem childhood by George Jawharieh, the son of the "storyteller of Jerusalem," Wasif Jawhariyyeh, vividly bring to life a Jerusalem of religious celebrations and intimate encounters, lovingly described from a child's perspective. Helga Tawil-Souri poignantly delineates her attempt to re-capture her "aunt's Mamilla" as she sorts through childhood memories listening to adult conversations about a lost home and country and ponders the unanswered questions raised by her aunt's peripatetic life of exile. In a journey through contemporary West Jerusalem she searches

for the family home in Mamilla, video camera in hand and her aunt on the telephone giving directions for navigating a vanished cityscape. Tawil-Souri, a filmmaker and media scholar, notes that “It was through images – still, and later also moving – that we recognized ourselves as displaced people.”

Issam Khalidi retrieves the history of Palestinian football until 1948, deploying sport as a window into Palestinian national feelings and identity. And pursuing another sport far removed from national celebration, Michael Dumper runs through divided cities, including Jerusalem, Mostar, and Belfast, in a sharp-eyed and fascinating essay.

With this issue of *Jerusalem Quarterly* we warmly welcome Alex Winder as a new Associate Editor: his editorial skills, innovative scholarship, and ideas for improving our publication are all valuable additions to the JQ team.

George Jawharieh 1933-2014

As we go to press we are saddened by the news of the passing of George Jawharieh. George was the main force behind making the papers of his father, Wasif Jawhariyyeh, available for publication by the Institute for Palestine Studies. A chapter from his own memoirs appears in this issue of *Jerusalem Quarterly*, which we dedicate to his memory.