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ENCYCLOPEDIA OF

THE
PALESTINIANS

REVISED EDITION

Philip Mattar



ENCYCLOPEDIA OF THE PALESTINIANS

Revised Edition

Edited by Philip Mattar



Facts On File, Inc.

Encyclopedia of the Palestinians, Revised Edition

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PREFACE

Much has happened since the first edition of this encyclopedia was published in 2000. The Israeli-Palestinian negotiations at Camp David in July 2000 broke down and were followed by the outbreak of the al-Aqsa Intifada in September 2000. Months later, Israeli prime minister Ehud Barak was replaced by Ariel Sharon, who adopted a hard-line policy toward the Palestinians. Palestinian attacks, which included suicide bombings, were directed at Israelis in the West Bank and Gaza Strip and inside Israel, killing more than 1,000 people, mostly civilians, by early 2005. Israel responded by reoccupying parts of the West Bank and Gaza and killing more than 3,300 Palestinians, the majority of whom were civilians. Sharon isolated Palestinian leader Yasir Arafat in his compound in Ramallah; the Israel Defense Forces assassinated Hamas leaders, most notably al-Shaykh Ahmad Yasin; and Israeli crews and bulldozers began constructing a separation barrier between Israeli and Palestinian populations. In a move toward the democratization of the Palestinian Authority (PA), the office of prime minister was established in May 2003 and filled first by Mahmud Abbas, who was succeeded by Ahmad Qurai. After the death of Arafat in November 2004, Abbas was appointed chair of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) and elected president of the PA in January 2005.

In the United States, George W. Bush replaced Bill Clinton as president in 2001, and though the new administration undertook several peace initiatives, such as the “Roadmap”—which included support for the establishment of a Palestinian state—the administration did not pursue them consistently or evenhandedly. The United States became less engaged in the Israeli-Palestinian

conflict. This was due in part to the United States’s preoccupation, in the aftermath of the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks, with its “war on terror” and its war in Afghanistan and Iraq. The violence and the absence of viable peace initiatives coming from their leaders spurred some prominent Israelis and Palestinians to undertake nonofficial peace initiatives, such as the Geneva Accord of late 2003.

By early 2005, a new sense of optimism was created by several developments. Israel’s plan for unilateral withdrawal from Gaza by summer 2005 was considered by some as establishing a precedent and a momentum for further withdrawal, despite Sharon’s stated aim to consolidate Israel’s hold over large parts of the West Bank. A new Bush administration, elected in November 2004, promised to pursue Palestinian democracy and statehood. And the election of Abbas provided an opportunity for the resumption of negotiations between the Israelis and the Palestinians.

This revised edition includes new entries about these recent developments and personalities, as well as updates to many of the existing articles. It also includes dozens of photographs of important leaders and events, and fifty key documents. With an increase in violence between Palestinians and Israelis, there has been a corresponding increase by both sides to use the media, research centers, journals, and even scholars to advance their respective causes. On both sides, the resulting versions of history and current affairs tend to be closer to their respective “official” accounts than they are to historical and current reality. This volume aims to serve as a corrective to the resulting proliferation of misinformation and distortion.

PREFACE

The overall aim of this encyclopedia is to respond to the need for a comprehensive one-volume compendium of knowledge about modern Palestinian history and society that is at once wide in scope, intermediate in size, authoritative, and readable. The encyclopedia covers three broad periods in modern times: the late Ottoman era, from the brief Egyptian occupation (1831–40) until the British conquest of Palestine; British rule, from 1917 until 1948; and the years since the 1948 war. The third period, because of the dispersion of Palestinians after 1948, can be subdivided into several periods and topics, such as the Palestinian citizens of Israel since 1948, the West Bank and Gaza Strip (1948–67, 1967–present), diaspora communities since 1948, the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) since 1964, and the peace process since 1991. While this work includes all three major periods, it is weighted in favor of the twentieth century, when the major events that shaped Palestinian history and society occurred and about which we know much more than the nineteenth.

There was no easy way to select some 400 entries and to assign lengths to each from a few words to thousands of words. I drew up a list of entries based on numerous general and specialized books and sent it to eight scholars for comments. Their suggested additions and deletions—and, in the case of biographies, the overlaps in their selections—helped finalize the overall list. Ultimately, the selection process was subjective, especially the biographies, which constitute a third of the entries. I chose individuals who I felt exerted a significant impact on Palestinian society and politics for a period of time and about whom readers would expect to find entries in a work such as this. In addition, while the selection of each entry and the assignment of length were determined by the significance of the topic and the extent of period covered, the scope of each article was also prescribed by the amount and quality of information available.

Even though more has been written about the history and politics of modern Palestine and the Palestinians than about many Middle East countries and societies, we still know relatively little about long periods of Palestinian history and other areas of knowledge, such as Palestinian archaeology and historical geography. Much of the writing has focused on the political struggle over Palestine between Arabs and Jews since 1882. The history of

Palestine is frequently subsumed under studies of the “Palestine problem,” which after 1948 became known as the Arab-Israel conflict, a branch of study that emerged in conjunction with Middle Eastern studies in the late 1940s in Britain and in the mid-1950s in the United States. In much of the literature about Palestine, there was little about the Palestinian people itself during a period of rapid developments.

It was not until the early 1970s that Palestinian studies emerged as a separate field. Two major reasons account for the increased interest in Palestinian affairs. First, the Palestinian national movement, which was active during British rule but dormant after 1948, reemerged in the form of the Palestine Liberation Organization in 1964, at a time of heightened tension over the Arab-Israeli conflict and increased involvement of the United States and the Soviet Union in the Middle East. Second, the opening of material in major archives—such as the Public Record Office (PRO) near London, the Israel State Archives (ISA) and the Central Zionist Archives (CZA) in Jerusalem, and the National Archives (NA) in Washington, D.C.—enabled a new and better trained generation of scholars to consult a massive amount of historical documents.

Nevertheless, scholarship on the Palestinians is still limited in scope and quality. Indeed, much of it focuses only on the political and diplomatic history, which is in turn limited to seven out of seventeen decades of Palestine in the modern period. There are very few works on the period prior to the 1830s, despite the availability of the Ottoman archives in Istanbul, Turkey, which cover Palestine from 1516 to 1917, and the abundance of court records and memoirs. Only two periods—British rule from 1917 to 1948 and post 1964—are developed well enough to constitute a critical mass. And, like the history of the Arab-Israeli conflict from which it grew, the history of the Palestinians lacks the quality not only of older fields of history but also of more recent ones, such as East Asian history. There is no college or university department specializing exclusively in Palestinian studies. There is no Palestinian national archive or library, no viable oral history program, no bibliography, no quality dictionary, and no adequate general textbook—based on original sources, especially Arabic—or a textbook on any other relevant discipline.

This state of underdevelopment is partly due to the nascent stage of a field that requires time to grow in breadth and depth and to the circumstances of Palestinian exile and dispersion. Yet neither of these fully explains why so much has been written that is limited in scope and quality.

A major reason for the narrow focus and lower standards is the fusion of ideology and scholarship. Like the history of the Arab-Israeli conflict, Palestinian historiography is one of the most polarized and politicized of any historical craft. The field is dominated by partisans—Israelis, Palestinians, and their respective supporters (many of whom are amateurs lacking professional skills)—who have used scholarship and journalism to galvanize their people, to gain world support, and as a weapon against one another in their struggle over Palestine.

Many Israeli and Zionist scholars, who dominate the field and have contributed to much of the distortion, are seemingly qualified to write about the Palestinians; that is, many have acquired the basic academic knowledge of Palestinian history, politics, society, religion, and Arabic language. The problem, however, is not lack of data about the Palestinians but the partisan interpretations driven by ideology and policy objectives. As Uri Savir, an Israeli negotiator of the Oslo accords, wrote in his book, *The Process*: “We [Israelis] had all sinned . . . in our pretensions to being great experts on the Arabs, and the Palestinians in particular. The more time I spent with our [Palestinian negotiating] partners, the more I discovered that we may have known a lot about them but we understood very little.”

I suggest that this lack of understanding stems from an inability or unwillingness to empathize (not sympathize) with the same Palestinian people Israeli and Zionist scholars are studying, even though empathy is indispensable if they are to bridge the cultural, religious, and political divide that separates the two peoples. Consequently, academics are locked out, unable to fully understand and explain.

Israeli domination of the field of Palestinian studies is partly due to the small numbers of Palestinian scholars. Whereas the Jewish people benefited from access to European education beginning in the eighteenth-century Enlightenment, encouraged the study of their own history, and came to Palestine equipped with scholarly standards and

methodology, the Palestinians were an educationally underdeveloped people until the Mandate period (1922–48). Even by the end of the Mandate, there were relatively few Palestinian college graduates and few professional scholars. They lacked a scholarly tradition based on archival research and critical inquiry, not to mention a capacity for self-criticism.

After 1948, education became a prized asset, yet most talented Palestinians gravitated to careers outside of academia. In Israel, even though Palestinian education was underfunded and few Palestinians found jobs, the superior Israeli education produced a number of capable Palestinian historians, political scientists, sociologists, economists, anthropologists, and legal scholars. In the West Bank and Gaza Strip, Palestinian universities were poorly funded for almost two decades of Jordanian and Egyptian rule, respectively, and remain so under Israeli occupation, which began in 1967. In fact, the Israeli military occupation—accompanied by university closures, censorship, confiscation, and massive arrests—and the Palestinian national reaction to it, consumed and disrupted academic life. In addition, Palestinian scholars lacked a support system, especially the research funding that is essential for intellectual pursuits and productivity, a situation that has unfortunately continued to exist under the rule of the Palestinian Authority.

Despite a more conducive environment in the diaspora, most of its Palestinian scholars have not been much more productive, either in their writings or in institution building. Indeed, some of the better-known Palestinian scholars in the Arab world and the West have written little, and most have not written a book on Palestine and the Palestinians that can be considered a major work. I suggest that they may have been diverted by two factors. First, they had to make a living, and the field of Palestinian studies was too narrow to sustain them. Second, many of them volunteered in the 1970s and 1980s to serve the Palestinian national movement as activists, championing the Palestinian cause. In the 1990s, some of the best and brightest were commandeered for the peace process, as negotiators or advisers.

A few were productive despite other preoccupations, and a handful even benefited by their involvement in the national struggle and the peace process because it enriched their writing and

PREFACE

work. This is true for Rashid Khalidi, who wrote about Palestinian identity, Yezid Sayigh, who wrote about the Palestinian national movement since 1948, and Camille Mansour, who wrote about Israel and the United States and established Bir Zeit University's legal center. It is also true of Walid Khalidi, who wrote and edited a number of major studies on Palestine and the Palestinians. Yet for most, every hour they spent on making a living, on political activity, or on the peace process was an hour lost to scholarship. Since the pool of professional scholars was already small (a few dozen by world standards), the output of capable scholars was limited.

Furthermore, both Israeli and Palestinian scholars are so overwhelmed by emotional and ideological considerations, be it antipathy or sympathy, that they are unable to write objectively. Their research and analysis are motivated, whether consciously or not, by a political stake in the outcome rather than a rigorous intellectual curiosity and honesty. And they write with full moral and financial backing of their institutions and communities for a receptive audience that does not seem to require higher standards or that has a narrow idea of what it wants to hear from its scholars.

The consequence has been the development of a separate Zionist-Israeli narrative and a Palestinian narrative, each closer to a partisan position than to the historical record. There is hardly an issue or event in the history of Palestinians that these narratives, often dressed in academic garb, have not distorted or mythologized. Most often this is done by focusing on the part of the story that supports their case and ignoring the part that does not, by selecting the sources and tailoring facts to fit their thesis, by reading into history more or less than the data warrant, and above all, by subtly condemning or exonerating.

Yet, these works are useful as much for their footnotes, which may lead the researcher to primary sources, as for their content, however imbalanced. Indeed, many partisan works are indispensable, especially those about areas that are understudied or those written by authors who lived in the period about which they are writing.

In the 1970s, a few Western, Israeli, and Palestinian scholars, relying on archival and other primary sources, armed with the scholarly tools of research and analysis and with knowledge of the

original languages, and dedicated to scholarly standards and integrity, began producing some fine works. Although these scholars were relatively few and have not written enough about most periods and fields, their pioneering studies filled in some of the gaps in the scholarship on the Palestinians and set new standards for future generations to follow.

It is from this group of scholars that I selected most of the contributing authors of this encyclopedia, such as Laurie Brand, Neil Caplan, Michael Fischbach, Deborah Gerner, Amal Jamal, Rashid Khalidi, Ann Lesch, Muhammad Muslih, Don Peretz, Julie Peteet, Sara Roy, Salim Tamari, Mark Tessler, and others. This group also includes a few scholars—such as Benny Morris, Avi Shlaim, and Ian Lustick—who have produced revisionist, often called “new,” history that has challenged a few, mainly Zionist and Israeli but also Palestinian and Arab, distortions and myths.

The product of the scholars of the 1970s and 1980s is a new generation of mainly American, Palestinian, and Israeli scholars, who have, in the 1990s and early 2000s, begun to fill in the wide gaps in fields such as anthropology, sociology, archaeology, historical geography, gender, conflict resolution, and many more.

The authors of entries in this encyclopedia are diverse, differing not only in their interpretations but even in their data. Benny Morris and Nur Masalha, for example, agree that an expulsion took place in 1948 but not about why and how many were expelled. Throughout the encyclopedia, there are, therefore, inconsistencies regarding basic data, especially numbers of population, refugees, and casualties. I have tried neither to reconcile inconsistencies nor to settle differences between my colleagues. The variety of voices and interpretations is not only reflective of the scholarship in the field but also enriches it and stimulates further research and writing. The contributions in this volume will not fill in all the gaps or challenge every distortion (it will take decades of scholarship to remedy these flaws). However, the fact that they represent some of the finest scholarship in the past three decades ensures that this revised and updated encyclopedia is the most reliable, balanced, and scholarly reference work on modern Palestinian history and society.

—Philip Mattar