

## Editors' Note

### • • • *Threats to Academic Freedom*

As we prepare this issue to go to print, the Association for Israel Studies is facing a serious challenge. The Israeli government recently escalated its measures against the Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions (BDS) movement and announced that it may ban BDS supporters belonging to specified organizations from entering Israel. This escalation is supported in Israel not only by the government coalition but also by the opposition parties, most of the public at large, and the media.

The AIS is an academic professional body, and as such it normally would not take a position with regard to this or any other policy or political issue. At the present time, however, we confront a grave dilemma because the government has made it clear that academics who support BDS might not be allowed to enter Israel. We do not monitor the political views of our members, but we consider it a serious threat if any of them face the possibility of not being allowed to enter the country, especially for our 2019 annual meeting, which is planned to take place in Israel.

Although it is obviously legitimate to have a variety of views regarding Israel's policy for regulating entry of foreigners, we cannot accept the use of a 'thought police' against academics. It is a clear and serious blow to academic freedom and to professionals, whose entire *raison d'être* is critical thinking. It is inconceivable to acquiesce in a situation in which a professor of Israel Studies anywhere in the world, who is not planning, committing, or calling for any illegal act, would be interviewed at the airport about his or her private political beliefs and attitudes concerning the policies of the Israeli government regarding the Palestinians, settlements, the two-state solution, or anything else.

The AIS Board—as well as those of many other organizations—has been discussing what actions to take to make clear our opposition to this policy and its implications. There are also legal challenges pending. By the time of our annual meeting in Berkeley in June, I am sure that the situation will have changed, but I doubt it will have disappeared. This matter is certain to be high on our agenda.

At the ISR, however, our principal objective is getting articles and reviews ready for your enjoyment (and criticism, of course). As hinted previously, we are now moving to three issues per year instead of two, and we have also switched to 'digital default' for membership access. Thus, all members will receive access to the online digital edition, as well as year-long access to all previous online issues, without a paper copy. We will now publish in the spring, autumn, and winter, instead of just in the summer and winter.

We have also added a new section to the ISR, beginning with this issue. Titled "Teaching Israel Studies," this section is to be managed by Shira Klein of Chapman University in California, whose article, "Using Wikipedia in Israel Studies Courses," appears in this issue. Topics may include, but are not limited to, innovative pedagogical methods, digital humanities, classroom controversies, service learning, and teaching with new sources. If you are interested in writing such an article, please send an abstract to Shira at [sklein@chapman.edu](mailto:sklein@chapman.edu).

We have an eclectic mix of articles in this issue, and it just so happens that two of them address labor relations and unionization, albeit in very different periods, and present rather different views. Avi Bareli and Uri Cohen analyze a particularly important labor controversy in the 1950s that perhaps our very oldest members might remember, namely, the 'middle-class professionals' strike' of 1956, when whole sectors of the professional workforce, including doctors, engineers, and academics, walked out, angered that the 'wage gaps' between their salaries and those of blue-collar workers were being diminished. Bareli and Cohen point out the ethnic overtones of this strike and identify it as a harbinger of changes that, by now, have transformed Israel from one of the most egalitarian countries in the world to one of the least.

Jonathan Preminger, by contrast, writes about the current wave of union organizing drives, a phenomenon new to Israel because as recently as the 1980s, 80 percent of the Israeli workforce was still unionized, compared to 33 percent in 2006. Emphasizing the socio-political context, Preminger examines media and legal attitudes toward unions and finds them to be a very far cry from what was prevalent in the heyday of union power in the 1950s.

Elisheva Rosman-Stollman examines a different sort of inequality, that of religious women who choose to perform military service instead of opting for alternative national service, which the Orthodox rabbinate insists that they should do. She views the changes in acceptance of Orthodox women's military service as a process of social legitimation, by which even very strong norms can be eroded when appropriate pressure is exerted over time.

Maoz Rosenthal brings us into highly theoretical political science terrain with his article on the 'heresthetic maneuvering' utilized by Knesset committee chairs in order to control the policy choices of their committees. For

non-political scientists, Rosenthal obligingly provides a definition of heresthetics as “structuring a worldview that would make political agents choose a policy not by rhetorically convincing them of its worth, but rather by setting them on a decision-making path that would compel them to make the choice that the heresthetician wishes them to make.” One may imagine that most Knesset chairs would be highly impressed with themselves to learn that they are practicing heresthetics on a daily basis.

We are also proud to present an article by the winner of the 2017 AIS Kimmerling Prize for the best paper by a graduate student. Geoffrey Levin, who is finishing his PhD at NYU, has written on a little-known episode in the mid-1950s when the American Jewish Committee quietly engaged the Israeli government on behalf of its Palestinian citizens, who were then under military government, and attempted to educate Israelis about liberal values.

As usual, we have an eclectic set of book reviews. We review books on radical ultra-Orthodoxy, tombstones, and neo-liberalism, as well as taxation, which turns out to be far more interesting than we tend to think.

We hope to see many of you in Berkeley this summer, where we will consider serious subjects such as the erosion of academic freedom, but lighter ones as well.

— *The Editors*