



FROM THE EDITOR

THE ISRAELI-PALESTINIAN CONFLICT has increasingly been defined in terms of the resolution of the question of the Palestinian territories occupied in 1967: East Jerusalem, the West Bank, and the Gaza Strip. This purposely short-sighted focus neglects two facts: that the conflict commenced well before 1967, and that the majority of Palestinians live outside these areas. Thus, most discussions of a resolution of the conflict ignore the interests and rights of the 1.5 million Palestinians who live inside the State of Israel and who are vitally affected by issues like the demand for recognition of Israel as a Jewish state.

Moreover, a majority of Palestinians live outside the boundaries of British Mandatory Palestine. Their interests and rights are similarly overlooked by the ill-informed and ill-intentioned policy discourse prevalent in the United States and Europe that maintains that the right of return and full compensation for Palestinians made refugees in 1948, most of whom live in the diaspora, is "impossible." This position is advanced essentially because the alternative would be inconvenient for Israel, which bears the largest share of the responsibility for their expulsion and dispossession in 1948 and which continues to benefit from both acts.

This issue carries three contributions that focus on aspects of the Palestinian refugee issue. In the first, Jalal Al Hussein examines the evolution of the relationship between UNRWA, the United Nations body tasked with dealing with Palestinian refugees, and the refugees themselves. He looks at how UNRWA's understanding of its mission has changed over time and how this may have affected the refugees' relations with UNRWA, as well as with the Arab countries in which they live.

Among refugees outside Palestine, those in Lebanon live under the most onerous conditions. Unlike Palestinians in Jordan and Syria, who enjoy relative security and stability and have certain recognized rights, those in Lebanon have suffered from the external aggression and internal conflict that have afflicted the country for decades and from the difficult conditions imposed on them by the Lebanese state.

The two other contributions look at facets related to the destruction of Nahr al-Barid refugee camp in northern Lebanon as a result of fighting in 2007 between the Lebanese army and an outside armed group that had taken up positions inside the camp. Ismael Sheikh Hassan and Sari Hanafi examine the competing pressures that have been at work in the planning for reconstruction of the camp, not yet completed after three years. Adam Ramadan looks at how these camps have become important sites of identity and meaning for Palestinians. This explains why the destruction of Nahr al-Barid (five other camps in Lebanon have been completely destroyed since 1968, and four of them were never rebuilt) had such an impact on its population.

The issue also includes an essay charting how new media may be changing the contours of representation of the conflict over Palestine, taking as its focus the treatment of the Israeli commando assault on the *Mavi Marmara* in May 2010. Finally, a biblical scholar reports on the July 2010 conference of Christians United for Israel, the main U.S. evangelical Zionist umbrella organization.

—Rashid I. Khalidi