

ELIA ZUREIK:
IN MEMORIAM

**Elia Zureik
(1939–2023)**

**My Colleague from
'Akka, Elia Zureik**

David Lyon



Photo by Mary Zureik, 2016.

I first corresponded with Elia Zureik from the UK around 1984, knowing him to be a sociologist interested in research on new information and communication technologies. I was ten years his junior and never expected to become his colleague one day. He welcomed me to Queen's University in 1990 when I obtained a position there and we became colleagues. From Elia, I not only discovered a keen and critical intellect, working on social impacts of new technologies, but also a Palestinian, researching and engaging politically with the extended aftermath of occupation. We worked together for more than thirty years. He, more than anyone, helped to establish surveillance studies in Canada and elsewhere.

But Elia also taught me much about consistently probing issues, through his exemplary work on Palestine. From his early work *The Sociology of the Palestinians* (1979), through to his

crowning achievement, *Israel's Colonial Project in Palestine: Brutal Pursuit* (2016), he devoted himself to rigorous analysis of social, economic, and political life in the disputed territory. He was involved with the UN in the Oslo agreements (1993, 1995) and thus showed practical skills as well as prodigious understanding. When Edward Said came to lecture at Queen's, he spoke admiringly of Elia. So did students fortunate enough to know him as undergraduates, and especially MA and PhD students, many of whom found a caring as well as a critical mentor in Elia.

Inspired by Elia, we devoted a research workshop – held in Cyprus to ensure that people from the “Middle East” could attend – to “Surveillance and Control in Israel/Palestine: Population, Territory, Power,” also the title of the Routledge book (2012) that Yasmeeen Abu Laban co-edited with us. While settler colonialism is the key concept of the 2016 book, the analysis, as in this workshop, showed how surveillance is deeply involved in the relationship between Israelis and Palestinians, both of whom were present. During that workshop, I was in awe of Elia's even-handed relationships with people from the many different positions represented. As a colleague, he could be grumpy as well as gracious, but it was his skills as a brilliantly well-informed negotiator that struck me in such contexts. His family asked me to speak at his life celebration, which is where I said adieu to my colleague of the past thirty-two years, from whom I learned much and whose fine work will live on.

David Lyon is former director of the Surveillance Studies Center and Professor Emeritus of Sociology and of Law at Queen's University in Ontario, Canada. His newest book is Pandemic Surveillance (Polity Press, 2022).