

International Academic Conference – Call for Abstracts

From Genocide to Regional Restructuring: Transformations in the Zionist Project and the Place of Palestine

March 31, 2026

For over a century, Palestinians have endured an ongoing Nakba – a catastrophe rooted in a settler-colonial project of genocide and displacement that aims to erase the Palestinian people and their very presence on their land. This ongoing eliminatory process is inseparable from transformations within the Zionist project itself over the decades, which many scholars have interpreted as indicators of a substantive shift in its nature. One may question, however, whether these shifts do indeed signal a fundamental transformation in the Zionist project, or rather reflect broader global and regional dynamics, such as the resurgence of fascism in new forms, the evolution of late-stage capitalism beyond national frameworks, and shifts within the Palestinian national movement and in its modes of resistance.

While internal developments in Israel include the growing political dominance of the religious far right, alongside the entrenchment of the neoliberal order, the use of religion and religiosity has always been integral to the Zionist movement. In this light, the current shift toward greater extremism can be seen as an inevitable outcome of the Zionist project itself. A central question thus arises: How should we understand the political, military, social, and economic transformations currently unfolding in Israel?

At this critical historical moment, the conference brings together researchers, academics, students, and other interested parties to ask: Where do we stand today? What defines the current phase? And what is our own position within the context of these transformations? The conference aims to provide a space for critical thinking, collective reflection, and rearticulating questions about present realities and future possibilities. For decades, Israeli and mainstream Western narratives have dominated the discourse about the "Israeli-Palestinian conflict," with Israel commonly portrayed as an "outpost of Western civilization" in the region. This framing has served to render Israel's colonial crimes "acceptable" within the logic of contemporary Western ideology.

Palestinian literature and scholarship strive to disrupt and dismantle this epistemological hegemony and construct a narrative grounded in the lived experiences of the Palestinian people. In face of the attempts to obliterate both Palestinian bodies and knowledge, the conference calls for the development of epistemologies that are grounded in Palestine and the Global South, approaches that deconstruct the colonial ideologies underpinning the Zionist project and critically engage with the knowledge systems that shape understandings of "Israel." The conference seeks to advance critical knowledge about the nature of the settler-colonial state, transformations within the Zionist project, and strategies of resistance, while addressing the attendant epistemological challenges.

Critical approaches have long viewed Zionism as a settler-colonial movement that is based on the negation – and attempted erasure – of Palestinian existence as part of a global order that seeks to reshape the Arab region. The Israeli leadership has openly declared that the goal of the "war on Gaza" goes beyond a military response to the events of October 7 or the elimination of Hamas; it aims to redefine the Palestinian question and restructure the Middle East in a manner that serves Israel's security, economic, and political interests. The recent developments we have witnessed – including the expanding confrontation with Hezbollah, escalating tensions with Iran, and Israeli political and military interventions in Syria – can be understood as the practical realization of these declarations.

In light of the above, the conference seeks to raise urgent, critical questions such as: How should we interpret Israel's relationship with Arab regimes in the aftermath of the war? What is the future of normalization in the region? And what roles have Arab states and actors played in bringing us to this pivotal political juncture?

The conference welcomes abstracts in Arabic or English of up to 500 words that engage with the themes outlined above and focus on one of the following topics:

- The reshaping of Israel's regional position after two years of genocide in Gaza
- Transformations in Israel's security and military doctrine
- Knowledge systems that produce understandings of "Israel" that deconstruct dominant narratives
- Genocide as a structural tool within the Zionist project
- Representations of Israel in academic knowledge: Deconstruction and confrontation
- The role of Israeli universities in producing colonialism
- The Israeli colonial imaginary of Gaza versus the realities of survival and resistance
- Settler expansion, annexation, and territorial domination in the West Bank
- The Israeli economy amid multiple crises
- Israel's position in the international order: Eroding legitimacy and strategic alliances
- The Israeli-U.S. alliance: Strategic stability and emerging tensions

- Transformations within Israeli society: Religion, militarization, and political fragmentation
- Netanyahu: The man, the era, and a state in transition
- Israel and the region: Normalization and restructuring

Submission timeline

- Abstracts (maximum 500 words) should be submitted no later than **November 20, 2025** to the following email address: conference.ISST@birzeit.edu.
- The conference's academic committee will review the abstracts and send notifications to applicants by **December 15, 2025**.
- If the abstract is accepted, a full paper (4,500 to 5,500 words) must be submitted no later than **January 31, 2026**.
- The committee will provide feedback on full papers by **February 15, 2026**.
- A selection of outstanding papers will be considered for publication in a special issue of *The Journal of Palestine Studies*.

The Academic Conference Committee



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