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These developments require urgent publications to address different dimensions of this delicate issue, which lies at the heart of most of the regional problems. In order to develop a better understanding of this issue and other related regional problems, it is necessary to produce inclusive materials about the city. Accordingly, at this critical time, we have designed this edited book to provide a better understanding of this core issue to intellectuals, academics, politicians, and the wider public interested in the Holy Land.
AL-QUDS
HISTORY, RELIGION, AND POLITICS
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EDITORS
Prof. Dr. Abd al-Fattah EL-AWAISI
Prof. Dr. Muhittin ATAMAN

SETA
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Since the end of the 19th century, the Middle East has been the target of global powers. The region, which was largely under the control of the Ottoman state as a political unit until the end of the First World War, was put under the mandate regime of different colonial states and was divided the region into many artificial states. From then onwards, controlling the region that hosts almost two thirds of the world’s energy resources has been considered one of the main preconditions of global hegemony. All global powers have tried to develop their own regional strategies regarding the Middle East and to intervene in the internal affairs of the regional actors. Today, the Middle East is one of the most penetrated, vulnerable, and unstable regions in the world. Political clashes have dominated the modern or the post-Ottoman Middle East, the Palestinian issue being the most important. The status of the holy city of al-Quds (Jerusalem) is at the heart of the Palestinian question.

Al-Quds is at the heart of the Middle Eastern region and the center of various belief systems and cultures. There are many definitions and considerations of the city. One of the best definitions of al-Quds was made by Sezai Karakoç, a well-known poet
and thinker from Turkey. He describes al-Quds as a “city created in heaven and brought down to earth” and also as “the city of God and the city of all humanity.” For Muslims, it is the first qiblah (the direction that should be faced when a Muslim prays), a blessed soil and the destination of all prophets. Al-Quds is the city of peace, mutual respect, and peaceful coexistence. It is not only the cradle of different civilizations but also the teacher of the history of humanity. Al-Quds, which was praised in three holy books, is a symbolic city for three main beliefs, namely Judaism, Christianity, and Islam.

For the last one thousand years, al-Quds had been under the control of Muslims and Arab Palestinians until the colonial powers occupied it in the wake of the First World War. It is not only the capital of Palestine and the home of Palestinians but also the third holy site for all Muslims. It was forcefully occupied first by the British, and then by the Israelis. According to the main principles of international law and many decisions of the United Nations, (Eastern) al-Quds still belongs to the Palestinians. However, with the help of the global powers, and the United States, in particular, the state of Israel continues to occupy the city.

As soon as the state of Israel was declared, it immediately occupied the western part of the city. The old and holy part (Eastern) of the city was occupied in 1967 after the Six-Day War. Since then, the UN and the world public opinion have considered Eastern al-Quds as part of the “occupied territories” by Israel. Even though the illegal fait accompli by Israel was stabilized, the world continues to discuss the city’s future.

Major discussions about the fate of the city began with the Israeli and American policies since the 1980s. First, Israel declared the united al-Quds as the eternal capital of Israel in 1981. Then, the Trump Administration recognized this decision and transferred the American embassy from Tel Aviv to al-Quds. The UN Gen-
eral Assembly passed a resolution condemning Trump’s decision. Only some small states forced by the U.S. followed the American initiative. The majority of states, Western and Eastern, continue to oppose the Israeli occupation and the American decision of transferring its embassy to al-Quds.

This timely and articulate book is composed of three parts, namely Historical and Religious Background, Theoretical and Legal Framework, and Political Developments and Current Problems, and ten articles explaining the religious, historical, legal, strategic, and political importance of the holy city of al-Quds. Authors from different parts of the world, Turkish, Arab, Palestinian, English, and Malaysian, made contributions to the volume and each of them reflected on a different perspective of the subject.

While the first article of the book focuses on the names of al-Quds and the origins of these names, the second article focuses on the city’s religious significance. The third article analyzes the history of the city and the surrounding region. The fourth article proposes a theoretical and conceptual model derived from the Muslim experience. The fifth and sixth articles examine the status of Jerusalem in international law and in the Palestinian-Israeli question. The remaining four articles analyze positions of global and regional powers towards Trump’s decision for the relocation of the American embassy to Jerusalem.

Considering the transformation process in the Middle East and the global transition, it is clear that the Palestinian-Israeli question and the issue of al-Quds will continue to dominate the agenda of the Middle East and global system. Recent regional developments such as Trump’s decision regarding the future of Jerusalem and the solution proposal called the “Deal of Century” by the Trump Administration demonstrate that the holy city of al-Quds will continue to be discussed. This timely book will surely contribute to the discussion.
I want to thank the editors, Abd al-Fattah el-Awaisi and Muhittin Ataman, and the contributors of the book, who made this significant publication possible. I am sure that this book will make an eminent contribution to the understanding of the Palestinian-Israeli question and to the meaning of the holy city of al-Quds.

Prof. Dr. Burhanettin Duran
SETA, General Coordinator
The controversial decision of U.S. President Donald Trump on December 6, 2017 to formally recognize the Holy City of al-Quds (Bayt al-Maqdis, Jerusalem) as the capital of Israel overturned decades of official U.S. policy. At the White House, President Donald Trump declared, “While previous presidents have made this a major campaign promise, they failed to deliver. Today, I am delivering.” Trump described the move as “a long overdue step” to advance the Middle East peace process and added that “today, we finally acknowledge the obvious: that Jerusalem is Israel’s capital. This is nothing more or less than a recognition of reality. It is also the right thing to do. It’s something that has to be done.”

This decision resulted in moving the United States embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem on the eve of the Palestinian commemoration of 70 years of the Nakbah (Catastrophe) on May 15, 2018, during which the Palestinian people have been suffering persecutions, massacres, and ethnic cleansing. In addition, while the Israelis were celebrating the move of the American embassy on May 14, 2018, the Israeli soldiers massacred an additional 60 Palestinian civilians, including children and women, who were protesting peacefully against the Israeli occupation and its blockade of the Gaza Strip for more than a decade.
Not only is this decision against international law, but it is also in direct conflict with a number of resolutions by the United Nations Security Council (UNSC). Recognizing the united Jerusalem as the capital of Israel brings an end to the two-state solution, which the international community has been trying to achieve for a long time. Moreover, this action is happening as a practical step of the “Deal of the Century” which the Trump administration is trying to impose in the region, and at a time when there are serious problems over fragmentations and divisions in a number of Arab countries, and a serious internal split among the Palestinians.

The issue of al-Quds (Bayt al-Maqdis, Jerusalem) is not only a Palestinian one, but is also an issue for Muslims and all individuals who are concerned with justice and freedom. We argue that the cost of this ideological, political, and corporate decision of the Trump administration will be a very high and very serious one. Indeed, it might spark, in the coming years, not only unrest in the region but also might have a severe impact on global security and possibly lead to a global war.

In a time when the hegemon of the world, the United States, neglects the main principles of international order that was established by the U.S. itself, the future of the Middle East is more uncertain and vulnerable than ever. There is no regional and global power to stop the expansionist policies of the Trump administration in the U.S. and the Netanyahu government in Israel. Their arbitrary, unilateral and, therefore, illegal policies have been threatening not only the regional stability but also the protection of the global order. The American and Israeli decisions regarding al-Quds will pave the way for other regional and global powers to follow a similar path, ignore the rule-based global system, and maximize their national interests through power politics.

It is necessary to examine and criticize these illegal acts in order to prevent or discourage other states and other international
actors from following the same policy discourse. Also, it should be mentioned that these illegal and unilateral political moves are self-defeating in the medium- and long-run. Eventually, the main purpose of this edited volume is to provide a better understanding of the Holy City of al-Quds (Jerusalem) for politicians, intellectuals, academicians, students, and the general public. It also attempts to reveal the religious and historical significance of the city, the legal position and its place in international law and global politics, and the meaning of the illegal steps taken by both Israel and the U.S. We hope that the volume will make an important contribution to the academic and intellectual understanding of the city.

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These serious developments require the urgent publication of many academic and intellectual works to address different dimensions of this delicate issue, which lies at the heart of most of the regional problems. In order to develop a better understanding of the issue of al-Quds and other related regional problems, it is necessary to produce inclusive materials about the city. Accordingly, at this critical time, we have designed this edited book to provide a better understanding of this core issue to intellectuals, academics, politicians, and the wider public interested in the Holy Land.

The book has been divided into three parts and ten chapters. The first part presents a historical and religious background of the Holy City. To better comprehend the historical associations of the three most well-known religious traditions, namely Judaism, Christianity and Islam, which still play a major role in the ongoing conflict, these associations must be understood better. Dr. Khalid El-Awaisi’s chapter (Chapter One) “Whose Holy Land? The Meanings and Origins of the Names of Bayt al-Maqdis” begins with a discussion of the perceptions of Abraham, the most important figure associated with this land, whom all three faiths try to claim as
their own. Then, he traces the importance of the region through studying the names attached to it and their origins.

In Chapter Two, “Jerusalem, The Eternal Capital of Faith,” Reverend Dr. Stephen Sizer theologically challenges the core idea of Christian Zionists about Jerusalem. In his relatively short but interesting piece, he concludes that “far from justifying, or even tolerating, an exclusive claim to Jerusalem, in the Hebrew and Christian Scriptures, God reveals that he expects Jerusalem to be a shared, inclusive city of faith, hope, and love.” Dr. Sharif Amin Abu Shamal presents an evaluation of this holy city from early centuries to our time in Chapter Three, “Bayt al-Maqdis: A Short History from Ancient to Modern Times.”

The second part of the book establishes the theoretical and legal framework for interpreting political developments. In Chapter Four, “Bayt al-Maqdis: A Muslim Model for Aman,” Dr. Abd al-Fattah El-Awaisi develops and presents the forgotten model of Bayt al-Maqdis as a Muslim model for Aman, the principle of peaceful coexistence and mutual respect. Although this holy city is the most delicate issue of the dispute between the two conflicting parties, it is hoped that El-Awaisi’s model will provide a better understanding for the world leaders who are trying to return peace to the region.

Dr. Berdal Aral analyzes the international legal status of al-Quds in Chapter Five “An International Legal Analysis of the Status of al-Quds (Jerusalem).” He concludes that “al-Quds is currently under the military occupation of Israel and, therefore, ought to be returned to the rightful owners of the city, who are the Palestinians.” In Chapter Six, “The Status of al-Quds in the Palestinian-Israeli Peace Process,” Dr. Abdulsalam Muala tries to address a core question: can the peace process continue while the problem of al-Quds exists? To address such a question, he examines the significance of al-Quds in the peace process, the reality
of the peace process within the international political context, and the balance of power between the parties in conflict, and the extension of the peace process.

The third part address the political developments and current problems by examining the reactions of regional and global actors to Trump’s decision and his policy towards region. In Chapter Seven, “Official Arab Positions on the Trump Administration’s Jerusalem Decision,” Hossam Shaker analyzes the official Arab reactions to the American decision. To have a better understanding of the Arab positions, he first examines the international reactions, and the context and dimensions of the decision. In addition, he identifies the foundation of their official positions and studies the factors and determinants of the Arab positions. Dr. Mohammad Makram Balawi tries to explore the positions of the European Union (EU) and the EU countries such as Britain, Germany, and France, and Russia and China towards the American decision in Chapter Eight, “The Stances of Global Powers on the Relocation of the United States Embassy to al-Quds (Jerusalem).”

In Chapter Nine, Dr. Helin Sarı Ertem discusses the meaning of al-Quds for Turkey and Turkey’s policy towards the Holy City. She first focuses on al-Quds under the Ottoman rule and the official position in the Ottoman state. Then, Sarı Ertem examines Turkey’s policy discourses and practices towards al-Quds emphasizing humanitarian and developmental assistance. In the end, she assesses the challenges that Turkey has been facing while resisting the American and Israeli illegitimate policies such as the transfer of the capital of Israel to Jerusalem violating the main principles of international law. In Chapter Ten, “Malaysia’s Stance towards Trump’s Decision Regarding Bayt al-Maqdis,” Dr. Mohd Roslan Mohd Nor and Muhammad Khalis Ibrahim examine Malaysia’s stance, both state and non-state actors, towards the U.S. decision. Malaysia provides a good example of the Muslim state that has no political
problems with Israel, but still opposes the occupation of al-Quds by Israel due to the city’s religious dimension. Malaysia, especially the current government of Mahathir Mohamad, is one of the most active countries playing an effective role in the Palestinian issue.

Ankara, May 15, 2019

Prof. Dr. Abd al-Fattah EL-AWAISI and Prof. Dr. Muhittin ATAMAN
ONE

HISTORICAL AND RELIGIOUS BACKGROUND
Bayt al-Maqdis, al-Quds, UrShalim, Yebus, Aelia, and the Holy Land mean different things to different people, i.e. the people of the three main faiths. Therefore, the holy city and the holy region around it carry symbolism for at least half of the world’s population. For Jews, it is rich in significance since Moses ordered the Israelites to enter the Holy Land, and also as Jews trace their origin back to Abraham. For Christians, it is the land where Jesus walked and the place where he was crucified and resurrected, and houses their holiest place of worship. For Muslims, it is important not only because it has a bearing on Muhammad and is the destination of his Night Journey and the starting point of his ascension, but also because the earlier prophets lived there, and they established and rebuilt the al-Aqsa Mosque. Today, these historical and religious associations still play a major role in the ongoing conflict and to better comprehend the conflict these associations have to be better understood. Accordingly, no one can deny the spiritual attachment that exists between the people of these three
faiths and this Holy Land and that it is the key to resolving the ongoing conflict.

The associations have been part of the shaping of the region’s identity, just as its different names. The names may differ from time to time, but the place and its importance are still the same. The inhabitants of the region have attached different meanings to these names and have sought to own and monopolize them. Names of sites and places are initially given by their first inhabitants. Yet these names are sometimes replaced by entirely new ones, sometimes modified, at other times reduced or expanded, or in some cases completely forgotten. Over the centuries, they develop their own identities and are understood differently by different people. This is true not only for names, but also for the associations of these places, which are also perceived differently by different people. The competing religious and political claims over the Holy Land have made it a prime example of this. Studying the use of names and terms is essential if we wish to come to a clear conceptual understanding of the associations.

In history, too, each group creates its own narrative, which has led to distortions. The competing religious and political claims have tinted the narratives of this land; even modern archaeology is used as a tool to forge such narratives. The history of who had the first connection and who first settled there is at its heart. It is historically accepted that the Canaanites were the earliest to have settled in this land, as they are inferred to in the Bible. By contrast, Muslim Arabs who came in the seventh century are considered to be the latest group to have had an association with this land, preceded by Christians and Jews. Arabs believe that they are the descendants of the region’s first inhabitants, the Canaanites, whereas Muslims consider themselves to be the inheritors of the legacy of the earlier religions, contending that they have superseded the religions of the
Jews and the Christians, just as the Christians see themselves as the inheritors of Judaism.

Trying to trace back the earliest connections with this land, one major figure comes up in the three faiths: Abraham. He is believed to have migrated and settled in this land and to have been buried there. Thus, this chapter will initially discuss the perceptions of Abraham, the most important figure associated with this land, whom all three faiths try to claim as theirs. Then it will trace the importance of the region through the names attached to it and the origins of these names.

**ABRAHAM, THE MUSLIM**

One of the first contested figures in all three narratives is Abraham, who is considered the father of the three faiths. Both Jews and Arabs consider Abraham to be their biological progenitor. The Jews claim that he was the first Jew, and Jewish rabbinic traditions assert that he observed the Torah; “our father Abraham observed the entire Torah before it was given to Israel” (Mishnah, Kiddushin 14: 4). Additionally, they restrict God’s promise to Abraham’s descendants to the offspring of Isaac, excluding those from his other son, Ishmael. Christianity challenged the Jewish narrative of the promise to the gentiles and claimed that Christians are the rightful heirs to Abraham. Jesus’s apostle Paul clearly tackles this issue, stating that Abraham is “the father of all those who have faith without being circumcised” (Roman 4: 11-12), thus changing the discourse from being born into a Jewish family to the acceptance of the Christian faith, through which one becomes the descendant of Abraham.¹

The Qur’an, on the other hand, speaks of the connection of Abraham to this land as well as reflecting debates in the seventh century over this issue. It discusses the context for the claim that

Muhittin Ataman

Dr. Muhittin Ataman is a professor of International Relations at Ankara Social Sciences University, Department of International Relations, where he teaches International Relations and Middle Eastern Politics. After graduating from Ankara University, he received his Master's degree from the University of Central Oklahoma and his PhD from the University of Kentucky. He has taught at Abant Izzet Baysal University and Ankara Yıldırım Beyazıt University for two decades. Dr. Ataman worked at the Higher Educational Council of Turkey as secretary general of the Inter-University Board, as coordinator of the international office, and as advisor to the president of YOK between 2012 and 2014. Since 2011, he has been working at SETA, Foundation for Political, Economic and Social Research, where he is now director of foreign policy research. Since 2014, Dr. Ataman is a regular contributor on foreign policy issues to different programs on the TV channel TRT Haber (TRT News). Since 2017, he has been contributing to the newspaper Daily Sabah. Dr. Ataman has published many articles about Turkish foreign policy, Middle Eastern politics, and international politics in some of the leading English, Turkish, and Arabic academic journals, and has edited several books including Dünya Çatışma Bölgeleri ve Alanları I-II (World Conflict Zones and Areas, I and II), Küresel Güç ve Refah (Global Power and Wealth), and July 15 Coup Attempt in Turkey. He is the editor-in-chief of the journal Insight Turkey, one of the leading journals on Middle Eastern politics, and of Ortadoğu Yıllığı (Middle Eastern Annual).

Abd al-Fattah El-Awaisi

Dr. Abd al-Fattah El-Awaisi is a professor of International Relations, a fellow of the Royal Historical Society (UK), and the founder of the Field of Inquiry of Islamicjerusalem Beytülmakdis Studies. He has been teaching and researching for 33 years at different Arab, British, Malaysian, and Turkish universities. He currently works at the Social Sciences University of Ankara and is a distinguished visiting professor at the Universiti Utara Malaysia (UUM). Dr. El-Awaisi has an excellent record of research publications in both English and Arabic. Some of his publications have been translated into French, Malay, Turkish, and Indonesian. He has encouraged and supported the development of a number of academic knowledge-based thoughts and ideas through his supervision of a good number of master dissertations and PhD theses. Moreover, he has participated and presented academic papers at many international academic conferences. In addition, he has established a number of international academic projects, such as the Field of
Inquiry of Islamicjerusalem Beytülmakdis Studies, which he founded in 1994; the annual International Academic Conference on Islamicjerusalem Studies, which he has chaired since 1997; and the academic refereed journal Journal of Islamicjerusalem Studies, where he has been the editor-in-chief since 1997. One of his major achievements is his contribution to knowledge in the form of a number of theories and models in the field of International Relations. Examples of the former include his new geopolitical theory, the Barakah Circle Theory of Islamicjerusalem, and his Aman (Peaceful Co-Existence and Mutual Respect) Theory. He has received a number of awards, including the Stirling Council Provost’s Civic Award for 1999 (UK); the Special Award for Innovation in 2007 (UK); and recently, the Islamic World Istanbul “Science” Award (2018). Dr. El-Awaisi is an energetic scholar and visionary, and an accomplished and innovative academic, who has dedicated his life to education and knowledge as a base for human development with a passionate and grittier commitment to progressive education, research, and community welfare.

Berdal Aral
Dr. Berdal Aral completed his PhD research with a thesis entitled “Turkey and International Society from a Critical Legal Perspective” in 1994 at the University of Glasgow, Scotland. His main areas of interest, both in research and teaching, include international law and human rights. He has written three books in Turkish, namely The Right of Self-Defence under International Law (1999); Collective Rights as Third-Generation Human Rights (2010); and From Global Security to Global Hegemony: The UN System and the Muslim World (2016). He has published articles, both in English and Turkish, on the aforementioned topics and on Turkish foreign policy. Dr. Aral currently teaches at the Department of International Relations at Istanbul Medeniyet University.

Helin Sari Ertem
Dr. Helin Sari Ertem is an assistant professor of International Relations at Istanbul Medeniyet University, Turkey. She received her Master’s degree in 1999 from the Department of Journalism at City, University of London, UK. Between 1999 and 2003, she worked as a broadcast journalist. In 2010, she received her PhD on International Relations from Marmara University, Turkey. Since then, Dr. Sari Ertem has been giving lectures, and writing and editing books, book chapters, and articles on various foreign policy issues. Her academic interests include Turkish and American foreign policies, Middle East affairs, and the identity-security relationship. She has co-edited the following books: Analysing Foreign Policy Crises in Turkey: Conceptual, Theoretical and Practical Discussions (Cambridge, 2017); GCC-Turkey Relations: Dawn of a New Era (Cambridge, 2015); and Turkish Foreign Policy in the 2000s: Opportunities, Risks and Crises (printed in Turkish) (Istanbul, 2015).
Khalid El-Awaisi

Dr. Khalid El-Awaisi is a graduate of the pioneering field of Islamic Jerusalem Studies where he received his PhD from the University of Aberdeen (2006). His main specialization is the historical geography of Beytulmakdis/Islamic Jerusalem and the geographical interpretations of the Qur’an. He has taught at a number of Turkish and British universities and was appointed the director of the Centre of Islamic Jerusalem Studies in the UK (2007-2011). Currently, he is an assistant professor at the Department of Islamic History at the Social Sciences University of Ankara (ASBU), and teaches in the field of Beytulmakdis/Quds Studies in the postgraduate programs.

Sharif Amin Abu Shammala

Dr. Sharif Amin Abu Shammala is a Palestinian researcher who holds a PhD in the history and civilization of al-Quds from the University of Malaya, Malaysia. He has published several books and articles. His research focus is Palestine and issues pertaining to al-Quds. He received the 2012 Ministry of Youth and Sports Award (Palestinian Youth Innovation Award) in the category of Islamic Thought. He is currently the chief executive officer of the Al-Quds Foundation Malaysia and a member of the Board of Directors of the Palestinian Center for History and Documentation. Abu Shammala is also the editor-in-chief of al-Aqsa Online Encyclopedia (Aqsapedia.net).

Stephen Sizer

Revd. Dr. Stephen Sizer is the former vicar of the Anglican parish of Christ Church, Virginia Water, in Surrey, England. In 2004, he was awarded a PhD by Oak Hill College and Middlesex University. His thesis examined the historical roots, theological basis, and political consequences of Christian Zionism in Britain and the USA beginning in 1820. Revd. Sizer is the founder and director of Peacemaker Trust.

Abdulsalam Muala

Dr. Abdulsalam Muala is a Palestinian freelance researcher based in the West Bank who holds a PhD degree from the Universiti Utara Malaysia (UUM), Malaysia. He has two books in the process of publication: Unlocking the Palestinian-Israeli Negotiations: A Critical Review of Contemporary Literature and Methodologies (in English) with Springer Publishing; and Barriers to Reach a Negotiated Solution to the Palestinian-Israeli Conflict (in Arabic) with the Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies.
Hossam Shaker

Hossam Shaker is a researcher, author, and a consultant in media, public relations, and mass communication for a number of organizations in Europe. He has an interest in the analysis of European and international affairs, as well as social and media issues. Shaker resides in Vienna.

Mohammad Makram Balawi

Dr. Mohammad Makram Balawi is a Palestinian academic and writer based in Istanbul. He is the founder and president of the Asia Middle East Forum, a public diplomacy organization that aims at bridging the gap between Asian countries and the Middle East, with special emphasis on advocacy of the Palestinian cause. In 2012, Dr. Makram Balawi co-founded the al-Quds Foundation Malaysia and worked as its managing director. He also founded a Malaysian coalition for advocating and supporting the al-Quds cause called “Save al-Quds Campaign” that consists of about 50 organizations. He holds a PhD in postcolonialism from the International Islamic University Malaysia. He is a prolific writer who is best known for his writings on Asian Relations and the Palestinian cause.

Mohd Roslan Mohd Nor

Dr. Mohd Roslan Mohd Nor is an associate professor at the Department of Islamic History and Civilization, Academy of Islamic Studies, University of Malaya, Malaysia. He was the deputy director (Research & Development) at the Academy of Islamic Studies between 2012 and 2019. Prior to that, he served as the head of the Department of Islamic History and Civilization, at the same academy. Dr. Roslan’s broad academic interests involve Islamic Jerusalem Studies, the Middle East, Islam and multiculturalism, Muslim affairs, religious studies, and civilization. He has published several academic articles in international refereed journals. Dr. Roslan participated in the “Study of the United States Institutes - Religious Pluralism and Public Presence,” University of California Santa Barbara (2010), and has been a visiting scholar at different institutions such as the Al-Maktoum Institute, Scotland (2009) and Minzu University, Beijing (2012-2013). He was a recipient of the 2018 MAPIM-KPT (then Ministry of Higher Education) award for a book published in the social sciences category. He also received the prestigious award Anugerah Akademik Negara (AAN) 2018 in the book category for The Significance of Islamic Jerusalem in Islam (University of Malaya Press, 2017).
Muhammad Khalis Ibrahim

Muhammad Khalis Ibrahim was a postgraduate student at the Department of Islamic History and Civilization, Academy of Islamic Studies, University of Malaya, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. His Master’s degree was about modern Turkish history and politics. Muhammad Khalis has published his research in academic journals such as *International Journal of West Asian Studies*, *UMRAN-International Journal of Islamic and Civilizational Studies*, *Online Journal of Research in Islamic Studies*, and *MANU-Jurnal Pusat Penatran Ilmu & Bahasa*. He also has an article in the forthcoming issue of *AKADEMIKA-Journal of Southeast Asia Social Sciences and Humanities* (indexed in the Web of Science). Ibrahim has presented his work in several international conferences and is now planning to pursue a doctoral degree focused on the Turkish foreign policy towards Western Asia.
The controversial decision of U.S. President Donald Trump to formally recognize the Holy City of al-Quds (Jerusalem) as the capital of Israel overturned decades of official U.S. policy. This decision resulted in moving the American embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem on the eve of the Palestinian commemoration of 70 years of the Nakbah (Catastrophe) on May 15, 2018, during which Palestinians have been suffering persecutions, massacres, and ethnic cleansing. Not only is this decision against international law, but it is also in direct conflict with a number of resolutions by the UN Security Council. It brings an end to the two-state solution, which the international community has been trying to achieve for a long time. Moreover, this action is a practical step of the “Deal of the Century” which the Trump administration is trying to impose in the region.

These developments require urgent publications to address different dimensions of this delicate issue, which lies at the heart of most of the regional problems. In order to develop a better understanding of this issue and other related regional problems, it is necessary to produce inclusive materials about the city. Accordingly, at this critical time, we have designed this edited book to provide a better understanding of this core issue to intellectuals, academics, politicians, and the wider public interested in the Holy Land.