

EDITORIAL

Refusing Extermination

This issue of the *Jerusalem Quarterly* is being released more than one year after 7 October 2023. As this grim anniversary came and went, the U.S.-Israeli campaign of genocide in Gaza has metastasized to include an invasion of southern Lebanon and air bombardments targeting Beirut, Tyre, Sidon, and the Biqā' Valley, among other areas of Lebanon; continuing strikes on Syria and Yemen; and exchanges of missile and drone attacks with Iran. The official death toll in Gaza since October 2023 until this writing now exceeds forty-four thousand Palestinians, including seventeen thousand children, with well over one hundred thousand people wounded. These figures do not include thousands who are missing, including those buried under the rubble (at least ten thousand in many estimates). Each day brings new reports of dozens more Palestinians killed in Israeli attacks on hospitals and schools where displaced families and the injured have sought treatment and shelter. In Lebanon, Israel has killed more than 3,600 people, injured more than 15,400, and displaced more than 1.2 million over the past year, with the war sharply intensifying since September 2024. In a period of less than a month, Israel assassinated longtime Hizballah leader Hassan Nasrallah, Nasrallah's presumed successor Hashim Safi al-Din, and Yahya Sinwar, the leader of Hamas in Gaza and chairman of the movement's political bureau, having succeeded Isma'il Haniya after his assassination in July. Even as fears of a regional war have come to fruition, the violence threatens to expand and intensify.

In the West Bank, Israeli raids and assassinations proceed with very little international attention. Israeli forces

have killed more than eight hundred Palestinians, including 166 children, in the West Bank over the past year, injured 6,500, and arrested more than five thousand. In early October, for example, Israeli employed fighter jets (used in the West Bank for the first time since the second intifada) to kill Zahi Yasir ‘Awfi, leader of Hamas’s ‘Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades in Tulkarm, alongside seventeen others in a busy café; later in the month, Israeli forces gunned down his successor, Islam Jamil ‘Awda. West Bank settlers continue to terrorize Palestinians, with the tacit or open support of the Israeli military and political establishment. The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian affairs documented more than 1,400 incidents of settler violence against Palestinians since October 2023, an average of four incidents a day. Recent attacks have targeted Palestinian villagers in Area C, from Khirbat al-Rahwa in the south Hebron Hills to al-Mu‘arrajat and ‘Arab al-Ka‘abna in the Jordan Valley. The production of this issue coincides with the olive harvest in Palestine, which has been disrupted by Israeli settlers and the military who burn and bulldoze trees, deny access to lands, steal olives and farming equipment, and attack those harvesting olives. In mid-October, an Israeli soldier shot and killed fifty-nine-year-old Hanan ‘Abd al-Rahman Abu Salama as she harvested olives on her land in Faqu‘a, northeast of Jenin.

Meanwhile, Israel is forging ahead with efforts to expand its settlements. The Jerusalem municipality recently recommended that the regional committee approve “urban renewal” plans that would add 1,300 residential units, the vast majority in the settlements of Gilo and Ramot. Far-right elements of the settler movement have begun mobilizing support for resettling Gaza and expanding settlements into southern Lebanon. The Knesset also passed two bills that will prevent the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA) from operating inside Israel, shutter UNRWA’s headquarters in annexed East Jerusalem, and declare the agency a terrorist group, banning any direct interaction with the Israeli state and effectively denying work and entry permits to UNRWA staff operating in Gaza and the West Bank. These laws seek to cripple the agency, undermining its work throughout Palestine and in particular its vital relief efforts in Gaza. The degree to which UNRWA is already hamstrung is made clear by Hani Almadhoun, UNRWA USA’s senior director of philanthropy, who in this issue recounts working outside its structures to feed starving Palestinians in Gaza.

The starvation that Israel is imposing on Gaza provides a disturbing backdrop to the contributions to this second of two special issues of *JQ* devoted to food and foodways. The pittance of aid that Israel has allowed into the Gaza Strip has further dwindled. In September 2024, aid organizations noted that 83 percent of required food aid did not make it to the needy Palestinians of Gaza, while in October 2024 Gaza’s Government Media Office announced that Israel had in the previous year blocked one-quarter of a million aid trucks from entering the Gaza Strip. In northern Gaza, Israel has intensified its ethnic cleansing, forcibly evicting thousands who had remained there despite the year-long assault, and subjecting the hundreds of thousands who remain to an ever-tightening noose of deprivation and air attacks. UNRWA staff in the north reported that “the smell of death is everywhere.” In addition to the forty-four

thousand killed in Gaza over the past year, a group of U.S. health care workers noted that a further sixty-two thousand had likely died of starvation in this period. It is a staggering number. Gaza's resilience, described so powerfully in Lila Sharif's essay "How Dough Rises in Gaza," is not limitless.

Israel's genocide in Gaza is accompanied by ecocide, as munitions, shrapnel, and the pulverized remains of residences and infrastructure poison Gaza's land, air, and water. Israel's starvation of Gaza has not only entailed the prevention of aid from entering, but the destruction of conditions that give nourishment to human and non-human life. Several contributions to this issue focus on matters of the environment closely linked to food and foodways. After all, as the articles, essays, interview, and reviews in *JQ* 98 and *JQ* 99 make abundantly clear, Palestinian food and foodways are intimately and inseparably intertwined with Palestinians' relationship to the land and the non-human forms of life it sustains. Meanwhile, various Zionist efforts have claimed Palestinian misuse of nature to justify their expulsion from the land. Tom Selwyn's review of Tamar Novick's *Milk and Honey* illuminates the environmental destruction caused by a settler modernity that suggested, whereas Palestinians had squandered Palestine's natural resources, Zionists were better stewards of the land, plants, and animals whose production, through science, they maximized. Yair Agmon's article about the "Farm in the Valley," part of the City of David settler project in Silwan, offers insight on another kind of settler imaginary, which seeks a return to a premodern biblical idyll. Both settler modernity and messianic nostalgia present environmental "solutions" incompatible with Palestinian presence on the land. By contrast, Benjamin Kaplan Weinger in "When the World Collapses in Palestine" offers an ecological reading of Palestinian literature by the likes of Ghassan Kanafani, Mahmud Darwish, and Edward Said, in which he finds a rich archive for thinking and rethinking climate catastrophe and the politics of environmentalism in and beyond Palestine.

Thinking beyond Palestine is, of course, necessary given Palestinian conditions of displacement and diaspora. Louis Brehony's *Palestinian Music in Exile*, reviewed here by Ruba Totah, explores how music, like food, helps sustain identity and community among those dispersed by ethnic cleansing and its supporters on the world stage. Meanwhile, Nicholas Bascuñan-Wiley and Jessica Schwalb's article on Chilean Palestinian (or "Chilestinian") cookbooks sheds light on how particular forms of collecting and presenting recipes are linked to transformations within the Palestinian community in Chile, while they also respond to conditions in Palestine itself. These cookbooks' affirmation and assertion of their Palestinianness is worlds apart, meanwhile, from *Jerusalem*, the cookbook co-authored by Israeli Yotam Ottolenghi and Palestinian Sami Tamimi and subject of Reem Farah's critical review essay in this issue. Farah decries *Jerusalem*'s claims to be free of politics, a way of appealing to a liberal Western audience that obscures the settler-colonial power dynamics on the ground in Palestine and between the book's authors. In moments like this, as we bear witness to genocide, unchecked violence, and mass starvation, the politics of cool disinterest are revealed as the politics of cruel indifference.