



MESSAGE
FROM THE
EDITOR

This issue marks the eighteenth year of *This Week in Palestine*, and we are pleased to present you with another issue filled with articles that attest to Palestine’s cultural wealth. A high level of religious tolerance and the integration of various faiths are defining facets of Palestinian culture, historically and today.

Such practice sets Palestine apart in a region where too many people have been immensely traumatized by acts of violence frequently caused by lack of tolerance, greed, and thirst for power and dominance. It is time to remember, in the Holy Land and elsewhere, that the central tenets and pillars of our religions are good will and kind deeds towards our fellow visitors on this planet.

Many thanks go to our authors that include a former Catholic Patriarch, the Imam and Preacher of Al-Aqsa Mosque, and the Palestinian ambassador to the Vatican. This issue will give you a glimpse into the variety of religious celebrations and the associated social customs of Palestinian Muslims, Christians, and religious minorities such as Sufis (a Muslim religious group), Christian Armenians, and Samaritans. Read accounts of how religious diversity enriches interfaith families and is actively pursued in Palestinian schools; find out how Muslims celebrate in London. Be intrigued by an account of Muslim holidays that may have its origins in pagan times while we tend to associate these traditional customs with Christian celebrations – and learn about native experts and their contributions to our knowledge about history. Immerse yourself in a lively account of seasonal religious celebrations and traditional songs. Enjoy the magnificence of a selection of the important shrines in Palestine and feel with the plight of Palestinian Christians for whom the *Nakba* has left scars that tend to burn more strongly at Christmastime. And if you are looking to buy a Christmas manger set, be inspired to look out for some special figurines – their image once helped preserve one of Palestine’s special treasures of world cultural heritage. Our personality, artist, and book of the month allude to religious celebration, tolerance, and diversity. Do not forget to check out our rich events section.

We hope that we can count on your faithfulness – both as authors and readers – as we are compelled to move on to a subscription-only website. Your subscription will go a long way in maintaining this long-standing project of promoting and documenting Palestine. Check out the upcoming themes, and please act early to submit your intent to contribute an article. You are the stars of this magazine!

From the entire team at TWiP, we wish a Merry Christmas to those of you who celebrate this month, and a Happy, Peaceful New Year to all of you!

Warmly,
Tina Basem
Editor



Forthcoming Issues

January 2017: **Palestine and the Common Good**

February 2017: **State of Justice**

March 2017: **Palestinian Poets and Poetry**



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