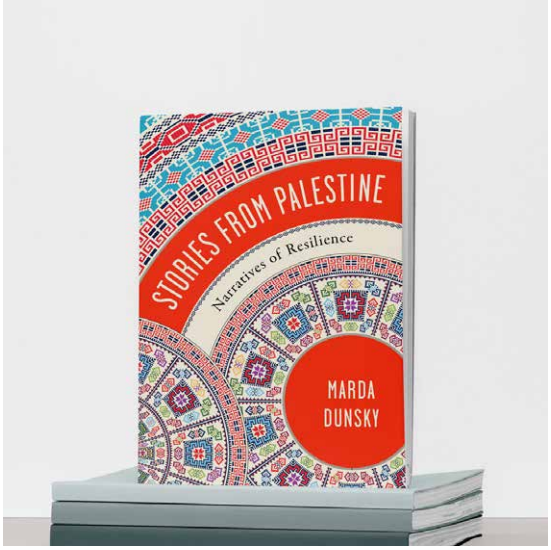

The Palestinians as We Have Never Seen Them

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Stories from Palestine: Narratives of Resilience
by Marda Dunsky
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262 pages

What does the world know about the Palestinians, their daily routine and their ambitions, apart from the fact that they are "victims of occupation"? Indeed, occupation is not pleasant, and Palestinian lives are marked by major hardships, including long lines at roadblocks, limited access to water, and confiscation of land. At the same time, according to this book, which presents the stories of some 30 Palestinian men and women from different areas, Palestinians are optimistic, determined, and talented. The individuals portrayed here include entrepreneurs who have succeeded at the international level, artists, professors who studied abroad, and more. Author Marda Dunsky is anxious to show that the Palestinians are not only victims, but also people who create, achieve, and seek to live in freedom.

In the preface, Dunsky discusses the rationale behind the book, and then proceeds to the chapters, each telling the stories of people who share a core characteristic, together with supporting data: farmers who successfully market local produce, artists who express their opposition to occupation in their work, children who experience and respond to the occupation in psychological and physical terms, a woman doctor who describes how the restrictions on leaving the territory have led to marriages of cousins, and others. Finally, Dunsky places the Palestinian narrative in a broader context. She ends with the conclusion that in spite of the wide range in outlook she encountered, those she interviewed cling steadfastly to the narrative, which is evidence of its strength and continuity.

Marda Dunsky is an American journalist and lecturer on journalism, with expertise in the contemporary Middle East. She taught journalism at Northwestern University and worked at the *Chicago Tribune*. As part of her work, she spent time in Israel and met Palestinians and witnessed their daily reality—an encounter that sowed the seeds for this book. "When you know that there's more to a story than what you have been told, more than what you have read and seen from a distance, what do you do?" said Dunsky in an interview with the publisher. Dunsky listened to her subjects' stories. When she was unable to meet these individuals, she conducted the interviews remotely. Among them was an interview with a gifted girl from Gaza who takes part in global mathematics competitions, which gave her a rare opportunity to leave the Strip.

Many books have been written about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, some of them personal memoirs of participants in the negotiations; some by academics, researchers, or media figures; some by professional writers and intellectuals. All these authors don specific glasses that reflect their particular views of the conflict, their political positions, their recollections, or the influence of their homeland. A quick survey of the library seems to show

that Dunsky's book is different in its nature and purpose from other books on the conflict.

Dunsky's subjects don't want to be pitied; they want their stories to be heard. They want the world to know that the Palestinians are not only linked to terrorism and violence, but to much more as well. Through their personal stories, amorphous images and stereotypes give way to concrete biographies and perspectives.

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Take, for example, Nazmi Jubeh, a professor of history at Bir Zeit University who lives in Beit Hanina. For 25 years, five days a week, he has traveled 50 kilometers from his home to his workplace and back, and waits for hours at the Qalandiya roadblock. He estimates that a quarter of the time of his workday is actually spent waiting at roadblocks. Indeed, who could keep calm in such a daily reality? From 1993 to 2000, he read about 100 books in line at roadblocks. "My car was a library," he says (p. 201). Dunsky points out that the complex logistics of this daily reality take their toll, and, reading is Jubeh's way of dealing with the anger he feels:

> In general, every conflict produces a lot of violence. Societies are becoming more violent and more aggressive, in every aspect of life.…Not everybody can get rid of the violence inside them in a positive way. Some do not manage. Some manage. I found my way of getting rid of anger at the checkpoints by reading.…The difference between us and others (occupied people) is that we are living in this conflict for more than five decades. They (the Israelis: AE) decide which books are allowed to come to the West Bank; they decide which kind of goods we can import. (pp. 201-202)

Jubeh could have overcome the logistical difficulties and avoided waiting at roadblocks by moving to Bir Zeit, and in that way also save a lot of money, because a home in Bir Zeit would cost him about $100,000, while a home in Jerusalem costs five times as much. But the trauma of 1948, which is embedded deep in the Palestinian consciousness, as their stories show, does not allow him to do that. "Nothing will move me out from my city," says Jubeh. "We were driven from our homes in 1948. We will not repeat it" (p. 202).

Or in the words of Imad Khatib, president of the Palestine Polytechnic University in Hebron: "There is no Palestinian who will accept becoming a refugee again" (p. 120). Khatib earned his doctorate in Germany and returned five years after the Oslo Accords, during the honeymoon—that is how he describes that time, when money flowed into the region. He was exposed to the Israeli left and was disappointed, and when an Israeli colleague who was one of the architects of the Oslo Accords said to him once that to tell the truth, it's not their land, Khatib understood that the Israeli left, or at least parts of it, does not recognize the legitimate rights of the Palestinians (pp. 112-120).

"Living under years of occupation" says Nadia Harhash, a divorced woman residing in Beit Hanina, "has diminished the value of life among the Palestinian people. Life feels so miserable and worthless that death seems merely to be a change, not a loss. Young men are eager to go and fight, knowing they will likely be killed, because this would not be a loss to them...Living in that state of humiliation, oppression, and suppression changes the nature of our souls and robs us of our joy for life. Life needs a space for hope to thrive, and such spaces have been shut and locked for young Palestinians." (p. 143). In periods of tension she is afraid that her daughters will become *shaheeds* (martyrs). She often goes with her daughters to Jerusalem's Old City and this is her way of expressing opposition, of seeking to show that the place belongs to them.

Alongside the human interest stories, Dunsky cites various data and figures relating to the routine of life in the territories: demographics, territory, infrastructures, and more. These figures, taken from reports from the UN, UNRWA, human rights organizations, Israeli and Palestinian government sources, NGOs, academic sources, and the media are intended to support the stories and the greater Palestinian narrative. For example, there is the demographic contradiction of Palestinians living in East Jerusalem: 95 percent are not citizens, but residents. From 1967 to 2017 the Arab population in East Jerusalem increased five-fold—double the rate of population growth in the Jewish population. Nevertheless, since 1967 the Israeli government has promoted the construction of 55,000 housing units for the Jewish population, compared to 600 units in Arab neighborhoods for the Arab population. According to Peace Now, only 16.5 percent of building permits are granted to Palestinians, although they represent about a third of Jerusalem's population. This reality has led to unauthorized building in Palestinian neighborhoods, for lack of choice. According to estimates, about 20,000 housing units are destined for demolition. In the years 2004-2019 about 1000 units were demolished.

Dunsky also describes discrimination against the Arabs of East Jerusalem: from 1967 to 2014 some 14,500 Palestinians lost the right to live in Jerusalem, and since 2006, when Israel added the condition of declaring loyalty to Israel, other Palestinians—those defined as terrorists—have also been barred. A Palestinian who goes abroad for a long period loses the right to return, contrary to Jews, whose right to the land is a given in the Israeli system.

Palestinians in East Jerusalem can vote in local elections, but not in the Knesset elections. They do not have Israeli passports. They can apply for citizenship, but this can take years. From 2003 to 2014 some 10,000 Palestinians applied, and about 3,000 are in the process of obtaining citizenship. Dunsky does not describe the other side of the coin: the anti-Israel political activity that leads to threats against residents who apply for citizenship.

According to Jubeh, the Palestinians in East Jerusalem have no political address in the city, that is, no institution to contact that will respond to their problems, so that in their distress, people find refuge and strength in their families, "because the law is not there to help us," he says, "the law is the law of the occupier." Discrimination against the Palestinians in East Jerusalem is not only geographic but also social, claims Jubeh. "There are some services that we use together like hospitals, transportation. We are living with Israelis but absolutely separated. Both sides try to ignore the existence of the other" (p. 201). Mahmoud Muna, the organizer of the Palestinian Festival of Literature in Ramallah and (some other places), describes it in a more extreme way: "The future will have to be better. I don't think anything can happen that is going to be worse than what we have already seen" (p. 132). Muna was born in Jerusalem in 1982. The trip to al-Quds University, where he studied, became much longer when the contiguity between the Palestinian villages was severed: five minutes became an hour and a half, and three kilometers became 25. Some of his friends were killed in clashes with the Israeli army. He is frustrated by the fact that the Palestinians have difficulty telling their story to the world.

It is unnecessary to read to the last page to understand that Dunsky presents a pro-Palestinian approach with no account of the essential circumstances affecting Israeli interests and needs, Palestinian political stubbornness and lack of willingness to compromise, a national struggle that has adopted terror tactics, and more.

That is what Dunsky has tried to do, but the picture she presents is not symmetrical. For example, she lays out the main points of former US President Trump's "deal of the century," presents its lack of balance, and details the

broad American support for Israel during his presidency. However, she omits any information about the external aid amounting to tens of billions of dollars that the Palestinians have received over the years, and that have come to naught. Presumably she feels there is no need to present these facts, nor does she pretend to be neutral. It is a mistake to think that this is a case of two equal parties: both parties have equal rights to security and dignity, but they do not have the same power to achieve them (p. 198).

It is unnecessary to read to the last page to understand that Dunsky presents a pro-Palestinian approach with no account of the essential circumstances affecting Israeli interests and needs, Palestinian political stubbornness and lack of willingness to compromise, a national struggle that has adopted terror tactics, and more. According to Dunsky, many books have dealt with this, and the purpose of this book—which is mainly aimed at the international public—is to deepen the reader's knowledge of the human-interest angle and arouse empathy and support for the routine and daily lives of the Palestinians. She seems to have succeeded in this task.

Lt. Col. (res.) Alon Eviatar, familiar with the Palestinian arena for many years, served in the IDF as an intelligence officer in Unit 8200 and as an advisor on Arab affairs for the Coordinator of Activities in the Territories. He is a lecturer and advisor on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and a commentator on Arab-Palestinian affairs in the Israeli, foreign, and Arab media. Aloneviatar1@gmail.com

Call for Papers for *Strategic Assessment*

The editorial board of the INSS journal *Strategic Assessment* invites authors to submit articles to be published in the journal's updated format. Proposals for special themed issues are also welcome.

Strategic Assessment, a multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary peer-reviewed journal on national security, cyber, and intelligence, was launched in 1998 and is published quarterly in Hebrew and English by the Institute for National Security Studies (INSS) at Tel Aviv University. *Strategic Assessment* serves as a platform for original research on a spectrum of issues relating to the discipline of national security, cyber, and intelligence. The purpose of the journal is to spark and enhance an informed, constructive debate of fundamental questions in national security studies, using an approach that integrates a theoretical dimension with policy-oriented research. Articles on topics relating to Israel, the Middle East, the international arena, and global trends are published with the goal of enriching and challenging the national security knowledge base.

The current era has seen many changes in fundamental conventions relating to national security and how it is perceived at various levels. As national security research evolves, it seeks to adjust to new paradigms and to innovations in the facets involved, be they technological, political, cultural, military, or socio-economic. Moreover, the challenge of fully grasping reality has become even more acute with the regular emergence of competing narratives, and this is precisely why factual and data-based research studies are essential to revised and relevant assessments.

The editorial board encourages researchers to submit articles that have not been previously published that propose an original and innovative thesis on national security with a broad disciplinary approach rooted in international relations, political science, history, economics, law, communications, geography and environmental studies, Israel studies, Middle East and Islamic studies, sociology and anthropology, strategy and security studies, technology, cyber, conflict resolution, or additional disciplines.

In the spirit of the times, *Strategic Assessment* is shifting its center of gravity to an online presence and availability. While INSS will continue to prepare issues on a quarterly basis, articles approved for publication, following the review and editing process, will be published in an online version on the journal's website in the format of "published first online," and subsequently included in the particular quarterly issues.

Strategic Assessment publishes articles in five categories:

Research Forum – academic articles of a theoretical and research nature on a wide range of topics related to national security, of up to 8000 words in Hebrew or 10,000 words in English (with APA-style documentation). Articles should be researched-based and include a theoretical perspective, and address a range of subjects related to national security. All articles are submitted for double blind peer review. Submissions must include an abstract of 100-120 words; keywords (no more than ten); and a short author biography.

Policy Analysis – articles of 1500-3000 in Hebrew words and up to 3,500 words in English that analyze policies in national security contexts. These articles will be without footnotes and bibliography and use hyperlinks to refer to sources, as necessary. Recommended reading and additional source material can be included. Submissions must include an abstract of 100-120 words; keywords (no more than ten); and a short author biography.

Professional Forum – panel discussions on a particular topic, or in-depth interview, of 2000-3000 words (up to 3500 words in English) including source material (APA-style). Submissions must include a short author biography.

Academic Survey – a survey of 1800-2500 words (up to 3000 words in English) including references and recommended reading (APA-style) of the latest professional literature on a specific topic relating to national security. Submissions must include a short author biography.

Book Reviews – book reviews of 800-1300 words (up to 1500 words in English) including source material (APA-style) on a wide range of books relating to national security. Submissions must include a short author biography.

Articles should be submitted electronically to editors-sa@inss.org.il and indicate the category of the attached article. You may also use this e-mail address for questions or additional information about the journal.

Kobi Michael and Carmit Valensi
Editors, *Strategic Assessment*