

Turkish Jews in the State of Israel: Life, Challenges and Politics

Duygu Atlas (Tel Aviv)

Abstract

Between 1948 and 1951, a total of 34,547 Turkish Jews, comprising nearly forty percent of the community at the time, immigrated to the newly established State of Israel—a wave that has continued in varying volumes over the decades including the present. This lecture will focus on this lesser studied aspect of the history of Turkish Jews; that is the chapter that has commenced with their arrival in Israel. The central question that I will seek to address in this lecture is how and to what extent the Turkish Jews’ previous experiences in Turkey as a minority community on one hand, and the Ashkenazi-dominated, Euro-centric Zionist culture in Israel on the other shaped Turkish Jews’ experiences with and integration into the Israeli society, culture and politics.

Bio

Duygu Atlas completed her doctoral studies at Tel Aviv University’s School of History in 2019 (Dissertation: “Turkey’s Jewish Minority between Turkey and Israel from 1948 to the 1990s: Israel’s Impact on a Diaspora Community and Its Identity Formation”). She completed her MA in Middle Eastern History at the same university. In 2016, she was awarded the Dan David Prize for Young Researchers. Together with Prof. Asher Susser of Tel Aviv University, she co-authored the book *The Emergence of the Modern Middle East*, which was based on their high-ranking online course by the same name.

In her research, Atlas focuses on Kurdish and Jewish minorities in Turkey. Her published articles include “The Role of Language in the Evolution of Kurdish National Identity in Turkey” (2014); “Turkey, Its Kurds and the Gezi Park Protests” (2014); “The Jews of Mardin” (in Turkish, 2016), “A Test of Democracy: Non-Muslim Minorities in Turkey” (2017); and “Artistic Expression in Times of Peace and War: The Case of Turkey’s Kurds from 2009 to the Present.”

She worked as a researcher at the Moshe Dayan Center for Middle Eastern and North African Studies at Tel Aviv University, and the Van Leer Jerusalem Institute, where she also served as the associate editor of the *Journal of Levantine Studies*.

She is the founder of the social media oral history project, Onlyherstory, which documents the life stories of “ordinary” women in Turkey.