



رابطة الاثروبولوجيين الفلسطينيين
Insaniyyat | Society of Palestinian Anthropologists

President's Update

January 2021

Dear Insaniyyat Community,

In the last newsletter ([July 2020](#)), we sent good wishes for prevailing over the pandemic and the threats it poses to health, common trust, collective struggle, and hope. As the pandemic has yet to vanish, we must reiterate that hope. As our struggle against occupation and tyranny teaches, we must not let the pandemic and the ravages that enable it and that it enables vanquish our ability to hope. Hoping against hope, we will continue to connect and care for our world.

That is precisely what the late [Leith Mullings](#), our International Advisory Board member, whom we lost last month, sought to do when she joined us in our Jericho foundational meeting in 2017 and continued doing until the end. Only a few months before her passing, she nursed connections between Black American and Palestinian anthropologists. To honor and cherish her unparalleled contributions, it is only befitting that I open our updates with a new initiative that lives on thanks to her commitment and care.

The Black-Palestinian Joint Action Group formed following the summer uprisings in the US against state violence targeting black lives and livelihoods. Insaniyyat reached out to African American scholars (with the assistance of Leith, Penny Mitchell of PARC, and others) to enhance connection and solidarity and brainstorm ways of acting jointly to affirm the value of Black and Palestinian lives. As of now, this committee of Insaniyyat members and Black academics with ties to Palestine held three meetings from which two projects have emerged. In the short term, a resource list is under construction to support the teaching and researching of struggles against racial supremacy. In the long term, a subcommittee is working on the Reprieve/Tanfessah project, which aims to bring Black American artists for a visit to “breathe” and “inhale” Palestine through encounters with local cultural centers, artists, and families.

The Podcast Committee is proud to announce the launching of “[Voice of Insaniyyat: Ethnographic Voices on Palestine and the World](#)” with four episodes, conversations with anthropologists Ala Alazzeah, Amahl Bishara, Khaled Furani, and Fadi Bardawil. Streaming in both English and Arabic, the episodes collectively cover a wide range of topics: the first Palestinian Intifada, memory and public politics, questions of sovereignty and theology, and Marxist organic intellectuals in 1960s Lebanon. All episodes are available for download from the Insaniyyat website and [Instagram](#) page as well as from [Anchor](#), [Apple Podcasts](#), [Breaker](#), [Google Podcasts](#), [Spotify](#), [Stitcher](#).

The Anthropology in Arabic Committee continues to explore ways of enhancing the production of anthropological knowledge in Arabic. It has produced two new webpages for Insaniyyat's Arabic language website, one [a list of resources for anthropological research and writing](#), and the other [a reservoir of Arabic language anthropological texts](#), some original and some translations. In the coming months, the committee plans to hold a series of meetings to discuss the craft of ethnographic writing in Arabic.

Anthropology in the Community Committee will soon publish the first piece of a series of reports on research in Arabic by Insaniyyat anthropologists in [Filistin ash-Shabab magazine](#) and on the Arabic site of Insaniyyat. The Souq ethnographic exhibition is planned for launch in 2021 with simultaneous exhibitions

featuring ethnographic photos and narratives in several historical markets in Palestine including Gaza, Nablus, and Acre. Insaniyyat's institutional partners in this project include Ta'awon, Drosos, and PARC, as well as multiple youth movements in the various cities. An Ethnographic Film Workshop in collaboration with local partners, Bethlehem University and [Filmlab Palestine](#) is also currently underway. A fourth project of this committee is an ethnographic photography workshop, being planned in partnership with the Arab Cultural Association in Haifa.

The Conference Committee has been planning for the 2021 Third Biennial Insaniyyat Conference under the theme: "Pessoptimism: Anthropologies of Palestinian Hope and Uncertainty." Should global conditions make it possible, it will take place on the first weekend of September at Talitha Kumi Guest House in Beit Jala. We already have a commitment for a keynote speaker, Stef Jansen. A leading anthropologist, Jansen writes on hope and uncertainty in the former Yugoslavia and teaches at the University of Manchester. In addition to research panels and a business meeting, the conference will include two colloquia designed for graduate students to receive feedback on their ongoing research from peers and senior colleagues. More details to follow soon.

The Fundraising Committee has worked tirelessly with other committees to raise funds for various projects. Together with the **Conference Committee**, it submitted an application to the Wenner-Gren Foundation, asking support for the third biannual Insaniyyat conference. It also worked with the **Anthropology in the Community Committee** on adjusting project planning for the corona age and successfully attaining funding for a number of projects.

The Al-'Atabeh (Threshold) Committee launched a blog series on "[Palestine: Fieldnotes on Life in Pandemic Times](#)" on Insaniyyat's website in order to reflect on the Covid-19 experience through an ethnographic and Palestinian lens. Two blogs posts have thus far been published and at least another two posts are currently in process.

The Bylaws Committee has concluded its review of Insaniyyat's governance articles after an extensive and thorough process that lasted nearly two years. The committee is preparing a report for the Executive Board and the General Assembly, recommending revisions to ensure Insaniyyat's organizational well-being.

The Insaniyyat Website contains a new feature, titled "[Opportunities](#)" (on the English website, soon in Arabic, too), which aims at distributing calls for papers, academic workshops and seminars, graduate and post-doc opportunities, calls for funding, and other relevant announcements from anthropological (or related) associations and centers.

If you have any questions, comments, suggestions, or ideas for Insaniyyat's website, committees, or Executive Board, please use the [website](#) contact page or join our [Facebook Forum](#). Inshallah, we will see you with us in the Fall at our conference discussing hope, uncertainty, despair, and more. And if you cannot join us in person, we will do our virtual best to make sure that the conference is available in virtual format(s). We are grateful to each of you for the ways you continue to support Insaniyyat as it seeks to offer a home for thinking and acting about anthropology and Palestine.

Yours,

Khaled Furani

President, Executive Board

on behalf of the Executive Board: Rema Hammami, Vice President; Nadeem Karkabi, Treasurer; Nayrouz Abu Hatoum; Dina Zbeidat; Amahl Bishara; and Rami Salameh