

## EDITORIAL

# The Journey of the *Jerusalem Quarterly*

Welcome to the one hundredth issue of the *Jerusalem Quarterly*, which was first published under the name *Jerusalem Quarterly File* in the summer of 1998.<sup>1</sup> Over the past quarter century, *JQ* has established itself as the leading journal on the past, present, and future of Jerusalem, as well as the most robust and innovative platform for studies on the social and cultural life of Palestinians in general. *JQ* contributed significantly to the historical shift in knowledge production over the past generation from policy-oriented geopolitical and nationalist analysis to centering the lives of ordinary Palestinians and expanding the notion of the “political” to include the agency, contradictions, intimacy, and textures of everyday life. *JQ*’s role in this shift, especially when it comes to the late Ottoman and British colonial periods, was largely driven by Salim Tamari, the founding editor of *JQ* and the founding director of the Institute for Jerusalem Studies, which publishes the journal.

This special issue, the first of two, honors Salim Tamari and his legacy in and beyond *JQ*. In his introduction, guest editor Issam Nassar, Tamari’s long-time colleague and fellow *JQ* collaborator, reflects on Tamari’s scholarship, which inspired many of the articles and essays curated here. While these two issues celebrate Tamari’s impact on the field of Palestinian studies, his influence can be seen more broadly in the numerous contributions to the pages of the *JQ*. This editorial connects the journey of *JQ* to the larger context of Palestinian studies and to the current war on the Palestinian people, including the ongoing genocide and ethnic cleansing in Gaza.

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<sup>1</sup> The name change took effect with the double issue 22–23 (Winter–Autumn 2005).

Palestinians are all too familiar with generational catastrophes (World War I, 1936–1939, 1948–1949, 1967, 1982, and 2023 to the present) characterized by large-scale killing, destruction of built environments, forced displacement, and ghettoization. Yet, after every political and military defeat, they remain more tenacious than ever. Over time, the practices of regeneration, reconstitution, and resistance in the face of erasure have become inherent to the modern Palestinian condition. In this issue of *JQ*, for example, an interview with Hadeel Assali on the Gaza Mutual Aid Solidarity group testifies to how, in the face of the current genocide in Gaza, Palestinians continue to find innovative ways to (re)assemble, repair, and live. With fuel and electricity cut off, people turned to clay pots and repaired solar panels. Tragically, these micro practices carry their own risks, as Israel targets the Palestinian social fabric and assassinates doctors, academics, and community workers. Also in this issue, Kegham Balian’s letter from Jerusalem is a timely first-hand testimony from the Save the Armenian Quarter movement, illuminating diverse forms of community mobilization under threat of dispossession, settler encroachment, and attacks. These practices often lie below the political radar and remain hidden in the shadows of large transformative events. It is more crucial than ever to understand how Palestinians (re)assemble their families, communities, and body politic during and after each catastrophe, and throughout the relentless everyday structural violence of settler colonial domination.

The pages of *JQ* over the past twenty-five years have shone inspiring light on the micro level practices of Palestinians that built foundations for resilience and resistance against all odds. The studies range from reconstituting social and cultural fabrics through memoirs and photographs to in-depth ethnographies of neighborhoods and “discoveries” of locally produced archival sources. The perceptive insights and relevance of these studies are due, in large part, to the fact that *JQ* is the primary English-language journal for Palestinian and non-Palestinian authors who live in Palestine and who are able to produce intimate and grounded knowledge concerning everyday conditions in Palestine.

That *JQ* became such a platform is due to the circumstances of its founding. In the heady years immediately following the Oslo agreements in the mid-1990s, the Beirut-based Institute for Palestine Studies (IPS), under the leadership of Walid Khalidi at the time, sought to establish a presence on Palestinian soil, just as tens of thousands of returnees, including Yassir Arafat, were doing, with the hope of establishing a Palestinian state with Jerusalem as its capital. One of the tasks was to locally print *Majallat al-Dirasat al-Filistiniyya*, the Arabic journal of IPS, as well as to distribute its English language *Journal of Palestine Studies*. Salim Tamari suggested a third publication: an informational bulletin to report from the ground up on the battle for Palestinian Jerusalem by local academics, journalists, and writers. It was envisioned to provide locally informed historical context and structural analysis to the unfolding of current events through the long-form investigative essay format that was the hallmark of MERIP’s *Middle East Report* and other politically engaged journals at the time.

The first eight issues of the *Jerusalem Quarterly File* focused solely on Jerusalem, analyzing Israeli government attempts to transform the city and documenting a chronology of relevant developments from issue to issue. But even within the “facts, facts, facts” positivist political history model that long defined IPS, the authors paid special attention to contextualizing how Palestinians in Jerusalem perceived, experienced, and resisted these

attempts. From the beginning, therefore, the analytical themes that would dominate later issues can be discerned. These included historical perspectives on landscape, the built environment, and archaeology, and the use of locally generated sources (such as letters, photographs, and memoirs) to construct social biographies of individuals, families, and institutions that defined the cultural life of pre-1948 Jerusalem.

Issue 9 (Summer 2000) marked the moment when *JQ* took on its current shape. It decentered the primacy of Israel's actions as frames for understanding Jerusalem and centered the Palestinian experience. In place of the usual lead article on Israeli policies, we find the story of Wasif Jawhariyya. The issue also included an account of the Arab College of Jerusalem by Sadiq Ibrahim 'Odeh, who attended from 1940 to 1944. The editorial, titled "Memoirs as History," defended this move:

This issue of the *Jerusalem Quarterly File* is devoted largely to the history of everyday life in Jerusalem. Featuring two memoirs – one recounting the life and times of a noted Jerusalemite popular musician, the other providing personal recollections of the Arab College of Jerusalem . . . . Memoirs fill the gaps that exist in our understanding of the histories with which we often claim familiarity, but which often prove elusive.

By Winter 2001 (double issue 11–12), the transformation was complete, as the entire issue was devoted to an irreverent historical exploration of Jerusalem's cultural elite by Tamari, vernacular photographers by Nassar, subversive (in the good sense of the word) ethnography by Rema Hammami, and a poignant cultural essay by Penny Johnson, to name but a few of the local contributors whose work on behalf of *JQ* spanned decades. Issue 30 (Autum 2006), "My Grandmother and Other Stories," was the first not to have Jerusalem as the focus and the first fully thematic guest edited issue. It was also at that time that the chronology section faded out.

*JQ* continues to give pride of place to Jerusalem and ground-up journalism by local writers is a consistent thread. It also remains a robust platform for social and cultural histories of all Palestinians, regardless of geography. In recent years, *JQ* added a double-blind peer review process for lead research articles. Most important, *JQ* continues to innovate new lines of inquiry about the Palestinian condition, largely through special issues, with particular attention to cultivating emerging scholars. Some recent examples of the expanded horizons of Palestinian studies have been special issues on discursive and materialist dimensions of the built environment (*JQ* 83 and 84, "Home and House"), formal and informal property regimes (*JQ* 88 and 89, "Who Owns Palestine?"), subaltern archaeology (*JQ* 90 and 91), Jerusalem's interrupted futures (*JQ* 92), UNRWA's archives (*JQ* 93 and 94), saints, festivals, and everyday religion (*JQ* 95), and Palestinian food and foodways (*JQ* 98 and 99).

The concurrence of the publication of the one hundredth issue of *JQ* during the most devastating Palestinian catastrophe of living memory serves as a reminder that engaged scholarship that centers Palestinians is more important than ever. We offer our sincere thanks to our devoted readers, our contributors, our staff, our contributing editors, and our editorial teams. Together, we continue the journey of *JQ* and the struggle for freedom, justice, and equality.