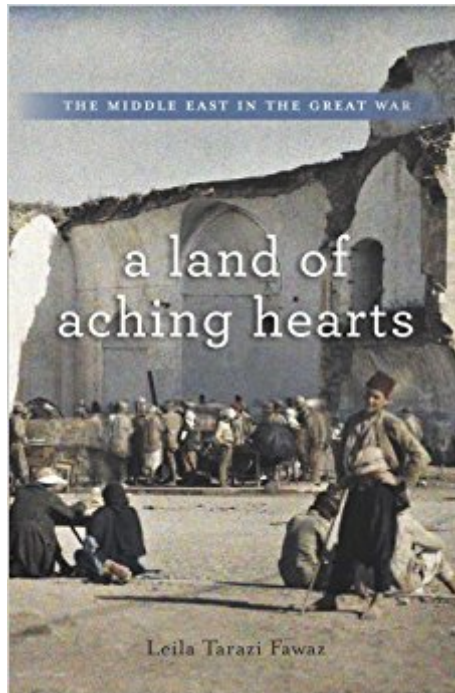




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# **A Land Of Aching Hearts: The Middle East In The Great War**



## Synopsis

The Great War transformed the Middle East, bringing to an end four hundred years of Ottoman rule in Arab lands while giving rise to the Middle East as we know it today. A century later, the experiences of ordinary men and women during those calamitous years have faded from memory. *A Land of Aching Hearts* traverses ethnic, class, and national borders to recover the personal stories of the civilians and soldiers who endured this cataclysmic event. Among those who suffered were the people of Greater Syria—comprising modern Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, Israel, and Palestine—as well as the people of Turkey, Iraq, and Egypt. Beyond the shifting fortunes of the battlefield, the region was devastated by a British and French naval blockade made worse by Ottoman war measures. Famine, disease, inflation, and an influx of refugees were everyday realities. But the local populations were not passive victims. Fawaz chronicles the initiative and resilience of civilian émigrés, entrepreneurs, draft-dodgers, soldiers, villagers, and townsmen determined to survive the war as best they could. The right mix of ingenuity and practicality often meant the difference between life and death. The war's aftermath proved bitter for many survivors. Nationalist aspirations were quashed as Britain and France divided the Middle East along artificial borders that still cause resentment. The misery of the Great War, and a profound sense of huge sacrifices made in vain, would color people's views of politics and the West for the century to come.

## Book Information

Hardcover: 416 pages

Publisher: Harvard University Press (November 17, 2014)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0674735498

ISBN-13: 978-0674735491

Product Dimensions: 1.2 x 6.5 x 9.8 inches

Shipping Weight: 1.8 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.0 out of 5 stars 1 customer review

Best Sellers Rank: #361,359 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #42 in Books > History >

Middle East > Syria #534 in Books > History > Military > World War I #4198 in Books >

History > Historical Study & Educational Resources

## Customer Reviews

A detailed account of the political and cultural events that occurred in the Middle East just before

and during World War I. It concerns the way in which Arabs were caught up in Europe's first major war of the twentieth century, and how this proved to be a turning point in Middle Eastern history, but one not of the Arab peoples' own making. What is startling, though, is how so much of what World War I unleashed – struggles over identity, sectarian or otherwise, national border disputes, rights of minorities, the place of women in society – still reverberates to this day. Fawaz explores the war's effect on the region's ordinary people: fishermen, villagers, entrepreneurs, Afghans, soldiers and draft dodgers are woven into a rich tapestry. She takes us aboard ships and into train stations, along the lines outside bakeries and into crowded prison camps. These are the vantage points from which Fawaz observes the scope and scale of the war. In minute detail, she recounts the devastation it wrought, including the way common catastrophes of locusts, famine and disease were exacerbated by the exploits of Europeans, such as the prolonged Anglo-French naval blockade. Fawaz is always at pains to present the ingenuities and the tenacity of ordinary Arab people under these pressures. As Fawaz does, [historians] should draw on local sources, languages and experiences to restore the Middle East's full complexity rather than reinforcing the blinkered, one-sided narrative of butchers and beheaders. (Tom Finn *The Nation* 2015-02-16) Magnificent. [Fawaz] write[s] perceptively and sympathetically about a complex and sophisticated society unfamiliar to most Americans. [She] recounts the effects of the Great War upon a Middle East grown prosperous and relatively free during a period of industrialization and Ottoman political decline. (Robin Darling Young *Commonweal* 2015-12-17) Intensely moving. [Fawaz] does an astounding amount of research into primary sources that haven't to my knowledge been synthesized before to an extent this masterful. Great figures stride through the history of the Middle East in the years of the First World War and its aftermath. But the main focus of Fawaz's book is the plight of ordinary people caught up in the often calamitous changes the war swept into the entire remains of the Ottoman Empire. Her book is a first-rate work of historical investigation, but it also functions as a kind of doleful question mark shadowing the present day, which has the dubious advantage of being able to see live video feed of the disruptions and sufferings being inflicted on the descendants of the same ordinary folk Fawaz so skillfully uncovers. (Steve Donoghue *Open Letters Monthly* 2014-11-24) Drawing on poetry, plays, and works of contemporary fiction, Fawaz supplements traditional historical sources the better to capture the experience and popular memory of the Great War. The result is one of the finest social histories of war in the modern Middle East yet published. (Eugene Rogan *Middle East Journal* 2015-06-01) [Fawaz] write[s] as vividly and knowledgeably

about political developments as about land tenure. [She] bring[s] ordinary men and women as well as military and political leaders to life. The long devastating war that destroyed this last Muslim Empire also killed off many dreams and plans, and Fawaz pays homage to them by salvaging the stories of ordinary men and women whose lives were cut short or changed forever. (Donna Robinson Divine New Rambler 2015-07-08)

In *A Land of Aching Hearts*, Fawaz gives us, not a chronological account of the Great War in the Middle East, but rather a look at the war as it was experienced by and as it affected the peoples of the region, a seriously neglected subject. *A Land of Aching Hearts* would make interesting reading for anyone interested in the origins of the modern Middle East, the Great War, or the human experience of war. (A. A. Nofi Strategy Page 2015-01-26)

Fawaz argues that the Great War was a socially transformational experience that, like the contemporary political transformation, is fundamental to understanding the region. Fawaz describes the era of modernity and change which began before the war, summarizes the war's major military campaigns in the region, and touches on various individual accounts of the conflict. She also examines the impacts on daily life caused by the war, including widespread famine, increased crime, decreased wealth, increased unemployment, and the large scale evasion of conscription. (Publishers Weekly 2014-09-01)

World War I changed the history of Europe, but left an even more indelible impression on the Middle East. The conflicts that tear at the region today the struggles over freedom, land, and identity all have their roots in the Great War. In this landmark account, Fawaz paints a vivid picture of how the war swept over the Middle East and forever changed its face. Smart, well-written, and brimming with insight, *A Land of Aching Hearts* stands apart from other histories because it insists on the war's relevance for today's world. (Vali Nasr, author of *The Dispensable Nation: American Foreign Policy in Retreat*)

A profoundly impressive book that sets a new standard for the social history of World War I. *A Land of Aching Hearts* does justice to the history of the people of the Middle East by focusing upon a side of the war that has received little attention. From stories of battles, political infighting, and the machinations of profiteers to heartbreaking images of famine, poverty, and disease, Fawaz covers the entirety of the war experience. By placing local events within their regional and international contexts, she shows how a new Middle East emerged after the fighting ceased. (Abdul-Karim Rafeq, College of William and Mary)

A magisterial account of the manifold ways in which exposure to, and participation in, the fighting shaped the lives of peoples and societies in the Arab world. Fawaz has produced an excellent account packed with information that will provide enduring value to scholars, students, and the general public. Current policymakers would also do well to engage with the book's major themes as they grapple

with a region in the renewed throes of upheaval. It is to be hoped that officials and onlookers from the region and beyond absorb the rich pickings offered by Fawaz of the conflict that effectively created the modern Middle East but also laid the foundations of many of its subsequent fissures. (Kristian Coates Ulrichsen International Journal of Middle East Studies 2016-01-01)

Leila Tarazi Fawaz is Issam M. Fares Professor of Lebanese and Eastern Mediterranean Studies at Tufts University.

A summary of the review on StrategyPage.Com: 'Prof. Fawaz (Tufts) gives us, not a chronological account of the Great War in the Middle East, but rather a well-written look at the war as it was experienced by and as it affected the peoples of the region, a seriously neglected subject. She opens with a chapter on the events leading to Ottoman participation in the war, and follows with one giving excellent overview of the campaigns in the region. She then devotes separate chapters to the effects of the war on some of those who lived it, exploring the ways in which the war affected the ordinary people of the region, whether Turks, Arabs, or Jews, and with individual chapters on the Turkish soldier and the often overlooked Indian troops. In a final chapter Fawaz examines how the region's people adjusted to and explained their wartime experiences in the postwar period. In an epilogue, Fawaz discusses remembrance, memory, and memorialization.' For the full review, see StrategyPage.Com

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