Speaker Biographies

Amira Hass

Amira Hass is the Haaretz (Israeli daily Newspaper) correspondent for the Occupied Territories. Hass joined Haaretz in 1989, and has been in her current position since 1993. As the correspondent for the territories, she spent three years living in Gaza, which served as the basis for her widely acclaimed book, “Drinking the Sea at Gaza.” She has lived in the West Bank city of Ramallah since 1997. Hass is also the author of two other books, both of which are compilations of her articles.

Ben Saul

Ben is Professor of International Law and an Australian Research Council Future Fellow at the University of Sydney. Ben has expertise on terrorism, human rights, armed conflict, the use of force, international crimes, the environment, and the United Nations. He is the author of Defining Terrorism in International Law (Oxford, 2006), lead co-author of The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights: Commentary, Cases and Materials (Oxford, 2014), and editor of Research Handbook on International Law and Terrorism (2014). He has published 10 books, 80 scholarly articles, and his research has been used in numerous courts. Ben has taught at Oxford, The Hague Academy of International Law and in China, India, Nepal and Cambodia, and has been a visiting professor at Harvard. He practices as a barrister, has advised United Nations bodies, governments and NGOs, and often appears in the media. He has a doctorate from Oxford and honours degrees in Arts and Law from Sydney.

Lisa Hajjar

Lisa Hajjar is a professor of Sociology at the University of California – Santa Barbara, and currently holds the Edward Said Chair of American Studies at the American University of Beirut. She is the author of Courting Conflict: The Israeli Military Court System in the West Bank and Gaza (University of California Press, 2005) and Torture: A Sociology of Violence and Human Rights (Routledge, 2013). She is currently working on a book about anti-torture lawyering in the US “war on terror.”

Michelle Burgis-Kasthala

Michelle is an Australian Research Council fellow at the Regulatory Institutions Network (RegNet) and member of the Centre for International Governance and Justice (CIGJ). She is currently on leave from Edinburgh Law School for three years during the course of her fellowship. Michelle’s interests lie in the fields of international law, human rights and transitional justice particularly as applied to the Arab world. She has led field trips with students from the University of St Andrews in Scotland to Israel and Palestine and has lived and worked across the region. Her doctoral thesis and then book (Brill, 2009) was entitled ‘Boundaries of Discourse in the International Court of Justice: Mapping Arguments in Arab Territorial Disputes. Her articles have been published in a number of journals including the Chinese Journal of International Law, the European Journal of International Law and the Leiden Journal of International Law.
Samah Sabawi

Samah is a Palestinian-Australian-Canadian writer, commentator, author and playwright. She has written and produced the plays Cries from the Land (2003) and Three Wishes (2008), both having staged successfully in Canada. In 2014, Sabawi completed a sold-out season of her acclaimed play, Tales of a City by the Sea, which had an Arabic production by Al Rowwad Theatre in Palestine and an English production by La Mama Theatre in Melbourne, Australia. Sabawi’s essays and opeds have appeared in various media outlets including The Australian, Al Jazeera, Al-Ahram, The Globe and Mail, The Age, The Sydney Morning Herald among many others. Her poetry has been featured in various magazines and books, most recently in an anthology published by West End Press titled With Our Eyes Wide Open: Poems of the New American Century. Sabawi is a policy advisor to the Palestinian policy network Al Shabaka, and a member of the board of directors of the National Council on Canada-Arab Relations.

Micaela Sahhar

Micaela is an Australian-Palestinian writer, researcher and poet, currently completing a PhD at the University of Melbourne in the School of Social and Political Sciences. Her doctoral thesis examines contemporary Israeli identity and the influence of Israeli national narrative on Western media’s reporting of Israel’s 21st century military operations in the Occupied Palestinian Territories. In particular, her interest lies in the transformative role of narrative and narrative transformations for the future of Israel-Palestinian relations. She is an occasional writer and commentator for online journals and local radio on current political and cultural issues surrounding the Israel-Palestinian conflict.

Sary Zananiri

Sary is an artist and academic. He has recently completed a PhD in Fine Arts at Monash University looking at the evolving representations of the Palestinian landscape. Currently he is lecturing in the Glass Workshop at Monash University. He has shown both in Australia and internationally being represented at the Experimenta Screen Program for Shanghai World Expo and collaborative projects with Beth Arnold for the Laneways Commissions in 2008 and VicUrban in 2012. More recently he was shortlisted for the National Student Art Glass Prize at the Wagga Wagga Glass Museum and exhibited his PhD examination exhibition at MADA Gallery. In 2008 he received an Emerging Artist Skills and Development grant from the Australia Council to travel to Palestine. He is currently continuing his PhD research to write a book on the imaging of Jerusalem.

Abe Quadan

Abe is of Palestinian background. He is a nationally accredited mediator and is registered as a Family Dispute Practitioner. Abe is a Conflict Resolution facilitator, lecturer and trainer. Abe is the Co-founder of Palestinian Jewish Dialogue Group. Abe believes in and passionate about peace with justice. Abe is a life member of the Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies and ex Council member of 10 years of the Sydney Peace Foundation.

Peter Slezak

Peter is an Associate Professor in Philosophy at the University of New South Wales. He is co-founder of Independent Australian Jewish Voices and an executive member of the Australian Palestine Advocacy Network.