



## From the Editor

by *Rashid I. Khalidi*

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Sixty years ago the Zionist movement launched an all-out military offensive to establish a Jewish state in a country with a two-thirds Arab majority. Victories followed in quick succession as the well-organized, well-armed Haganah battled poorly coordinated Arab irregulars and local militias. On 18 April 1948, after the prelude of the Dayr Yasin massacre and the conquest of Arab villages in the Jerusalem corridor, the mixed Arab-Jewish town of Tiberias was captured and its entire Arab population bused to Transjordan. The attack against the Arab quarters of Haifa, Palestine's largest city, followed almost immediately; Haifa fell on 22 April. With the conquest of Arab Jaffa several weeks later, the fate of Palestine was sealed, and on 14 May 1948, the State of Israel was proclaimed. This issue of JPS commemorates this first crucial phase of the 1948 war with two articles about those first key Zionist victories: Mustafa Abbasi's "The End of Arab Tiberias" and a reissue of Walid Khalidi's landmark 1959 article, "The Fall of Haifa," with a new introduction and footnotes by the author. The two articles have different approaches, with Abbasi focusing especially on the background to the tragedy, tracing the deterioration of relations between Tiberias's Jewish and Palestinian communities, and Khalidi concentrating more on the immediate military and diplomatic background of the attack on Haifa and the progress of the battle itself. Both articles, however, highlight the extraordinary collusion between the Haganah and Britain, which in each case virtually turned the cities over to the Zionists. Sixty years after the Nakba, the political and physical fragmentation of what is left of Arab Palestine continues apace. The Palestinian national movement, meanwhile, is in tatters. The West Bank under the Palestinian Authority and Gaza under Hamas are totally cut off from one another. Gaza is under a draconian siege, facing a humanitarian disaster. With the PA leadership increasingly discredited by its cooperation with Israel, and internal Hamas leaders weakened by popular disapproval of their Gaza takeover, the need for reconciliation between the two has become urgent. Against this background, Hamas politbureau chief Khalid Mishal looms larger on the international stage. Mishal's extended interview with JPS, part I of which appears in the current issue, is thus particularly timely. While most interviews with the Hamas leader focus on the current situation, JPS has taken a longer view, foregrounding in particular his political formation, the influences that shaped him, and the founding of Hamas. The issue also contains the second installment of JPS's new Congressional Monitor, cataloguing all the initiatives pertaining to Israel and Palestine in the first session of the 110th U.S. Congress (January 2007 to January 2008). Once again, the cumulative impact of the initiatives is sobering, with little expected to change in the future. Finally, for the record, a special document file contains the main documents associated with the Annapolis

Conference of November 2007. —Rashid I. Khalidi

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