THIS ISSUE: PALESTINE

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With its own professional staff of Middle East experts, the LMEI is further strengthened by its academic membership – the largest concentration of Middle East expertise in any institution in Europe. The LMEI also has access to the SOAS Library, which houses over 150,000 volumes dealing with all aspects of the Middle East. LMEI’s Advisory Council is the driving force behind the Institute’s fundraising programme, for which it takes primary responsibility. It seeks support for the LMEI generally and for specific components of its programme of activities.

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The aim of the LMEI, through education and research, is to promote knowledge of all aspects of the Middle East including its complexities, problems, achievements and assets, both among the general public and with those who have a special interest in the region. In this task it builds on two essential assets. First, it is based in London, a city which has unrivalled contemporary and historical connections and communications with the Middle East including political, social, cultural, commercial and educational aspects. Secondly, the LMEI is at SOAS, the only tertiary educational institution in the world whose explicit purpose is to provide education and scholarship on the whole Middle East from prehistory until today.

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Dear Reader

**Najm Jarrah, MEL Editorial Board**

This issue of the magazine marks the launch of LMEI’s new Centre for Palestine Studies (CPS). The Centre was inaugurated on March 1 as an institutional home for the broad range of work on Palestine and the Palestinians that has long been done at SOAS, and brings together scholars from a variety of academic disciplines.

Most of the articles published here have been contributed by members of the CPS, addressing topics related to their areas of expertise, including Politics, International Relations, History, Development Studies, Economics, Media and Film Studies, Anthropology and Art.

The establishment of the CPS has been widely welcomed. Some of the reasons why are touched on by Haim Bresheeth in his historical reflections opposite. Speakers at the inaugural event also noted the importance of Palestine Studies to understanding the contemporary Middle East, given the Palestine question’s complexity and impact on countries throughout the region.

It has become something of a fad over the past year – in political and media if not academic circles – to talk down the relevance of Palestine and the conflict with Israel to the politics and societies of the Middle East. Pundits assert that the Arab uprisings show that these issues no longer matter to the Arab peoples, and if they ever did it was because dictators and demagogues invoked them.

Clearly, this assertion has more to do with wishful thinking than realities on the ground. The wish that the Palestinians and their cause would simply go away is hardly new. Disengagement from the politics of the region has long been seen as key to compelling the Palestinians to accept their ordained fate.

Yet even when not in the headlines, Palestine continues to impose itself on the issues that are – the ongoing crisis in Syria, for example, or the West’s showdown with Iran. And it is by no means immune to the dynamics of change in the Arab world. These have only just begun to make their effect felt on the Palestinians’ politics, and to open up new possibilities and choices to them as a people – whether currently categorised as West Bank or Gaza Strip residents, Jerusalem ID-holders, citizens of Israel, refugees in the neighbouring states, or members of the Arab and worldwide diaspora.

Information about the Centre for Palestine Studies can be obtained at http://www.soas.ac.uk/lmei-cps/ or by contacting LMEI on Tel: 20 7898 4330 or E-mail: lmei@soas.ac.uk
The History of SOAS, as we know, is quite fascinating. The School of Oriental Studies was set up in 1916,* before the decline and fall of the British Empire, and interestingly, just when British designs on the future of Palestine were finally materialising into a practical plan. The word ‘Oriental’ still carried the baggage of orientalism, a concept for which we are indebted to the most famous of Palestinian scholars, the late Edward Said. While many ‘Oriental Studies’ were motivated by scholarly curiosity, some were indeed studies of ways and means of maintaining British control over the most vast and powerful empire the world had known. The students would be colonial administrators of the ‘Orient’, that somewhat abstract term denoting almost anything east of Gibraltar. That ‘Orient’ was, of course, the flip-side of the ‘Occident’, the ‘other’ to the British ‘self’, the contour of not just Britishness, but of European identity, and the occidental set of ‘grand narratives’.

1916 was also the year that saw Zionist aims adopted by the British political leadership – especially by Lloyd George, Churchill and Balfour, the main figures directing the empire’s political plans. Just two years earlier, in mid-1914, the British War Office successfully tricked the Ottoman Empire into agreeing to an archeological survey of southern Palestine, a supposedly scholarly examination of the Naqab and parts of Eastern Sinai. Actually, the survey – conducted by an unknown archaeologist, later famous as Lawrence of Arabia, and his partner C L Wooley – was a cover. Hiding behind the learned society of the Palestine Exploration Fund, the War Office’s real task was to accurately map the Naqab so as to enable its conquest during the widely-expected war which began later that year. Six army surveyors, pretending to partake in the archaeological survey, prepared the amazingly detailed map that was used in General Allenby’s campaign. The British army in Egypt had to cross Palestine to reach the rest of the Arab world, and took Gaza a week after the Balfour Declaration was released.

Thus Palestine, as so often before, became a gateway for another imperial project. In 1917, with the military conquest in-mid swing, the empire concluded its political plans by publishing the Balfour Declaration – one of the shortest political documents ever, and one of the most explosive. The empire declared its commitment to

Haim Bresheeth reflects on the opening of the new Centre for Palestine Studies

Palestine Studies at SOAS: not a moment too soon

Housed amid the rich tapestry of area studies at SOAS, the new Centre injects a new element into the academic and political scene
establishing ‘a national home for the Jews’ in Palestine, with only a passing reference to the country’s inhabitants, who were not credited with an identity, but referred to merely as ‘non-Jewish inhabitants’.

Some years later, with the Mandate in preparation, Churchill displayed the same level of objectivity when speaking of plans for Palestine: ‘We think it is good for the world, good for the Jews, and good for the British Empire. And it is also good for the Arabs dwelling in Palestine, not really belonging there. They shall share in the benefits and progress of Zionism.’ Revealingly, the three entities for which Churchill claimed the Mandate was good -- the ‘world’, Jews and the British Empire -- excluded the indigenous population. They were added as an afterthought, not as citizens or inhabitants, but as ‘Arabs dwelling in Palestine’, not really belonging there.

The ‘Arabs dwelling in Palestine’ were mere ciphers to the colonial politician: numbers to be moved or decimated, to make way for the colonisers that was to support British interests in the Middle East.

The Balfour Declaration was a bizarre document by any standard. Britain was gifting a territory it did not own or control, to a people which wasn’t there, disregarding the rightful owners. While the declaration is meaningless as a legal document, it has, of course, proven most useful as a political tool for Zionism. That such a colonial scheme emerged in the second decade of the 20th century is quite unbelievable – what would have been ‘normal’ in the 17th or 18th centuries, was no longer so in 1917. We all know what it led to.

Was the Balfour Declaration studied at the young School of Oriental Studies at 2, Finsbury Circus? We have no records, but no doubt the topic came up in the classrooms at some point. How was it presented and understood? Probably very differently than it would be today.

Since its early days as a school for colonial administrators, SOAS has developed into one of the world’s leading universities of area studies, part of a postcolonial understanding and critical analysis of recent history. As we know, a topic can be presented and analysed from a variety of perspectives, and in many cases the viewpoint tends to underwrite the conclusions. Israel and its supporters have built a large and influential system of Jewish and Israel Studies all over the Anglophone world. An enormous amount of funding supports this network of academic centres. Journals, anthologies and monographs continue to further the Zionist perspective and ensure its dissemination, making it the default version of academic analysis.

Palestine, like the rest of the Arab world, stayed invisible, as invisible as its indigenous people were to Balfour and Churchill. This meant that the Palestinian narrative of the colonised, occupied, brutalised and oppressed stayed submerged, marginalised and denied. Like the disappearance of the refugees, and the way the land was increasingly snatched from the Palestinians, the academic narrative was denied to the colonised.

How can this continuous effort of denial, erasure and displacement ever be reversed? Can there be any hope for a just resolution of the Palestine atrocity without first addressing the denial of the Palestinian narrative?

For SOAS to open a centre of Palestine Studies in 2012 is almost a century too late. But we should welcome it as a most necessary development. Housed amid the rich tapestry of area studies supported by the university, it injects a new academic and discursive element into the academic and political scene – recognising the need to address a long century of denial, redressing imbalances of empire and colonialism, allowing a voice to those who have been silenced for too long.

If Jewish Studies are partly justified by long centuries of anti-Semitism in Europe, periods when Jews had no social voice, then the introduction of the discipline of Palestine Studies addresses a similar imbalance, a more recent one, imposed and supported by the machinery of British colonial and imperial control. While the Arab world is rising against Western-installed dictators and non-democratic regimes, with thousands dying for long-denied rights, we should also remember that the non-violent popular direct action which provided inspiration for the Arab Spring was introduced by the Palestinians, during the first intifada.

The new centre will add an independent, democratising and analytical voice to the discourse on Palestine, the Middle East, and the troubled relationship between the West and the Arab and Muslim East. It may contribute to changing the dominant, hegemonic narrative on Palestine and Zionism. It could not have a better home.

Haim Bresheeth is a filmmaker, photographer and a film studies scholar at the University of East London

* It became known as SOAS in 1938, when Africa was added to the school’s name and remit

The new Centre recognises the need to address a long century of denial, redressing imbalances of empire and colonialism
Consequences of decline

The Arab upheaval came at the worst moment for the United States – at a time when its influence in the Middle East was in sharp decline. The primary reason for this was, of course, the Iraqi defeat, presaged by the likes of Henry Kissinger and Zbigniew Brzezinski as a ‘catastrophe’ worse than Vietnam. The oil-related strategic importance of the Gulf is indeed far greater than whatever was at stake in Indochina.

Despite the Obama administration’s effort to cast the withdrawal from Iraq as a ‘mission accomplished’, it escaped nobody’s notice that the US was unable to retain a single military base in that country. It is quite obvious that Tehran’s clout in Iraq is much greater today than Washington’s. Thus a massive and very costly war effort – costly for the US in both human and budgetary terms, not to mention the immense human and material cost incurred by the Iraqis – ended up severely weakening US hegemony and ‘credibility’, which only emboldened Tehran in its defiance of Washington.

The Arab upheaval led at its early stage to the fall of Washington’s best Arab friend, Egypt’s former autocrat Hosni Mubarak. Even though the Egyptian military – the world’s second biggest recipient of US military aid after Israel – stepped in to try to limit the damage, it quickly became clear that its control over the country was shaky at best. The main force to benefit from the upheaval so far – at the level of the entire region – has been the Muslim Brotherhood, whose most important constituent is its original, Egyptian, branch.

Faced with adversity, Washington decided to reorient its regional policy and revive its once friendly ties with the Brotherhood. The two sides collaborated closely in the 1950s and 1960s against Nasserism, left-wing nationalism, and Soviet influence. Their divorce came in the early 1990s when Washington deployed its troops on Arab soil to attack Saddam Hussein’s Iraq after its invasion of Kuwait.

In tandem with the renewal of its ties with Washington, the Muslim Brotherhood collaborated with Egypt’s military. Though marred by occasional tensions, this collaboration has been the main feature of the situation in Egypt since the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces took over from Mubarak.

A direct consequence of this turn of events was to put the Palestinian Authority (PA) in Ramallah and the Palestinian government in Gaza on the reconciliation track. Progress was achieved in this regard, starting with the Cairo agreement last April, and culminating in the Qatar-sponsored Doha agreement in February. Egypt’s influence on Fatah and Qatar’s influence on the Muslim Brotherhood as a whole, including its Palestinian branch Hamas, played a decisive role.

The decline in Washington’s regional influence had two other closely connected consequences. On the one hand, Benjamin Netanyahu’s Israeli government felt it had an even freer hand than before in dealing with the Palestinians. On the other, the PA understood that under such circumstances there was nothing to be gained from continuing to defer to Washington’s wishes, as it was clearly and increasingly unable to obtain any Israeli concessions. This explains the PA’s unusual boldness in pressing ahead with its quest for state recognition at the United Nations despite Washington’s irritation with that move, and returning to the Palestinian reconciliation track to Washington’s dismay – as the US still regards Hamas as a ‘terrorist’ group.

Given the fact that Hamas is now backed by an increasing number of Arab governments dominated by fellow branches of the Muslim Brotherhood, Washington’s Palestinian predicament will only grow – adding to the overall image of decline it is projecting regionally and internationally.

Gilbert Achcar on US Middle East policy and Palestine today

Gilbert Achcar is Professor of Development Studies and International Relations, Chair of the Centre for Palestine Studies and author of many books including The Arabs and the Holocaust: The Arab-Israeli War of Narratives (2010)
The devastating impact of Israel’s military occupation on social and economic life in the West Bank and Gaza Strip has been thoroughly documented. Israel’s restrictions on the use of water and other natural resources, uprooting of trees and destruction of property, impediments to movement of goods and people, and ongoing expropriation of land, have wrought an immense cost to Palestinian society. In 2010 alone, according to a report from the Palestinian Ministry of National Economy and the Applied Research Institute in Jerusalem, the Palestinian economy lost an estimated US$6.9 billion (equivalent to around 85 per cent of Palestinian GDP) as a result of such measures. Most of these losses stem from the removal of natural resources such as water, stone, minerals, and salts by Israeli companies operating in the West Bank. As a consequence of these familiar patterns of colonial rule, Palestinian development has been perpetually stymied under the exigencies of Israel’s occupation.

Much less attention has been devoted by journalists, activists, and scholars to analysing the economic strategy advocated by the Palestinian Authority (PA) itself. This is summarised in a 2007 document known as the Palestinian Reform and Development Program (PRDP), which drew heavily on detailed proposals written by the World Bank and other international financial institutions. External donor funding to the PA has been made contingent on implementation of the PRDP, and control over this aid is maintained by channelling it through a Trust Fund headquartered in Washington DC and managed by the World Bank. As a consequence, the PRDP has become the guiding framework for Palestinian economic policy since 2007, particularly in the West Bank.

The PRDP committed the PA to a series of fiscal reforms aimed at achieving a ‘diversified and thriving free market economy led by a pioneering private sector that is in harmony with the Arab world, [and] is open to regional and global markets.’ The reform component includes adoption of the PRDP, it has come under increasing scrutiny and criticism from those living in PA-controlled areas. Critics contend that it is too reliant on the types of neoliberal policies – based upon private-sector growth, reduced public sector spending, liberalisation of trade, and market de-regulation – that have proven disastrous in other areas of the world. Moreover, some have argued that as well as increasing poverty levels and the polarisation of wealth within Palestinian society, this model of development reinforces the structures of military occupation.

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Adam Hanieh takes a critical look at the Palestinian Authority’s economic development strategy
A sharp reduction in the size of the public sector (the PA committed itself to a 21 per cent reduction in jobs by 2010), a promise not to increase public sector salaries (which in effect means a sharp decrease in real wages due to high inflation), and an end to subsidisation of electricity and water bills (by requiring citizens to present a ‘certificate of payment’ in order to receive any municipal or government services). This latter measure has a dramatic impact on the poor, as continued access to electricity and water despite the non-payment of bills was a central means of survival for thousands of families.

For its development component, the PRDP envisages utilising low-wage Palestinian labour in industrial zones and parks, located at the edges of the patchwork of Palestinian territories in the West Bank. These zones would bring together Israeli, Palestinian and regional investors in sectors such as traditional low value-added goods (eg textiles and garments) as well as high-tech sectors that could complement the Israeli economy. Local non-government organisations and activists have criticised this development model for ‘normalising’ and legitimising the Israeli occupation. Land for the Jenin Industrial Estate, for example, has twice been confiscated from Palestinian farmers: in 1998 when the PA first mooted the idea for the industrial zone, and again in 2003, when the Israeli military confiscated part of the land for construction of the separation wall’s ‘buffer-zone’. The confiscation of land – a key element of Israel’s colonisation strategy in the West Bank – has thus been integrated into the ‘development’ component of the PRDP. The likely outcome of this model – particularly in the context of an extreme dependence upon foreign aid – has been described by Palestinian economists Raja Khalidi and Sobhi Samour as one that serves to ‘perpetuate Palestinian dependence on Israel and allow personal prosperity for some but communal impoverishment for all.’

In this environment, many Palestinians are turning to debt to survive. According to the Palestinian Monetary Authority, the amount of bank credit almost doubled from 2008 to May 2010 (from US$1.72 billion to US$3.37 billion). Much of this involves consumer-based spending on residential real estate, automobile purchases or consumption such as credit cards – the amount of credit extended for these three sectors increased by a remarkable 245 per cent from 2008 to 2011 (reaching US$466 million in the first quarter, 2011). The expansion of the financial markets underscores the fact that much of the development that appears to be taking place across the West Bank (most notably in the city of Ramallah) is debt-fuelled. It is reflected in the striking spatial transformation of the Ramallah landscape over the past few years, and the proliferation of billboards promoting banks and the ability to purchase items such as houses, cars and other merchandise through taking on debt. The growth in debt also needs to be placed alongside the widespread poverty in the West Bank and Gaza Strip – unemployment in 2010 was close to one-quarter of the workforce (23.7 per cent) and per capita GDP was only US$1,847.

Many Palestinians are concerned that one outcome of these processes is a growing inequality within Palestinian society itself, which weakens the capacity to resist occupation and colonisation. Palestinian development expert Jamil Hilal recently emphasised precisely this point, noting that: ‘the empowering of Palestinians in the WBGS to organise themselves to defy and challenge the colonizing apartheid state, requires being guided by the principles of equality and social justice in fashioning their society, and not leaving it to the whims of the colonial power, the donors, or the market.’ He went on to propose measures such as ‘legislation to establish a decent minimum wage, to provide formal protection to the unemployed, and to re-activate the social insurance law... with special attention to those with special needs. A strategy of widening the free provision of health care and education to cover all citizens would be an empowering strategy. Such a strategy should be based on an appreciation of women’s role in the provision of care and right to participate in the paid labour force.’

These demands echo the same sorts of concerns that innervated the mass struggles across the Middle East and North Africa in 2011. Addressing these fundamental issues requires an effective struggle that can both tackle the structures of military occupation and chart a development strategy premised upon meeting popular needs. The outcome of these debates will be an important element in shaping the future course of Palestinian society.

Adam Hanieh is a lecturer in the Development Studies Department, SOAS, a member of the Centre for Palestine Studies, SOAS and author of Capitalism and Class in the Gulf Arab States (2011)
On January 5, 2012, the government of the United States released the US Defense Strategic Guidance, which re-oriented US defense policy for the decades to come. The document reiterated the US’ commitment to its strategic partners – the oil sheikhdoms – in the Gulf, and began to re-direct its conventional forces eastward, towards an increasingly assertive China. But also significantly, the document claimed that ‘large-scale, prolonged stability operations’ were to be replaced with ‘counterterrorism’ which was to be ‘characterized by a mix of direct action and security force assistance.’ If one is to employ the brilliant and still-relevant terminology coined by the late Eqbal Ahmad, this moment marks a US military shift from a ‘liberal-reformist’ style of pacification to a ‘punitive-militarist’ one. Both are violent, but the latter has shed all the niceties of reform and developmentalism which adorn the structures of violence in the former.

For a student of Israel/Palestine, this less ‘developmental’ and more kinetic (ie using higher fire-power) form of pacification is already very familiar. The Israeli military has long used a combination of intelligence-gathering missions (sometimes by special operations soldiers dressed in Arab gear), punitive excursions, and campaigns of assassination as its primary modus operandi. Perhaps what is most noteworthy are the slight gradations in operative force used in these different locales.

In occupied East Jerusalem, which was illegally annexed in 1967, Palestinian residents have a between-and-betwixt status. Here, overt military activity is limited, and the primary means of pacification depend on legalism and proceduralism. While Palestinian residences are continually expropriated, the basis of expropriation is always some appeal to ‘law’ – whatever body of law may be convenient. The legalism includes Israeli settler or state claims of ownership based on spurious documentation, ‘absentee laws’, or appeal to regulatory building codes – which inevitably militate against Palestinian interests – which lead to expulsion of Palestinian residents from their homes, and destruction of their buildings. Jerusalem residency cards are another effective disciplinary means. For Palestinians to be able to come and go to their homes, they require these residency cards, which can often be revoked on the basis of the most arcane set of procedures or regulations.

On the other end of the spectrum from East Jerusalem is the Gaza Strip, which has more or less become an enclosed enclave, where – until the sporadic openings of the Rafah gate to Egypt after the fall of Hosni Mubarak – entry and exit has been fully monitored by the Israeli military. Control of the flow of goods, including especially foodstuffs, is another crucial mechanism of pacification. As the Israeli activists of Gisha have shown, the Israeli state has maintained secret lists of allowed foodstuffs and horrific calculations of the precise caloric needs of Gaza residents according to age and gender, which are then used to modulate how much food can be allowed into the Strip.

The Israeli military has long used a combination of intelligence-gathering missions, punitive excursions, and campaigns of assassination as its primary modus operandi.
The state of Israel is profoundly sensitive to charges of illegality and withers at any criticism that its violent assaults on civilian targets may be intentional.
The work of the British Consulate-General in Jerusalem is unusual. It has consular responsibility for British people in Jerusalem, the West Bank and Gaza, and political responsibility for UK relations with the Palestine Liberation Organisation and the Palestinian Authority (PA). Our job is also to strengthen ties with the Palestinians in East Jerusalem, the West Bank and Gaza – which form the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPTs). We share this work locally with our colleagues from the Department for International Development and the British Council.

What do we do, why, and why does it matter?

We analyse and report on Palestinian policies, domestic and international – the fundamental issue being the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the Occupation, on which our colleagues in HM Embassy in Tel Aviv bring to bear their analysis of Israel’s intentions and policies. We pool our analysis, aiming to give colleagues in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office in London our considered view.

We relay the British Government’s views to President Mahmoud Abbas, his advisers, and to PA Prime Minister Salam Fayyad. In January 2012 President Abbas visited London, meeting Prime Minister David Cameron, Deputy Prime Minister Nick Clegg and Foreign Secretary William Hague; a chance to refresh the bilateral relationship, and discuss prospects for resolving the Middle East conflict. They agreed that bilateral ties are in good shape. On the conflict, UK ministers underlined our full commitment to a just and lasting resolution, ending the Occupation through direct negotiations, entailing an agreement on the borders of the two states, based on 1967 lines with equivalent, agreed land swaps; security arrangements which respect Palestinian sovereignty, while protecting the security of Israel; a just, fair and agreed solution to the refugee question, and a negotiated resolution of the status of Jerusalem as the future capital of both states.

Mr Clegg also reiterated our views on Israeli settlements in the OPTs, including East Jerusalem: they are illegal under international law, an obstacle to peace, and a threat to the two-state solution. All settlement activity should cease.

Israel settlements are illegal under international law, an obstacle to peace, and a threat to the two-state solution.
immediately. We continue to encourage both sides to return now to the negotiating table. We believe that Israeli security and the realisation of the Palestinians’ right to statehood are inseparable objectives. There is urgency: systematic settlement expansion risks making the two-state solution impossible.

After President Abbas’ visit, Mr Cameron said: ‘In the end, the only way you can resolve the final-status issues – whether about Jerusalem, the right to return, or swaps – is by the Palestinians and the Israelis sitting down and talking to each other. All the rest of us can do is try to help bring that about. That is the commitment from Britain: a good friend of Israel, a good friend of the Palestinian people, and a supporter of the two-state solution. But we want you (Israel and the Palestinians) to talk this year, because every year that goes by is a year in which we miss the chance of a solution that would drain so much poison from our world and give the Palestinian people the homeland they deserve’.

The Consulate-General covers Gaza, so my team and I go there. (FCO travel advice is against travel to Gaza, and bears very careful study by anyone contemplating travel.) We have no contact with the de facto power in the Gaza Strip (Hamas). We are deeply concerned by the recent escalation of violence in Gaza and southern Israel, and condemn attacks targeting civilians. We seek an end to all violence there.

The Secretary of State for International Development, Andrew Mitchell, visited Gaza in December, following FCO Minister Alistair Burt in June. We support the reunification under President Abbas of Gaza and the West Bank. We support free and fair elections across the OPTs in 2012, leading to reunification. And we seek an end to the Israeli closure of Gaza – it is against the interests of both Israelis and Palestinians.

The Department for International Development (DFID) is very active in the OPTs, in support of our aims to help resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. DFID works to help build Palestinian institutions and promote economic growth, so that a future Palestinian state will be stable, prosperous, well-run and an effective partner for peace with Israel. DFID support to the OPTs is focussed on three areas: helping the PA to deliver essential services; promoting private sector growth to stimulate the Palestinian economy, and providing humanitarian assistance and support to the vulnerable.

Together, we seek to uphold the rule of law, and to challenge human rights abuses wherever they occur. On average, DFID will provide £87 million annually in support of Palestinian development over the next three years. DFID funding to the OPTs will help put 35,000 children through school, immunise nearly 30,000 children against measles, and help create 8,000 jobs. Prime Minister Fayyad rightly regards DFID as an exemplary donor partner.

The British Council is the other main official UK player in the OPTs. It is the UK’s international organisation for educational and cultural relations, building engagement and trust through the exchange of knowledge and ideas between people. For 70 years now, the British Council has been working to build stronger ties and greater mutual understanding between Palestinians and people in the UK through its activities in English, arts, education and society. The Council excels at creating people – to – people links between universities, schools, cultural institutions, local community groups and business. It also excels at English language teaching and training of English teachers with the Palestinian Ministry of Education and Higher Education. The next step is face-to-face English language teaching in Ramallah and East Jerusalem this year, with a view to expanding into other cities. We are really glad that SOAS is participating in the Higher Education Scholarships Programme for Palestinians (HESPAL) administered by the British Council, enabling Palestinian postgraduates to study for a Master’s at SOAS. We hope that SOAS will send some of its Arabic language students to Nablus or Jerusalem this autumn.

Why does all this matter? Because we want to accompany the Palestinian people in their development; and respond to their expressed needs, first and foremost for an end to the 45-year Occupation – as Mr Cameron put it, help ‘give the Palestinian people the homeland they deserve’. Israel’s security must be assured. The two-state solution is the only way forward: no other solution will work. The United Kingdom will continue to seek it, urgently.

Sir Vincent Fean KCVO is HM Consul General to Jerusalem and a member of the LMEI Board of Trustees

We support free and fair elections across the OPTs in 2012, leading to reunification. And we seek an end to the closure of Gaza – it is against the interests of both Israelis and Palestinians.
My name is Jamila. I want this message to reach all. It is about the right of the original refugees. These people are paying the price for their national cause. Their houses are not healthy and nobody takes care of them, neither the state nor UNRWA... Where is the PLO and all those people who visited us? Where are the rich Palestinians who go around talking about the Palestinian cause? Where are the rich Palestinians who go around talking about the Palestinian cause? Where is the right of the poorest Palestinian people and the first generation who had the burden of carrying the Palestinian cause? They come and take pictures of us and then say ‘we’re glad we’ve seen them, now let’s leave and forget about them’. I want the message to reach the rich: What about these poor old people who... are saying ‘we want to go back’? It is they who carried the cause and your homeland’s name for you. But you do nothing. Let your power and your abilities reach those who need them.’ (Jamila, Gaza camp, Jordan, June 2011)

‘We only want to exercise rights, not to be Lebanese. But they say offering rights is tawteen. Both the Lebanese and Palestinian factions say that. The Palestinian factions’ existence depends on the difficult situation of the Palestinians. So they use this in a clever way. If you want to make the camp look nice: that’s tawteen. If you want to change the sewage system: that’s tawteen...’ (Raed, Chatila camp, Lebanon, September 2011)

‘Camps are essentially like ghettos, and ghettos are where the creativity starts. You know, the creativity comes from the minority. Being a minority is not about numbers, but about (not) having access to power...’ (Firas, community worker, Sabra camp, Lebanon, September 2011)

Refugees and displaced people have been absent from recent analyses of the Arab Springs. Not surprisingly, debates on rights, democracy, dignity and pluralism seem to suffer from a chronic methodological nationalism. This perpetuates the idea that people seek and fight for rights exclusively in their national territory, the natural and main place for self-determination. Those who are at the margins of nation-states or excluded from their own territorial nations come to be twice marginalised, and their plight made even more invisible.

In his influential work Homo Sacer (1998), political philosopher Giorgio Agamben, drawing from Hannah Arendt, argued that the figure of the refugee represents one of the most potent and dramatic embodiments of the constitutive fallacies of the modern nation-state. The refugee is excluded from rights and sovereignty and confined to a zone of indistinction, or humanitarianism.

Agamben’s analysis is pertinent to some of the less explored strands of the Palestinian refugee issue. The ‘permanent temporariness’ that characterises their lives is a powerful reminder of Agamben’s zone of indistinction. Their status is, at best, that of precarious citizens with an invisible national identity (Jordan), and, at worse, of stateless subjects because of their national identity (Lebanon).

Refugees, however – and especially Palestinian refugees by virtue of the enduring character of their displacement – have a lot to say about the lack of democratisation, the precarious nature of rights and the need for state/society reconfigurations in the region.

Over the past six decades, they have been held hostage and victim to two inflexible standpoints. On the one hand, Israel has adamantly refused to be considered accountable for the Nakba and only been willing to accommodate a symbolic Right to rights, and right to return

Refugees have to make new sense of their 63 years of dispossession and exile. This starts with rejecting the official narrative, which held that their lack of rights was a pre-condition for their return
Palestinians live under different predicaments and regimes of sovereignty in their countries of exile, and these are often crucial in shaping their political cultures.

history. In Lebanon and Jordan, they refer to how Palestinianness has decisively shaped (and has been shaped by) nation-building processes and identities. In Jordan – a country with a large majority of Palestinians – what it means to be (or not) a ‘Jordanian’ is inextricably linked with the selective incorporation and exclusion of Palestinians in the economic, political and socio-cultural structures. In Lebanon, much of the country’s recent history revolves around the presence of Palestinians. Palestinians are fully aware of the fact that their exclusion from any entitlements in fact aims at preserving a precarious sectarian ‘balance’. In the West Bank, the legitimacy and existence of the PA depend paradoxically on upholding a rhetoric of return (symbolically and politically the core of the Palestine national question), while progressively marginalising refugees and return from the negotiation agenda.

And yet, far from being just passive victims, Palestinian refugees articulate a powerful critique, from below, of sectarian neo-patrimonial regimes where resources and entitlements are hierarchically distributed according to ethnicity, religious affiliation, nationality, class, gender and family status. They voice their frustration with the lack of accountability and corruption of their local leaderships, and decry the dehumanising humanitarianism which confines them. Furthermore, they contest the old ‘political space’ as a terrain through which scarce resources are distributed and affiliations and loyalties controlled and managed.

Refugees’ narratives carry the seeds of a new space of the ‘political’ which, though saturated with contradictions and uncertainties, echoes the disillusion with past forms of mobilisation and organisation recurrent in the contemporary Middle East.

The urge to reconcile integration, rights and dignity with ‘return’ is an arena where we can see Palestinian refugees turning into a political avant-garde, positing new democratic state/society reconfigurations.

* These reflections draw from a project that involved over a hundred interviews across Lebanon, the West Bank and Jordan, carried out with Sophie Richter-Devroe, University of Exeter between 2009 and 2011.

Ruba Salih is Reader in Gender Studies & Chair of the Centre for Gender Studies, SOAS, a member of the Centre for Palestine Studies, SOAS and author of Gender in Transnationalism. Home, Longing and Belonging Among Moroccan Migrant Women (2003)
Hilma Granqvist was the first anthropologist to do intensive, long-term fieldwork in one Palestinian village, and her books remain unique in Palestine studies for their rich content, and in the absence of comparable studies from the pre-Nakbah period or since.

Granqvist was a Swedish-speaking Finn who was drawn to anthropology from a background in Biblical Studies in Finland and Germany, and a particular interest in the women of the Old Testament. After first visiting Palestine in 1921, however, her primary focus shifted to the present, and she decided to research contemporary women’s lives in the little village of Artas near Bethlehem. This choice was influenced by the presence there of Louise Baldensperger, the daughter of missionaries from Alsace who was an accomplished amateur ethnobotanist, and whose brothers were noted beekeepers and folklorists.

‘Sitt Louisa’, as she was known, was an ideal collaborator for Granqvist. She had lived in Artas for over 30 years so was fluent in the village dialect, and intimately familiar with the people and their customs; and she shared a common language (German) with Granqvist. Sitt Louisa recruited two local widows, Alya Ibrahim and Hamdiyeh Sanad, as research assistants, and Granqvist worked with these three women - her ‘scientific committee’ as she called them – several days a week recording and checking information. The rest of the time she engaged in, observed and photographed everyday village life and special events.

This combination of systematic data collection with ‘participant observation’ over an extended period within one small community later became the ideal method of anthropological fieldwork, but was then path-breaking and controversial.

Granqvist mainly concentrated on studying women’s lives, and particularly the events, rituals and beliefs surrounding birth, marriage and death.
Granqvist vividly depicted people’s lives and village events, enlivening her accounts with their sayings and songs, and with verbatim quotations

fieldwork totalling three years took place between 1925 and 1931. This provided the material for the two volumes of Marriage Conditions in a Palestinian Village (1931 and 1935); Birth and Childhood among the Arabs (1947); and Child Problems among the Arabs (1950). Granqvist was unable to return to Artas until 1959. After a 28-year absence, it must have been a bitter-sweet experience. Sitt Louisa and other friends were now dead. And huge changes had taken place, including an influx of refugees from western Palestine following the establishment of the State of Israel. This final four-month visit resulted in her last book, Muslim Death and Burial (1965).

Granqvist also defied contemporary scholarly conventions in the modes of description and analysis she adopted in her books. Employing what she called the ‘statistical method’, she rigorously documented kinship relations and marriage patterns, making the important distinction between proclaimed ideals and actual practice. She was thus able to demonstrate, for example, that only a minority of people married their paternal cousins, the stated preference.

Granqvist vividly depicted people’s lives and village events, enlivening her accounts with their sayings and songs, and with verbatim quotations from her main informants, whom she named. She was determined to portray the diversity of local views and customs, and acknowledge her human sources. This respectful, transparent and nuanced approach also presaged current narrative ideals, but was almost unknown at her time. Most other anthropologists at that early stage in the discipline described customs divorced from their social context, and over-generalised about peoples and cultures which they often also exoticised. Granqvist was aware that her methodology resembled that which later dominated British anthropology under the aegis of Bronislaw Malinowski, but insisted that she developed it independently of Malinowski’s influence.

In part because of her innovative research methods and writings, in part because of her Swedish-Finnish identity in an era of growing Finnish nationalism, Granqvist never had the professional academic life she deserved. Her first book (Marriage Conditions I) was rejected for a PhD by Helsinki University because it was ‘only about one village’, and she had to switch to the Åbo Akademi to obtain her doctorate. Her subsequent application for a first academic post was blocked by the male establishment. This included the Finnish professor of Arabic, Aapeli Saarisalo, who attacked her books on the grounds that they were all Baldensperger’s work, she hadn’t lived in the village, and her transcriptions of local dialect were replete with classical Arabic faults. She passionately defended herself against his false and unjust accusations, but such attacks successfully blighted her career. Although she pursued her scholarly interests as an independent researcher and writer all her life, she remained on the margins.

Although Granqvist’s books were well-reviewed in academic journals at her time, and remain highly valued among specialists, they are still not widely known and are long out of print. This is probably partly because, although their contents are fascinating, their language is stilted, and some are heavily freighted with code numbers, footnotes and tables so look rather indigestible. Were they edited and reprinted with better reproductions of her photographs, they would undoubtedly gain a larger and appreciative audience.

Soon after Granqvist died in 1972, I visited Helsinki to see her papers. Her small living room was lined with files and books; she had obviously spent years sorting, annotating and labelling her precious research materials. At my suggestion, her family decided to donate much of this matter to the Palestine Exploration Fund in London, where it would be more accessible to international scholars. This part of the Granqvist archive comprises about 95 files, and includes field notes, working notes, photographs and correspondence with other scholars. This material is mainly in English, German and phonetically-transcribed village Arabic. The remainder of her papers, which are mainly in Swedish, went to the Åbo Akademi in Finland. These include her field note-books, journals and personal letters from the field.

Since Granqvist’s death the great value of her work has increasingly been recognised and discussed in academic circles. A selection of her unique photographs of Artas has been published. Three international conferences have been held in her memory in Finland, Palestine and Paris. And a small but steady stream of anthropologists, linguists and other scholars have consulted the Granqvist archives at the PEF and the Åbo Akademi. A number of scholarly articles have also been published by Scandinavians and others evaluating her achievements and describing her tribulations in the context of her background and times. An exciting prospect was the intellectual biography of Granqvist being prepared by the Finnish feminist anthropologist, Professor Ulla Vuorela. Sadly Ulla died suddenly in December 2011 with the work unfinished. One hopes another scholar can take on this worthwhile project, but few possess the necessary combination of linguistic and scholarly skills. Perhaps another little ‘scientific committee’ could be formed to tackle the task.

Shelagh Weir is a member of the MEL Editorial Board and author of Palestinian Costume (1989)
For 15 years, the London Palestine Film Festival has invited audiences to explore moving images of Palestine drawn from the widest possible range of genres, eras, and places. Over this time, film events focusing on Palestine have proliferated. Kuala Lumpur, Caracas, and Nairobi are just a few of the new festivals to have appeared in the last 18 months alone. Today, festivals of varying scale and nuance map a widespread appetite for engaging with Palestine on and through film. Their origins and ambitions differ, with academic, campaigning, religious, or community-driven projects often exhibiting a distinctive ethos, and with curatorial leanings hued by local settings. Cumulatively, these multiplying events announce an unprecedented degree of interest in Palestine and the moving image.

Much can be welcomed in this. But just as many questions need to be asked about these initiatives as appear to be raised by them. The same blurring of political sympathy with critical sensibility that has seen (too) much Palestinian filmmaking uncritically applauded (elevated, indulged, patronised), seems to allow a commensurate superficiality to obtain over questions of curatorial practice and audience engagement.

Most opportunities to engage with Palestine on film today remain tiresome and predictable, marred by conservative programming and sledgehammer messaging. What is lacking is not a turn to political ambivalence or critical antipathy (toward films, artists, or cultures); far from it. Rather, there appears to be little readiness by programmers to engage audiences with film histories and practices in a spirit of inquiry before celebration. Instead of asking film to furnish shallow affirmations, we might embark on more rewarding investigations into the far less certain political economies of production and representation that have lent moving images of Palestine their distinctive qualities and effects over time and place.

The extent to which such critical inquiries might be advanced in the framework of a film festival is unclear. The Palestine Film Foundation (PFF) was formed as a research structure in 2005 and has managed the London festival since. In doing so it has aimed, with uneven results, at a curatorial balance between the enquiring ethos mooted above, and more mundane exigencies of festival design (marketing, venue partnerships, donor requirements).

This tightrope walk can disrupt expectations in ways that are welcome as well as resisted. A memorable comment left in a 2008 audience survey reacted concisely to the inclusion of Jean-Luc Godard’s *Notre Musique*: ‘this film does not belong in a Palestine film festival’. By contrast, last year’s screening of the radical 1968 portmanteau *Far From Vietnam* led reviewer Naira Antoun to hail a selection that ‘prompts us ... to recalibrate and expand on what our expectations of a Palestine film festival are.’

This year’s programme will press anew at the limits of those expectations. Alongside Palestinian premieres and cutting-edge documentaries are works that will surprise and perhaps unsettle: neither Susan Sontag’s *Promised Lands*, Mike Hoolboom’s *Lacan Palestine*, nor Ella Shohat’s talk on Israeli cinema will conform universally.
with understandings of what ‘belongs’ in a Palestine film festival. Audiences may rightly query not just their contents, but also their inclusion.

However, these experiments at the margins of expectations fall short of the type of critical engagement alluded to above. Balancing curatorial adventurism with marketing or audience development is ungainly. However stretched, the festival format is a confining one. More searching questions need to be asked about Palestine and the moving image; questions that are today inadequately addressed by scholars as well as curators. This can only meaningfully be done outside the festival framework – once the pressures of attendances, reviews, and sales are shed along with the invocations of celebration and solidarity with which they too comfortably coalesce.

What is called for is a broad research agenda for the interdisciplinary study of Palestine and the moving image – one alert to, and engaged with, economies of production and consumption, yet sufficiently independent of those economies to reach beyond them, and to engage critically with them. By way of illustration, we might consider just three contemporary examples of film-based research areas that are as clearly ill-suited to a film festival format as they are demanding of in-depth critical investigation:

Economies of surveillance and privilege:

Of over 1,200 works held in the PFF’s collections, more than 100 are ‘campaign’ videos shot at checkpoints or barriers. Invariably submitted by Israeli or international activists, this questionable oeuvre is stalked by problems, not least of which is: What kinds of aesthetic-political circuitry are generated once Israeli campaigners seek evidence of Palestinian pain by mobilising colonising privilege to film alongside the military, adding a further layer to larger invasive-surveillant systems? Sibling sub-genres inviting this type of critical research include films made in, and in forms of complicity with, Israeli institutions of torture and illegal detention.

Consequences of cultural NGOisation:

West Bank film output has increased in the past decade. Much of this increase has been supported by INGOS or/and philanthropic bodies, directly or indirectly. Yet these financing structures, few of which claim not to have underlying socio-political agendas, cannot compensate for what remain low levels of cinema access, inadequate training opportunities, and a scarcity of film criticism. The impact of NGOised economies of opportunity and production under such conditions is yet to be soberly assessed – whether in terms of the qualities of resulting output, the ambitions influencing film funding, or the structural effect on industry-building processes.

Co-option, leverage, resistance

Efforts have been made to co-opt Palestinian filmmakers to ideological projects by conditioning finance, training, or distribution on their legitimising collaborative mechanisms with Jewish Israeli ‘counterparts’. A corollary to the ‘coexistence’ agendas that flooded the later Oslo years, Palestinian resistance thwarted the more aggressive of these initiatives, forcing international agencies to consider alternatives. But the strategies and discourses (polemical, institutional, artistic) orbiting the attempt to leverage an ideologically compliant Palestinian filmmaking fraternity are still to be given the sort of in-depth research and analysis they warrant.

The examples above suggest just a little of the scope that presently exists for critical research, while focusing on recent dynamics inside Palestine. A far fuller research agenda, reaching historically and geographically further afield, ought to now be developed in a manner that similarly addresses tactics of cooption, structural and industrial politics, or the co-implication of military and film practices. Such a research agenda could include comparative work on the roles played by festivals and curatorial practitioners; it ought to also deconstruct some of Palestine’s more insistent (and dispiriting) filmic signifiers, whether donkeys, oranges, checkpoints, olive trees, or Kalashnikovs; it might ask what work images of Palestine are tasked with in such provisional sub-genres as the ‘first person Jewish American identity film’; and it should surely address the seemingly insatiable market for testimonial/absolution films involving generation after generation of Israeli perpetrators.

The advent of the Centre for Palestine Studies at SOAS represents a great opportunity to develop research capacities allowing these and many more urgent questions to be posed, and ensure that the critical study of Palestine and the moving image acquires the institutional home and interdisciplinary rigour it requires.

Nick Denes is a founder and co-director of the Palestine Film Foundation

The London Palestine Film Festival runs at the Barbican Cinema, SOAS, and UCL from April 20 to May 3. The 2012 pre-festival season opened on March 29. Full details: palestinefilm.org and listings
west Bank cities are known for their graffiti. Before internationally recognised street artists like Banksy and Blu visited Palestine, Palestinians had already been making their plight visible to each other and the rest of the world through graffiti. When it first appeared widely during the first intifada, it was for political reasons and served explicitly communicative purposes. Transgressing the boundaries set by Israeli army surveillance, resistance groups employed encoded graffiti to mobilise for strikes and rallies and identify suspected collaborators as well as generally expressing defiance. Spraying messages of resistance in public space was a defiant subversion of Israeli control. The collective consciousness was materialised, circulated and perpetuated through graffiti, the most overtly political of art forms.

Fast-forward a decade to the Israeli-imposed Segregation Barrier. Also dubbed the Apartheid Wall, its surface has become the latest and arguably boldest site of the struggle between Palestinians’ assertion of their identity and Israel’s ongoing attempt to suppress it. In many ways, the trajectory of graffiti in Palestine – like other forms of cultural production such as cinema and visual art – tells the story not only of Palestinian resistance against Israel, but also the progression of this resistance’s choice of self-representation, and the world community’s growing recognition that it is valid, genuine and justified.

Yet in the framework of the transnationalisation of the conflict, making and mediating resistance through the poetic act can also risk subsuming local Palestinian efforts to do away with the Wall altogether. For to aestheticise the conflict in ‘universal’ terms – as the well-known story of Banksy’s conversation with an elderly man in Palestine indicates – may also be to accommodate aspects of it. ‘You paint the wall, you make it look beautiful,’ the old man said, ‘But we don’t want it to be beautiful. We hate this wall. Go home.’ Reflecting this, imagining a Palestine beyond the dominant discourse on international legality and the accepted two-state solution promulgated by the doomed ‘peace process,’ becomes nearly impossible, relegated to the margins of acceptability.

Yet in a single act that occurred overnight recently a few weeks ago, the aesthetics of resistance moved beyond their usual West Bank sites and into the soul of the conflict, Jerusalem. Transgressing heavily fortified West Jerusalem, one evening in late February 2012, several artists painted images bearing vows of continued resistance on walls, doors, construction sites and other surfaces in populated and busy touristic areas. One of their images, depicting a woman donning a kefiyyeh and the inscription ‘intifada,’ is shown above. The artists reportedly struck in two areas, the West Jerusalem city centre and the German Colony/ Talbiyye district. Neither Israel’s gradual sealing off of Jerusalem from the rest of the West Bank through an elaborate web of closures, permits and bypass roads, nor the international donor community’s investment in Ramallah as an undeclared future Palestinian capital, have succeeded in shifting the dynamics and focus of resistance away from Jerusalem for the ‘final status’ negotiations.

If anything, these transgressive aesthetical acts are proof of a rising tide that is part and parcel of a larger wave of discontent, protest and change in the Arab region that relies on public space – and specifically the street – to express its sentiments and demands. The 650km long and 8m high concrete Segregation Barrier, with its watchtowers every few hundred metres reminiscent of the Berlin Wall’s, is unable to locate either the source of subversion or its manifestation when it emerges from within what Israel defines as its own borders. That is the greatest irony of all.

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All peoples of the world have icons, who are often associated with the making and refining of perceptions. The philosopher Edward Said (1935-2003) and the poet Mahmoud Darwish (1941-2008) are such icons for the Palestinians. They not only contributed decisively to putting Palestine on the world’s map, but also brought the world to Palestine. Their secret, if they ever had one, was the power of language – painstakingly crafted, with visions of justice, freedom and humanity at its heart.

Said and Darwish's contributions are too plentiful to enumerate fully here. Said brought the plight of the oppressed to world attention, and to where it matters—the very centres of power that for so long acted as disinterested sources of knowledge and governance. He did this with scrupulous and passionate scholarship, examining the makeup of the colonial ventures in the east and the often dubious representations that buttressed and objectified them. Darwish wrote what amounts to the Song of Songs for Palestinians, illuminating the sites of their wounds and the vistas of their human condition in the context of the Israeli occupation.

Said and Darwish’s beginnings were rooted in the traumatic experience of the 1948 Nakba, when Israel founded a state for itself at the expense of the native population of Palestine, their own families included. Both drew their visions, in prose and poetry respectively, from and for the Palestinian question. Both struggled with painful questions of identity and exile in an age when conflicts acquired global dimensions. These conflicts were born of longstanding interactions and tensions, and involved diverse interests, discourses, dialogues, local identities and priorities. Any genuine intellectual would be equally moved and perplexed by these issues; themes that resonate in the battleground for and over Palestine.

Edward Said was born in the Talibiyeh district of Jerusalem, and grew up in Cairo and Lebanon before settling in the United States. He worked in the literary, political and musical fields with the overriding ideal of human reconciliation and co-existence, while exposing the injustices of colonialism, its political, economic and cultural exploitation, and its demeaning intellectual representation. As his colleague Joseph Massad wrote, Said’s intellectual life “was guided by his radical opposition to ignorance and by his unwavering commitment to fighting injustice. Everything he wrote revolved around these two axes.” In his book, Orientalism, for which Said is best known, he poses a question which sums up the spirit that guided his writings: ‘Can one divide human reality, as indeed human reality seems to be genuinely divided, into clearly different cultures, histories, traditions, societies, even races and survive the consequences of humanity?’

Said's entire work attests to a search for the genuine commonalities and connections underpinning humanity, transcending the mediocrity of provincial scholarship. In this sense, Palestine is not an isolated case of occupation, but interlinked with colonial exploitations and misrepresentations, and as such deserving of a humane solution.

Unlike the stubborn ideologue, both Said and Darwish believed in a tomorrow, a future, in which justice would be available for all, and in a yesterday, a past, which could serve as a wellspring from which all could learn—rather than one which would stultify with its claims to authenticity and exclusivity. To this end, their views on Israel and Palestine evolved, though their premises remained constant.

At the centre of their shared view was the understanding that Palestinians have been victims of Zionism’s colonial mindset and practices. These entailed both land theft and displacement of the native population, and attempts to eradicate Palestinian culture—all aimed at undermining the viability of the Palestinians’ continued existence in their homeland.

Nevertheless, alongside their rejection of all forms of orthodoxy and extremism, Said and Darwish retained a belief in the possibility of coexistence between Palestinians and Israelis on the basis of equality. They also opposed unjust agreements such as the 1993 Oslo accords and other lopsided negotiations and bogus deals, however dressed up they were as promoting national aspirations. These could not restore even a modicum of the rights the Palestinians had struggled and longed...
At the centre of their shared view was the understanding that Palestinians have been victims of Zionism’s colonial mindset and practices

I became a metaphor of a swallow
Floating over my debris
In the spring, in the autumn
Baptizing my feathers with the clouds of the lake
Prolonging my greeting
Unto the Nasserite who never dies
Because in him is the spirit of God
And God is the prophets’ luck

Along the revolutionary journey, which Darwish and Said both chronicled, Darwish’s poetry acquired new dimensions. In one interview, he approvingly quoted the Mexican poet Octavio Paz as stating that ‘words in prose are to inform, but in poetry, to be.’ The Palestinian condition is one of a struggle for viable existence and survival and another of informing and educating the world on its predicament, as Darwish did in vivid poetry and Said in luminous prose. Increasingly, Darwish’s expanded vision resorted to the ordinary, mystic, epic and musical, giving a worldly voice to the voiceless, while at the same time celebrating the world for its small gifts and hopes.

Darwish and Said gave the Palestinians, and indeed the world, their genuine gift of vision and humanity. We touch the grace of this gift in the words of Said, in several scholarly fields. We hear and feel it in the poetry of Darwish, acclaimed all over the Arab world and beyond. Darwish seemed to have spoken of himself, when he wrote of Said:

He loves a land then departs from it.
(Is the impossible far?)
He loves departure to anything.
In free travel between cultures, the researchers of human essence might find enough seats for everyone. Here is a periphery advancing.
Or a centre receding. The East is not completely East and the West is not completely West. Because identity is open to plurality, It isn’t a citadel or a trench.

In such words resides worldly hope for which Darwish and Said planted ripe seeds. The Arab revolutions, with all their complexities, seem to testify to this in a way that can only mean their hope for justice and humanity lives on. Said was fond of quoting the Martinique-French Poet Aimé Césaire, whose words best illuminate Darwish’s sentiments above:

‘No race has a monopoly on beauty, on intelligence, on strength, and there is a place for all at the rendezvous of victory.’

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Darwish was born in the village of el-Birweh in Galilee, he left Palestine to Moscow in 1970 and a year later, moved between several places, including Cairo, Beirut, Tunisia and Paris before finally returning to Ramallah in 1996 and stayed there until his passing on August 2008. He launched his poetic vocation with poems that reclaim identity and – sharing the same path as fighters, martyrs and peasants – assert steadfastness and solidarity.

It is fair to describe him as the swallow of Palestine, a bird he loved evoking in his poems. Its longings and spirited flights served the purpose of transcendence, freedom and beauty:

I could have not been a swallow
Had the wind wished it so
The wind is the traveller’s luck
I went north, east, west
But the south was too hard for me
Too far from me
Because the south is my country
It’s the night before Valentine’s and we’re being seated in Ottolenghi in Islington. We thought we’d combine our review for you, our readers, with an intimate meal without the mad crush of the Big Night. As we step off the fashionable Upper Street pavement and through Ottolenghi’s limpid glass frontage, we both know this doesn’t look like our usual gig. Everywhere is dazzling white. All the lines are clean. The colourful cornucopia of food on the counters gives the place a deli feel. If you’re an old romantic (Mark, obviously), this isn’t necessarily a Good Thing. They seat us at a communal table next to four garrulous gents in suits. We look longingly at some smaller tables, but these need to be requested when booking. Well… OK then…

Yotam Ottolenghi grew up in Israel. He’s lived in the UK for over a decade and has become internationally renowned as a chef and restaurateur. His partner and head chef, Sami Tamimi, is a Palestinian from East Jerusalem. This is a Middle Eastern story. Yet the food - as seen in the popular cookbooks, internet appearances, and the menu we’re now perusing - resolutely refuses any categorisation. Ottolenghi has stressed in interviews the influence of Palestinian cooking and, more broadly, of a Mediterranean outlook. That’s evident in the glistening salads on the counter. Familiar menu items catch the eye – yoghurt, lamb, aubergine, pumpkin seeds, beetroot, and pomegranate. But combinations are less familiar. So there’s turmeric in the yoghurt? Have you heard of Tea Smoked Lamb? He’s curried the pumpkin seeds? Clearly, currents from India and the Pacific Rim aren’t strangers to these shores. We know too that, in some cases, re-imaginings may lead to an uncomfortable déjà vu disconnect. In a recent interview in the States, Ottolenghi showcased his Burnt Eggplant with Tahini and Pomegranate. Some outrage followed. One article was sardonically titled Israeli Chef Invents Baba Ghanouj.

Dishes are all smallish, modelled on the idea of a mezza meant for sharing and sampling. The seven cold dishes are spectacularly displayed on the counter. Hot dishes waft by on the way from the kitchen. We choose – two cold dishes and three hot ones. A complimentary selection of breads arrives. All are flavourful; one is unspeakably delicious.

The dishes start coming…

Normally we’d begin a deconstruction, focusing on successful dishes, and touching on the not so successful. But we’ve only 165 words left of our allotted 600 and each
The Idea of Israel: A History of Power and Knowledge

Ilan Pappé

With *The Idea of Israel*, Ilan Pappé – Professor of History at the University of Exeter and author of *The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine* – delivers a new history of Israel and Zionism. Pappé examines the function of ideology in Israel’s history, with particular attention to the role of the country’s academic and media institutions: he looks at their production of knowledge and information, and the way these have been used to provide an ideological scaffolding for the state. Pappé also describes how the all-time guiding idea of the country’s actions and identity came under question for the first time during the Oslo years, and wonders if that episode could be the premise of a new direction for Israel.

*Verso, July 2012, £16.99*

Islamist Radicalisation in Europe and the Middle East: Reassessing the Causes of Terrorism

Edited by George Joffé

In this book, George Joffé looks beyond the recurring assumption that adherents to Islamism are necessarily extremist and violent. The book seeks to examine the processes by which people become radicalised; in other words what framing is adopted by social movements that contend the hegemonic discourse of the state, particularly in the case of Islamic movements. There are two articles on each country in the Maghrib, one by a scholar from within the country concerned and the other by an outside commentator, with a separate stand-alone article on Mauritania. The contributors include Zaki Mogherbi from Libya who was instrumental in setting up the constitution for the country proposed by Saif al-Islam and Mehdi Mabrouk, the current minister of culture in Tunisia. One of the contributions on Morocco deals with the Salafi movement in Marrakesh and has an introduction by Mohammed Tozy, a well-known Moroccan sociologist. There is also an article looking at the al-Djaza’ira movement within the FIS in Algeria in the 1980s and 1990s.

*IB Tauris, July 2012, £59.50*

Sherbet and Spice: The Complete Story of Turkish Confectionery

Mary Isin

Mary Isin started researching Ottoman cuisine in the 1980s and learnt Ottoman Turkish in order to be able to read old cookery books. With her new book she sets out to deliver a study of the multiple dimensions and evolution of Turkish sweets. In Sherbet and Spice, she carries the reader on a journey through the land of Turkish confectionery. She explores the history of Turkish sweets from the Middle Ages to the present day and examines their cultural role, taking the reader from Turkey to Persia, Arabia, Egypt, Central Asia and the Levant.

*IB Tauris, April 2012, £19.95*
Lebanon Adrift:  
From Battleground to Playground

Samir Khalaf  
Samir Khalaf is Professor of Sociology and Director of the Center for Behavioural Research at the American University of Beirut. He has also held academic appointments at Princeton, Harvard, MIT and New York University. In this book, he describes Lebanon’s post-war malaise and argues that today the country is adrift. Burdened by the consequences of an unfinished conflict and by mounting economic difficulties, Lebanese society has lost its moorings. According to Khalaf, while lethargy and indifference prevail, nowadays Lebanese people tend to seek refuge in religiosity, communalism and cloistered spatial identities, or to find temporary relief in mass consumerism.


The Arab Awakening:  
Islam and the new Middle East

Tariq Ramadan  
Tariq Ramadan, Professor of Contemporary Islamic Studies at Oxford University, examines the current opportunities and challenges across North Africa and the Middle East. He argues that the debate over the future of this region cannot be reduced to a confrontation between two distinct approaches, the modern and secular versus the traditional and Islamic. Ramadan sets out to demonstrate that both of these approaches are in crisis, and that the Arab world has the historic opportunity to stop blaming the West and to create a truly new dynamic. He then discusses what enduring legacy the Middle East will generate from the historic moment of the Arab Spring.

Allen Lane – Penguin, April 2012, £20

The Journey to Tahrir:  
Revolution, Protest and Social Change in Egypt, 1999-2011

Edited by Jeannie Sowers  
Jeannie Sowers, an editor of the Middle East Report journal, brings together updated essays which analyse Egypt’s political and social transformation up to the toppling of former president Hosni Mubarak. Starting from the 18 days of street protest that compelled Mubarak’s resignation, the volume goes back in time to examine the state’s strategies of repression and the rising dissent of workers, democracy advocates, and anti-war, social and environmental campaigners. The book also describes the demographic and economic trends that produced wealth for the few and impoverishment for many in the most populous country of the Arab world. Contributors include Hossam Bahgat, Asef Bayat, Joel Beinin, Timothy Mitchell and Ted Swedenburg.

Verso, May 2012, £19.99
EVENTS in London

THE EVENTS and organisations listed below are not necessarily endorsed or supported by The Middle East in London. The accompanying texts and images are based primarily on information provided by the organisers and do not necessarily reflect the views of the compilers or publishers. While every possible effort is made to ascertain the accuracy of these listings, readers are advised to seek confirmation of all events using the contact details provided for each event.

Submitting entries and updates: please send all updates and submissions for entries related to future events via e-mail to mepub@soas.ac.uk or by fax to 020 7898 4329.

BM – British Museum, Great Russell Street, London WC1B 3DG

SOAS – School of Oriental and African Studies, Thornhaugh Street, Russell Square, London WC1H 0XG

LSE – London School of Economics and Political Science, Houghton Street, London WC2 2AE

0207 3776606 E info@dasharts.org.uk W www.dasharts.org.uk

International Conference, SOAS, 13th-15th February 2013

CALL FOR PAPERS

As part of an AHRC/DFG Anglo-German research project on the history of urban violence in the modern Middle East this international conference seeks to generate new discussions on the relationship between urban politics, societies and cultures and public violence. The aim is to foster innovative understandings of urban violence informed by comparative and interdisciplinary approaches. The conference is open to papers dealing with cities and towns in the Arab world, Iran, Ottoman Empire/Turkey in the early modern and modern periods, approximately from the late 18th century to the 1960s. Proposed contributions relate to one or more of the following themes: 1) public violence as event and calendars of violence, 2) order and disorder, multiple logics of violence and 3) urban violence as a form of spatial politics.

Deadline for the submission of abstracts, 1 June 2012. For further information contact Dr Nelida Fuccaro, nf2@soas.ac.uk or Dr Rasmus Elling, re13@soas.ac.uk.

BM – British Museum, Great Russell Street, London WC1B 3DG

SOAS – School of Oriental and African Studies, Thornhaugh Street, Russell Square, London WC1H 0XG

LSE – London School of Economics and Political Science, Houghton Street, London WC2 2AE

0207 3776606 E info@dasharts.org.uk W www.dasharts.org.uk

Thursday 5 April


Friday 6 April

8:30 pm | The Reluctant Revolutionary (Film) Organised by: DocHouse. Sean McAllister’s intimate portrait of Yemen as the revolution unfolds, filmed during an exceptional year of struggle, hardship and hope, in a country where no other foreign camera crews were allowed to remain. Followed by a Q&A with the director. Tickets: £10 T 020 7494 3654 Prince Charles Cinema, 7 Leicester Place, London WC2H 7BY. T 020 8237 1220 E info@dochouse.org W www.dochouse.org

APRIL EVENTS

Wednesday 4 April

7:30 pm | Art & Conflict - the Case of Syria Organised by: Dash Arts. Dash Arabic Series Café. What is the role of art in situations of conflict? The Independent columnist Yasmin Alibhai-Brown in conversation with the author Robin Yassin-Kassab, Al-Hayat journalist and prose writer; Ghalia Kabbani, cultural activist and director of Reel Syria; Dan Gorman and others. Tickets: £5 henrietta@ dasharts.org.uk Rich Mix, Bethnal Green Road, London E1 6LA. T 0207 3776606

SOAS – School of Oriental and African Studies, Thornhaugh Street, Russell Square, London WC1H 0XG

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When his wife leaves him, Nader hires a young woman to take care of his suffering father. But he doesn't know his new maid is not only pregnant, but also working without her unstable husband's permission. In Persian with English subtitles. Various ticket prices. Barbican Cinema, 19 Lower Regent Street, London SW1Y 4LR. W http://ukiff.org.uk

Thursday 12 April

8:30 pm | Premiere: Last Days in Jerusalem (Lecture) Organised by: Palestine Film Foundation. Part of the 2012 London Palestine Film Festival pre-Festival screenings and talks. Dir Tawfi k Abu Wael’s Last Days in Jerusalem followed by a QA with the director. Nour and Iyad, a Palestinian couple in East Jerusalem, are preparing to move to Paris. When a terrible accident sees Iyad return to hospital and delay their departure, Nour starts to question their move... Tickets: £13.50/£11.50 conc. Ciné lumière, 17 Queensberry Place, London SW7 2DT. E info@palestinefilm.org W www.palestinefilm.org

Friday 13 April

9:15 am | The Idea of Chivalry in the Persianate World (Workshop) Organised by: British Institute of Persian Studies (BIPS). Admission free - Pre-registration required. British Academy, 10 Carlton House Terrace, London SW1Y 5AH. E BIPS@britac.ac.uk W www.bips.ac.uk

Saturday 14 April

11:00 am | Inside the Mind of the Scribe: writing surfaces in ancient Egypt (Seminar) Kathryn E.Piquette, 3D Encounters, Petrie Museum of Egyptian Archaeology; John Tait, UCL Institute of Archaeology; Dirk Obbink, University of Oxford and Director of the Imaging Papyri Project. Organised by: The Egypt Exploration Society. A look at inscribed objects of a wide variety of types from the earliest period of state-formation to the Graeco-Roman period. Tickets: £28/£23 (EES members)/£20 (Student non-members)/£16 (Student EES members). The Egypt Exploration Society, 3 Doughty Mews, London WC1N 2PG. T 020 7242 1880 E contact@ees.ac.uk W www.ees.ac.uk

2:00 pm | Discover Mesopotamia through Storytelling (Lecture) Organised by: The Enheduanna Society. Guided tour led by Fran Hazleton. Admission free. Meet at the desks beside the Information Desk in the Great Court, BM at 1:45 pm. T 020 7278 3624 E esocc@zipang.org.uk W www.zipang.org.uk

Wednesday 18 April

7:00 pm | Seeing in Isfahan: Expanding Gaze for an Early Modern Capital (Lecture) Renata Holod, College for Women Class of 1963 Term Professor in the Humanities, History of Art Department; Curator, Near East Section, PENN Museum, University of Pennsylvania, USA. Organised by: Islamic Art Circle at SOAS. The Bahari Foundation Lecture in Iranian Art and Culture. Part of the Islamic Art Circle at SOAS Lecture Programme. Chaired by Doris Behrens-Abouseif, SOAS. Admission free. Khalili Lecture Theatre, SOAS, T 0771 408 7480 E RosalindHaddon@aol.com W www.soas.ac.uk/art/islac/

Thursday 19 April

5:00 pm | Nights at the Brunei (Lecture) Henna/Mehendi Workshop and Live Sudanese Music. Admission free. Brunei Gallery, SOAS. T 020 7898 4046 E bginfo@soas.ac.uk W www.soas.ac.uk/nightsatthebrunei/

7:00 pm | Amidst Shadow and Light: Challenges and New Waves in Iranian Art Now (Lecture) Hamid Keshmirshakan, Editor in Chief, Art Tomorrow. Organised by: The Iran Society. 6:30pm for 7:00pm. Admission free for Society members and guests. 2 Belgrave Square, London SW1X 8PJ. T 020 7235 5122 E info@iran society.org W www.iran society.org

Friday 20 April

6:30 pm | Pitching for Palestine – New Thinking for an Old Conflict (Panel Discussion) Rushanara Ali MP, Shadow Development Minister; Filippo Grandi, UNRWA Commissioner-General; Rosemary Hollis, City University; Richard Horton, Editor, The Lancet; Ahmad Khalidi, St Anthony’s College, Oxford; Illan Pappe, Exeter University. Organised by: Caabu in association with Medical Aid for Palestinians. Event which aims to bring together critical thinking on practical steps forward in the occupied Palestinian territory. Chaired by Jon Snow, Channel Four. Tickets: £10. Harvey Goodwin Suite, Church House, Westminster, London SW1P 3NZ. T 020 7832 1321 E info@caabu.org W www.caabu.org/events

Saturday 21 April

3:30 pm | Man Without a Cell Phone + Yala to the Moon (Lecture) Part of the 2012 London Palestine Film Festival. Man Without a Cell Phone, see listing for Friday 20 April for film, venue and contact details + Yala to the Moon, Dirs Suheil Nafar & Jacqueline Reem Salloum (2011), 7 min. Aseel, a young girl who peddles CDs on the streets of the West Bank, uses her vivid imagination to remake the world around her...

6:15 pm | Politics as Art: Triple Bill (Film) Part of the 2012 London Palestine Film Festival. Sand Creek Equation, Dir Travis Wilkerson (2011), 25 min. Wilkerson suggests some terrible parallels link the 2008/9 war on the Gaza Strip to the 1864 massacre of Native Americans at Sand Creek, Colorado. + X Mission, Dir Ursula Biemann (2008), 40 min. Film essay exploring the logic of the refugee camp as a form of extraterritoriality ruled
by International Law. + End of September. Dirs Sama Alshaibi & Ala Younis (2010), 16 min. Realist drama in which Dalal, a Palestinian *fokai* (fighter) returns to her liberated homeland where she faces a series of mysterious occurrences. See listing for Friday 20 April for venue and contact details.

8:00 pm | 30 Years on from the Seige of Beirut (Film) Part of the 2012 London Palestine Film Festival. Gaza Hospital, Marco Pasquini (2009), 84 min. Documentary that chronicles Beirut’s Gaza Hospital’s history, from the Hospital’s foundation as a cornerstone of a revolutionary social welfare programme begun by the PLO, to its transformation into a vertical refugee camp. Followed by a panel discussion. See listing for Friday 20 April for venue and contact details.

Sunday 22 April

4:00 pm | Ashkenaz (Film) Part of the 2012 London Palestine Film Festival. Dir Rachel Leah Jones, (2007), 72 min. Filmsessay on Zionism’s (and Israel’s) historically hegemonic European ethnic elite. Ashkenaz looks at whiteness in hegemonic European ethnic elite. Zionism’s (and Israel’s) historically hegemonic European ethnic elite. See listing for Friday 20 April for venue and contact details.

6:15 pm | Five Short Dramas from the West Bank (Film) Part of the 2012 London Palestine Film Festival. *Flower Seller*, Ibah Jadallah (2011), 18 min. Thriller about collaboration and betrayal in a Palestinian refugee camp. + *The Well*, Ahmad Habash (2011), 15 min. During the 1948 war, an elderly man meets a young father and son running for their lives, they take shelter in an abandoned well, one held in folklore to possess magical powers... + *Haneen*, Ossama Bawardi (2011), 18 min. Haneen, a woman in her mid 60s lives alone in a Palestinian city, on befriending Salem, a boy whom she finds stealing fruit in her garden, she appears to develop a new spark of life. + *First Lesson*, Areen Omarai (2010), 15 min. Having moved to Paris in order to find a new life, actress Areen Omarai’s directorial debut reflects her own experience of first leaving Palestine. + *Birth*, Dima Abu Ghoush (2011), 9 min. Seven year old Farah lives with her mother who is pregnant, as Farah’s father is absent, it falls upon her to set out into the dark to seek help when her mother begins to give birth. See listing for Friday 20 April for venue and contact details.

Monday 23 April

6:00 pm | Material Aspects of Prayer in the Dead Sea Scrolls (Lecture) Daniel K Falk, University of Oregon. Organised by: Anglo-Israel Archaeological Society. Admission free. King’s College London, 2nd Floor, Strand Building, London WC2R 2LS. T 020 8349 5754 E sheilaford1@sky.com W www.ais.org.uk

6:15 pm | Beyond Palestine # 1: Syria (Film) Part of the 2012 London Palestine Film Festival. *The Long Night*, Dir Hatem Ali (2009), 94 min. Four prisoners are about to be released after serving 20 years as political detainees. With an introduction by Wissam Al Adel. See listing for Friday 20 April for venue and contact details.

7:00 pm | In Your Eyes a Sandstorm: Ways of Being a Palestinian (Book Launch) Organised by: Jews for Justice for Palestinians (JFJP) in association with the London Middle East Institute (LMEI), SOAS. Who are the Palestinians? In his book Arthur Neslen reaches beyond journalistic clichés to let a wide variety of Palestinians answer the question for themselves. Introduced by Gilbert Achcar, SOAS. Admission free. Room G50, SOAS. E jfjfp@jfjfp.org W www.jfjfp.org

7:00 pm | Bonjour Monsieur Ghaffari (Film) Organised by: Centre for Iranian Studies, LMEI, SOAS. Centre for Iranian Studies Monthly Film Evening. A portrait of the life and experiences of Farrokh Ghaffari, veteran Iranian film critic, founder of the Iranian Film Archive and one of the forerunners of the Iranian New Wave cinema in the early 60s. Followed by Q&A with the director, Parviz Jahed, film maker, film critic and scholar. Chaired by Saeed Zeydabadi-Nejad, SOAS. Tickets: £2 on the door. Khalili Lecture Theatre, SOAS. T 020 7898 4490 E vp6@soas.ac.uk W www.soas.ac.uk/lmei-cis/events/

8:30 pm | Lacan Palestine (Film) Part of the 2012 London Palestine Film Festival. Dir Mike Hoolboom (2012), 70 min. Visual allegories and cutup counternarratives around the notion of Palestine as “a land that is not a land”. Followed by Q&A with the director. See listing for Friday 20 April for venue and contact details.

Tuesday 24 April

5:30 pm | Areta - The Lost Civilization of Southern Persia (Talk) Mahmoud Kavir. Organised by: Centre for Iranian Studies, LMEI, SOAS. Areta is a lost civilization of the southeast of Iran going some 5000 years back in history. This mysterious civilization is referred to in the Sumerian text as one of the powerful and greatest civilizations of the time. Dr Kavir’s talk introduces this civilisation and examines its chequered history. Please note that this talk is delivered in Persian. Admission free. Room B102, SOAS. E vp6@soas.ac.uk W www.soas.ac.uk/lmei-cis/events/

6:15 pm | My Land + Eid (Film) Part of the 2012 London Palestine Film Festival. *My Land*, Dir Nabil Ayouch (2010), 85 min. After recording testimonies from Palestinians in the camps of the region, Ayouch visits their homes in present day Israel, testing the attitudes of today’s inhabitants toward the land’s Palestinian past and owners. + *Eid*, Dir Saeheb Collective (2011), 9 min. Using found materials Eid, a Palestinian Bedouin from the village of Um el Kheir, makes miniature models of the machinery of occupation, including bulldozers and helicopters. See listing for Friday 20 April for venue and contact details.

8:30 pm | Beyond Palestine # 2: Western Sahara (Film) Part of the 2012 London Palestine Film Festival. *The Problem*, Dir Jordi Ferrer & Pablo Vidal (2010), 82 min. Morocco’s occupation of the Western Sahara, and the Saharawi people’s resistance to it, continues to this day. While the Polisario Front heads the political and armed struggle from without, those living under occupation face draconian suppression of their cultural identity. Followed by a panel discussion. See listing for Friday 20 April for venue and contact details.
Wednesday 25 April

4:30 pm | Sunni identity and sectarian relations in post-civil war Iraq (Seminar) Fanar Haddad, Queen Mary, University of London. Organised by: LSE Kuwait Programme on Development, Governance and Globalisation in the Gulf States. Seminar examining the dynamics of sectarian relations and ‘sectarianism’ in Iraq. Admission free. Graham Wallas Room, 5th Floor, Old Building, LSE. T 0207 955 6639 E i.sinclair@lse.ac.uk W www2.lse.ac.uk/government/research/resgroups/kuwait/home.aspx

5:00 pm | Colouring Light: Brian Clarke – An Artist Apart by Mark Kidel (Film) The Aga Khan University (International)- Institute for the Study of Muslim Civilisations (AKU-ISMC). 5:00pm for 5:30pm. Part of the AKU-ISMC Film Series: Spaces Between. Documentary portrait on Brian Clarke, renowned for his stained glass work for the King Khaled International Airport Mosque. Tickets: £3 donation on the door. AKU-ISMC London, Multipurpose Room (1st Floor), 210 Euston Road, London NW1 2DA. T 020 7380 3865 E i.sinclair@lse.ac.uk W www.aku.edu

6:15 pm | Promised Lands + The Beautiful Language (Film) Part of the 2012 London Palestine Film Festival. Promised Lands, Dir Susan Sontag (1974) 87 min. Filmed in the aftermath of the October 1973 war Sontag’s documentary traces fault lines in a militarised society, combining observational meditations (landscapes, military patrols, cinemas, cemeteries, psychiatric wards, national museums) with interviews. With an introduction by Ella Shohat. + The Beautiful Language, Dir Mounir Fatmi (2010), 17 min. Fatmi revisits the imperial brutalities and scientific racisms critiqued in François Truffaut’s 1970 film, L’Enfant Sauvage, questioning their place in contemporary societies. See listing for Friday 20 April for venue and contact details.

6:30 pm | Life During Wartime: Eşref Bey and the End of the Ottoman Empire (Inaugural Lecture) Benjamin Fortna, SOAS. Organised by: SOAS Events Team. In his lecture Professor Benjamin Fortna will present the traumatic final years of the Ottoman Empire through the life of Eşref Bey, a field officer close to the Unionist leadership who was involved in each of the empire’s last wars: in Libya, in the Balkans, in the Great War and in the fighting that eventually produced the Turkish Republic. Admission free. Brunei Gallery Lecture Theatre, SOAS. T 020 7898 4013 E events@soas.ac.uk W www.soas.ac.uk/about/events/

8:45 pm | Last Days in Jerusalem + Diary of a Male Whore (Film) Part of the 2012 London Palestine Film Festival. Last Days in Jerusalem, Dir Tawfi k Abu Wael (2011), 85 min. See listing for Thursday 12 April for film details. + Diary of a Male Whore, Dir Tawfi k Abu Wael,(2001), 15 min. Essam, a young Arab refugee who lives in Tel Aviv, makes his living as a male prostitute. See listing for Friday 20 April for venue and contact details.

Thursday 26 April

11:00 am | Art of the Islamic & Indian Worlds (Auction) Organised by: Christie’s London. Also at 2:30pm. The sale includes a group of Iznik pottery dating from the mid to late 16th century and some early glass from across the Islamic world. Public Viewing Days: Friday 20 April - Wednesday 25 April (except Saturday 21 April).
6:00 pm | Some thoughts about Young Avestan polytheism (Lecture) Jean Kellens, Collège de France, Paris. Organised by: Department of the Study of Religions, SOAS. 2012 Kutar Lecture, SOAS. Admission free.

6:30 pm | Ziggurat: Diary of a Modern Day War Artist (Lecture) Organised by: British Institute for the Study of Iraq (BISI). Audio-visual presentation by Xavier Pick, peace artist and war artist, about his journey to Ur, with drawings, photographs, and extracts from the film he is currently working on, Ziggurat: Diary of a Modern Day War Artist. Tickets: £15/£10 BISI members/£5 Students. British Academy, 10 Carlton House Terrace, London SW1Y 5AH. T 020 7969 5274 E bisi@britac.ac.uk / bisiappeal@britac.ac.uk W www.bisi@britac.ac.uk / www.xavierpick.co.uk

7:00 pm | Ella Shohat: Israeli Cinema (Talk and Reception) Organised by: Palestine Film Foundation. Part of the 2012 London Palestine Film Festival. Ella Shohat joins dissident Israeli filmmaker Eyal Sivan to discuss the recent new edition of her seminal work Israeli Cinema: East/West and the Politics of Representation. Donation on the door. Khalili Lecture Theatre, SOAS. E info@palestinefilm.org W www.palestinefilm.org

7:00 pm | Persian Tribal Rugs (Talk) Organised by: Oriental Rug and Textile Society. Arash Karamzadeh of the Pars Rug Gallery will talk about Persian Tribal Rugs and invites you to bring your tribal bags and rugs for discussion. Tickets: £6 non-members (includes refreshments). Swedenborg Hall, 20/21 Bloomsbury Way, London WC1A 2TH (entrance on Barter Street). T 020 8886 3910 E penny@orientalrugandtextilesociety.org.uk W www.orientalrugandtextilesociety.org.uk

Friday 27 April

6:15 pm | Palestinian Refugees after the Iraq War: Screen Talk (Film) Part of the 2012 London Palestine Film Festival. Palestinian Refugees after the Iraq War: Screen Talk (Film) 2012. Tickets: £5/£10 BISI members/£5 Students. Swedenborg Hall, 20/21 Bloomsbury Way, London WC1A 2TH (entrance on Barter Street). T 020 8886 3910 E penny@orientalrugandtextilesociety.org.uk

Saturday 28 April

7:00 pm | Abbas Kiarostami Film Screening (Film) Organised by: RACE. Omid Cultural Centre, 45 Queens Walk, Ealing, London W5 1TL. Tickets: TBC. T 0781 884 0824 E omidculturalsociety@yahoo.co.uk W www.omidculturalsociety.com

Sunday 29 April

3:00 pm | Sports Sunday: An Olympic Year Triple Bill (Film) Part of the 2012 London Palestine Film Festival. Women in the Stadium, Dir Sawsan Qaoud (2011), 52 min. The thoughts and dreams behind the first Gaza Parkour Team, an initiative of two 22-year-old friends, Mohammed al-Jakheber and Abdallah Enshis. See listing for Thursday 26 April for venue and contact ticket details.

Monday 30 April


6:15 pm | The Druze in Israel: Screen Talk (Film) Part of the 2012 London Palestine Film Festival. Back to One’s Roots, Dir Bilal YOUSEF (2009), 47 min. Documentary that works to demystify and challenge perceptions of Druze political life in Israel, it tells the story of Yaman, a Druze citizen who grew up in the north of Israel. Followed by a talk by Kaif Firro on Druze politics and society in Israel. Darwin Theatre, UCL. See listing for Thursday 26 April for ticket and contact details.
6:00 pm | **Ain Zubaida: The Symbol of a Magnificent Legacy** (Lecture) Omar Abu Rezaiza, King Abdul-Aziz University. Organised by: London Middle East Institute, SOAS (LMEI). A talk by Professor Abu Rezaiza on Zubaida Al-Abbasi, who lived in Baghdad from AD 760 to 820, and her extraordinary contribution to the ancient engineering heritage of the region through her support of the Qanat (ain) system where groundwater from upstream Wadi Naaman was transferred through a network of stone galleries (qanats) to the City of Mecca and other Holy Places. Admission free. Room B102, SOAS. E vp6@soas.ac.uk W www.soas.ac.uk/lmei/events/

**EVENTS OUTSIDE LONDON**

**Wednesday 25 April**

5:00 pm | **The Relationship between Islamic Ethics and Islamic Law** (Seminar) Jasser Auda.

**Sunday 1 April**

Until 15 April | **Hajj: journey to the heart of Islam** Examining the logistics involved, the exhibition compares how pilgrims over the centuries negotiated this undertaking and how it continues to be experienced today. Various ticket prices. BM. T 020 7323 8181 W www.britishmuseum.org

Until 12 August | **Migrations: Journeys into British Art** Exhibition exploring how British art has been shaped by migration. Featuring artists from van Dyck, Whistler and Mondrian to Steve McQueen and Francis Alÿs. Tickets: £6/£5 conc. or £6.60/£5.50 conc. including Gift Aid W www.tate.org.uk/tickets Tate Britain, Gallery 2, Millbank, London SW1P 4RG. T 020 7887 8888 E visiting.britain@tate.org.uk W www.tate.org.uk/britain/

Until 7 April | **Raeda Saadeh: True Tales, Fairy Tales** Raeda Saadeh’s images portray the Palestinian experience in the most visually striking way, they convey the atmosphere of living with curfews, under occupation and surrounded by destroyed Palestinian houses. Admission free. Rose Issa Projects, 269 Kensington High Street, London W8 6NA. T 020 7602 7700 E info@roseissa.com W www.roseissa.com

Until 20 May | **Social States** Duo-exhibition of new works by resident artists Baptist Coelho and Nadia Kaabi-Linke which investigates how we communicate individual and historic experiences of social conflict. Admission free. The Delfina Foundation, 29 Catherine Place, London SW1E 6DY. T 020 7233 5344 E info@delfinafoundation.com W www.delfinafoundation.com

**Friday 6 April**

Until 26 April | **Navigations: Palestinian Video Art, 1988 to 2011** 2012 London Palestine Film Festival Exhibition. A celebration of the creative practices developed by artists working in Palestine and the diaspora over nearly a quarter of a century. Admission free. Mezzanine, Barbican Centre, Silk Street, London EC2Y 8DS. E info@palestinefilm.org W www.palestinefilm.org

**Tuesday 17 April**

Until 23 June | **Disappearing heritage of Sudan 1820 - 1956** A photographic and filmic research exhibition by Frederique Cifuentes A unique collection of photographs and videos that document the remnants of the...
MIDDLE EAST BRIEFINGS
The London Middle East Institute offers tailored briefings on the politics, economics, cultures and languages of the Middle East. Previous clients include UK and foreign governmental bodies and private entities. Contact us for details.

Tel: 020 7898 4330 E-mail: lh2@soas.ac.uk

MAY EVENTS

Tuesday 1 May

6:15 pm | Subversive Film Presents: L’Olivier (Film) Part of the 2012 London Palestine Film Festival. Dir Collectif Vincennes (1976), 82 min. Cannily structured to convey the Palestinian story and to highlight the (then) present state of the struggle, L’Olivier is a rousing call for global revolutionary solidarities and, particularly, for European political engagements. See listing for Monday 30 April for venue details and Thursday 26 April for ticket and contact details.

Wednesday 2 May

5:00 pm | Our Feelings Took the Pictures - Open Shutters Iraq by Maysoon Pachachi (Film) The Aga Khan University (International)-Institute for the Study of Muslim Civilisations (AKU-ISMC). 5:00pm for 5:30pm. Part of the AKU-ISMC Film Series: Spaces Between. Photography project during which a group of women came from five cities in Iraq to live and work together in Damascus where they presented their ‘life maps’ to each other, unearthing memories and telling stories. £3 donation on the door. AKU-ISMC London, Multipurpose Room (1st Floor), 210 Euston Road, London NW1 2DA. T 020 7380 3865 E Anne.Czambor@aku.edu W www.aku.edu

6:15 pm | My Father from Haifa (Film) Part of the 2012 London Palestine Film Festival. Dir Omar Shargawi (2009), 52 min. The personal story of Danish-Palestinian director, Omar Al Shargawi’s search for understanding and reconciliation with his father Munir, who fled Palestine as a child in 1948. See listing for Monday 30 April for venue details and Thursday 26 April for ticket and contact details.

Thursday 3 May


Saturday 5 May

10:30 am | A seminar day on martyrdom in the Iraqi Church: historic and modern perspectives (Seminar) Cornelia Horn, St Louis, Missouri; Desmond Durkin-Meisternst, Berlin; François de Blois, Cambridge; Richard Payne, Mt Holyoke, Massachusetts; Suha Rassam, ICIN; and representatives of the Iraqi communities. Centre of Eastern and Orthodox Christianity, Department of the Study of Religions, SOAS, British Institute for the Study of Iraq and Jerusalem and Middle Eastern Churches Association. Christianity in Iraq IX. Seminar exploring the historic aspects of martyrdom and martyrdom in the modern communities of Iraqi churches. Tickets: £30/£25 Members of BSI or JMECA/£12 students. Brunei Gallery Lecture Theatre, SOAS. E eh9@soas.ac.uk W www.easternchristianity.com

Tuesday 8 May

5:30 pm | The Rock Carvings of the Messak: a story of pastoral adaptation (Lecture) Maria Guagnin, Member of the Society for Libyan Studies Fezzan Rock Art Project. Organised by: Society for Libyan Studies. Admission free. Lecture Theatre, British Academy, 10 Carlton House Terrace, London SW1Y 5AH. E shirleystrong@btconnect.com W www.societyforlibyanstudies.org

6:30 pm | Fuel on the Fire: Oil and Politics in Iraq (Lecture) Greg Muttitt, Campaigns and Policy Director at War on Want and author. Organised by: LSE Kuwait Programme on Development, Governance and Globalisation in the Gulf States. Admission free. New Theatre, East Building, LSE. T 0207 955 6639 E l.sinclair@lse.ac.uk W www2.lse.ac.uk/government/research/resgroups/kuwait/home.aspx
Wednesday 9 May

6:30 pm | Politics and Power in the Maghreb (Lecture) Michael Willis, University of Oxford. Organised by: Society for Algerian Studies and the LSE Middle East Centre. Lecture on the modern history of the Maghreb, the area where the Arab uprisings began. Admission free. Thai Theatre, LSE. E info@algerianstudies.org.uk / d.c.akkad@lse.ac.uk W www.algerianstudies.org.uk / www2.lse.ac.uk/middleEastCentre/home.aspx

Monday 14 May

7:30 pm | FRENEMIES + Jigsaw (Performance) Stand-up comedy evening hosted by the Centre for Iranian Studies, LMEI, SOAS. With Miss D (aka Daphna Baram) and Peyvand Khorsandi + Jigsaw. "She's Israeli. He's Iranian. Can they sweep their differences under the carpet?" Tickets: £7/£3 Students advance booking online or £10/£5 Students on the door. Brunei Gallery Lecture Theatre, SOAS. E vp6@soas.ac.uk W www.soas.ac.uk/lmei-cis/events/

Tuesday 15 May

6:30 pm | The Kurdish Spring: State-society relations and dissent in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (Lecture) Nicole Watts, San Francisco State University. Organised by: LSE Middle East Centre. Watts, who was in Sulyanmaniyah last spring for the 'Kurdish Spring', will discuss her on-going research on dissent and campaigns for social and political change in Iraqi Kurdistan. Admission free. Alumni Theatre, LSE. E d.c.akkad@lse.ac.uk W www2.lse.ac.uk/middleEastCentre/home.aspx

Wednesday 16 May

Time TBC | Musical Geographies of Central Asia (Three-Day Conference: Wednesday 16 - Friday 18 May) Keynote speaker: Theodore Levin, Dartmouth College. Organised by: The Middle East and Central Asia Music Forum (Institute of Musical Research, School of Advanced Study) in association with SOAS. International Conference convened by Saida Daukeyeva, IMR and Rachel Harris, SOAS. Tickets: TBC. Senate House and SOAS. T 0207 664 4865 E music@sas.ac.uk

4:30 pm | Religion, ideology, and strategic calculation: The Arab Gulf monarchies and the Arab-Israeli conflict (Seminar) Rene Rieger, Institute of Arab and Islamic Studies, University of Exeter and Ludwig Maximilians University of Munich. Organised by: LSE Kuwait Programme on Development, Governance and Globalisation in the Gulf States. Seminar on the Arab Gulf monarchies’ policies towards the Arab-Israeli conflicts in the period 1967 to 1991. Admission free. KSW 1.04, LSE. T 0207 955 6639 E i.sinclair@lse.ac.uk W www2.lse.ac.uk/government/research/resgroups/kuwait/home.aspx

7:00 pm | A lecture to celebrate the life and work of Ernst J Grube: 1932–2011: The Edmund de Unger Ewer: an Early Fatimid Rock Crystal Ewer in Context (Lecture) Jeremy Johns, Khalili Research Centre for the Art and Material Culture of the Middle East, University of Oxford. Part of the Islamic Art Circle at SOAS Lecture Programme. Chaired by Doris Behrens-Abouseif, SOAS. Admission free. Khalili Lecture Theatre, SOAS. T 0771 408 7480 E RosalindHaddon@aol.com W www.soas.ac.uk/art/islac/

Thursday 17 May

5:00 pm | Saad Amiry and Palestinian Life Writing (Lecture) Bart Moore-Gilbert, Goldsmiths College, University of London. Organised by: Bloomsbury Gender Network and the Centre for Gender Studies, SOAS. Part of the Centre for Gender Studies Seminar Series. Seminar on Saad Amiry’s Sharon and my Mother-in-Law (2005), focusing on the author’s articulation of the genre of life-writing in the Palestinian context from a gendered perspective. Admission free. Room 4421, SOAS. E rs94@soas.ac.uk W www.soas.ac.uk/about/events/

Sunday 20 May

Time TBC | The Ruling of Zaman Khan (Performance) Production of SAAM Theatre Company’s Drama Workshops. Directed by Soussan Farrokhnia. Tickets: £5. Unitarian Church, 311/5 Hoop Lane, Golders Green, London NW11 8BS. T 0781 396 00 31 W www.omidculturalsociety.com

Monday 21 May

6:00 pm | Coin Circulation in Hellenistic and Early Roman Galilee: politics, economy and ethnicity (Lecture) Danny Syon, Israel Antiquities Authority. Organised by: Anglo-Israel Archaeological Society. Admission free. King’s College London, 2nd Floor, Strand Building, London
Wednesday 23 May

5:30 pm | New field work at Kadhima (Kuwait) and the archaeology of the Early Islamic period in Eastern Arabia (Lecture)
Derek Kennet, Durham University. Organised by: British Foundation for the Study of Arabia and the LSE Kuwait Research Programme

Wednesday 25 May

Time TBC | The Messages of Hizbullah: Communication

Friday 25 May

5:30 pm | The Development of Ethics and Spirituality through Islamic Law (Seminar)

Wednesday 30 May

5:00 pm | Reflections on Friendship in Islamic and Western Thought (Seminar)

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Rasheed Araeen ‘Rang Beranga’, 1969, Tate (Migrations: Journeys into British Art, see Exhibitions, page 31)
PRESS RELEASE

17 APRIL – 23 JUNE 2012

Disappearing heritage of Sudan
1820 - 1956:
A photographic and filmic research exhibition
By Frederique Cifuentes

Frederique Cifuentes undertook photographic and filmic research in Sudan from 2004 to 2010. One of the most important outcomes of this journey was to build up a new and unique collection of photographs and videos that documents the remnants of the colonial experience in Sudan from the Ottoman, Egyptian, and British periods. All the materials taken during these journeys will be used for the exhibition. It will offer a different way of looking at imperial history.

This photographic and video project is an exploration of the mechanics of empires through its official buildings, private residencies, cinema houses, railways, irrigation canals, and bridges. This research, the only one of its kind, will highlight colonial architecture, design and construction and the impact they had on Sudanese society before and after Independence in 1956. It will help us understand the ways in which people appropriated and used the buildings.

The exhibition will be comprised of materials created by Frederique Cifuentes and from Durham University’s Sudan Archive. Many of the country’s old buildings have fallen victim to wider economic development or lack of a preservation campaign. This study will show different aspects and forms of the rich colonial architectural heritage in Sudan before it vanishes completely. This is an illustrated history of a unique cultural landscape.

The exhibition will also be shown at the Dunelm Gallery, Durham University, October - December 2013, after which the photographic collection will be donated to the University of Khartoum, Sudan.

Abu Gharban railroad station, Bayuda Desert

For more information visit: www.soas.ac.uk/gallery or
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