

EDITORIAL

In the Shadow of Death

Completing this issue of the *Jerusalem Quarterly* has been a difficult task. The reasons for this are obvious, but worth stating: all of those involved in this issue, from contributors to editors to printers, have been impacted by the ongoing genocide in Gaza, the concomitant intensification of oppression throughout the West Bank, Jerusalem, and the '48 territories, and the concerted campaign to quash speech, scholarship, and activism on Palestine across North America and Europe. Time and energy have been directed toward the immediate, pressing concerns of the crisis we are living, making journal work at times a secondary priority. Still, the persistence of our contributors and editorial team has been admirable and reflects our belief that the struggle for Palestine is waged on many fronts, and that engaged scholarship has been and should continue to be a crucial component of the long fight to secure freedom, justice, and dignity for Palestinians.

There is no question that the genocide that continues day after day in Gaza casts a pall over every contribution to this issue of *JQ*, whether or not Gaza is their explicit focus. For example, Frances S. Hasso and Aisha Barghouti Saifi's compelling article on the politics of midwifery and childbirth evokes the plight of some sixty thousand pregnant women in Gaza, who must give birth in unfathomable conditions and in the near total absence of antepartum and postpartum care. At the same time, their work draws attention to broader trends, in which Palestinian midwifery as a community-based praxis has been superseded by biomedicalized reproductive healthcare in underresourced and understaffed

physician-led hospitals and clinics. Their article allows us to think about broader structural issues in Palestinian healthcare, not detached from nor reducible to Gaza's healthcare crisis.

Similarly, Chris Whitman-Abdelkarim's account of water theft in Kufr 'Aqab in this issue's Letter from Jerusalem inevitably evokes the water crisis in Gaza – the scarcity of fresh drinking water, the destruction of sanitation and sewage management systems, the lengths to which Palestinians must go (and the creativity that they must harness) to secure water for themselves and their families. Conditions in Kufr 'Aqab cannot be compared to those in Gaza, but again such an account illuminates the structural inequalities that undermine the most basic necessities for Palestinians, which produce a spectrum of effects that must be considered holistically rather than in isolation.

Indeed, several of the present issue's contents confirm that, although Israel's assault on Gaza may be unprecedented in its intensity, this extreme violence is part of a longer history and a broader geography of imperial-backed Zionist efforts to erase Palestinian life, culture, and history. Hamdan Taha details the large-scale destruction since October of Gaza's cultural heritage, including religious sites, historic buildings and landmarks, museums, and archives. Contributions from Penny Johnson and Karel Vriezen offer a more granular look at Palestinian culture. Johnson's meditation on three Palestinian productions of *Romeo and Juliet*, "Star-Crossed Lovers in a Star-Crossed Land," begins with an account of a 2016 staging of the play at Gaza City's Said al-Mishal Cultural Centre, which was destroyed by Israeli bombs in 2018. Vriezen's review of John Landgraf and Owen Rye's landmark volume on Palestinian traditional pottery, meanwhile, reaffirms the crucial contributions to our knowledge of Palestinian culture and history by archaeological projects that are not guided solely by a Jewish-supremacist political project. Vincent Lemire's *In the Shadow of the Wall*, reviewed here by Maissoun Sharkawi, is a reminder of just how much cultural heritage has already been lost. Lemire's book details the centuries-long history of Jerusalem's Mughrabi Quarter and its flattening by Israeli bulldozers just days after Israel's occupation of the Old City in 1967. Also during the 1967 war, Israeli forces ethnically cleansed the village of 'Imwas (along with the neighboring villages of Yalu and Bayt Nuba), severing the links between the local population and the Latrun monastery, as described by Father Louis Wehbe in Rawda Ghanayem's feature on Latrun in this issue. Israel's propensity for establishing radical new "facts on the ground" under the cover of war in 1967 can serve, as Sharkawi notes, as a heuristic for understanding Palestinians' present realities on the ground and future challenges.

When it comes to future challenges, it is no secret that scenarios for the "day after" the war on Gaza are already being formulated in Washington, New York, Geneva, Tel Aviv, and so on. Christopher Burnham's article on Ronald Storrs, the British military governor of Jerusalem in the immediate aftermath of World War I, revisits this crucial moment in which imperial interests, masquerading as even-handedness, indelibly shaped the future trajectory of Palestine and the Palestinians. Mick

Dumper's review of Anne Irfan's *Refuge and Resistance* offers insight into another example of international intervention on the "day after," exploring the Palestinian refugee question within the emergence of the international refugee system at large. Israeli-led and U.S.-backed efforts to dismantle UNRWA will inevitably give rise in the coming months and years to discussions about the suitability of this system and what kinds of alternatives may arise to meet (or not) the enormous needs of Palestinians in Gaza in the aftermath of this genocidal war.

The scale and intensity of the assault on Gaza is such that it can seemingly render thoughtful or measured analysis impossible or inadequate. There is a value in acknowledging this, in recognizing that academic work is insufficient to meet the moment. There is also a value in resisting it, in pressing forward with critical scholarship that highlights what Gaza has taught us and can teach us. As we do so, we must also keep in mind that the atrocities in Gaza result from a larger set of policies that aim to contain, imprison, silence, starve, humiliate, harm, and destroy Palestinians wherever they may be.