



FROM THE EDITOR

SINCE ISRAEL'S WINTER 2008–2009 offensive against the Gaza Strip, it has seemed that we are living through a period of *après-Gaza*. Whether it was because of the brutality of that offensive with its lopsided 100-to-1 casualty ratio, the unusually critical media treatment of Israel that eventually emerged, a greater international awareness of the pernicious nature of the Israeli-Egyptian blockade of the Strip, or the ongoing impact of the Goldstone report, echoes of what happened then in Gaza have lingered on. It is of course too early to make a definitive judgment of the impact of the war on Gaza, but at least in the short term, it appears to have been a turning point.

It is thus appropriate that *JPS* should publish an article that places the offensive against Gaza in a moral and legal context. In his analysis of the new “ethical code” adopted by the Israeli army, Muhammad Ali Khalidi examines the ways in which the innovations introduced by this code into official Israeli doctrine contradict the traditional laws of war and provisions of international humanitarian law. Notably, by formally placing the safety of its own soldiers above that of civilians, the Israeli military has enshrined in its operating procedures principles that are at odds with centuries of legal thinking on the subject. This may explain the high number of civilian casualties and the skewed proportion of Palestinian civilians to Israeli soldiers killed during the Gaza offensive, as well as the troubling facts reported in the Israeli press at the time and in the Goldstone report. The latter found that Israel may have committed war crimes and possibly crimes against humanity in Gaza. This article shows that these were not random occurrences; rather, they were the result of deliberate decisions, supported by the army’s “ethical code,” which now guides the actions of the Israeli armed forces.

Jamil Hilal’s essay treats the division in Palestinian politics between Fatah and Hamas, and the rival Palestinian authorities they control, in the West Bank and Gaza Strip respectively. Hilal shows that this split predates the Hamas takeover of Gaza in July 2007, as well as the 2006 elections that gave Hamas a majority in the Palestinian Legislative Council. He argues that this split, which is partly due to extensive external interference, may be amenable to the impact of Palestinian public opinion, which is largely at odds with the two leading Palestinian political formations.

The issue also includes an interview with Mohammad Mustafa, chairman of the Palestine Investment Fund, and an internal report by a retired U.S. Army colonel who served under Lt. Gen. Keith Dayton, tasked with training security forces for the Ramallah Authority. Both pieces are revealing of the strategy not only of the Ramallah Authority, but also of its U.S. backers, as well as of some of the problems facing this strategy.

Finally, to commemorate the death of the eminent Palestinian entrepreneur and philanthropist Hasib Sabbagh, *JPS* republishes Walid Khalidi’s reminiscences of their friendship, which are revealing both of the political role played by Sabbagh and of facets of his long and distinguished life.

—*Rashid I. Khalidi*