

## **Ep. 14: The Jerusalem Question – The Conflict in a Nutshell**

**Guest:** Prof. Dr. Yfaat Weiss, Leibniz Institute for Jewish History and Culture – Simon Dubnow / Hebrew University of Jerusalem

**Hosts:** Efe & Year 13 Politics Class, Walter-Gropius-School/Berlin

**Bio:** Prof. Dr. Yfaat Weiss is one of the most eminent historians of Jewish history and Israeli society of her generation, widely recognized for her innovative work on German-Jewish relations, Israeli society, and the history of Jerusalem. She serves as Director of the Leibniz Institute for Jewish History and Culture – Simon Dubnow, one of the world's leading research centers in the field, Professor of Modern History at Leipzig University, and Professor of Jewish History at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem.

Prof. Weiss's work has been recognized with several major distinctions. In 2012, she was awarded the Hebrew University Rector Prize for her outstanding contributions to research, teaching, and academic life. In the same year, her intellectual independence she was recognized with the Hannah Arendt Prize for Political Thought in the same year. In 2015, she received the Polonsky Prize for Creativity and Originality in the Humanistic Disciplines. Since 2019, she has been a member of the Saxon Academy of Sciences.

Her international academic profile is further reflected in numerous fellowships and visiting positions, including at the International Research Center for Cultural Studies in Vienna (2003), the Hamburg Institute for Social Research (2005–2006), the Remarque Institute at New York University (2007), the International Institute for Holocaust Research at Yad Vashem (2007–2008), and the Wissenschaftszentrum Berlin für Sozialforschung (2008). She has also held appointments as Visiting Professor and Anna Lindh Fellow at Stanford University, EURIAS Senior Visiting Fellow at the Institute for Human Sciences in Vienna (2014–2015), and Honorary Fellow at the Historisches Kolleg in Munich (2017).

In her book *Verdrängte Nachbarn. Wadi Salib – Haifas enteignete Erinnerung* (2012), she describes the expulsion of Arab residents during the 1948 war from Haifa and the protests of Moroccan Jews in 1959 in Wadi Salib, the city's former poor district. In her most recent book *Verfehlte Mission. Das geteilte Jerusalem und die Vereinten Nationen* she explores the failed UN plan to internationalize Jerusalem after 1947 by focusing on the small Mount Scopus exclave in the divided city between 1948 and 1967. Using sources dispersed around the world for the first time, she shows how this area became a microcosm of the Israeli–Jordanian conflict, shaped by competing sovereignty claims and the limits of international intervention, a case study that reveals patterns and dynamics that continued to shape the conflict in later decades.

Prof. Yfaat Weiss serves on several international academic advisory boards, including the Vienna Wiesenthal Institute for Holocaust Studies, the Leibniz Center for Literary and Cultural Research in Berlin, the Jewish Museum Berlin, and the Leonid Nevzlin Research Center for Russian and East European Jewry.

Her research focuses on German, Jewish, and Israeli history, with particular emphasis on spatial history, material culture, (Jewish) cultural restitution, memory, and the history of universities and knowledge transfer. Her scholarship is distinguished by conceptual precision, deep engagement with archival sources, and a compelling narrative voice. Her research has become an important reference point for understanding how historical conflicts continue to shape present realities.

## In this Episode:

Prof. Yfaat Weiss explores the “Jerusalem Question” through the lens of Mount Scopus as a condensed site of conflict. From this microhistorical perspective, she traces key dimensions of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict.

A central focus is the role of international actors, particularly the United Nations’ ultimately unsuccessful 1947 attempt to internationalize Jerusalem. As Weiss shows, this plan was overtaken by the events of 1948, which led to the division of the city—an outcome that continues to shape political realities today.

The discussion also addresses the long-term consequences of the 1948 war and the Six-Day War, highlighting the enduring tension between international law and political power.

Efe’s introduction draws on three contemporary voices—John Gary Hill (p. 17), Anthony Eden (p. 196), and David Senator (p. 85)—all quoted from Weiss’s *Verfehlte Mission. Das geteilte Jerusalem und die Vereinten Nationen*. Their inclusion underscores a defining feature of her scholarship: analytical precision realized through masterful narrative.

## Links:

Leibniz Institute for Jewish History and Culture – Simon Dubnow

<https://www.dubnow.de/person/prof-dr-yfaat-weiss>

Leipzig University

<https://www.uni-leipzig.de/personenprofil/mitarbeiter/prof-dr-yfaat-weiss>

Hebrew University of Jerusalem

<https://en.jewish-history.huji.ac.il/people/yfaat-weiss>

Weiss, Yfaat. *Verdrängte Nachbarn: Wadi Salib – Haifas enteignete Erinnerung*. Hamburger Edition, 2008.

<https://www.hamburger-edition.de/buecher-e-books/artikel-detail/d/1813/verdrangte-nachbarn/14/>

Weiss, Yfaat. *Verfehlte Mission. Das geteilte Jerusalem und die Vereinten Nationen*. Jüdischer Verlag / Suhrkamp, 2023.

<https://www.suhrkamp.de/buch/yfaat-weiss-verfehlte-mission-t-9783633543373>