



## Palestine

*Joe Sacco , Edward W. Said (Introduction)*

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Prior to **Safe Area Gorazde: The War In Eastern Bosnia 1992-1995**—Joe Sacco's breakthrough novel of graphic journalism—the acclaimed author was best known for **Palestine**, a two-volume graphic novel that won an American Book Award in 1996.

Fantagraphics Books is pleased to present the first single-volume collection of this landmark of journalism and the art form of comics.

Based on several months of research and an extended visit to the West Bank and Gaza Strip in the early 1990s (where he conducted over 100 interviews with Palestinians and Jews), **Palestine** was the first major comics work of political and historical nonfiction by Sacco, whose name has since become synonymous with this graphic form of New Journalism. Like **Safe Area Gorazde**, **Palestine** has been favorably compared to Art Spiegelman's Pulitzer Prize-winning **Maus** for its ability to brilliantly navigate such socially and politically sensitive subject matter within the confines of the comic book medium.

Sacco has often been called the first comic book journalist, and he is certainly the best. This edition of **Palestine** also features an introduction from renowned author, critic, and historian Edward Said (**Peace and Its Discontents** and **The Question of Palestine**), one of the world's most respected authorities on the Middle Eastern conflict.

## Palestine Details

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## From Reader Review Palestine for online ebook

### **yasmine says**

this hurt my heart. not enough people are aware of Palestine's situation.

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### **Georgina Koutrouditsou says**

Εξαιρετικ?,δυνατ?,αληθιν?!

Δεν μοι?ζει με καν?vα GN που κυκλοφορε? εκε? ?ξω..?σως 2o καλ?τερο απ? το "Χαιρετ?σματα απ? τη Σερβ?α".

Ο Joe Sacco μας γνωρ?ζει την Παλαιστ?νη ?τσι ?πως δεν θα το κ?vει καν?vα ειδησεογραφικ? καν?λι..

Οι ασπρ?μαυρες εικ?vες του επιτε?vουν την τραγικ?τητα που βι?vουν ?χι μ?vο οι ?νθρωποι στην περιοχ?,αλλ? και ευρ?τερα η Ανθρωπ?τητα ?ταν π?φτει θ?μα πολιτικ?v αποφ?σεων.

Δεν διαβ?ζεται ευχ?ριστα,?σα-?σα προβληματ?ζει!

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### **Karyl says**

We in the States are always told that we have to support the Israelis. Remember what the Jews have endured with the Holocaust! Why didn't we stop Hitler (there are always those that insist we had the chance)?? We need to make it up to the Jews! They need to have their own homeland as reparation for their terrible suffering!

Yes, the Jews suffered terrible things. It was awful and horrific, and I hope with every fiber of my being that something like the Holocaust will never happen again.

But what about the Palestinians? I always wondered as a kid how the Israelis can just go into a country that already has a government and a people, and just decide that it's theirs now because God said so. What \*about\* the Palestinians?

Even in Israel, the reporting is very one-sided, as evidenced by Sacco's reprinting of a news article that puts the blame for a particular episode of violence square on the Palestinians. But even if it were supposedly unprovoked, how can you consider it totally unprovoked when the Palestinians are crammed into refugee camps? When their villages are razed to the ground so that nothing more exists of the homes in which they were raised? When none of their sons over the age of 16 have escaped going to prison? When they live under curfew, in homes without electricity, without plumbing, without even walls to keep out the elements? When they can be arrested, beaten, and held without even being charged with a crime?

Sacco brings all of this to life, quite vividly. And it's depressing that the Israelis and the Palestinians he interviews all seem to agree that peace is never going to come to the Holy Land, not while both Israelis and Palestinians exist.

Highly recommend this to everyone who is interested in seeing another side of the conflict in Israel, a

conflict that is still going on, more than twenty years after Sacco visited the area.

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## **Ken-ichi says**

Joe Sacco is a comics journalist, or as he describes himself in this book, an "action cartoonist," entering areas of political turmoil to make documentary comics. Despite some occasional dips into free-wheeling personal anecdote reminiscent of Kerouac or Crumb, Sacco is predominantly a documentarian, not terribly concerned with narrative, but more focused on recounting the individual stories of the people he interviews. And there are a lot of interviews, conducted over countless cups of tea in innumerable Palestinian homes, usually with groups of people seemingly eager to recount tales about the oppression and injustice they suffer under the Israelis every day. These range from the petty (police forcing a kid to stand in the rain while they question him under the shelter of an awning), to the horrific (soldiers shooting a mother's son, then her other son, then refusing to release the bodies until the dead of night, then giving the family no more than 15 minutes to mourn over the body), to the dystopian (myriad tortures including stress postures held for days, ball point pen tubes inserted into genitalia, etc). It's rough stuff, and the very few bright spots, like a curious child asking about America or a translator's efforts to help disabled kids, just make it worse by contrast.

Sacco intentionally does not tell the story of the Israelis, because, as he says, that's the side we usually get in the West. All I really knew about the conflict when I started reading was that both sides seemed culpable, so I found this approach a little frustrating, because now, of course, I feel like the Palestinians are the most shat upon people on Earth, forced from their homeland by powerful Europeans, and living under Orwellian conditions forced upon them by powerful Israelis and their oil-hungry American financiers. Sacco introduces a few sympathetic Israelis, those who don't believe in the settlements, those who acknowledge the injustices met out to the Palestinians, but even they seem petty and ineffectual under the massive weight of Palestinian suffering. I guess I'm a little better educated about the situation after having read this, but also more depressed. This was written in the mid-90s, after all, and things don't seem much better in 2010.

Stylistically, Sacco's approach is interesting. His layouts are creative and diverse, his pacing and illustration skillful enough that I frequently found myself skipping the text and following the images. As I said, Sacco's a documentarian, and most of his illustration is realist, possibly copied and assembled from his photos. His linework is orderly but weatherbeaten, which suits the slums and war zones he visits. His humans, however are rendered with some degree of cartoonish abstraction, usually with exaggerated mouths and lips that gives them an ugly, demanding look. He's either unable or unwilling to depict young women and children with the smooth and unlined faces they usually possess. He seems to both respect his subjects and value authentic representation, so I'm tempted to chalk this up stylistic peculiarity or lack of ability rather than an intent to depict humanity as hungry, babbling, and debased.

His depiction of himself is also worth considering, both visually and personally. He draws himself with small, opaque glasses, giant lips, and a scrawny, hunched figure. Kind of a mole-carp-mantis. He frequently describes himself quailing before violence, fleeing in taxis at the first sign of conflict, and predominantly self-interested, constantly reminding himself that he's collecting stories and experience for his own comic. Judging from his photo in the back of the book, he's not nearly as ugly as his cartoon, and it's hard to believe a cartoonist would make a book like this if he didn't sympathize with the Palestinian's plight, so I don't think his own character in the book is strictly accurate. It could be that he's the kind of prat who uses excessive self-deprecation to unconsciously solicit sympathy (I am often that kind of prat, and we recognize our own; see I'm doing it now!), but he might also be deliberately creating a pitiful and ineffectual avatar for the reader

to suggest how difficult (or impossible) it is for the West to help resolve or even understand Middle Eastern conflict. Or maybe he's just flawed and human like the rest of us and he was striving for realism again.

Certainly recommended reading for anyone who's never read non-fiction comics, or anyone with an interest in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

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### **Magrat Ajostiernos says**

Un reportaje periodístico totalmente subjetivo, cargado de un sarcasmo brutal que llega a resultar incómodo. Sacco busca respuestas para el conflicto israelí-palestino centrándose en la tragedia de los refugiados y la penosa vida que llevan, habla de vejaciones, injusticias, tortura y muerte. Cuenta lo que vio y recoge testimonios de primera mano.

Es una novela gráfica impresionante, tan solo echo en falta el punto de vista de los israelíes.

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### **Tosh says**

Superb book by Joe Sacco, regarding his journalistic cartooning and narration on the stories that are located in Palestine. It's a subject matter that I have avoided for a long time now. Due to the fact that Israel has close ties to the American culture and the feverish defense and anger towards that country. It is better to look away. Luckily, Sacco doesn't turn his head around, and here we get an interview after interview of Palatine dwellers and what it is like to live in and on an occupied land. It's not pretty. In fact, it is terrible. Curfews (between 8 PM and 4 AM), the brutality of the Isreali soldiers, the thuggish Jewish settlers, and Israel controlling the water, sewage, medicine, electricity, and so forth. It is more or less an open air prison. What makes the stories so strong is not only the tales of the Palestinians, but Sacco's skills as a journalist. He reports without anger or making judgements on the people he's interviewing. Including Israeli citizens. Also his skills as an illustrator are quite remarkable. I imagine that there is a lot of interest right now in this region (as of now, August 2014), and I strongly recommend "Palestine," for its scope and awareness of the darkness that is out there.

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### **Roberto says**

#### **Una polveriera**

Siamo abbastanza abituati ad associare la questione palestinese all'immagine di qualcuno che si fa esplodere in un autobus o in un mercato in mezzo a tranquilli e ignari israeliani.

Purtroppo le cose non sono così semplici e definite.

E' mia ignoranza oppure i media ci trasmettono una informazione parziale?

Joe Sacco cercò di approfondire la situazione andando nei territori occupati verso la fine del 1991, intervistando persone e vivendo nei campi profughi al termine della prima Intifada (la rivolta araba contro la presenza israeliana in Palestina).

Sacco descrive i Palestinesi per quello che sono, senza nascondere nulla, imperfetti (come tutti) e

tendenzialmente aggressivi. Ma racconta anche le loro storie, fatte di soprusi, violenze, privazioni, torture, scontri e indicibili efferatezze compiute dagli israeliani.

Passiamo vari luoghi, da Gerusalemme a Nablus, a Hebron, Ramallah, i campi profughi di Nuseirat e Jabalia e infine Tel Aviv. Un panorama che cambia radicalmente faccia nello spazio di pochi chilometri, ma in cui regna la povertà; baracche, pozzanghere, pantano, coprifuoco, sporcizia.

La zona è certamente una polveriera ove gli arabi, ritenuti parassiti dagli occupanti, sono vessati dai soldati e dai coloni israeliani che imperversano senza che i palestinesi possano invocare alcuna giustizia, visto che la stessa è nelle mani israeliane.

Ovviamente difficile stabilire chi abbia ragione; forse la figura peggiore la fanno Stati Uniti e Gran Bretagna, che con le loro scelte sbagliate, con i loro appoggi militari e i loro soldi hanno di fatto creato e alimentato una faida che dura ormai decenni.

[Penso anche io. Possibile che non riescano a vivere in pace? Qualcuno deve alimentare l'odio]

Il risultato è una vita di guerriglia, di insicurezza, di attentati e di insoddisfazione che permane tutt'oggi.

Fin qui il contenuto. Per quanto riguarda la grafica e l'impostazione del fumetto, devo dire che i disegni sono molto vivi, molto ben fatti, le scene assolutamente realistiche e tali da farci sentire "dentro" i campi profughi, con sapori, odori e sensazioni.

Per contro, a mio parere le didascalie usano troppo testo, scritto troppo piccolo rispetto ai disegni e orientato fuori squadra, cosa che ci costringe a orientare spesso il libro per poter leggere.

Inoltre ho trovato il libro troppo prolioso. Da un fumetto mi aspetto velocità, sintesi, immagini, sensazioni, dinamismo; cose che ho trovato solo parzialmente in Palestina. Considerato il fatto che ho letto le 1500 pagine dei Miserabili in una decina di giorni, i venti giorni per leggere le 312 pagine di Palestina parlano chiaro.

Molto interessanti i contenuti quindi, poco efficace la tecnica espositiva. O sono io che inizio a gradire meno la graphic novel?

Acuto il quesito che Sacco pone alla fine del libro:

*"Prima di arrivare qui avevo fatto delle congetture e, una volta arrivato, avevo scoperto con stupore come può diventare chi crede di avere il potere dalla sua. Ma poi... Come diventa chi crede di non averne alcuno?"*

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### **Emily May says**

*They destroyed everything. There is no sign that we ever lived there.*

This was good. Interesting use of "graphic journalism". A little bit of preaching to the choir in my case as I'm already pretty sympathetic to the Palestinians and aware of the abhorrent treatment they have received in the last several decades, but a must-read for the Americans and Europeans who only get the pro-Israeli stance on the issue. For a graphic novel, it's quite word-heavy, with a lot of pages filled up with text in the margins.

### Aleksandra says

This is very hard book for me to review. The subjects matter is heart-breaking and I don't have words to describe the atrocious politics of Israel government. Their inhuman actions and how little international community care about Palestine.

Palestine is non-fiction graphic novel based on journalist-comic artist Joe Sacco's two months in Israel, Palestine and The Gaza Strip. The events of the book takes place in 1990s. It's been two decades since then, things only got worse.

I wasn't the fan of the art style, but the visuals served its purpose make emotional impact on the reader.

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### Resh (The Book Satchel) says

- art work was not my kind of art.
- important non fiction read
- author does give his own opinions (eg: about wearing hijab) but he also mentions views of those supporting and opposing his views.
- even though this is a graphic novel (non fiction), it does not undermine the tragedies happening in Palestine. Every page is a shocking read.

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### Jan Philipzig says

#### Old-School Journalism

Over the past few decades, journalism has lost much of its credibility and almost all of its punch. Shallow, commercially-minded infotainment dominates, feeding us the "blue pill" (in *Matrix* terms) that makes us forget all those unpleasant realities out there. Why would media conglomerates fund costly in-depth research when a fluffy little human interest story not only feels better but is also much better for the bottom line? Mmmmm, the blissful ignorance of media myths and illusions...

Thankfully, Joe Sacco flushes those blue pills down the toilet and takes journalism back to its roots. He goes into the field, interviews people, takes risks, writes down what he hears, draws what he sees, and ultimately delivers this illustrated journal of his observations in Palestine.

Much like Noam Chomsky, Sacco puts the spotlight on the Palestinian perspective that usually remains hidden in our commercialized media environment. Unlike Chomsky, however, he is more interested in the personal experiences of the people he interviews than in the global political context of their situation - an approach that comes with major blind spots (the crucial and highly problematic role of the U.S. in the conflict is largely ignored, for example) but nevertheless manages to add another dimension to our understanding of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. As we learn more about the harsh realities of daily life in Palestine, the "terrorist" label that various politicians and media outlets have attached to Palestinians in

general feels increasingly ludicrous.

Apart from the unflinching, devastating look at life in Palestine, the portrayal of Sacco himself is another key ingredient of this book. The author does not portray himself as the selflessly heroic or brilliantly detached observer, but as someone with his own personal motivations and weaknesses, someone the reader can relate to. This honesty ensures that *Palestine* is not only an important and educational read, but also a lively and very engaging one. Highly recommended!

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## Mona says

*Palestine* first appeared as a series of nine comic books, but is collected here in a special edition that also includes a foreword by the late Edward Said and an introduction by the author. Sacco writes that he was compelled to visit the Palestinian territories for two main reasons. First, he realized that the taxpayer dollars he paid as an American were being spent in financial aid to Israel, perpetuating the occupation. Second, after pursuing a degree in journalism, he became aware as to the one-sided and inadequate reporting on the conflict. After falling out of regular journalism, Sacco became a cartoonist, and it is this medium through which he represents his wanderings in the occupied territories during two and half months in the winter of 1991-1992.

Each chapter, which represents the original series of nine comic books, contains a number of "episodes" or vignettes, detailing the stories that Sacco hears through his interviews with various Palestinians, and the experiences he has in the refugee camps. The topics of these vignettes range from the expulsion of Palestinians from their homes and land in 1948, the intifada, jobs, checkpoints and roadblocks, living conditions in the camps, women's rights, and the peace process. The episodes concerning three men's prison experiences in Ansar III are particularly moving. Mentions of Arab/Israeli politics are scarce and often are included only in footnotes. The book is concerned, above all, with Palestinians living day-to-day under occupation.

Sacco's style varies throughout the book. As he notes in his introduction, in the beginning, he was uncomfortable drawing on a daily basis. It shows in the early chapters, where both Palestinians and Israelis appear in a rather negative light, looking almost monstrous. However, in the rest of the book, Sacco seems to have figured out a few things, and his drawings look more like regular people. He also is flexible in his formatting. Some pages follow a panel format, some are nearly taken up with writing, while others consist of half-page or full-page drawings with few words. I found that the most absorbing parts of *Palestine* are those when there are only a few words or none at all.

Sacco notes in his introduction that the biggest criticism leveled against his work is that it is too one-sided. But he explains that was his purpose:

"My contention was and remains that the Israeli government's point of view is very well represented in the mainstream American media and is trumpeted loudly, even competitively, by almost every person holding an important elected office in the United States...My idea was not to present an objective book but an honest one."

Most of the book takes place in the West Bank or Gaza, and most of the Israelis represented are those seen most often through the Palestinians' eyes: the settlers and the soldiers. The exception is in the very last chapter, when Sacco visits Tel Aviv. His drawings and conversations with two Israeli women there provide a stark contrast to the rest of the book.

Overall, this book turned out to be a very effective and interesting (if somewhat depressing) portrayal of the Palestinians' plight. In fact, I was surprised at how effective it was, but in a way, it makes sense. Politics and social justice issues in general can be complex and confusing, but a medium like the comic is often viewed as instantly understandable. The drawings - what Sacco calls "comics journalism" - provide a relatively easy avenue by which to access and develop an understanding of the Palestinians' concerns. Several years have passed since Sacco first visited the occupied territories and published these comics in their original form, but they are still highly relevant and comprise a significant piece of work. Highly, highly recommended. (I also highly recommend reading Sacco's introduction for those who are unfamiliar with graphic novels or who are interested in learning about his methodology.)

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### **Veeral says**

Joe Sacco delivers a scathing piece of comic-journalism with Palestine. The Arab side of the story is fully ignored by the Western media since, well, the beginning of the conflict.

The treatment inflicted upon the Arab refugees is horrendous, but the Western media is never going to acknowledge it. They come and kick you out of your home. There are almost no Arab youngsters above 16 years of age who have not received a jail term. The soldiers can hold you up for 6 months. Without reason. And that term could be extended again for 6 months. And again. The interrogation techniques remind you of NKVD and KGB. The uncaring attitude of the soldiers towards the dying reminds you of the SS and SD. There are dozens of stories here and all of them are without fail, heart-wrenching.

This is a very important piece of journalism which is not to be missed especially if you are a neutral like me who has no connection whatsoever with either side in the Palestine-Israel conflict.

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### **Shaimaa Ali says**

Sacco is really raising the bar for any other so-called: Comics!

This is a real Master Piece!! Not an ordinary Comic that you are going to forget once you turn over its last page!

With the eyes of a foreigner, Sacco illustrated what he saw in Occupied Palestine. His illustrations spoke a thousand words besides his commentary on the plot. It was so real that I felt when I'll raise my head from the book I'll find those characters moving in front of me!

He addressed lots of issues, the occupation history, people traditions, food, refugees & their daily sufferings, peace & medical organizations trying to help in vain, charity centers, even women's hijab attracted the catchy eyes of Sacco with its religious & traditional basis.

I was even more fascinated by his sarcastic notes that came while describing very gloomy situations ..

P.S.

I'm not sure, but my Arabic edition either was missing some parts in the end, or it just was ended abruptly..

In fact after reading Tim's amazing review on it, he left me speechless & I couldn't find proper words for this

review :-)

Tim's review:

<https://www.goodreads.com/review/show...>

It's a very highly-recommended read.

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## Miina says

I had a hard time getting through this graphic novel. It was a tough read due to the subject matter. I also wasn't fond of the art on a personal level.

I did immensely appreciate Joe Sacco's motivation for writing this graphic novel. In an interview with Al Jazeera, Joe Sacco said:

"I grew up thinking of Palestinians as terrorists, and it took a lot of time, and reading the right things, to understand the power dynamic in the Middle East was not what I had thought it was... And basically, it upset me enough that I wanted to go, and, in a small way, give the Palestinians a voice - a lens through which people could see their lives.

There are two ways in which Palestinians are portrayed - as terrorist and as victim.

There may be truth in certain situations for both descriptions, but Palestinians are also people going to school, who have families, have lives, invite you into their home, and think about their food."

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Living in the U.S. with its strong ties to Israel, your average person (i.e. Me) will usually just get the Israeli sympathetic viewpoint from the media. The author wanted to get the other side of the story, the side that is grossly under-represented (you might even say misrepresented) in the American media. He wanted to see and hear, first hand, the Palestinian story.

My God, what a depressing story.

What I came away with from the novel were the following memorable highlights:

- 1) Palestinians drink A LOT of tea.
- 2) If you're a young, Palestinian male then it's practically guaranteed that you've gone to jail. If you haven't, there is something wrong with you.
- 3) The Israeli jails are set up in such a way that its Palestinian prisoners are intentionally dehumanized. This was quite a powerful panel in the novel. A former inhabitant of one of the jails points out how the prisoners are not given proper eating utensils, bathrooms, showers or basically any other living necessity thereby forcing the Palestinians to live like animals just to survive their prison term. Couple that reality with the fact that the Israeli soldiers in charge of guarding the jails (military service is compulsory in Israel) are often young impressionable kids witnessing large groups of Palestinians together for the first time and the whole prison set up takes on a very sordid and manipulative overtone of nationalist proportions.
- 4) There was the depressing revelation that there are Israelis who honestly believe that Palestinians "have it better under occupation" than before. \*sigh\* That's like believing under-paid workers in third world sweat shops are doing all right "because at least now, they have a job and are making SOME kind of money rather than none at all." (If you currently believe that bullshit, please read "No Logo" by Naomi Klein so that you get an opposing viewpoint and can subsequently make a more well-rounded and informed opinion.)

- 5) In another couple of powerful panels, Joe Sacco remarks to himself in wonder that he doesn't even know what it would be like to WANT to have the kind of faith that would compel young women to want to cover their heads all the time. That struck me, because, well, I don't know what that would be like either.
- 6) Much like the U.S. agricultural industry, it seems that the Israeli economy also relies on the availability of cheap Palestinian labor.
- 7) There was a poignant and possibly unintentional symbolism involved during the panel sequence in which a Palestinian patriarch describes to Joe how he was forced by the Israeli army to chop down his grove of olive trees. The trees, the patriarch said, were like "his sons". He wept as the axe bit into the flesh of the trees. In one cruel afternoon, his family's livelihood was destroyed.

Overall, I liked the novel and the author's intent. Like I said, I didn't much like the art but it was fitting to the novel's content and tone.

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### **Maryam AlNasser says**

it's so sad that 20 years after this book was written, the circumstances are still the same.

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### **Dan says**

pretty much a masterpiece on every possible level.

first off, because sacco wisely lets the people he encounters do the talking. it's a warts-and-all first person account of people's lives in palestine, and almost all embellishments and social commentaries come from the mouths of the people he talks to, rather than from things he learned reading edward said or whatever.

at the same time, he allows his own story to weave throughout. we are privvy to his own frustrations and fascinations along the way. the account is never neutral, but he never soapboxes either.

best of all, it's FANTASTICALLY illustrated - a direct descendant of the drawings of social critique from the 30's and 40's (grosz, dix, shahn, etc.). every panel is lovingly and obsessively rendered, giving the thing a marvelous scope that involves as much looking as it does thinking. note the care with which each human expression is given, or the way he takes the time to render each and every mud track along his path. the drawing amounts to a kind of world-building, which makes the socio-political impact of the comic all the more visceral and real.

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### **Anne says**

For the love of God everyone needs to read this book. Americans are so ignorant when it comes to the struggles of the Isralies and Palestinians. THis is something we need to know about and Sacco presents it in a real person to person manner that will leave shocked and horrified, as you should be. If more people read this book the world would be a better place, because people would have to stand up and fight!

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## **Huda AbuKhoti says**

**Palestine** is a one of a kind graphic novel, at least to me. This is the first book I've read for Joe Sacco and I loved it!

This book takes place between 1991 and 1992 in several Palestinian cities, Cairo and Tel Aviv from the Israeli side. The main focal point of the book was showing the occupied land's people point of view of the story, because in the west this other side of the story is pretty much invisible.

The art style was really amazing, all the drawings were very supportive to the content and they were funny when they needed to be.

Obviously this book was written at a time with much better political conditions, when people could go from Gaza strip to the west bank, and there are other stuff that got really complicated after the second Intifada which happened after the book's publication.

Politically the author's opinion was absent. It pretty much conveyed other people's testimonies, whether they were Palestinian (which they were in the largest part of this book) or Israelis. Tragic stories of Palestinians.. Some lost their kids, some brothers, some their legs and others their eye. Most of them been to prison and they were tortured for crimes they didn't commit. Kids forced to lose their innocence. Although they are stories I'm used to listen to as a Palestinian... they still had a huge impact on me.

For the religion part, the author really wasn't afraid to show his point of view regarding that, e.g when writing the call of prayer for Muslims he wrote "????? ?????" as "???? ?? ?????" so he changed the meaning from "Allah is the greatest" to "Allah isn't the greatest". He also pointed out how he had problems with religions in the book.

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## **Oriana says**

book two for Jugs & Capes, my all-girl graphic novel book club!

Whew. This is a really, really devastating book. Part of the problem (and obviously part of the point) is that it is relentlessly awful, with story after story after story of death, destruction, skirmishes with soldiers, dead sons, dead husbands, maimed daughters, displacement, oppression, poverty, and pain.

It's so painful, horribly, that I actually started to get a little jaded; or that's not what I mean exactly, but the stories after awhile sort of lost their power to shock, to devastate. I understand this was originally published as many small issues, so perhaps if I'd read each story as a standalone, with in-between time to fully process each before moving on to the next, they would each have continued to wield as much sorrow as they were meant to. I don't know.

I feel like I should say something intelligent about the art, since this is after all a graphic novel, but I'm still

finding my sea legs, as it were, on the books with pix. So here's a try: Sacco has an incredibly chaotic style, which really helped to create an immersive feeling. That said, though, there's practically just as much text as pictures, and at times I wondered why he chose to tell this story as a graphic novel, rather than just straight prose. There were plenty of illustrations that were particularly affecting, and times when the images did enhance the story it was paired with, but for the most part I think this could have been text-only without losing a whole lot.

I talked a lot about this book with my Zionist-leaning mother, and it was pretty difficult. Like so many impossibly polarizing issues, it's tough to even find the language with which to locate a middle ground.

She would say, "The Gazans have no electricity because they dig up the pipes to use as weapons against the Israelis." And I would say, "Well, according to this book, the Gazans have no electricity because the Israelis cut it off all the time, at random, just to keep them unstable."

And she would say, "Why do the Palestinians keep asking Israel to give them jobs? Why can't they just make their own industry?" And I would say, "How can they do that? Israel controls the water, the power, the supplies, the land, the permits, the transportation, and everything else. From what could they possibly make industry?"

And she would say, "Israelis are ready to discuss peace, but most Palestinians won't even acknowledge Israel's right to exist." And I would say, "This has been going on for decades. Imagine if you were a teenager in Gaza and all you had ever known was relentless humiliation, oppression, and poverty? How would you feel about your oppressors? Would you be in any hurry to negotiate anything?"

And then we would have to change the subject, because where could we go?

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