

Crown Center Fellow

Jennie Sowers awarded fellowship to complete book project on Middle Eastern wars

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[Jennie Sowers](#), professor of [political science](#), has been awarded a Faculty Leave Fellowship at the Crown Center for Middle East Studies at Brandeis University for the 2021-22 academic year. The fellowship will allow her to complete a co-authored manuscript, “Protracted Conflict, Civilian Infrastructure and Humanitarian Assistance in the New Middle Eastern Wars,” under contract with Oxford University Press.

The book manuscript, co-authored with Erika Weinthal of Duke University, focuses on the causes and consequences of the wartime targeting of water, energy, agriculture and

health infrastructures in the Middle East and the challenges faced by humanitarians as they attempt to respond to violence and displacement.

While a significant body of scholarship focuses on the direct civilian casualties of acute conflict, the conflict-induced spread of hunger, disease and indirect mortality is less well understood, says Sowers.

“The collapse of water, sanitation and health services, coupled with internal displacement, means that many people are more likely to suffer and die from these indirect effects than from war-related violence,” she says.

Building upon existing work that critically examines humanitarianism, Sowers and Weinthal are exploring the blurring of development and humanitarian mandates and projects under conditions of protracted conflict. They are also examining the politics of reconstruction, particularly where major parties to the conflict are both the principal funders of the humanitarian assistance and the principal actors responsible for damage to civilian objects.

The book is the culmination of a broader research project they have been working on for the past three years. With external funding from the [Gerda Henkel Stiftung](#) and the [Council of American Overseas Research Centers](#), they have conducted field interviews with human rights groups, humanitarian organizations and international organizations in Amman, Jerusalem, Geneva, Ramallah, Rome and Washington, D.C. External funding also supported building an original database with student research assistants, which tracks discrete incidents and aggregate reporting of civilian infrastructure targeting in Yemen, Libya, Syria and the Palestinian territories from 2010 to 2020.

“My main motivation for applying for a Crown Center fellowship is to have the opportunity to join the vibrant community of scholars working on compelling Middle East-related research at Brandeis,” says Sowers. “I’m looking forward to contributing to the scholarly life of the Center.”

- COMPILED BY:
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