

Editorial

We Are Still Watching You:

Counting Cameras, Chicken Coops, and Calories

This issue of *Jerusalem Quarterly* continues the examination – initiated in *JQ* 66 – of the intelligence and security regimes that have monitored Jerusalem and Palestinian lives over the last century, from World War I to the present. Its contributors cover the breadth of this period, reflecting on the developments and innovations, as well as the continuities, that have characterized the various efforts to harness the collection and recording of information to projects of political control and disruption.

Kate Dannies revives the enigmatic history of the NILI espionage group during the current centenary of World War I. NILI was a Jewish spy network that worked on behalf of the British in Palestine and did not coordinate with the Zionists, who were still trying to find an accommodation with the Ottoman government. This essay frames the historical origins of the group discussed in *JQ* 66 by Johnny Mansour, who investigated the interactions between Charles Boutagy, who came from a prominent Haifa merchant family, and NILI in Boutagy's efforts on behalf of the British war effort. Dannies describes how the wartime espionage and postwar propaganda efforts of Alexander Aaronsohn (who, along with his siblings Aaron and Sarah, founded and led NILI) reflect the shift in Zionist strategy from finding a niche for the Jewish nationalist project within the Ottoman state to an alliance with British Empire.

Once this alliance was secured with the Balfour Declaration and the establishment of the British Mandate, the Zionist movement set about developing lasting intelligence infrastructures. Saleh Abdel Jawad reveals how the pre-state security apparatus of the Haganah monitored and recorded the daily life of Palestinians in Village Files in the 1930s and 1940s. The

case of al-Bireh, discussed here, is both frightening and fascinating: the al-Bireh file reveals the most intimate details of local village lives, including consumption patterns (Birawis' ownership of everything from chickens and chicken coops to radios and other "modern" items), cropping arrangements, household furniture, marriage patterns, land title deeds, and elite formations. Abdel Jawad details the variety of sources from which the Haganah collected such information, raising the issue of collaboration between the Zionist leadership and scholars that specialized in the ethnography of Palestinian society and wondering whether such sources can be repurposed to write a social history of Palestinian villages that resists – rather than abets – colonial control.

The Haganah Village File reports focused on land ownership and leadership, targets of Zionist attention prior to the conquest of 1948 and the occupation of 1967, but which continued to be priorities for the new state of Israel in the aftermath of these momentous events. In "Stifling Surveillance," Ahmad H. Sa'di examines operations of the Military Government during the 1950s and early 1960s. The main target of these control mechanisms was the "de-nationalization" of the Arab community by undermining extended forms of solidarity with the Palestinian community that had been forced across the borders. In particular, these mechanisms incorporated the residual Palestinian population "at the margins of the Israeli polity and economy as subordinate collectivities devoid of an overarching identity, vision, will, or ability to resist." Those early mechanisms of control according to the author continue to operate until today, albeit in a different format.

Israel's seemingly constant development of technologies of surveillance and suppression is addressed in Daoud Talhami's review of Jeff Halper's *War against the People*. Talhami applauds Halper's clear-sighted and expansive evaluation of Israel's security industrial complex, which is also linked to Israel's foreign policy and the international impunity that it has managed to secure through the sale of weapons and security technology to states and regimes worldwide. Further, by claiming that its military technologies have been tested in the laboratory of the occupied territories, Israel has managed to turn its failure to pacify the Palestinian population into a marketing strategy. Meanwhile, Israel's security "products" include not only conventional weapons, but also satellite technology and drones, as well as "the militarization and weaponization of research in scientific fields including genetics, nanotechnology, and biotechnology." A report by 7amleh – Arab Center for Social Media Advancement indicates the degree to which Israeli (but also Palestinian) security services have infiltrated social media, rendering its Palestinian users vulnerable to harassment and arrest.

Helga Tawil-Souri, in "Surveillance Sublime," notes, however, that even the latest and most advanced technologies of surveillance merely supplement rather than supplant the tried and true "low-tech" methods developed well before 1948. She writes:

there is no shift in surveillance methods used before and after 1948 or before and after 1967, just as there is no clear moment of a surveillance regime becoming completely reliant on new technologies. Technologies that were fundamental to early colonial and state control, such as population registries, identification cards, land surveys, and mapping, remain a central

part of Israel's surveillance regime. And much surveillance still relies on old fashioned intelligence and data gathering on the ground: a police force, intelligence agents, informants, spies, infiltrators, collaborators, imprisonment, torture and interrogation methods, observation from a distance and direct observation, differentiated infrastructure, territorial mapping, land surveys and registration, urban planning, architecture, watch towers, population registration, censuses, identification papers, and slightly newer low-tech tools such as postal interception, wiretapping, and x-ray machines. While an increasing number of tools – such as drones, remote controlled robots, biometric data collection, and computer viruses – are hi-tech, these do not displace low-tech ones, but supplement them.

Tawil-Souri also reflects on the state's attempt to usurp the all-seeing power (though not the all-loving potential) of God in the holy city of Jerusalem. Indeed, it is only in modern history that omniscient surveillance became a secular rather than a divine imperative. However, as Enlightenment thinkers like Jeremy Bentham attempted to invent mechanisms that would “sidestep the need for the watchful eye to be God's,” they reproduced an understanding of man as inherently sinful, and thus requiring constant surveillance and, ideally, self-surveillance. Anne Meneley turns an eye toward one form of self-surveillance in a wry review of *A Slim Peace*, a 2007 documentary about seven Palestinian and seven Israeli women who join a common weight-loss group held in the settlement of Gush Etzion. Meneley finds the documentary both shocking and amusing, as it suggests that engaging Israeli and Palestinian women

in the self-surveillance of their own fatness can provide a ground for the development of a shared political subjectivity . . . the film records a bizarre and questionable (in terms of gender politics) example of a “normalization discourse” that assumes that nongovernmental practices and interactions can somehow lead to an end of violence or acceptance of the very unequal state of affairs in the Holy Land.

In a roundtable discussion of Israeli conquest through urban planning, Nour Arafeh, Maha Samman, and Raja Khalidi seek to push forward different strategies of resistance to the present state and future plans of inequality in Jerusalem. Arafeh, an urban planner, discusses the succession of recent Israeli masterplans for Jerusalem – including the Jerusalem 2000 and 2050 Masterplans, as well as lesser-known private planning schemes. Arafeh, Samman, and Khalidi discuss possible Palestinian responses to these schemes, ranging from the establishment of popular committees in East Jerusalem neighborhoods to the revitalization of the Palestine Liberation Organization. Samman notes that three common Palestinian responses to Israel's municipal plans have been: to work within the system, “which means trying to improve conditions within existing planning structures and strategies”; to comply with Israeli planning, thus becoming “passive subjects without seeking alternatives”; and to reject all things Israeli, which – as a result of the imbalance

of power – “provides no strategy to tackle the challenges at hand.” Samman suggests a “compound challenge” to counteract Israeli plans, which uses settler-colonialism as a organizing paradigm and articulates three main groups of variables: “(a) the roles of knowledge, power, and technology; (b) the roles of strategic and urban planning and the concept of sovereignty; and (c) the roles of demographic, social, economic, and cultural aspects.” Khalidi stresses the need to reorient Palestinian planning “in terms of the territory of historic Palestine rather than that of the elusive State of Palestine, Areas A/B, Jerusalem, inside/outside the barrier, Gaza,” and other subdivisions, while also acknowledging the problematic, but potentially effective, option of municipal participation.

Gerard Horton, founder of Military Court Watch, raises a similarly difficult issue of Palestinian lawyers appearing before Israeli military courts in his discussion of the proceedings of the military court at Ofer Prison, located in the West Bank on the approaches to Jerusalem. There, hundreds of Palestinian prisoners are tried every year for infractions that increasingly deal with conflict with settler communities and settlers. Palestinian lawyers are largely unable to obtain justice for their clients, while their presence lends legitimacy to the court both internationally and locally. The question of Palestinians’ struggle to strategize outside of the Israeli system – without falling victim to compliance or fatalistic rejection – remains, but we can add here Bob Dylan’s iconic verse evoked recently by the Nobel Prize committee in Stockholm: *the answer, my friend, is blowing in the wind.*