

Books and Reports

Gaza: Preparing for Dawn' by Donald Macintyre (Gabi)

<https://www.hive.co.uk/Product/Donald-Macintyre/Gaza--Preparing-for-Dawn/22644475>

Most media coverage paints a relatively one-dimensional picture of Gaza: a population sandwiched between the harsh economic blockade imposed by Israel and the brutal rule of Hamas leadership. This does much to obscure its incredibly complex history and contemporary reality.

Macintyre provides a really accessible, bitesize chronology of the political events, conflict and discourse that has surrounded Gaza, from 1917, when it was captured by British imperial forces from the Ottomans, to 2017.

Particularly fascinating is his dissection of the relationship between Hamas, the Palestinian Authority and Israel, and of the international influence of the Middle East Quartet. As a journalist, however, his account is also deeply personal, led by the stories and voices of people he met during his time in the region.

For anyone interested in learning more about the nuance to this agonising place, and its inextricable connectedness to the wider Israeli-Palestinian conflict, it's a must read.

EcoPeace Middle East, 'Climate Change, Water Security, and National Security for Jordan, Palestine, and Israel' (2019) (Gabi)

<http://ecopeaceme.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/climate-change-web.pdf>

EcoPeace is an NGO that brings together Jordanian, Palestinian and Israeli environmentalists. It promotes regional cooperation and collaboration to protect shared environmental heritage and to engage in cross-border peace building.

This report provides a fascinating overview of current and projected climate-related challenges - principally water scarcity - in the Israel, Palestine and Jordan. Rather than a scientific analysis, it explores the consequences of predicted changes from a socio-political perspective.

For the three neighbouring countries at the heart of the MENA region, which has been identified as a climate hotspot, many questions fall to be answered. What is the relationship between

climate change and social conflict? Can climate change act as a threat multiplier, exacerbating already existing social tensions in the region?

The report sheds light on these uncertainties and concludes with 5 practical policy recommendations which seek to mitigate against the worst impacts of climate change. Examples include placing climate change on national security agendas and, beyond this, creating a roadmap for an integrated regional plan.

Find out more about EcoPeace here: <http://ecopeaceme.org/>

To the End of the Land by David Grossman (Zavi)

<https://www.hive.co.uk/Product/David-Grossman/To-The-End-of-the-Land/148605>

I read this novel just before my fellowship trip to Israel, and much of the book resonated with me throughout my travels, recognising not only places and sights described in the book, but also relationships and emotions involving young soldiers.

To the End of the Land describes the story of Ora as she travels through Israel, trying to avoid having to hear the news that her son, who is serving in the IDF, might be dead.

Seeing so many young soldiers in Israel always makes me sad, but after reading this book I appreciated with greater keenness how many more people are impacted by a soldier's service than just himself.

Not only did it really give an insight into the daily lives of families whose loved ones are daily at risk, but it also had a wonderful sub narrative about the complexity of relationships between Jews and Arabs. It didn't always make for a comfortable read but it was incredibly gripping and beautifully written.

My Promised Land by Ari Shavit (Zavi)

<https://www.hive.co.uk/Product/Ari-Shavit/My-Promised-Land--the-triumph-and-tragedy-of-Israel/18548236>

Shavit's book takes an unshrinking look at the successes and failures of all on the political spectrum in the last 120 years of the land which is now Israel. I particularly enjoyed his brief mentions throughout of diverse individuals and groups which could act as a springboard for me to investigate the bits which intrigued me.

I was incredibly moved by this book, although I'll acknowledge it's quite dense at times, and took me a while to get through. I was worried it would be dry, but Shavit's writing is anything but. It has a well-proportioned contrast between the author's experiences, facts, and the viewpoints of those he met and spoke with. This meant it never felt as long as the book actually was. Shavit's writing is, at least to my eyes, not politically weighted in either direction and it was this trait that most recommends the book.

NIF caveat: over the past couple of years Shavit has admitted to inappropriate interactions with women. We recognise that some may prefer not to read Shavit's books in light of his behaviour.

Year Zero of the Arab-Israeli conflict by Hillel Cohen (Tash)

<https://www.amazon.co.uk/Arab-Israeli-Conflict-Schusterman-Israel-Studies/dp/1611688116>

Year Zero of the Arab-Israeli conflict by Hillel Cohen focuses on the 1929 riots in Palestine in which 133 Jews and 116 Arabs were killed. Cohen's work aims to understand the motivations for the violence that took place outside of mainstream national narratives. His style is natural and his focus on individuals within communities and their testimonies allows the reader to understand their positionalities and predicaments.

The book looks at the community relations of those living in Palestine before and during the riots, namely Palestinians, Arab Jews, Jewish non-Zionists and Zionists and how the boundaries of these previously distinct groups started to shift in light of the riots and that particular historical period. Cohen cross examines statements made after the riots as well as focusing on individuals who would go on to play important roles and works hard to dispel assumptions that may use the riots as an example of a supposed intrinsic Arab animosity towards Jews. Instead Cohen contextualises the violence and aims to understand the motivations without condoning them or reducing them to simple acts. He claims that the riots enhanced Jewish cohesion because non-Zionist Jews were not spared harm and also that the perpetrators were no longer able to distinguish between non-Zionist Jews and Zionist Jews because of the capacity for Zionism to offer the fulfilment of shared aspirations. Cohen also examines the role of the British in the violence through criticising their approach both during and after the riots.