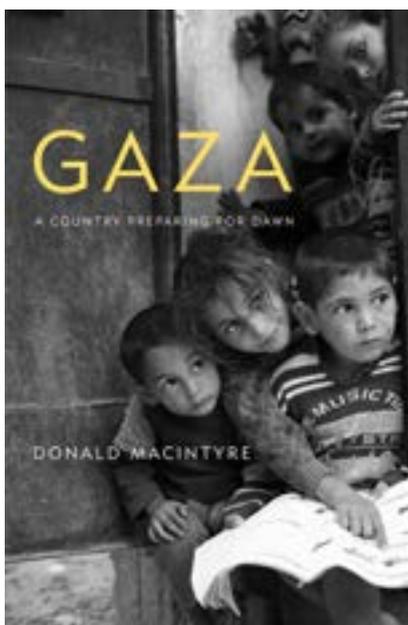


Gaza: A Country Preparing for Dawn

By Donald Macintyre

Oneworld Publications, United Kingdom, 2017, 368 pages, \$30

Reviewed by Mahmoud Muna and Anna Paluszek - Educational Bookshop, Jerusalem



There are very few places in the world where history, religion, politics, and economy interplay in the harshest way to produce a grim reality like that in Gaza. Yet, Gazans remain among the most hospitable people in Palestine. Years of aggression and violence haven't stripped them of their humanity or their humor. "Gaza is like heaven. There is no work in heaven either."

Author and award-winning journalist Donald Macintyre has managed to skillfully write a comprehensive account of the Strip that is faithful to history, humane in its consideration of people, and accurate with respect to events. The lucid style of this commendable journalist makes history and events comprehensible and easy to follow.

This is an important book for anyone seeking to understand the recent history of the Gaza Strip and the consequences of the failed political and diplomatic solutions. Combining people's own stories and narrative with an events timeline has produced a lively and informative volume. Macintyre refers to many documents and official quotes to back his story, and the details clearly show the extensive research on which the book is based.

Although most of the personal stories are from the time during and after the second Intifada, there are valuable details and accounts from the years before 2000. Macintyre describes in great detail how the quality of life in Gaza deteriorates with every Israeli invasion and after every failed attempt at reconciliation between the two main Palestinian political factions, Hamas and Fateh.

The book also unveils many important details of the geopolitical and international context that greatly influence Gaza and that cannot be overestimated. Macintyre gives a vivid picture of the events, the actors, and the interventions which are not always known to the public, including a well-documented record of the internal dynamics of the Palestinian political scene.

The author does an excellent job of challenging the many stereotypes and misinterpretations of Gazans, showing their beautiful spirit even as they remain imprisoned by futile politics. Macintyre's book is a balanced narrative about the sufferings of ordinary people and their experience in the midst of constant violence. It is a fair book about unfair circumstances.

Readers will be left with mixed feelings of admiration, pain, and anger. The dreams of nearly two million people are interrupted daily. The absence of real opportunities and the impossibility of escaping the bleak reality keep people hostage to the vacuum of change. However, the author's account of the Gazan spirit and the Gazan commitment to freedom and love for life leave us with no doubt that Gaza will have its dawn, and its people will break the chains that bind them.

