Governing Gaza
Feldman, Ilana

Published by Duke University Press

Feldman, Ilana.

For additional information about this book
https://muse.jhu.edu/book/65108

For content related to this chapter
https://muse.jhu.edu/related_content?type=book&id=2290189
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

My thanks go first to the people I knew in Gaza. This book could not have been written without the many retired civil servants and other Gazans who welcomed me into their offices, homes, and lives—who let me tape record our conversations and shared their memories and insights with me. Though my commitment to honor their privacy means I cannot name them here, I am forever grateful to them. Of those people I knew in Gaza whom I can name, special thanks must go to my research assistants, Emad Karam and Mushir Amer, who with amazing dedication and resourcefulness helped me transcribe the tapes of my interviews and work through some of my documentary materials. I am also grateful for their good humor and the pleasure of their company. Others in Gaza who helped me with my research include Dr. Assam Sesalem, Wedad Sourani, Majda Taleb, Ahmed Saleem, Wedad Nasser, Yusuf El-Hindi, Abdul Latif Abu Hashim, and Rajab Sarraj. I thank them all for their efforts, and also thank Wedad for the many excellent meals. I wish them and everyone in Gaza and in Palestine more generally better days ahead.

I conducted archival research for this project in a number of places. I am grateful to the archivists and librarians at Dar al-Watha’iq and Dar al-Kutub in Cairo; the Israel State Archives and the Jewish National Library in Jerusalem; the Library of Congress; the New York Public Library (particularly the Middle East and Jewish Divisions); the National Archives/PRO in London; the American Friends Service Committee Archives in Philadelphia; and the United Nations Archives in New York. Staff in the Gaza City offices
of the Palestinian Housing Ministry, Awqaf Ministry, Comptroller General’s Office, Pensions and Social Security Administration, ’Omari Mosque library, as well as the Gaza City Municipality, aided my research into Gaza’s local documentary history immensely. The New York Public Library deserves an additional word of thanks for providing not only resources for my research, but wonderful spaces in which to write. I wrote the dissertation that was the first incarnation of this project in the Wertheim Study and wrote much of this book in the Allen Room. I cannot imagine better conditions in which to work. Some of the ideas explored in this book were first published in my “Everyday Government in Extraordinary Times: Persistence and Authority in Gaza’s Civil Service (1917–1967),” Comparative Studies in Society and History 47, 4 (2005): 863–91.

I was extremely fortunate to receive generous financial support at all stages of this process, support that gave me the opportunity to dedicate myself not only to research but to writing. Dissertation research was funded by the Near and Middle East Program of the Social Science Research Council (through two grants), the Council of American Overseas Research Centers, and the Wenner-Gren Foundation. The writing of the dissertation was made possible by support from the Horace Rackham Graduate School at the University of Michigan and the Charlotte W. Newcombe Foundation. I conducted follow-up research in Palestine with a grant from the Palestinian American Research Center. The writing of this book was supported by a Richard Carley Hunt Fellowship from the Wenner-Gren Foundation. I thank all these institutions for their support.

My research experience was made eminently more pleasurable by the many wonderful people I knew in Gaza and Ramallah. I treasure my friendships with Khalil and Ana Ansara, Christo Bursheh, Marwan Hamad, Lubna Ghaneim, Amelia Peltz, and Nisreen Shyoukhi. Abu ’Ali Harara and Jamal Harazin helped me in my everyday life in Gaza in innumerable ways, keeping a careful, but never oppressive, eye on my well-being. Bassam Nasser helped me get settled when I first arrived. A special word of thanks goes to Samah Zaroub and her family. I can’t imagine a warmer welcome than I received from this large, wonderful family. I was delighted to share the joys of their life and honored to be included also in their sorrows.

My intellectual interest in the Middle East, and my first inkling that I
wanted to be an academic, began when I was an undergraduate at Wesleyan University. I especially thank Hope Weissman, my senior thesis advisor, for reading everything and always challenging me to do more. It is certain friends from college—most especially Jen Douglas, Erin Kelly, and Elizabeth Meister—whom I most count on to keep me true to myself. I began my graduate work in the Near Eastern Studies program at New York University. Courses I took there with Lila Abu-Lughod, Samira Haj, and Timothy Mitchell influenced my thinking in important ways. While at NYU, I also began my study of Arabic with Ahmed Ferhadi, who provided an excellent foundation. Anyone who works on the Middle East will find the rest of my path of Arabic language learning (Middlebury, casa) familiar. I am grateful to my teachers in these institutions and also for the many friendships forged in the struggle of learning Arabic. My casa cohort was especially close, and I appreciate the continued friendships of Christina Civantos, Ken Garden, Parastou Hassouri, Kate Kolstad, Nancy Reynolds, Karen Rignall, Jessica Winegar, and the other shilla members Lee Keath and Karim Mostafa.

I cannot think of a better intellectual training ground than the University of Michigan’s doctoral program in anthropology and history. Certainly it provided me with exactly what I needed to be able to imagine and embark on this project. I especially thank the members of my doctoral committee—Brinkley Messick, Ann Stoler, Juan Cole, and Val Daniel—both for their intellectual examples and for their encouragement throughout. The influence of what they taught me is evident throughout these pages. Fellow students at Michigan—including Lee Belhman, Carla Daughtry, Karen Rignall, and Laura Stevens—enriched all aspects of my life. I was especially fortunate that an extraordinary group of colleagues and friends also came to New York for dissertation writing. I cannot imagine a better writing group than we had—its strength perhaps evident in that it has continued in various forms even beyond the dissertation. For their insightful comments, helpful nudges, careful readings, and the pleasure of their company, I thank Pamila Gupta, Rachel Heiman, Mani Limbert, Brian Mooney, and Karen Strassler.

I began the process of reimagining my dissertation while a fellow at the Society of Fellows in the Humanities at Columbia University. While teaching contemporary civilization occupied a great deal of my time, what I learned from the experience has influenced this text in unanticipated ways.
I am glad for the presence around the Heyman Center of Bashir Abu-Manneh, Sandrine Berteaux, Rashmi Sadana, Mark Swislocki, and Miriam Ticktin, all of whom stimulated my thinking enormously. I consider it especially fortuitous that Miriam and I landed at Columbia at the same time. Our conversations and ongoing collaborations have been important to so many aspects of my work. I am thankful to my colleagues at the Kevorkian Center at New York University for providing a congenial place to work and to write. I am most especially grateful to Zachary Lockman for making it possible for me to have the time to do so. My gratitude to the people who took the time (out of always busy schedules) to read parts or all of the manuscript is enormous. I thank Robert Blecher, Elliott Colla, Rachel Heiman, Mandana Limbert, Zachary Lockman, Shira Robinson, and Rashmi Sadana. The book is immeasurably improved by their thoughtful suggestions. I am grateful to Hamdi Attia for his work on the maps and to Tracy Maher for her help with transliterations. I also thank two anonymous readers for Duke University Press for their comments and Ken Wissoker, Courtney Berger, and Mark Mastromarino for their enthusiasm for the project and their expert guidance in bringing it to completion.

I am grateful to my husband, Hani Alam, for his love and care and for the pleasure of life beyond work. I am thankful to my family for their unfailing support for me and my work—even when they have found it troubling. My grandmother died shortly before I completed this book; my mother, ten years earlier. Both were tremendously strong women: loving, smart, and stubborn. The qualities I inherited and learned from them have been crucial not only in my work, but in my life. It is to them I dedicate this book.