

From the Editor



THIS SPECIAL ISSUE of the *Journal* marks something of a departure from our usual focus on the history, politics, and social science aspects of the study of Palestine as it is largely devoted to a cluster of contributions titled “Queering Palestine.” Featuring an introduction by three members of the *Journal’s* editorial committee, Leila Farsakh, Rhoda Kanaaneh, and Sherene Seikaly, the cluster includes articles by scholars C. Heike Schotten, Walaa Alqaisiya, and Mikki Stelder, as well as a roundtable with queer-identifying Arabs or Palestinians who are either academics or otherwise engaged in knowledge production. These contributions speak to the convergence between an anti-colonial perspective on Palestine and sexual politics, a topic that is underexplored. Palestine studies generally avoids issues touching on sexuality, and much of the work on gender has sidestepped trying to understand how gender and sexuality are conditioned by the colonial and indeed the postcolonial situation in Palestine (and elsewhere).

This issue of *JPS* not only highlights this crucial intersection but it also delves into its political ramifications. One of the many bogus claims for the “civilizing mission” of Zionism as a colonial endeavor is that Israel provides a beacon to Palestinians and a refuge for them from abuses involving sexuality, portrayed as endemic to “backwards” Palestinian and Arab societies. Israel’s effort to polish its tarnished reputation by describing itself as a haven for those oppressed because of their sexual orientation—a practice known as pinkwashing—is an increasingly important claim in the threadbare arsenal of justifications for Zionism, to which Queering Palestine’s introduction, three articles, and the roundtable provide robust responses. The articles in the cluster also explore efforts by Palestinian queer groups to organize around sexual politics, as well as the challenges they face and some of the debates their work has given rise to.

This issue also includes a review essay by Paul Gaston Aaron of the best-selling book *Rise and Kill First: The Secret History of Israel’s Targeted Assassinations* by Ronen Bergman. Aaron reviews Bergman’s extraordinary chronicle of the murder of over two thousand Palestinian leaders and ordinary civilians under Israel’s so-called targeted killing policy, as well as in atrocities like repeated car bombings in Beirut by Israeli intelligence agents or their proxies. Covering the long and blood-soaked history of Israel’s covert operations, the book is both highly informative and spine-chilling, as Aaron underlines in a critical but appreciative review that repays careful reading.

This issue went to press as the reverberations were still being felt from Donald Trump’s decision to recognize Jerusalem as Israel’s capital and move the U.S. embassy there. These were only the first measures taken by an administration that is completely in step with the Netanyahu government and even more hostile to Palestinian aspirations than any of its predecessors. We include two contributions that analyze these developments. The first, by Victor Kattan, who explores the various ways in which recent U.S. decisions appear to violate international law: since Israel does not have sovereignty over any part of Jerusalem, East or West, according to the international legal system, Kattan argues, moving the U.S. embassy there would be illegal. The other is my essay that

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places the latest developments in the context of the Trump administration's unpredictable foreign policy, and assesses its grave implications. The essay also suggests potential Palestinian strategic responses to the dangerous escalation of U.S. support for the most extreme government in Israel's history.

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