

STATEMENT BY THE CO-EDITORS  
ON THE RECENT SPECIAL ISSUE OF *ISRAEL STUDIES* (24.2, SUMMER 2019)  
“WORD CRIMES; RECLAIMING THE LANGUAGE OF THE ISRAELI-PALESTINIAN  
CONFLICT”

Ilan Troen    Natan Aridan

*Israel Studies* was established almost a quarter of a century ago. It is published by Indiana University Press; co-sponsored by two academic institutions (Ben-Gurion Research Institute for the Study of Israel and Zionism of the Ben-Gurion University of the Negev continuously since 1996; the Oxford Centre for Postgraduate Hebrew and Jewish Studies of Oxford University, 1996-2005; and Brandeis University’s Schusterman Center for Israel Studies from 2006 until the present). The journal has long maintained a reputation as a significant, valuable and respected scholarly publication in an emerging field.

The latest Special Issue of *Israel Studies* (*Word Crimes; Reclaiming the Language of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict* – Summer 2019) was published without the knowledge or approval of the journal’s Editorial Board. It drew severe criticism from many scholars in the field, and resulted in the resignation of 11 prominent members of the Editorial Board, who wrote a sharp letter of dissent stating that the issue “deviates sharply from academic standards and acceptable scholarly norms. Its publication clearly crossed the lines between academic scholarship and political advocacy.”

We, the Co-Editors, acknowledge that the Special Issue and our decision-making process regarding its publication were flawed. We regret any embarrassment caused by the publication to individuals and institutions affiliated with the journal and the field. Though such dissent was not universal, the criticism and the underlying problems it exposed must be addressed.

In order to maintain and ensure the academic reputation of *Israel Studies*, we are committed to working collaboratively with past and current members of the Editorial Board, with the Sponsors, and with the AIS leadership to discuss, articulate, and agree upon clear by-laws and governance mechanisms. We have already circulated proposals that include the appointment and terms of service of editors and members of the editorial committee as well as procedures for acceptance, review, and publication of individual articles and of special issues among the Sponsors, Editors, members of the Editorial Board, and the Board of the AIS and its Executive Committee.

We welcome additional proposals, including from those who have publicly dissented, and these will be incorporated in the discussions of the June, 2019 meetings of both Boards. We expect a governance document will be ratified by the end of 2019.

EDITORIAL BOARD – LETTER OF DISSENT

We, members of the Editorial Board of *Israel Studies*, express our profound and unequivocal dissent from the latest, special issue of *Israel Studies*, titled *Word Crimes; Reclaiming the Language of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict* (Summer 2019).

This issue – published without our knowledge or consent – is highly polemical and deviates sharply from academic standards and acceptable scholarly norms. Its publication clearly crossed the lines between academic scholarship and political advocacy.

We consider the publication of the issue as tarnishing the journal's historical scholarly record and damaging to its future role as a trusted academic forum that maintains rigorous academic standards for scholarship on Israel.

We do not wish to see the journal compromised and therefore publicly call the editors to promptly take the following steps to remedy the situation and to rehabilitate the current and future scholarly standards of the journal:

1. The editors should publish in the next issue (in print and online)
  - a clear, public statement of error and apology
  - This letter of dissent (signed by 11 or the 12 board members who resigned).
2. Work collaboratively to articulate and ratify clear and transparent governance and oversight by-laws for the journal.

Such by-laws must include:

- Clear and transparent procedures for appointing editors for the journal (including set term limits and re-appointment mechanisms) that will include consultation with members of the Editorial Board.
- Clear and transparent procedures for nominating and electing an active and robust Editorial Board (including set term limits and re-appointment mechanisms).
- A small cohort of members selected from the Editorial Board will serve as part of the senior leadership team of the journal, maintain frequent contact with the Editors, and provide regular oversight (checks and balances) in the future.
- Reaffirm a rigorous peer review process for all articles, whether in regular or special issues or sections.
- Create a mechanism by which 'Special Issues' are decided upon, articles solicited, collected and reviewed.

We believe that these steps are critical for restoring the credibility of the journal and its Editorial Board, and necessary for our continued involvement in (or, in the case of those who have resigned, return to) the board.

Respectfully,

Gannit Ankori (Brandeis University)  
Uri Bialer (Hebrew University of Jerusalem)  
Michael Brenner (American University)  
Ayelet Harel-Shalev (Ben Gurion University of the Negev)  
Dan Kurtzer (Princeton University)  
Pnina Lahav (Boston University)  
Yehudah Mirsky (Brandeis University)  
Derek Penslar (Harvard University)  
Muhammad S. Wattad (Zefat Academic College)  
Yael Zerubavel (Rutgers University)  
Ron Zweig (New York University)