



رابطة الاثنوبولوجيين الفلسطينيين
Insaniyyat | Society of Palestinian Anthropologists

Insaniyyat Newsletter

Winter 2022

Dear Insaniyyat Community,

Reflecting on our very successful conference in early January and its main theme of hope and despair, we wish for you the most minimal dose of the latter necessary to experience the former. Despite the pandemic's persistence, Insaniyyat has had a very event-full second half of 2021 due to the innumerable efforts of all the members of our community. Their dedication, responsibility, and creativity have been ensuring our community's flourishing. Insaniyyat's membership today numbers 68 anthropologists dispersed across diverse geographies: Palestine, both '48 and '67 lands, Jordan, Europe, Singapore, Canada, and the United States. May you all find this newsletter a deeply appreciated recognition of, and testimony to, your efforts. Without further ado, a report on Insaniyyat's most recent activities follows.

Third Biennial Conference: In cold January in Beit-Jala, Insaniyyat held a heartwarming third biennial conference titled, "Pessoptimism: Anthropologies of Palestinian Hope and Uncertainty." The conference brought 80 participants (physical and virtual) from some 30 locations around the world. It opened with Insaniyyat recognizing Rosemary Sayigh's life-long, tireless work in support of Palestine and Palestinian anthropology. Stef Jansen (University of Sarajevo) gave a keynote address on what anthropologists have done—and could still do—in studying "hope," with comments by discussant Julie Peteet (University of Louisville). Six research panels addressed diverse themes, from Utopia to epistemology, and included papers on Palestinian intimacies, aesthetics, pluralism, and relations with the land.

Two workshops aimed at supporting the writing and publications of graduate students were led by Rania Jawad (Birzeit University) and 'Alaa al-'Azzah (Birzeit University), and Niko Besnier (University of Amsterdam). The third half-day of the conference was devoted to Insaniyyat's membership meeting, which concluded with announcing election results for the Executive Board. In addition to the diligent work of Insaniyyat's conference committee and cadre of devoted volunteers, invaluable support from the Palestinian American Research Center and the Wenner-Gren Foundation made the conference possible.

Anthropology in the Community Committee (AIC): Dedicated to "translating" the academic discourse of anthropology into a good that can be shared by publics beyond the academy, AIC successfully concluded three amazing projects. First, a team of participants in the past summer's exhibition of visual-ethnographic connections among seven ancient markets of Palestine published a book of "Souq Stories," featuring exhibition highlights in images and stories. Insaniyyat and AIC wishes to express our gratitude for the generous support of Taawon for Youth, Drosos, the Palestinian American Research Council (PARC), and the Yan P. Lin Centre for the Study of Freedom and Global Orders in the Ancient and Modern Worlds at McGill University for helping to

make both the exhibit and the book possible. To learn more about this project, please visit souqstories.insaniyyat.org.

AIC also conducted a highly successful Visual Anthropology and Ethnographic Film Workshop, led by Egyptian anthropologist Farah Hallaba. From a pool of 90 applicants, the workshop committee chose 25 participants, who joined the workshop via Zoom from diverse geographic locations in the West Bank, Gaza, Jerusalem and 1948 Palestine, in addition to Palestinian filmmakers based in Jordan, the UK, Belgium, Spain, France and Germany. Aiming to avail the tools of ethnography and visual anthropology to Palestinian cinema students and filmmakers, the workshop consisted of nine sessions of some 3.5 hours each over the course of two months, in which participants discussed various schools and methods of visual ethnography used in the selected films they watched prior the sessions. The workshop culminated with participants' sharing and discussing their ideas for implementing the tools they learned in their own projects. We are grateful to the Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung and Filmlab Palestine for their crucial support. Click [here](#) to read more about this project.

The third and final project by AIC has had Insaniyyat partner with a local non-academic periodical published in Ramallah, [Filasteen al-Shabab](#), to publish there a series of articles aimed at introducing the anthropological work that Insaniyyat members do to a wider, non-academic public. Anthropology masters student and lawyer, Alaa Haj-Yahya, authored the first piece in the series, published in November, titled "Al-Filistiniyyat wa Sharaf al-'Aa'ilah: Ifrat fil Hirasa wa Tafrit fil Himaya [Palestinian Women and Family Honor: Excess Guardianship and Abandoned Protection]."

Fundraising Committee (FRC): Having successfully secured funding for various Insaniyyat projects, the FRC continues to develop a plan for sustainable funding of Insaniyyat activities, and sought guidance through meetings with both the Wenner-Gren Foundation and the Social Science Research Council. Both organizations have offered their ongoing support and cooperation with Insaniyyat in various activities.

Outreach Committee (OC): Tasked with building contacts with regional and international bodies in support of Insaniyyat's vision and mission, OC met with Algerian colleagues from Fa'ilun—The Center for Anthropological Research. We are exploring possibilities for joint activities, including publishing Arabic translations of Western anthropological texts, a special issue of a periodical published by Fa'ilun on Palestine, and a joint webinar.

Al-'Atabeh [The Threshold] Committee: Tasked with hosting academic events locally and globally, this committee sponsored a series of monthly talks via zoom. The series was launched in September 2021 with Hadeel Assali who spoke about the unmapping of Gaza. In October, Ala Alhourani spoke about ethics and aesthetics of Islamic charity. In November, Sophia Stamatopoulou-Robbins spoke about waste management in Palestine. Finally, in December Aseel Sawalha about the arts scene in contemporary 'Amman, Jordan.

Voice of Insaniyyat Podcast: Launched in January 2021, the podcast released two new episodes in the second half of the year, featuring conversations with anthropologists Ted Swedenburg and Nadeem Karkabi. In [episode 05](#), Swedenburg speaks to Anna Tyshkov about his book, *Memories of Revolt: The 1936-1939 Rebellion and the Palestinian National Past*, oral history and power, the unified uprisings in May 2021, and more. In [episode 06](#), Aamer Ibraheem invites Karkabi to reflect on his relationship to the anthropological field as an ethnographer who spent many years traveling

between '48 Palestine, the West Bank, Amman, Berlin, London, and elsewhere in the world researching the alternative Palestinian music scene and the ways it helps to forge different modes of solidarity and national belonging. Karkabi also shares key insights from his current project on the workings of culture and politics that demarcate the boundaries of Israel's Jewish collective and safeguard its privilege.

Insaniyyat wishes to thank all of you who have been listening to our online streaming from all around the world, and to ask that you stay tuned as the amazing team of Voice of Insaniyyat develops new episodes for 2022. The team is also working on ideas for partnership with the Wenner-Gren Foundation on a joint podcast series. The Voice of Insaniyyat is available for streaming on multiple platforms: [Anchor](#), [Apple Podcasts](#), [Breaker](#), [GooglePodcasts](#), [Spotify](#), and [Stitcher](#), and on *Insaniyyat's website*. Receive podcast updates on Instagram [@voice_of_insaniyyat](#).

Reprieve/Tanfeesah Project: After the uprising of 2020 for Black Lives Matter in the US, Insaniyyat hosted a meeting to brainstorm with Black anthropologists and other academics about ways to solidify alliances that nourish both of our struggles. Initially facilitated by the late anthropologist Leith Mullings and Penny Mitchell from PARC, this joint committee held several meetings and drafted a proposal for a project that would support a number of Black artists from the US to spend a few weeks in Palestine in the context of an arts residency, and in cooperation with local families and art institutions. Having received four supportive reviews from artists and anthropologists from the US and Palestine, the proposal completed its trial stage. Immediate plans include finalizing the proposal and submitting it for funding.

Palestinian Pluralism Book: Insaniyyat's recent conference hosted a panel on this book project, with Salim Tamari as a discussant. Now tentatively titled *Naseej: The Becomings of Palestine*, the book received a letter of interest from American University of Cairo Press and intends to bring together 16 contributions. Various printed media (essays, images, poems, stories) will together explore Palestine's historical indigenous multiplicity and unity, today endangered by Zionism's steady work toward expulsion, fragmentation, and exclusion.

We Need You!

Insaniyyat welcomes your input and participation in any and all committees and activities. Whether you have participated in the past or not, you are most welcome to comment, offer suggestions, and volunteer. We are in need of your contributions through writing, publishing, presenting, mentoring, fundraising, and offering ideas for new projects that further Insaniyyat's [mission and vision](#). Please contact Insaniyyat via the contact page on our website: <https://insaniyyat.org/contact>.

Yours,

Khaled Furani

President, Executive Board

on behalf of the Executive Board [in transition]: Rema Hammami, Vice President; Nadeem Karkabi, Treasurer; Nayrouz Abu Hatoum; Dina Zbeidat; Laura Adwan; Amahl Bishara; Rami Salameh; and Aamer Ibraheem, Thayer Hastings, Rhoda Kannaneh and Aseel Sawalha, 'Alaa al-'Azzah.