

The Manama riots 1947: Bahraini Jews between *Palestine* and Gulf labour politics

in *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, (Online Publication Date: 5 Oct 2022)

Eirik Kvindesland

In December 1947, following the UN decision to divide Palestine, Bahrain's Jewish community became the target of communal violence. As crowds protested the partition plan, Manama's Jewish quarter was attacked and looted. In their aftermath, the Manama riots have been understood as a nationalist show of anger against Zionism, unfortunately unleashed against local Bahraini Jews. However, a close reading of events shows the riot as complex event involving local labour politics, anti-colonialism and Shi'a religious rituals. Drawing on British records, Jewish correspondence and personal memoirs, this paper locates the riot in its post-war Persian Gulf context and argues that it represented an encounter between regional politics of the Palestine Mandate and the post-war tensions of Manama as a late colonial oil city. While ostensibly driven by Arab opposition to Zionism, the riots also saw the culmination of socio-political tensions over labour and colonial rule, exacerbated by five years of war. As such, the Manama riots should be understood not only as an extension of emerging Arab-Jewish conflict in Palestine, but also within the local politics of the post-war Persian Gulf.

More information:

<https://doi.org/10.1080/13530194.2022.2128720>

About the author

Eirik is a DPhil candidate in History at St Antony's College, University of Oxford. He works on transnational connections between Palestine/Israel and the Persian Gulf,

Featured Research and Publications from BRISMES Members

with a particular focus on Jewish history. His DPhil is funded by Oxford's Middle East Centre through the 3-year Pachachi Studentship.

Twitter: @eirkvi

Website: www.kvindesland.net