



رابطة الانثروبولوجيين الفلسطينيين  
Insaniyyat | Society of Palestinian Anthropologists

## President's Update

Summer 2019

Dear Insaniyyat Community,

We are excited to update you about Insaniyyat. This April we became legally incorporated in the UK as Insaniyyat—Society of Palestinian Anthropologists. We entered the Spring launching our website ([insaniyyat.org](http://insaniyyat.org)), and concluded it with our biannual meeting, whose theme was: “Thinking Without A State.” During a three-day conference between 7-9 June, we met in Talitha Komi, Beit Jala, Palestine within the exuberance of a community coming-into-existence despite our dismembered homeland and dispersed communities.

On its first day, the conference featured keynote speaker, J. Kēhaulani Kauanui, Professor of American Studies and affiliate faculty member at Wesleyan University whose talk was titled, “Rethinking Sovereignty and the Contradictions of Self-Determination.” Her address was followed by two panels, “Stateless and Besieged Memories: Refugees & Political Generations,” and then “Anthropological Methods and Knowledge Production: Palestine as an Epistemic Site.” On the second day of the conference, two additional panels were held, “Religious Registers and Pious Publics: Practices & Resistances” and “Spaces and Infrastructure: Dispossession, Contestation, Reclamation.”

The papers presented at the four panels included research by students and established faculty, presented in either English or Arabic with simultaneous translation. These choices by the Insaniyyat Conference’s Academic Planning Committee aimed to reflect the diverse range of our scholars, provide a supportive platform for junior scholars, engage critical issues in relation to the anthropology of Palestine and Palestinians, and bring together in conversation scholars who write in both languages. Out of this care to cultivate, on the second day of the conference, a workshop was also held for graduate students and junior scholars on the arts of proposal writing, publishing in peer-reviewed journals, and book proposal writing, gracefully lead by Ilana Feldman and Amahl Bishara. On the third and final day, Insaniyyat core members convened to elect a new Executive Board and also brainstorm about activities for the coming months and years.

Although this was Insaniyyat’s second conference, it was a first in being primarily devoted to academic presentations and discussions. It was also a first of its kind in Palestine, modeled on a professional members’ conference. On the first day, a wide group of nearly 60 people attended the sessions, including social science students and faculty from Palestinian universities. The conference provided an important platform to develop new ties and networks, with many anthropology graduate students from the West Bank and 48’ meeting

for the first time, building new connections, and discussing their work and interests with faculty both from historic Palestine and from overseas.

Many participants remarked what a crucial experience the conference was for them, allowing them to feel part of a Palestinian anthropological community. I would like to particularly thank Penny Mitchell from the Palestinian American Research Council (PARC) for the outstanding moral and material support she provided, without which the conference would not have been possible. Conference Chair, Rema Hammami, and the other members of the conference organizing committee (Nadeem Karkabi, Rami Salameh, Aseel Sawalha, Nayrouz Abu-Hatoum, and Randa Wahbeh) tirelessly overcame countless obstacles to bring the conference to fruition and make it a stellar success.

Elections for the Executive Board (EB) included procedures to ensure members not able to attend the conference could nominate candidates, run for office, and vote. The elections yielded the following new Insaniyyat EB: Nayrouz Abu-Hatoum, Amahl Bishara, Khaled Furani, Rema Hammami, Nadeem Karkabi, and Rami Salameh. The EB subsequently met to determine positions and appoint a student representative as required by Insaniyyat's bylaws. These positions include: President (Furani), Vice-President (Hammami), Secretary (Bishara), Treasurer (Karkabi), and Student Representative (Randa Wahbe). I wish to convey our deep gratitude to additional members who served on the previous acting EB: Lori Allen, Rhoda Kanaaneh, and Aseel Sawalah. Their dedicated work enabled and will continue to enable our community's flourishing.

The EB is now in the midst of forming various working committees in response to both the current needs of our organizational growth and to the conference's brainstorming of projects. While you may soon be approached to serve on one of these committees, please feel welcome to initiate contact with any advisory board member and suggest your name to a committee in which you wish to get involved. These committees currently include:

- 1) Membership and Outreach: to maintain and cultivate membership and alliances;
- 2) Bylaws: to review our bylaws, monitor compliance, and propose any changes for proper governance;
- 3) Anthropological Knowledge in Arabic: generate translated and original Arabic writings in the anthropology of Palestine;
- 4) Publication: promote diverse forms of on-line and print publications as a way to support scholars of and scholarship on Palestine;
- 5) Website: ensure Insaniyyat's optimal presence in virtual reality;
- 6) "Threshold:" develop projects and activities that bring Palestine to the world and the world to Palestine;
- 7) Anthropology in the Community: render anthropological works in diverse media available to a range of Palestinian and Arab publics outside the academy;
- 8) Department of Anthropology in Palestine: work with interested faculty at any Palestinian university to establish a premier department of anthropology (as there currently is none);
- 9) Conference Committee: plan, execute, and evaluate our next biannual conference.

Regarding Insaniyyat's finances, we are pleased to inform you that thanks to PARC's generous support, private donations, and our new and renewing members, Insaniyyat has been able to attain a healthy financial standing for the 2019 cycle. Today our membership stands at 50 members, 29 Core and 21 Friend members.

Please visit our website, acquaint yourself with our projects, or apply to become a member via our website. I take this opportunity to remind those of you who have not yet joined as members to do so. This is one way to keep Insaniyyat sufficiently independent and enable it to promote the cause of Palestinian anthropology. Please let us know of ways you wish to contribute to Insaniyyat's growth and to the promotion of anthropological knowledge on and in Palestine.

Sincerely,



Khaled Furani  
Executive Board President