

Elia and the Israeli Gaze

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Leafing through earlier issues of the *Jerusalem Quarterly* I came across an essay by Elia Zureik titled “The Israeli Gaze” (*JQ* 66, 2016), in which he dealt with the origins of the surveillance protocols defining much of the Israeli culture of control that emerged in the 1990s. That essay took me to an earlier time of dialogue and polemics over the future of Palestine during Elia’s sojourn to Jerusalem in 1995–96. During that period Elia, accompanied by his wife Mary, decided to spend his sabbatical year at Birzeit University while on leave from Queens University. After a long absence spent teaching in Canada, with brief stints in Kuwait and the UK, he was ready to come back home. His home of course was ‘Akka, which he had left after the death of his parents in 1961 to relocate to the new world and a new life as a budding social scientist. But by the late 1990s, with Palestine dismembered, Jerusalem was the closest he could get to his return home.

While teaching at Birzeit Elia became engaged with the activities of the newly established Institute for Jerusalem Studies in Shaykh Jarrah (the precursor to the

office of the Institute for Palestine Studies in Ramallah), and with the refugee group in the multilateral peace negotiations emanating from the Madrid Peace Conference. A product of that year was a monograph on the use of refugee archives for policy research titled, *Reinterpreting the Historical Record: The Uses of Palestinian Refugee Archives for Social Science Research and Policy Analysis* (1998). Elia was a frequent presence in our Shaykh Jarrah offices, where his dynamic and combative mind engaged a large number of constant visitors: students, academics, and journalists. I particularly enjoyed his recollections of his early years in ‘Akka, where he grew up after the occupation of the city by Israeli forces following the 1948 war – tales of a rebellious youth and black humor about life in the besieged city. My only regret is that we never recorded his narrative of those formative years in his life. Perhaps hidden somewhere in his papers we will find a record of this period, and Elia’s generous spirit will come back to life again.

Salim Tamari is the founding editor of JQ. His most recent book is Camera Palaestina, with Issam Nassar and Stephen Sheehi (University of California Press, 2022).