

al majdal



quarterly magazine of

BADIL Resource Center for Palestinian Residency and Refugee Rights

Special Nakba 60 issue 36/37

60 Years On

Honoring the Struggle for Justice and Dignity

Palestinian Refugees and IDPs

“If they let us come back, we have everything in the community. We have qualified people to build Palestine again. We are ready.”
(Sanaa, Beit Nattif)

“I miss everything, the mint, the tomatoes, the water, the freedom to go to the sea or walk in the mountains. I miss the air.”
(Fatima, Deir Aban)

“60 years of Nakba simply is my life and add to that the one or two more generations of Palestinian refugees. And because of what is happening in Palestine these days, we - the Palestinian refugees - are now more attached to our cause and land than ever.” (Mustapha, Sumayriyya)

“We counted on the UN to implement its resolutions for 60 years, mainly Resolution 194. Had it been implemented, a lot of bloodshed would have been spared.”
(Hussein, al-Damoun)

BADIL takes a rights-based approach to the Palestinian refugee issue through research, advocacy, and support of community participation in the search for durable solutions.

BADIL was established in 1998 to support the development of a popular refugee lobby for Palestinian refugee and internally displaced rights and is registered as a non-profit organization with the Palestinian Authority.

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Front Cover Photo: Remains of a Palestinian home in Lifta, 2007 (©Anne Paq)

Back Cover Photo: Kufr Bir'im, 2005 (©Zaha Hassan)

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The Fabric of a People United in the Struggle for Justice and Dignity



Palestinians fleeing the war near Tulkarem in 1948. (©ICRC)

Many will agree that the past few months have posed many challenges to Palestinian unity; yet, when reading the stories of Palestinian refugees and internally displaced scattered around the world, one cannot but feel the symbiotic union of a people; something that transcends borders and politics, “something of the heart”, as a boy in the Al-Wihdat refugee camp puts it.

This special Nakba 60 issue of *al Majdal* aims to honor the 7 million Palestinian refugees and internally displaced who live in forced exile today. Voices, from Chile to Gaza, that come together to tell of their love and longing for their home, land and people; voices that call for humanity, justice and dignity – and for return, the return of rights, all rights. A demand, after 60 years of ongoing dispossession and displacement, that is stronger than ever.

Palestinians - the indigenous people of the land which is now Israel and the occupied Palestinian territory - are suffering from historic injustices as a result of the colonization and dispossession of their lands, territories and resources. They are struggling against an ideology - Zionism – that contends that there should be a Jewish State in ‘Eretz Israel’ - a territorial construct that includes all of the land of Mandate Palestine, and upon which a Jewish majority should be created and maintained. Concretely, this means that Palestinians are faced with discriminatory policies and practices that violate their fundamental rights, notably their rights to self-determination, equality, and return.

Despite violations of their fundamental rights, Palestinians remain steadfast and committed to regain the justice and dignity they have been denied for the past 60 years. They know they are the indigenous people of this land and that they will return, because they are Palestine. As Mahatma Gandhi wrote in 1938,

Palestine belongs to the Arabs in the same sense that England belongs to the English or France to the French. It is wrong and inhuman to impose the Jews on the Arabs. What is going on in Palestine today cannot be justified by any moral code of conduct. The mandates have no sanction but that of the last war. Surely it would be a crime against humanity to reduce the proud Arabs so that Palestine can be restored to the Jews partly or wholly as their national home.⁽¹⁾

(1) Mahatma Gandhi, “The Jews In Palestine”, *The Harijan*, 26 November 1938.

Selected Articles from the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

entered into force in September 2007

Article 2

Indigenous peoples and individuals are free and equal to all other peoples and individuals and have the right to be free from any kind of discrimination, in the exercise of their rights, in particular that based on their indigenous origin or identity.

Article 8

1. Indigenous peoples and individuals have the right not to be subjected to forced assimilation or destruction of their culture.
2. States shall provide effective mechanisms for prevention of, and redress for:
 - (a) Any action which has the aim or effect of depriving them of their integrity as distinct peoples, or of their cultural values or ethnic identities;
 - (b) Any action which has the aim or effect of dispossessing them of their lands, territories or resources;
 - (c) Any form of forced population transfer which has the aim or effect of violating or undermining any of their rights;
 - (d) Any form of forced assimilation or integration;
 - (e) Any form of propaganda designed to promote or incite racial or ethnic discrimination directed against them.

Article 10

Indigenous peoples shall not be forcibly removed from their lands or territories. No relocation shall take place without the free, prior and informed consent of the indigenous peoples concerned and after agreement on just and fair compensation and, where possible, with the option of return.

Article 18

Indigenous peoples have the right to participate in decision-making in matters which would affect their rights, through representatives chosen by themselves in accordance with their own procedures, as well as to maintain and develop their own indigenous decision-making institutions.

Article 26

1. Indigenous peoples have the right to the lands, territories and resources which they have traditionally owned, occupied or otherwise used or acquired.
2. Indigenous peoples have the right to own, use, develop and control the lands, territories and resources that they possess by reason of traditional ownership or other traditional occupation or use, as well as those which they have otherwise acquired.
3. States shall give legal recognition and protection to these lands, territories and resources. Such recognition shall be conducted with due respect to the customs, traditions and land tenure systems of the indigenous peoples concerned.

Article 27

States shall establish and implement, in conjunction with indigenous peoples concerned, a fair, independent, impartial, open and transparent process, giving due recognition to indigenous peoples' laws, traditions, customs and land tenure systems, to recognize and adjudicate the rights of indigenous peoples pertaining to their lands, territories and resources, including those which were traditionally owned or otherwise occupied or used. Indigenous peoples shall have the right to participate in this process.

Article 30

1. Military activities shall not take place in the lands or territories of indigenous peoples, unless justified by a relevant public interest or otherwise freely agreed with or requested by the indigenous peoples concerned.

2. States shall undertake effective consultations with the indigenous peoples concerned, through appropriate procedures and in particular through their representative institutions, prior to using their lands or territories for military activities.

Article 40

Indigenous peoples have the right to access to and prompt decision through just and fair procedures for the resolution of conflicts and disputes with States or other parties, as well as to effective remedies for all infringements of their individual and collective rights. Such a decision shall give due consideration to the customs, traditions, rules and legal systems of the indigenous peoples concerned and international human rights.

Article 41

The organs and specialized agencies of the United Nations system and other intergovernmental organizations shall contribute to the full realization of the provisions of this Declaration through the mobilization, inter alia, of financial cooperation and technical assistance. Ways and means of ensuring participation of indigenous peoples on issues affecting them shall be established.

Article 42

The United Nations, its bodies, including the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, and specialized agencies, including at the country level, and States shall promote respect for and full application of the provisions of this Declaration and follow up the effectiveness of this Declaration.



Front page headlines of The New York Times, 14 May 1948

60 Years of Dignity and Justice Denied

How the unresolved Palestinian refugee question stands for the failure of the international human rights and humanitarian regime

by Ingrid Jaradat Gassner*

At the beginning of the 20th century, most Palestinians lived inside the borders of Palestine, which is now divided into Israel and the occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip. Today, almost 75% of the Palestinian people are displaced, and Palestinian refugees present the world's largest and longest-standing unresolved refugee case. Approximately half of the Palestinian people live in forced exile outside their homeland, while another 23% are displaced within the borders of former Palestine.¹ Six decades after the first and most massive wave of forced displacement in 1948, Palestinian refugees and internally displaced persons (IDP) still lack access to durable solutions and reparations, including return, restitution and compensation, in accordance with international law and UN resolutions. While more Palestinians are being displaced today, effective protection is still not available for them.





British military ceremony marking the conquest of Jerusalem, 15 December 1917. (©Israeli Government Press Office)

Contrary to conventional wisdom, the Palestinian refugee question is not primarily a result of armed conflicts, but rather the outcome of a protracted and ongoing process of colonization and forced population transfer (ethnic cleansing). The latter is defined by the United Nations as the “*systematic, coercive and deliberate ... movement of population into or out of an area ... with the effect or purpose of altering the demographic composition of a territory, particularly when that ideology or policy asserts the dominance of a certain group over another*” [emphasis added]. Forced population transfer constitutes a war crime and a crime against humanity under modern international law.²

The origins of Palestinian displacement date back to the early 20th century, when the Zionist movement began implementation of its Basle Program (1897) with the aim to “create for the Jewish people a home in Palestine secured by public international law”³ - i.e. a Jewish state in Palestine, where Jews at the time constituted only 8% of the population and owned some 2.5% of the land. In the period prior to 1948, Zionist colonization of Palestine was conducted through the implantation of Jewish immigrants – by 1948, the portion of the Jewish population in Palestine had grown to one third, primarily due to immigration – and land purchases by Zionist agencies, such as the Palestine Colonization Agency (PCA) and the Jewish National Fund (JNF).

The idea of transferring the indigenous population out of the country played a key role in political Zionism from early on, simply because most Palestinian Arabs were unwilling to part with their land – Zionist landownership increased from 2.5% to approximately 6% only between 1922 and 1945⁴ - and because Palestinians resisted Zionist colonization. Already Theodor Herzl, the founding father of political Zionism, had stated: “*We shall try to spirit the penniless population across the border by procuring employment for it in the transit countries, while denying it any employment in our own country. The property owners will come over to our side. Both process of expropriation and removal of the poor must be carried out discreetly and circumspectly.*”⁵

During the British Mandate over Palestine (1923 – 1948), leading Zionist thinkers developed numerous plans to carry out the ethnic cleansing of Palestine, including the Weizman Transfer Scheme (1930), the Soskin Plan of Compulsory Transfer (1937), the Weitz Transfer Plan (1937), the Bonne Scheme (1938), the al-Jazirah Scheme (1938), the Norman Transfer Plan to Iraq (1934–38), and the Ben-Horin Plan (1943–48).⁶ The Zionist movement and its colony in Palestine, however, did not have the power to requisite territory by force and implement a massive forced population transfer until late 1947, when both became possible for the first time.

Zionist colonization of Palestine and the massive forced displacement of the indigenous Arab population in 1947 – 1949 would most likely not have occurred without the active support of the international community at the time, which violated its own standards and international law for this purpose. Since then, the international community has failed to hold Israel to account for its violations of international law. This explains why, 60 years later, the Palestinian refugee question has remained unresolved, while Israel continues to occupy and colonize Palestinian land and displace Palestinians.

World War I – 1947: Setting the stage for armed conflict and population transfer

Until the First World War, Palestine was one of several Arab territories that were part of the Ottoman Empire, while the indigenous population aspired for independence and sovereignty in an Arab state. Encouraged by a promise of the British High Commissioner in Egypt to support Arab independence (Mac Mahon – Hussein correspondence)⁷, Arab forces joined the Allied effort to bring down the Ottoman regime, and Palestine was occupied by Allied forces under British command in September 1918.

Towards the end of the war, Arabs in Palestine and beyond were inspired by U.S. President Woodrow Wilson’s doctrine of self-determination for the post-World War I order⁸ and the Anglo-French Declaration signed in November 1918. The latter stated that the goal “[... was] the complete and final liberation of the peoples who have for so long been oppressed by the Turks, and the setting up of national governments and administrations deriving their authority from the free exercise of the initiative and choice of the indigenous populations” [emphasis added]. This and the doctrine of self-determination were subsequently enshrined in the Covenant of the League of Nations (1919).⁹

In 1919, the Allied powers members of the League of Nations decided to establish a temporary “Mandate System” in accordance with the Covenant of the League of Nations to facilitate the independence of these territories. Article 22 of the Covenant stipulates that “*certain communities formerly belonging to the Turkish Empire have reached a stage of development where their existence as independent nations can be provisionally recognized subject to the rendering of administrative advice and assistance by a Mandatory until such time as they are able to stand alone. The wishes of these communities must be a principal consideration in the selection of the Mandatory.*”¹⁰ The August 1920 Treaty of Sèvres between the Allied Powers and Turkey affirmed that Palestine “*be provisionally recognised as an independent State subject to the rendering of administrative advice and assistance by a Mandatory until such time as they are able to stand alone.*”¹¹

Parellel to the above, however, Britain and France had signed already in 1916 a secret understanding (Sykes-Picot agreement) in which they defined their respective spheres of influence and control in West Asia after the expected downfall of the Ottoman Empire. Palestine was reserved for British control under this agreement. In November 1917, the British cabinet issued the Balfour Declaration. The one-page letter from Arthur Balfour, British Secretary of Foreign Affairs, to Lord Rothschild, head of the British Zionist Federation, granted explicit recognition of and support to the idea of establishing a Jewish “national home” in Palestine through immigration and colonization. Despite widespread Arab opposition to the Balfour Declaration, Great Britain viewed Zionist colonization as a way to advance British interests in the region.¹²

Due to the above, Arabs, including the indigenous population of Palestine, were strongly opposed to a British Mandate over Palestine. Britain, however, insisted that, “*in the case of the ‘independent*



From the front page of The New York Times, 14 May 1948.

Jewish immigration to Palestine was facilitated, while the borders of many Western countries, including the United States, remained largely closed to Jewish refugees, despite the knowledge of Nazi persecution and atrocities.

nation' of Palestine, we do not propose even to go through the form of consulting the wishes of the present inhabitants of the country. Zionism, be it right or wrong, good or bad, is rooted in age-long traditions, in present needs, in future hopes, of far profounder import than the desires and prejudices of the 700,000 Arabs who now inhabit that ancient land."¹³ In 1920, the League of Nations entrusted the temporary administration ("Mandate") of Palestine to Great Britain.

The British Mandate, which eventually came into force in September 1923, thus included an inherent contradiction which set the stage for armed conflict in Palestine: although Palestine was classified as a "Class A" Mandate (i.e. the type closest to independence), the British Mandate incorporated the political commitment to the Zionist movement set out in the Balfour Declaration. In order to facilitate establishment of the Jewish "national home", moreover, the British Mandate accorded full political rights to the Zionist colony in Palestine, while only civil and religious rights were granted to the Palestinian Arab majority.¹⁴

Subsequently, the British administration in Palestine promulgated new laws, including the *1925 Citizenship Order* and the *1928 Land (Settlement of Title) Order*, which facilitated Zionist colonization. Under these laws, tens of thousands of Jews from around the world would immigrate and acquire citizenship in Palestine, while thousands of Palestinian Arabs who were abroad were unable to acquire citizenship¹⁵; annual land acquisitions by Zionist agencies increased twenty-fold. Although the overall amount of land purchased remained small, the real impact of Zionist purchases lay in the quality and strategic location of the land, and in the unprecedented policy of forced eviction of indigenous tenant farmers. Already in the 1930s, the British administration grappled with a new phenomenon of landless peasants, and by the early 1940s, the average rural Palestinian Arab family had less than half of the agricultural land required for their subsistence.¹⁶

British support of Zionist colonization led to a series of Palestinian uprisings, including the "Great Revolt", which lasted from 1936 to 1939. The British responded with a combination of military force and administrative measures, including emergency laws, that severely curtailed basic civil and political rights and weakened Palestinian resistance. Palestinian Arab leaders were arrested, jailed and deported. Thousands of Palestinian Arab homes were demolished. Some 40,000 Palestinian Arabs fled the country during the mid-1930s alone.¹⁷ Palestinian uprisings were suppressed in cooperation with Zionist militias which were trained and armed for this purpose.

Following each uprising, the British government dispatched an official commission of inquiry to Palestine. These commissions invariably identified fear of the political and economic consequences of Zionism among the indigenous population as the leading cause of the conflict. British efforts to appease Arab resistance by slowing down the rate of Jewish immigration and a promise of sovereignty after ten years – which was conditioned upon a power-sharing agreement between the indigenous Arab majority and the Zionist colony (1939 White Paper) - triggered strong opposition of and armed conflict with the Zionist movement.

British efforts at the time to restrict Jewish immigration failed, among others, because western states, in particular the United States, supported and facilitated the resettlement in Palestine of displaced European Jews in violation of international commitments not to resettle displaced persons in non-self-governing territories without the consent of the indigenous population. [need

a reference here] Jewish immigration to Palestine was facilitated, while the borders of many Western countries, including the United States, remained largely closed to Jewish refugees, despite the knowledge of Nazi persecution and atrocities.

In early 1947, the British government informed the newly-established United Nations (the successor to the League of Nations) of its intention to withdraw from Palestine.

1947 – 1949: from the UN Partion Plan to the Palestinian Nakba



Palestinian students protesting UN partition plan, 12 March 1947. (©Orient House Archives)

The United Nations took up the “Question of Palestine” in 1947, when the atrocities of the Nazi regime and World War II had given rise to new international legal norms that were binding for states. The UN Charter, for example, prohibits the use of force in inter-state relations¹⁸, including the aquisition of territory by force, and provides for the right of nations to self-determination. The United Nations, however, sidelined the right to self-determination of the Arab majority and prevented de-colonization of Palestine, in clear knowledge of the likely disastrous consequences for the Arab people of Palestine, the people of the region, and international peace and security.

The UN Charter stipulated that upon termination of a mandate, non-self-governing territories should become independent or be placed under a “Temporary Trusteeship” of the United Nations. In the case of Palestine, however, the UN General Assembly decided to appoint a special committee to formulate recommendations concerning the future status of the country. The Assembly rejected a request of Arab states to discuss independence of Palestine as a possible option. It also rejected requests, again submitted by Arab states, to obtain an advisory opinion from the International Court of Justice (ICJ) concerning the appropriate legal outcome of the British decision to terminate the Mandate in Palestine, as well as the legal authority of the UN to issue and enforce recommendations on the future status of the country.¹⁹

The United Nations, however, sidelined the right to self-determination of the Arab majority and prevented de-colonization of Palestine, in clear knowledge of the likely disastrous consequences for the Arab people of Palestine, the people of the region, and international peace and security.



From the front page of The New York Times, 15 May 1948.

In September 1947, the UN Special Committee on Palestine (UNSCOP) presented its final report which included a majority proposal and a minority proposal, because Committee members had been unable to reach a consensus on the future status of the country.²⁰ The majority of the Committee members supported the partition of Palestine into two states, one Arab and the other Jewish, although they conceded that “[w]ith regard to the principle of self-determination, although international recognition was extended to this principle at the end of the First World War and it was adhered to with regard to the other Arab territories, at the time of the creation of the “A” Mandates, it was not applied to Palestine, obviously because of the intention to make possible the creation of a Jewish National Home there. Actually, it may well be said that the Jewish National Home and the sui generis Mandate for Palestine run counter to that principle.”²⁰

The minority proposal was for one federal state for Arabs and Jews. Committee members of the minority were adamant in their warnings of the consequences of partition: “Future peace and order in Palestine and the Near East generally will be vitally affected by the nature of the solution decided upon for the Palestine question. In this regard, it is important to avoid an acceleration of the separatism which now characterizes the relations of Arabs and Jews in the Near East, and to avoid laying the foundations of a dangerous irredentism there, which would be the inevitable consequences of partition in whatever form. [...] Partition both in principle and in substance can only be regarded as an anti-Arab solution. The Federal State, however, cannot be described as an anti-Jewish solution. To the contrary, it will best serve the interests of both Arabs and Jews.”²¹

Also in the United States, the State Department, the Department of Defence, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, staff of the National Security Council and the newly established Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) were united in warning of the dangers partition might inflict to strategic US interests. In public and private statements they also explained that the UN partition proposals were not workable and in contravention to international law and the UN Charter: “[they] ignore such principles as self-determination and majority rule. They recognize the principle of a theocratic racial state and go even so far in several instances as to discriminate on grounds of religion and race against persons outside of Palestine. We have hitherto always held that in our foreign relations American citizens, regardless of race or religion, are entitled to uniform treatment. The stress on whether persons are Jews or non-Jews is certain to strengthen feelings among both Jews and Gentiles in the United States and elsewhere that Jewish citizens are not the same as other citizens.”²²

On 29 November 1947, however, the UN General Assembly adopted Resolution 181 recommending the partition of Palestine into two states, one Arab and one Jewish, in which all persons were to be guaranteed equal rights, and an international regime for the city of Jerusalem. 33 states, including the United States, Canada and many European states, voted for partition, while 13 states, including all Arab states, voted against and 10 states, including Britain, abstained. The proposed Jewish state was allotted 56% of the land, even though Jews constituted less than one-third of the population and owned no more than 7% of the land. The dispersal of the Arab and Jewish populations in the country meant that nearly half the population of the proposed Jewish state consisted of Palestinian Arabs, who owned nearly 90% of the land.²³

In Palestine, immediate massive protests against the UN partition plan by the Arab population gave way rapidly to armed conflict between local Arab and militarily superior Zionist militias. The latter were “trying to consolidate the advantages gained at the General Assembly by a succession of drastic operations [...]”²⁴ A first major wave of Palestinian refugees was induced by the Zionist military operation known as “Plan Dalet”, which was designed to achieve the military *fait accompli* upon which the state of Israel was to be based, including conquest of western Jerusalem and its surrounding Arab villages.²⁵ The massacre of more than 100 men, women and children in the Palestinian village of Deir Yassin in April 1948 is widely acknowledged to have contributed to the fear and panic that led to the mass displacement.

While some 300,000 Palestinians were forcibly displaced by Zionist forces when Palestine was still under the British Mandate regime (November 1947 - 14 May 1948), neither Britain nor the United Nations intervened to protect Palestinians. The United Nations, moreover, also failed to protect Palestinians from forced displacement during the subsequent first Arab-Israeli war (15 May 1948 – 1949).

States voting for the UN partition plan were aware of the fact that partition would have to be imposed on the parties.²⁶ However, UN efforts for implementation of the plan through the Security Council and a Palestine Commission set up for this purpose were soon abandoned. As Palestine descended into the predicted violence, the United States launched in March 1948 an initiative for UN Trusteeship in the UN Security Council but failed to pursue it with determination. On 14 May 1948, Britain concluded the withdrawal of its troops and terminated its Mandate regime over Palestine without any formal arrangement for the transfer of power. On the same day, the Zionist movement declared the establishment of the state of Israel, and Arab states responded with a declaration of war on 15 May 1947.

As the first Arab-Israeli war was fought in Palestine, hundreds of thousands of Palestinians more were forcibly displaced from their homes as a result of Israeli war crimes, including shelling of Palestinian communities with the aim to induce flight, massacres, rape, looting, destruction of civilian property and homes, and overt expulsion of the civilian population of Palestinian towns and villages. Israeli military forces systematically destroyed numerous Palestinian villages, as one of six measures included in a “Retroactive Transfer” plan approved in June 1948 in order to prevent Palestinian Arab refugees from returning to their homes. The destruction of homes and entire villages was accompanied by large-scale looting.²⁷

During the war, the United Nations declared an embargo on arms sales, appointed a mediator, brokered cease-fire agreements and provided emergency assistance to Palestinian refugees through its Refugee Organization (later to be replaced by UNRWA). It also issued several resolutions,

While some 300,000 Palestinians were forcibly displaced by Zionist forces when Palestine was still under the British Mandate regime (November 1947 - 14 May 1948), neither Britain nor the United Nations intervened to protect Palestinians.

On 11 May 1949, the UN General Assembly decided that “Israel is a peace-loving State which accepts the obligations contained in the Charter and is able and willing to carry out those obligations” and approved Israel’s membership in the United Nations.

Palestinians refer to the events of 1947 – 1949 as the *Nakba*, meaning the Catastrophe.

including UN General Assembly Resolution 194 (11 December 1948), which affirmed Palestinian refugees’ right of return to their homes and properties and established the UN Conciliation Commission for Palestine (UNCCP). The latter was mandated to ensure protection, including durable solutions, for Palestinian refugees in accordance with UNGAR 194 and facilitate a peace agreement between Arab states and Israel. None of these measures, however, were able to prevent or reverse Palestinian displacement.



Palestinians fleeing the the war near Tulkarem in 1948. (©ICRC)

By the time the first Arab-Israeli war ended in 1949 with cease-fire agreements between Israel and Arab states, Israel had effective control over 78% of British Mandate Palestine, including areas which had been allocated to the Arab state under the UN partition plan. In several of the sub-districts of former Palestine that were wholly incorporated into Israel – Jaffa, Ramla and Beersheba – not one Palestinian village was left standing. In total, more than 500 Palestinian villages, with a land base of more than 17,000 km², were depopulated.²⁸ An estimated two-thirds of Palestinian refugee homes inside the new state of Israel were destroyed; the remaining third were expropriated and occupied by Jews.²⁹ In total, 750 – 900,000 Palestinians, representing half of the pre-war Arab population of Palestine or 85% of those in the territory that became the state of Israel, were displaced.³⁰ Most of them became refugees; of the roughly 150,000 Palestinians who remained in those parts of Palestine that became the state of Israel on 14 May 1948, approximately 30,000 were internally displaced persons (IDP).

On 11 May 1949, the UN General Assembly decided that “Israel is a peace-loving State which accepts the obligations contained in the Charter and is able and willing to carry out those obligations”³¹ and approved Israel’s membership in the United Nations.

For the purpose of the United Nations and its dominant members states, Palestine and the Palestinian people had disappeared. “They had become an indistinct mass of refugees – not a nation, not a political entity, only a problem, and not a major one at that.”³² Palestinians refer to the events of 1947 – 1949 as the *Nakba*, meaning the Catastrophe.

1949 – 2008: the “ongoing Nakba”

In May 1949, the UN General Assembly had approved Israel’s UN membership without conditions. The international community thereby prejudiced the outcome of parallel UN-facilitated efforts for Arab-Israeli peace and a solution of the Palestinian refugee question, and encouraged continuation of the Zionist pre-war policy by the state of Israel.

Most western states and the Soviet Union had recognized the state of Israel immediately following its declaration on 14 May 1948. One year later, the UN General Assembly approved Israel’s UN membership without conditions; it only “recalled” UN resolutions 181 and 194 and “took note of” the explanations provided by Israel’s representative, including the argument that the state of Israel had acted in self-defense. The United Nations thereby provided implicit recognition of Israel on the territory conquered in the first Arab-Israeli war, in contravention of the UN partition plan and in violation of the UN Charter-enshrined prohibition on the acquisition of territory by force.

Moreover, in an era when states had endorsed the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), prosecuted Nazi perpetrators for the crimes against humanity, including genocide, committed against Jews and other people (Nuremberg Tribunals, 1945 - 1949) and established war crimes under the Fourth Geneva Convention (1949), the General Assembly failed to hold Israel to account for war crimes and crimes against humanity committed against Palestinians before and during the first Arab-Israeli war, including the massive population transfer.

Lack of accountability to international law created an environment in which UNCCP-facilitated efforts for conflict resolution based on UN General Assembly Resolution 194 were prone to fail. The Palestinian refugee question featured central during the peace conferences of Lausanne (1949) and Paris (1951), where Arab states insisted that a solution must be based on the choice of the refugees and include return to their homes and properties now located in Israel, while Israel insisted that the solution of the refugee problem was to be sought primarily in resettlement in Arab territory. By 1952, the UNCCP concluded that it had failed in its task and held that the parties would have “*to depart from their original positions in order to make possible practical and realistic arrangements towards the solution of the refugee problem,*” even at the cost of straying from the letter of Resolution 194.³³

Since the 1970s, the United Nations has reaffirmed that Palestinians are a nation entitled to self-determination, independence and refugee return,³⁴ but the lack of accountability has remained. Failure to uphold the rule of law gave rise to a situation where Israel violates the fundamental rights of the Palestinian and other Arab people and continues its colonial enterprise with impunity:

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From 1948 onwards, the state of Israel provided a powerful vehicle for consolidating the war gains of political Zionism.

Estimated Number of Palestinians Displaced, by Period of Displacement

Year	Number of Palestinians Displaced
British Mandate: 1922–1947	100,000 – 150,000
Partition to Armistice (<i>Nakba</i>): 1947–1949	750,000 – 900,000
Military rule in Israel: 1950–1966	35,000 – 45,000
1967 War	400,000 – 450,000
Occupation: 1967–2006	300,000 – 400,000
Total	1,585,000 – 1,945,000

By mid-2007, the total number of Palestinian refugees and IDPs, including descendants, was estimated to be 7.5 million.

Estimated Area of Palestinian Land Expropriated/Confiscated, by Period

Year	Area of Confiscated Palestinian Land (km ²)
British Mandate: 1922–1947	–
Partition to Armistice (<i>Nakba</i>): 1947–1949	17,178
Military rule in Israel: 1950–1966	700
1967 War	849
Occupation: 1967–2006	3,558
Total	22,285

The total area of historical Palestine (Israel and OPT) is 26,323 km².

Note: there is no single authoritative source for the exact number of Palestinian forcibly displaced since 1948, or for the exact amount of land expropriated from Palestinians by Israel since 1948. The figures above are based on available data and estimates. For a more detailed analysis of these figures and comprehensive references, see: Survey of Palestinian Refugees and Internally Displaced Persons 2006-7, BADIL Resource Center.



"Infiltrator" Refugee returning home, but arrested and searched by Israeli forces, 1954 (©Israeli Government Press Office).

From 1948 onwards, the state of Israel provided a powerful vehicle for consolidating the war gains of political Zionism: effective control of territory and borders provided for the first time the conditions for unrestricted Jewish immigration. A military government (1948 - 1966) set-up exclusively to control the remaining Palestinian population served to prevent refugee return and facilitated seizure of land of the Palestinian refugees and IDPs, as well as of those who had remained.³⁶ By the mid-1950s, Israeli forces had killed some 5,000 refugees (“infiltrators”) who had tried to return to their homes³⁷, and the land area held by the state and the Jewish National Fund (JNF) had increased tenfold (from 11% before 1948 to 90%). The names of more than 500 depopulated Palestinian villages were erased from the map, while the Arabic names of geographical landmarks were replaced with Hebrew ones.³⁸ Physical destruction of the depopulated Palestinian villages continued until the mid-1960s; it was referred to as ‘cleaning up the national views.’³⁹

A discriminatory, apartheid-like regime was promulgated by the state, in order to “legalize” and sustain the massive population transfer and requisition of Palestinian property accomplished before and during the first Arab-Israeli war. The *1952 Citizenship and Entry into Israel Law* facilitated the mass denationalization of Palestinian refugees; because most Palestinian refugees were outside the state of Israel on, or after, 14 July 1952, the date on which the *Citizenship and Entry into Israel Law* came into effect. They have been unable to resume domicile in their homeland, while all Jews in the world and their relatives are entitled to Israeli citizenship under the *1950 Law of Return*. A web of new land laws, including emergency regulations and laws relating to so-called abandoned property, was adopted to facilitate the expropriation of Palestinian-owned land and transfer of title to the state, the Development Authority and the JNF. Under the *1960 Basic Law: Israel Lands*, land held by these three bodies is not transferable through sale or any other way. This land regime has ensured exclusive use by Jews of most of “Israel Lands”, which are estimated to be around 93% of the land in Israel.⁴⁰

Rather than holding Israel to account, the international community led by the Quartet (United States, EU, Russia and the United Nations) has imposed sanctions against the occupied Palestinians since 2006.



Palestinians fleeing the Gaza Strip in small fishing boats in the 1950s. Refugees from all over Palestine gathered in the Gaza Strip in 1948; many tried to continue their journey via two routes: a 200 mile desert track through the Sinai to Cairo, and the Mediterranean Sea. Both routes were cut off as a result of the 1967 Israeli occupation. (©UNRWA Archives)

While various Israeli official and unofficial transfer plans for “resolving” the Palestinian refugee problem through encouraging permanent resettlement (e.g. in Iraq, Libya, Latin America and elsewhere) have had little practical impact, Israel’s transfer policy has been highly effective in the 1967 Occupied Palestinian Territory (OPT).

After the war, Israel’s regime of military occupation in the 1967 OPT served to consolidate and sustain the war gains.

At the same time, the state of Israel continued to change the demographic composition of the country through further population transfer:

Between 1949 - 1966, Palestinians were forcibly transferred primarily from the northern border villages, the Naqab (Negev), the “Little Triangle” (an area ceded to Israel under the armistice agreement with Jordan), and from villages partially emptied during the 1948 war. The 1965 *Planning and Building Law* established 123 Arab communities with little or no space for expansion. No new Palestinian community has been approved since then. All other Palestinian communities, even if established prior to the creation of the state of Israel, were classified as unauthorized and illegal (“unrecognized villages”). Unrecognized villages cannot apply for building licenses, are not entitled to public services, and homes can be demolished. “Nearly 100,000 Palestinian citizens of Israel – one in 10 – live in unrecognized villages.”⁴¹

Since 1967, the official policy of *Judaization* - i.e., the establishment of Jewish majorities in every area of Israel - has led to more dispossession and internal displacement of Palestinian citizens of Israel.⁴² This policy is reflected in a 2004 emergency plan of then Prime Minister Ariel Sharon to “save the outlying areas” in the Naqab (Negev) and Galilee⁴³, as well as in Israel’s national development plan, “Tama 35” (2005). Since the collapse of the Israeli-Palestinian peace negotiations in 2000, moreover, plans for the transfer of Palestinian citizens outside of the country have again become a legitimate matter of public debate and law proposals. In July 2001, for instance, a bill was proposed to encourage the emigration of Palestinian citizens of Israel on the grounds that “they do not identify with the Jewish character of the state” and in order to strengthen “Israel as a Jewish state and a democracy.”⁴⁴

While various Israeli official and unofficial transfer plans for “resolving” the Palestinian refugee problem through encouraging permanent resettlement (e.g. in Iraq, Libya, Latin America and elsewhere) have had little practical impact, Israel’s transfer policy has been highly effective in the 1967 Occupied Palestinian Territory (OPT):

Israeli plans to take control of and colonize the remainder of British Mandatory Palestine, i.e. the Jordanian controlled West Bank, including eastern Jerusalem, and the Egyptian controlled Gaza Strip, had existed since 1948, and preparations for a military government there were ongoing since 1963.⁴⁵ In 1967, armed conflict (the 1967 Arab-Israeli war) provided once more the context in which Israel was able to induce massive forced displacement of Palestinians and establish effective control over more Palestinian land.

During the 1967 war, Israeli military forces again attacked numerous Palestinian civilian areas that had no military significance. Refugee camps in Jericho, for example, were bombed by the Israeli air force, leading to an exodus of tens of thousands of refugees. Palestinians were driven from their homes, others were transferred out of the West Bank on busses and trucks provided by the military.⁴⁶ Israel completely destroyed several Palestinian villages and thousands of homes; the entire Moroccan quarter in the Old City of Jerusalem, adjacent to the Western Wall, was razed to make way for a large plaza for Jewish religious and national events.

After the war, Israel’s regime of military occupation in the 1967 OPT served to consolidate and sustain the war gains. This regime of occupation combines overt military force with an administrative regime based on a myriad of military orders, which were modelled on the

discriminatory, apartheid-like legal regime over Palestinians in Israel for the same Zionist policy objectives:⁴⁷ in the course of 41 years, Israel's regime of occupation has prevented refugee return, facilitated confiscation of Palestinian land and Jewish colonization, and displaced more of the occupied Palestinian population. These policies have been implemented irrespective of the US-led peace efforts between Israel and the PLO (since 1991) and the presence in the OPT of the international community (since 1967) and the Palestinian Authority (since 1994). They have changed the demographic composition of the country and prevented self-determination of the Palestinian people: by 2007, the approximately 450,000 Jewish settlers in colonies in the occupied West Bank, including eastern Jerusalem, constituted 15% of the population in this area, Israel held at least 45% of the land, and the construction of the Wall annexed, *de facto*, over 10% of the land of the West Bank.⁴⁸



A destroyed Palestinian refugee shelter, Ein Al-Sultan destroyed camp, Jericho 1967. (©UNRWA Archives)

Rather than holding Israel to account, the international community led by the *Quartet* (United States, EU, Russia and the United Nations) has imposed sanctions against the occupied Palestinians since 2006. A policy of economic and diplomatic sanctions was combined with divisive financial, diplomatic and military support, in order to bring down the Hamas-led Pal-

In this relentless process of Israeli land-grab and Palestinian displacement, the Nakba continues for Palestinians, and so does their struggle for dignity and justice. Both have shaped Palestinian identity from generation to generation, in the homeland and in exile.

estonian Authority government elected democratically in 2006. The results are unprecedented humanitarian crisis, the collapse of the Palestinian political system, internecine armed conflict between the leading Palestinian factions, geographical fragmentation of the OPT and lack of humanitarian access due to Israel's closure policy, in particular to the occupied Gaza Strip – where 70% of the population are Palestinian refugees of the Nakba of 1948.

In this relentless process of Israeli land-grab and Palestinian displacement, the Nakba continues for Palestinians, and so does their struggle for dignity and justice. Both have shaped Palestinian identity from generation to generation, in the homeland and in exile.

How do Palestinian refugees reflect on their lives 60 years into the Nakba? This is the question addressed in this magazine through the life-stories told by 15 Palestinians living in places as diverse as Britain, Chile, Egypt, Greece, Jordan, Lebanon, Scotland, Syria, The Netherlands, Canada, the United States and historic Palestine (Israel, West Bank and Gaza Strip). Their stories are different in many ways. They reflect loss, humiliation, hopes, efforts and successes at re-building lives, homes and communities in foreign, often inhospitable, lands and societies that have become "hosts" not by choice. At the same time, these stories are strikingly similar, because the current attempts to destroy the Palestinian collective identity bind new generations of Palestinians directly to the older ones, and the exile to the home. And as the young grapple with the consequences of a shared but distant past and reclaim a collective present, every one of them has somehow, through all of the different journeys, arrived together at the same place.⁴⁹

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Endnotes

- 1) See: *Survey of Palestinian Refugees and Internally Displaced Persons 2006-2007*, BADIL Resource Center, 2007. Available at: www.badil.org
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- 4) See Lehn, Walter, *The Jewish National Fund*, 1988.
- 5) *The Complete Diaries of Theodor Herzl*, Vol. I. Patai, Rephael (ed.). New York: Herzl Press and T. Yoseloff, 1960, pp. 8–9.
- 6) See, for example: Masalha, Nur, *Expulsion of the Palestinians: The Concept of "Transfer" in Zionist Political Thought, 1882–1948*, Washington, DC: Institute for Palestine Studies, 1992. Also see Simons, Chaim, *International Proposals to Transfer Arabs from Palestine 1895–1947, A Historical Survey*, Hoboken, New Jersey: Ktav Publishing, 1988. See also Ilan Pappé, *The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine*, Oxford: Oneworld Publications, 2006.
- 7) Correspondence between the Sharif of Mecca and the British High Commissioner in Egypt, Henry Mac Mahon (Mac Mahon – Hussein correspondence), see: Walid al Khalidi, *Before Their Diaspora*, Institute for Palestine Studies, Beirut, year, page?
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- 9) Article 22 of the Covenant of the League of Nations, 28 June 1919, reprinted in *Survey of Palestine*, Vol. I. Washington, DC: Institute for Palestine Studies, 1991, pp. 2–3.
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- 11) The Treaty of Peace between the Allied and Associated Powers and Turkey, signed at Sèvres, 10 August 1920, Part II, Section VII, Art. 94.

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- 13) Statement by Arthur Balfour, British Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, *Foreign Office No. 371/4183* (1919), quoted in *The Origins and Evolution of the Palestine Problem 1917–1988*, Part I. New York: United Nations, 1990.
- 14) The Mandate for Palestine, 24 July 1922, is reprinted in *Survey of Palestine*, Vol. I. Washington, DC: Institute for Palestine Studies, 1991, pp. 4–11.
- 15) Out of 9,000 citizenship applications from Palestinians outside the country, British officials approved only 100. Based on an average family size of six persons, more than 50,000 Palestinians may have been affected. *Palestine Royal Commission Report*, Cmd. 5479. London: HMSO, 1937, p. 331.
- 16) *Toward the De-Arabization of Palestine/Israel 1945–1977*. Nijim, Basheer K. (ed.). Dubuque, Iowa: Kendall/Hunt Publishing Company, 1984, p. 10.
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- 18) See Article 2(4) of the UN Charter with its exceptions in the form of self-defense (Article 51 of the Charter) and forcible measures undertaken by the Security Council under Chapter 7 (Articles 39, 41–42).
- 19) For the proposed texts of the questions to be submitted to the ICJ, see Iraq (UN Doc. A/AC.14.21); Syria (UN Doc. A/AC.14/25); and Egypt (UN Doc. A/AC.14/14).
- 20) Report of the UN Special Committee on Palestine, *The Question of Palestine*. UN Doc. A/364, 3 September 1947.
- 21) *ibid*, paragraph 176.
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- 32) A/RES/273 (III) of 11 May 1949.
- 33) Kristisson, p. 94.
- 34) United Nations Progress Report, from 23 January to 19 November 1951, A/1985, 20 November 1951.
- 35) See, for example, UNGAR 2787 (1971) and UNGAR 3236 (1974).
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- 38) See Benvenisti, Meron, *Sacred Landscape: The Buried History of the Holy Land*, Berkeley: The University of California Press, 2000.
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- 40) See, e.g., Boling, Gail J., "Absentees' Property Laws to Israel's Confiscation of Palestinian Property: A Violation of UN General Assembly Resolution 194 and International Law," 11 *Palestine Yearbook of International Law* 73 (2000–2001); *Ruling Palestine*, COHRE and BADIL, 2005; Halabi, Usama, "Israel's Land Laws as a Legal-Political Tool", Working Paper No. 7, BADIL, December 2004.
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- 47) See, for example, *Ruling Palestine*, COHRE and BADIL, 2005.
- 48) Report of the Special Rapporteur on Human Rights in the 1967 OPT, John Dugard; Commission on Human Rights, 62nd session, E/CN.4/2006/29, 17 January 2006, p. 5, para. 2.
- 49) See: Karma Nabulsi, "From Generation to Generation", in: *al-Majdal* (No. 24, Spring 2006); BADIL.

Reflections on the Palestine Return Movement

by Muhammad Jaradat*



Washington DC rally - 10 June 2007. (@al-awda.org)

When the first news came from Tunis and Tel-Aviv in early September 1993 about the secret talks between the PLO and the Israeli government, the people of Palestine inside and in the exile were torn between enthusiasm and optimism on the one hand, and doubt and skepticism on the other. “Let’s wait and see”, said many then.

The situation of uncertainty did not last long. A week later, the secret Oslo talks were revealed and we learned that the parties had concluded the talks with a Declaration of Principles that was to pave the way for final status negotiations on the fundamental rights of the Palestinian people, i.e. the agreement which became known as the Oslo Agreement or the Declaration of Principles.

Later on, when the text of the agreement was opened to the public, the Israeli press was the first to publish. I ran to the Israeli Press Office in West Jerusalem to get a copy - it was published then only in Hebrew and English. Reading the original English copy, I was not only shocked but also deeply alarmed and upset, because I had expected that the PLO leadership would not surrender and, at the minimum, uphold the fundamental national rights and base any agreement on UN resolutions and international law. Reading the agreement, I searched for references to the core issue of the conflict, i.e. the refugee issue, and found it mentioned only in a few words as an issue scheduled “for discussion in the final status negotiations.” I thus understood that there were no guarantees or principles recognized for dealing with this most central issue of

The scene in the streets was heartbreaking: people were dancing and celebrating the coming peace and a promising future on the eve of 13 September 1993; they had no idea what the Israeli government had in store for them.



Nakba 59th Commemoration,
Bethlehem 14 May 2007.
(©BADIL)

the conflict, and that the future of the large majority of the Palestinian people who are refugees was uncertain.

The above immediately gave rise to troublesome questions: what to do about such deterioration? Who can do what? Is it possible to reinstate people's rights as a solid basis for peace and coexistence in the region? These questions and hundreds more were ringing in the heads of activists, mainly those who had been heavily involved in the first Intifada, not only in Palestine but also in communities in exile. In fact, those concerned initially were a very small number of people, while the scene in the streets was heartbreaking: people were dancing and celebrating the coming peace and a promising future on the eve of 13 September 1993; they had no idea what the Israeli government had in store for them. These public celebrations showed clearly that our people are keen for peace and justice; they were ready to place flowers on the jeeps of the Israeli occupation army which only a day before was killing them. The scene was amazing and a clear statement by the Palestinian people of forgiveness, tolerance and acceptance of the other.

Those were the conditions and circumstances in which early preparations for the grassroots right of return movement started in 1993-4. More organized action followed in 1995, based on the first large popular conference convened in the former al-Fara'a military detention center opposite the

al-Fara'a refugee camp. Some 1,500 participants had come to this conference from all over historic Palestine, and it marked the beginning of the grassroots right-of-return movement. More initiatives, including specialized workshops and popular conferences, followed the al-Fara'a conference between 1996 and 2000, in places such as Nazareth, Bethlehem, Gaza, Beirut, Copenhagen, Berlin, Washington, Vancouver, London and many others.

Still, the obstacles and challenges for the activists who then led these initiatives were tremendous:

The majority of the Palestinian public still believed that their fundamental rights would now be implemented, because they had formed the minimum national program of the PLO for so long: the independent state with Jerusalem as its capital and the return of the refugees to their homes.

There was a lack of popular culture and experience with building lobbies or special interest groups, and with shaping programs for campaigns that aim to advance specific issues. Thus, for example, a campaign for the protection of Palestinian residency rights in Jerusalem in the early 1990s was accused of "fragmenting the national rights and the cause", and similar criticism was raised when the campaign for refugee rights started in the mid-1990s. At the early stage, moreover, some people and many of the Palestinian political leadership thought that the popular right-of-return campaign would develop into a new political party or was intended as an alternative to the PLO, and the campaign was accused of being driven by "external forces" opposed to the PLO.

In Israel, the campaign was immediately branded as being a challenge to Israel's "right to exist", as "extremist" undermining the authority of then President Arafat, and as "fundamentally opposed to peace." Israeli journalists argued that the campaign undermined Palestinian statehood, weakened the camp of moderate Palestinians, and shifted the public mood from conciliation to hostility. They did so, in order to put pressure on the Palestinian leadership and political activists and cause internal division and conflict.

The Palestine solidarity movement in the West did not understand the campaign initially. Many solidarity activists wondered what was the problem of these people, and why they were speaking about the refugees in times when the Palestinians were finally getting their state based on the Oslo Agreement. In short, the international community at large thought that everything was settled and that we should move on to something else.

Finally, the popular right-of-return campaign was faced with a serious lack of resources. Although hundreds, if not thousands of people were ready to contribute as volunteers, there was a shortage of professional skills and financial resources required for global networking, production of tools for public education and awareness-raising and effective media work

These obstacles and challenges, in particular those found in the internal, Palestinian arena, have played a major role in shaping the campaign. They taught its activists to work with and for the people, to be patient, tolerant and modest, and to build solid partnerships. Education and awareness-raising was undertaken in many different ways, through talking and writing, small meetings with selected cadre that could influence the political leadership, workshops with opinion leaders among their communities, as well as through public rallies and demonstrations.



Badil Legal Support Network Conference – Uppsala, Sweden, November 2007. (©BADIL)

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New community centers, committees and NGOs have been formed wherever Palestinians live, and Palestinian communities are more aware of their rights and better organized.

Initially, all these efforts were focused on one main question: “how can we stop the demoralization among the refugees in Palestine and in the exile and bring back hope and strength?” The answer was found in the creation and broad dissemination of slogans which affirmed Palestinian refugee rights in a simple language, such as: “the right of return is sacred”, “the right of return is possible and realistic” and “my home is my dignity”. The next step was to give substance to these slogans by introducing refugee communities to relevant international law and a rights-based approach to the refugee issue through lectures, workshops and discussions conducted in the camps, and to ensure the widest-possible public outreach through the local media.

Nowadays, some 15 years later, we should be proud of the Palestine Return Movement’s achievements:

New community centers, committees and NGOs have been formed wherever Palestinians live, and Palestinian communities are more aware of their rights and better organized. Efforts at training the youth and building a new generation of community leaders have been started. Since 2000, individuals, groups and organizations have become more connected across borders; they have formed networks and coalitions, which jointly organize conferences and function as pressure groups.

Research and literature produced in this period have succeeded in closing gaps in information and knowledge, while new and diverse tools of struggle have been developed for stronger impact. Today, the repertoire of tools is no longer limited to right-of-return rallies and demonstrations; it rather includes fact finding visits, petitions, advocacy and lobbying among policy makers, the use of elections as an opportunity for pressuring candidates for a clear and rights-based position on the refugee question, and the strategy global campaign for Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) against Israel which has gained considerable strength and momentum over the past few years.

The Palestine Return Movement has succeeded in revitalizing the Palestinian consensus about the centrality of the right to return for the future of the Palestinian people and peace in the region. This consensus is expressed in similar language by a large majority of the Palestinian public, organized civil society and the media, as well as in public statements of the Palestinian leadership. Understanding and support of this Palestinian consensus, as well as the need for a solution of the Palestinian refugee issue in accordance with international law, have increased considerably also among the global solidarity movement and a small but important minority of Jews in Israel.

Looking forward for ways this Movement can be sustained and become even more effective, we see a need to move on, beyond the focus on the **right** of return *per se*, and towards building a Palestinian culture and struggle for **actual** return. Creative and practical plans and methods, as well as more direct action, will be required for this purpose.

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My Father's Treasure

Mohamad and Rawan Al-Bash - Damascus, Syria

By Rawan Al Bash*

My name is Rawan Al Bash and I would like to tell the story of my father since he was displaced in 1948.

My father, Mohamad Al Bash, is from the village of Tiret Haifa in Haifa, on the north shore of Palestine. My father's family consisted of his father Ibrahim and his mother Ghazaleh and two children when they were exiled from Palestine in 1948; my father, who was only four years old at the time, was the oldest son.

They had a small fruit grove that they depended on for consumption and provision and owned sheep, which supplied the neighborhood with milk and cheese, and which they used to exchange for other goods like beans and wheat. My father used to play with his bare feet on the grass of their garden; this is also where he hid his treasure under the smallest tree. His treasure was a collection of all the old things he had found on the ground.

Their exile began when his father came and asked his mother to gather all their things and leave their home. This was after they had heard of the massacres the Jewish and British armies had committed against the Palestinian people. My father was worried about his treasure so he ran to the garden to fetch it. He was not wearing his shoes and while he was under his lovely tree he heard the sounds of bombs and shootings, his mother quickly came, grabbed his small hand and took him, barefoot, away from the bombs and bullets.

They walked for one day and night in search of a safe place where the sounds of bombs and weapons could not be heard. My father's feet were too small to resist the sharp and tough stones on the road, his feet were harmed and blood covered them. But my father was not thinking about his feet, the only thing he was worried about was his treasure, he did not want anyone to touch it.

After long and hard days of walking, my father's family became very tired and hungry. My father started to feel the pain in his feet, he asked his mother to carry him but his mother was pregnant. She gave birth on the way.

They arrived to a place that was full of people who had come from different villages in Palestine, some people slept in tents, others under the sky; my father's family made a tent of their clothes and spent a few nights under it. By the end of the month, they were taken by train to the Syrian borders and then to Aleppo, in the north of Syria. There they built their new home: four walls with an aluminum ceiling that did little to protect them from the wind and rain in the winter.

After 10 years of exile, my grandfather died and left the responsibility of the family to his elder son "my father" who was only 14 years old. My father had to work while he was attending school, he collected plants and herbs from the lands of other people in return for a meager pay. His mother had to serve rich people in Aleppo to support her children. This situation was intolerable to my father, and in 1958 he decided to move the family from Aleppo to Damascus in search of a better life.



Village school (1993) – last school graduates (1947) (source: palestineremembered.com)

Al-Tira. Known in Arabic as *Tiret Haifa* to distinguish it from other villages in Palestine with the same name, Al-Tira was one of the first villages to be attacked soon after the announcement of the Partition Resolution. On 12 December 1947, members of the Irgun Zvai Leumi (IZL) terror gang raided the village killing 13 and wounding 10 villagers. Between 24 April and 3 May 1948, 600 of the village's women and children were bused out by the British troops to Jinin and Nablus areas, but many of the inhabitants formed a local popular resistance committee that was able to successfully defend their village until the second half of July 1948. When the village finally fell to a combined force from the Israeli Navy, Golani, Carmeli, and Alexandroni brigades on 16 July 1948. The Israeli soldiers massacred at least 25 of the village's defenders. Today the Israeli colonies of ha-Chotrim, Tirat Karmel, Megadim, Kefar Gallim, & Beyt Tzvi stand on the lands of the village.





Mohamad in Syria

In Damascus, they rented a house until in 1961 they were able to buy land with the help of the General Authority for Palestine Arab Refugees (GAPAR) and build a house in Yarmouk Camp. My father left school and decided to devote his life to taking care of his brothers, sisters and mother. Five years later, he started to build a big house which kept the family together during that time. All his brothers and sisters were able to attend school and some of them got diplomas. My father has two sisters and one of them, Lotfiah, married a Palestinian who took her back to live in Nablus, just a few months before the 1967 War, and where she has been living until now. Except on two occasions, my father has been unable to see his sister ever since. I am now in touch with her children, my cousins, via the internet.

My father eventually got married and in order to avoid the crowdedness of the camp, he moved to the city center. He bought a house there and now owns a store that sells birds.

My father's story affected me and my family's life tremendously. I, my brothers and sisters know that our real wealth is our perseverance in life; this is what pushes us to work hard to prove ourselves as Palestinians in the society. I learned from my father how to fight for life – how to remain steadfast in time of difficulties and persist to achieve my goals. From his life of exile, I also realized how badly injustice can affect honest people. My father never forgot his tree and keeps mentioning it whenever he talks about his childhood. I also remember the stories that my grand-mother told us about our land and fruit trees and I feel I want to fly and come back to my homeland and kiss the land that belongs to us.

Although I did not grow up in a camp, being a refugee has always been a bitter fact in my life; I always envied my friends and classmates when they were talking about their lands and villages. In my dreams I always see myself playing on the green grass under a fruit tree, but in the morning, after I open my eyes, I realize that it is just a dream, and that makes me desperate. I always say to myself that "great achievements start with a dream" then I go back to dream in hope that this will be the first step to my return.



Mohamad

When I see the world ignoring our suffering and believing Israel's mendacity, I feel hopeless; when the world agrees with Israel that Palestinian people should pay for the Holocaust - which was not perpetrated by Palestinians - I feel desperate; when Israel ignores international law and UN resolutions like 194, I become desperate, but all these feelings have not weakened me; to the contrary, they have pushed me to fight for our rights as refugees and for our right to return to our homes and lands. I am now working with Aidoun Group, which defends the rights of Palestinian refugees and their fundamental right of return in the hope that a rights-based solution will solve our exile.

Although it is hard to live again with people who affected our life as refugees very badly, I do not mind to go back to Palestine and live with Jewish people, all together on the same land. The most important thing for me is to go back to the land I always dreamed of.

**Rawan Al Bash was born in 1987-Damascus, Syria, she has been the student-faculty, coordinator of management affairs at Aidoun since 2004.*

“Palestine at heart” for a Palestinian refugee writer in Amman

Dr. Sanaa Shalan - Amman, Jordan

By Anne Paq*

Dr Sanaa Shalan appears immediately as a strong, successful, articulate and proud young woman. Sanaa is a highly respected professor of Arabic literature at the University of Jordan. At only 27, she is a renowned writer who has won 32 awards, among them the Al-Shariqa Award for Arabic creativity for the story *The Nightmare* and the first Young Author Award of the Abd-Al-Muhsin Qatan Association for her short story collection *Aina Khader*.

But above all Sanaa is a Palestinian refugee. She has a promising successful career in Amman, but she does not forget where she comes from and she strongly speaks about her identity as a Palestinian.

When asked if she knows the story of her family, she promptly answers: *“of course, we know everything. Our grandfather told us about the house, where the keys are, how many rooms and how many chickens we had. We know it by heart because we consider these stories as sacred.”* One of her grandmothers recently passed away, but over the years she had continued to tell the story of the family to the younger generations.

Her family comes from Beit Nattif, a village located around 20 kilometres southwest of Hebron. Her grandfather was a carpenter, and now *“everybody in the family is fond of wood; some learned how to work it and my father is in the wood business.”* Her mother’s side of the family is from the same village: *“people used to marry from the same village so that the lands once returned will stay in the same families.”*

During the Nabka, in 1948, the village was ethnically cleansed and completely destroyed. There was some fighting and some of Sanaa’s family members were killed. As many refugees, they did not have time to take many of their belongings as they were convinced that they would go back after a few days.

Subsequently, the family came to Jordan, rented a piece of land in Madaba not far from Amman, and started to cultivate the land. *“Imagine that they were keeping some grains for their land in Palestine.”* Then they moved to Al-Karama camp, close to the Jordan Valley. But during the 1967 war, they were forced to flee once again because the camp was being shelled by the Israeli army so they went to Amman.

Sanaa was born in 1978 in Sweileh and grew up in Amman, among a family of 11 sisters and brothers, all of whom pursued higher education. At the early age of seven Sanaa started to write, and one of her teachers predicted that she would become a writer. At nine years old she wrote her first novel called *Unknown Steps*. Being already very well aware of her Palestinian identity, the subject of this story was the return to Palestine. She had a strong personality. She recalled how she spoke out when a high-ranking representative of UNRWA came to the school to give out some gifts. She protested in front of everybody and asked: *“how can you give us some gifts when you [the UN] are the ones responsible for our misery?”* She was slapped. She continued her education and developed her writing skills. At the age of 19 she published her first book and at 20 she won her first award. She specialized in criticism, novels, plays and children’s stories. She also has a regular column in the Jordanian daily newspaper *Al-Dustour*. In 2005, she was given the trophy of the Jordan University President for outstanding student in academia and creativity. At 26 she obtained her PhD in modern criticism and Arabic literature and began her work as a professor. Her career is a way to pursue her passion for literature: *“I am related to the language, it is my identity.”*



Depopulated village of Beit Nattif, 2007. (©BADIL)

Beit Nattif. Standing on a high, flat-topped ridge between two broad valleys, this ancient village was surrounded by olive groves and fields of corn, planted by the over 2400 villagers, in the valleys below. The village was attacked by the Israeli Har’el brigade on 21 October 1948 as part of Operation ha-Har, and its occupation enabled the army to block the Bethlehem-Ajjur-Beit Jibrin Road. All of its inhabitants were ethnically cleansed in the operation, and most reside in the refugee camps of Bethlehem (Dheisheh, ‘Azzah, ‘Aida). All of the buildings in the village were completely destroyed, with only rubble remaining, on which the Israeli colonies of Neliv ha-Lamed-He, Avi’ezer, Roglit, and Newe Mikha’el were built.



Sanaa receiving one of her 32 literary awards.

Sanaa has never been to Palestine. Nobody in her family has been able to, especially since a member of her family became a martyr in 1981 as he tried to enter Israel through the Golan Heights. Since then, none of her family members has been able to get an entry permit. As with most Palestinian refugees, they have all become “*persona non grata*” in their own country.

Even if she can not visit Palestine, Sanaa has Palestine at heart. She has become very active and been involved with Palestinian organisations. She has just finished writing a collection of stories for Al Qattan foundation, entitled *Aina Khader*, on the question of martyrdom. Next summer, she will visit the US to meet some other refugees and write their stories.

Together with another writer, she has built a website called “those who dance for emptiness” gathering resources on writers of Palestinian origin, and whose Palestinian origin is often unknown. Something similar happened to her. One time, Sanaa was invited to receive an award and the speaker declared that there was no

Palestinian writer in the gathering, she immediately stood up and said that even if she has a Jordanian passport, she is indeed Palestinian.

As a refugee she always feels like a second class citizen, “*when I travel I always have problems. They always put me aside and ask me more questions just because I am Palestinian. If I am treated that way, how is it for an ordinary person? It is really shameful.*” Even at the University of Jordan she cannot freely express herself and introduce herself as a Palestinian refugee, although she always finds indirect ways. She also strongly states, “*I am fed up with telling people that we have rights. Why do I have to waste my time defending myself as if I am a criminal? Why do two or three generations have to be wasted? Why should I get married and have kids if they have to end up killed by the Israelis? Why can't I live as other people?*” The Palestinian history and current situation affects her : “*when I think of the Nakba, it is painful. Before I used to feel sorry, but nowadays the situation is getting worse with all the killings; the organized and systematic killings of my people.*”

She does not believe in the current peace process, “*we have been talking with them [the Israelis] for many years, and we have nothing to show for it. The only peace will be when we will be able to return. The Palestinians should be able to form a viable Palestinian state and Israel should admit responsibility for all the crimes committed against the Palestinians.*” She thinks that despite the fact that many people are supportive of the Palestinians, the governments are not, “*all the countries will come to celebrate the 60th anniversary of the creation of Israel and nobody will stand with the Palestinian suffering.*”

But she still feels hopeful for the future. She hopes that she will be able to return. She refers to a Palestinian saying “*the soil of the land always craves its owner.*” Her hope also lies in the strength of the Palestinian people who all over the world keep their strength and their distinctive identity and always make a priority of developing and educating themselves, “*if they let us come back, we have everything in the community. We have qualified people to build Palestine again. We are ready.*”

* Anne Paq is a photographer member of *activestills* (activestills.org) and human rights specialist. She concentrates her work on refugees, human rights violations in the OPT and the impact of the occupation on peoples' lives. See her blog: <http://chroniquespalestine.blogspot.com>

Not for Sale

Mohammed Awni Obeid – Cairo, Egypt

By Serene Assir*

Mohammed Awni Obeid is one of 70,000-100,000 Palestinian refugees living in Egypt.¹ The majority of refugees in Egypt fled Palestine during the 1967 war. In the first years the Egyptian state, under President Gamal Abdel-Nasser, Palestinians were granted equal treatment to Egyptians. But his successor President Anwar Al-Sadat, and to a much greater extent the current President Hosni Mubarak, gradually withdrew the privileges conferred to Palestinian refugees. Now, second and third-generation refugees born and living in Egypt are barred from obtaining permanent resident status in Egypt, and rely on their employment to maintain their residency status. UNRWA does not operate in Egypt, and only recently have some Palestinians started to receive assistance from UNHCR.



Great mosque in the depopulated town of Al-Majdal (source: palestineremembered.com)

Each human life is different from the next. But because Palestinians in Egypt constitute so small a group in proportion to the country's population of 80 million, and because ties between Palestinian refugees in Egypt are weak, it is particularly the case in Egypt that finding social networks between Palestinian refugees and similarities in their stories is difficult. Perhaps the main common factors, however, are the difficulty involved in becoming regularised, and of living a life which is caught between marginalisation and integration.

"The truth is that we will never be accepted here. I was born here, and I speak the Egyptian dialect with just as much ease as the Palestinian. In fact I grew up speaking it. But we will always be marginal, and the Egyptians have a hard time understanding us," according to Obeid. Originally from Al-Majdal, where his family was expelled in the 1948 Nakba, Obeid's father obtained his degree in Iraq after he was expelled for a second time from Gaza in 1967. He then moved along with his mother to Egypt to join a Palestinian military squadron that was part of the Egyptian army. Deployed to Lebanon during the Lebanese civil war, he was killed there when the jeep he was riding in drove over an unexploded bomb. Mohammed was eight years old then. He is now 34.

What follows is Obeid's story, told in his own words.

I was born in Masr El-Gedida, a suburban district of Cairo. I completed high school here. Only one other boy at school was Palestinian. I remember he and I felt strange, because we spoke exactly like all the other children did, and yet we were expected to feel different because we were Palestinian. We used to think back then, why us? Why did it have to be us?

Anyhow, once I had graduated from high school I had to come up with other options. I missed a year in the process. I couldn't go on to university in Egypt because Palestinians were not allowed to at the time. Instead, because I had an uncle living in Pakistan, I decided to accept his offer of help and went on to study telecommunications engineering at the University of Engineering and Technology in Lahore. Because it wasn't an Arab state, I was treated just as any foreigner would be. This felt good. It was a change from Egypt. But at the same time,

Al-Majdal. A bustling coastal town of just under 11,500 people, Al-Majdal is the place after which this publication is named. The vast majority of the townspeople were forced out by Israeli aerial and marine bombardment as part of Operation Yoav in November 1948, while many of those who were able to stay were later driven out through a combination of military force and administrative measures under the Israeli Emergency Laws that targeted Palestinian citizens of the newly established state. Thousands of newly arrived Jewish immigrants were settled in Al-Majdal under its new name: Ashkelon, while the original inhabitants had ended up only a few miles away in the refugee camps of the Gaza Strip.



Mohammed

though Pakistanis professed to sympathise with Palestinians, sympathy was often symbolic. Still, I met my wife there, and she lives with me here in Egypt now.

I returned from Pakistan aged 27. The main reason I returned was because I had to be with my mother. My siblings were, and still are, all abroad. My sisters live in Saudi Arabia and Germany, while my brother returned to Gaza with the ultimately shattered hope of obtaining his rights. We haven't seen my brother in almost eight years now.

I work as an IT specialist, and through the companies I work for I obtain a residence permit, which I need to renew every three years, as long as I am still working. To be honest, I don't have any issue with the legal arrangements in Egypt. Like any other country, Egypt is free to run its legal affairs as it chooses. However, I can tell you that it feels extremely degrading, given that I was born and raised here, that I am unable to be treated as anything other than a foreigner, and a second-class foreigner at that. For this reason, I am determined to leave here as soon as I can, preferably to work in the West.

I will always visit Egypt, because I have friends here. But I cannot let my children, Ramin and Yousef, suffer the way I have. And if we stay here it is guaranteed that they will.

I think if we look at the Palestinians of Lebanon, we find far more obvious problems. They live in poverty, and are barred from many professions. They are physically marginalised by their presence in the camps. In Egypt, this is not the case. But the pressure is psychological. Egyptians were taught in school that Palestinians sold their land, that we are traitors and that our lot is of our own doing. It takes time to break the prejudices, even in daily life. Once closeness is established, it becomes easier. I have made good friends in spite of the initial mistrust. At the same time, we don't have, as Palestinians, a strong network here, unlike the Palestinians in Lebanon or Syria. It is difficult to get to know other Palestinians, so I am led to feel isolated from both camps – the Palestinian and the Egyptian. At the end of the day, our problem relates to our paperwork. As a non-Egyptian, I cannot change that. So I just figure that it's better just to leave.

As for Palestine, we used to visit every year up until the outbreak of the first Intifada. Then our visits became forbidden. But I remember it well. Palestine is the most beautiful piece of land on the planet – this is clear to any visitor. I visited the whole of historic Palestine, including Gaza, Haifa, Yaffa and Jerusalem. If Palestine is liberated tomorrow I would go back immediately. I would return to Al-Majdal – to the land that my grandfather owned and whose proof of ownership he showed me. I would not want to live anywhere else. That is my family's home.

I am not, however, like many other Palestinians. I don't talk about the Palestinian cause very much, and I don't intend on teaching my children much about politics. I believe God put me on this Earth to live – not to die. When Adam and Eve came to Earth, did they have nationalities? No. We have made countries, not God. What I see for the future is not good though. The way Israel is behaving in the West Bank and Gaza, it tells me that Israel wants the Palestinians there to leave too. In the future, many more Palestinians will start to leave. This is especially true for Gaza, where most residents are refugees and don't have roots in Gaza. It is only when the United States collapses as the only superpower in the world that perhaps we can start to imagine a solution.

But on the long run, I know that Palestine will return. History is always changing. Maybe it could be a country of mixed identities, and so long as everybody has equal rights I don't think

this would be bad. This is because the other scenario is horrible, and would involve a second genocide of the Jews or of us. At the end of the day, either way it is unacceptable. The way Israel was invented means it will not last. Palestine will return. Maybe people need to start to accept this, and work towards what is good.

As for the UN – the UN is the US, so long as the Security Council has so much power and the US abuses its seat. I don't expect help from the UN, or other nations. When it comes, I say thank you. But how can we expect help from other countries when we Palestinians are not helping ourselves? We are not united. So how can I blame the others for our disunity? It is true that Israel is responsible for sowing disunity among the Palestinians – but it is our fault that we have fallen into that trap. From the news, it seems very hard for us to regain our unity at this point. There are also other agendas, including the US, the EU, the Syrian and Iranian agendas. But I know it is weak to blame the others. The others have exploited our weaknesses and our disunity. Our unity is our responsibility to maintain. It is a given that any country in the world that has power will conspire.

So for us Palestinians, our unity should be our national goal. Maybe in the future there will be unity. Now we do not have this, but this will change, as everything in history does.

Maybe it is because of this that I don't invest any hope in politics. I would emotionally support activists, but I would not do anything alongside them. I want to raise my children. But at the same time, I am clear on one thing: I will not accept compensation instead of my right of return. Accepting that would mean I am willing to sell Palestine. It is absurd, the idea of selling Palestine. No, I will never sell Palestine.

** Serene Assir is a Lebanese journalist based in Cairo*

Endnotes

- 1) It is difficult to determine precisely how many Palestinians live in Egypt because many live here without documentation and are unregistered with any agency.
- 2) For those Palestinians who are not working, not only is residence unobtainable but it also becomes impossible to renew the "wathiqa," (Palestinian travel document). For the overwhelming majority of Palestinians here, the "wathiqa" represents the only form of permanent proof of identity.

Architect in Exile

Mahmoud Kaddoura – Toronto, Canada

by Hazem Janjoun*



Depopulated village of Suhmata
(source: palestineremembered.com)

Suhmata. The ethnic cleansing of Palestine was well under way when Israel's Golan brigade began its bombardment of the village of Suhmata in late October 1948. The over 1100 inhabitants of the village were expelled to Lebanon and Syria with only a tiny proportion of the villagers managing to stay in their country. Around 600 of the people of Suhmata are Israeli citizens today, with the colonies of Tzuri'el and Chosen, as well as part of the Israeli city Ma'alot built on the village lands. At the beginning of January 2008, the Israeli Northern District Planning and Building Committee announced new plans to construct yet another new neighborhood east of Ma'alot on Suhmata's confiscated lands. The neighborhood will consist of an estimated 3500 housing units, annexing what remains of Suhmata's lands. Internally displaced Suhmatans have set up a website for the people of the village, and have launched a campaign to prevent Ma'alot's expansion on what remains of their village lands. For more see <http://www.suhmata.com>



Newlyweds: Mahmoud and Nadia.

“Our lives became so much more complicated when Saddam's Iraq invaded Kuwait”

Having been born and raised in Kuwait, Mahmoud's perception of his being a Palestinian refugee revolved around his father's stories about their village of Suhmata and its people, the pools, the castle and the stories of his childhood visits to Balbaak's Thakanet Ghor (Gouraud) refugee camp. He would also hear about 'Ein El-Hilweh, the refugee camp in Sidon where his mother was raised. *“In Kuwait, it was very normal for you to be Palestinian or Yemeni or Indian, or indeed from anywhere in the world since most of the labor done in that country came from elsewhere.”*

Years later when Mahmoud lived in Lebanon, the grandfather he was named after would tell him long stories of his days working at the Akka docks, about his memories in Suhmata, the road to Safad, the agricultural school that they took so much pride in having despite the village's small size, the neighboring towns of Tarshiha, Al-Jish and Deir Al-Qasi that everyone had relatives in, and about how many of the men and women of Suhmata organized themselves into popular resistance committees in 1948 to try to prevent their expulsion at the hands of the Zionists.

Although they were not rich, the lives of the Kaddouras in Kuwait was comfortable, especially compared to what people underwent in Lebanon in those wretched years of the Israeli occupation, Lebanese civil war, and the war of the camps. Then came August 2, 1990 and Iraq's invasion of Kuwait. Daily life turned into a quest for the basic needs of survival; queuing for endless hours to get the meager rations of bread, cooking gas, drinking water, and whatever was available for the month.

Everyone who could leave left, including the Kuwaitis themselves. Those that stayed did so out of necessity; either they did not have the means to leave, or they were from Gaza or Lebanon; places that were in an even worse condition than Kuwait. Most brutal was the uncertainty, stories of Iraqi soldiers abusing Kuwaitis began to spread, and news of the US amassing allies and troops at Kuwait's doorstep in preparation for war made it clear that the worst was yet to come.

“For those of us in Kuwait, 1991 was another Palestinian Nakba like '48, '67 and '82”

Even before the war, the idea that Palestinians were no longer welcome had begun to surface. In 1975 Kuwait stopped granting entry permits to Palestinians with refugee documents mainly from Lebanon. That year Mahmoud's uncle Mustafa was supposed to start work in Kuwait and obtained a work permit to do so, but while at the airport discovered that he would not be allowed entry as the new law had come into effect. Later, a Kuwaiti law was passed that effectively stripped foreigners including Palestinians of residency rights once they turned eighteen, unless they were enrolled at the University of Kuwait, however only Kuwaitis were accepted into that university unless they had very good connections or ranked the highest in the country. This

was affecting the family since Mahmoud's older sister Leena was to start high school, and the family had to think of a place for her to go once she graduated. Another law was that any non-Kuwaiti whose salary was less than 300 Dinars was not allowed to marry; so "ultimately Egyptians went back to Egypt, Pakistanis to Pakistan, where were we supposed to go?"

There was also the palpable bond between Palestinians and Iraqis in Kuwait; "when the Iraqi football team would come to play in Kuwait, half of those who came out to cheer them would be Palestinians." The leadership of the PLO was playing a very risky, and ultimately disastrous, game in taking a strong official position endorsing Saddam Hussein in the war with the US and its allies. As a result, and despite some Palestinians playing important roles in training and supporting Kuwaitis fighting against the Iraqi occupation, Kuwait began to see Palestinians as part and parcel of the Saddam regime, indeed many Palestinians had rejoiced when Saddam entered Kuwait, and many were supporters of his regime because he was against Israel.

Within weeks of the February 27, 1991 liberation of Kuwait, Kuwaiti militant groups had been formed both unofficially by local warlords and by the state itself. Iraqis, Palestinians, Sudanis, and Yemenis were the "four nationalities" targeted by these groups with more than the mere complicity of the regular Kuwaiti security apparatus. It also became known that people from various communities were collaborating with Kuwaitis, informing on anyone who hosted Iraqi soldiers in their homes or even offered them a glass of water during the days of the occupation. Mahmoud began to notice and hear of disappearances from the Palestinian community and several Palestinians' bodies had been found tortured and killed. Abdallah Abdun, a very kind and generous Sudanese man who was a very close friend of the family had sent his wife and daughter back to Sudan to wait for him while he got his affairs in order before leaving himself was intentionally run over by a car that had chased him. What made it particularly difficult for Palestinians was the lack of any kind of representative that could follow up on these cases. Mahmoud admits that "until today, I don't know if anyone is even asking about what happened to those who disappeared during those horrible days."

Mahmoud's father began to seriously consider moving the family to Lebanon, despite the horror stories that were reaching Kuwait from Lebanon. He planned to wait for compensation from work in order to be able to afford the move, and hoped that in the meantime the situation would quiet down in Lebanon. During this period, Mahmoud and his friend were randomly and with no reason, other than their Palestinian identity, arrested by militants and beaten mercilessly for most of the day. It was clear that they would be killed, and at one point they overheard that they were indeed to be taken to a desolate area and executed. Luckily for the two young men, one of their neighbors had told their families about the kidnapping and the families had gone to people they knew in the government and the allied military, which in turn showed up at the scene and prevented the executions from taking place. Their captors were released immediately with no charges laid, while the two Palestinians were then handed over to an official state prison where they were further interrogated about their connections to the Iraqi occupation, and ultimately set free when none were found. With his son bruised from head to toe, Mahmoud's father could no longer postpone the relocation of his family to Lebanon.

"In the 1990s as in the 1980s, we Palestinians were the most vulnerable group in Lebanon"
Life in Lebanon was very difficult at first. There was not enough room for the newly arrived



Mahmoud helped design and build a larger than life Handala [a character created by Palestinian refugee cartoonist Naji Al-Ali] for the second ever Palestine float at the annual Labor Day Parade in Toronto, Canada.



One of Mahmoud's innovative architectural designs. Avenue Road, Toronto, Canada.

family in relatives' homes, so Mahmoud and his brother joined his aunt's family ending up in a *Kharroub* juice factory building with another five families. Throughout the civil war, these families had sought refuge there from Tal El-Za'tar camp, Al-Damur (Lebanon), Al-Rashdiyyah camp, and Tyre. His mother, two sisters and two younger brothers stayed in Sidon at his grandmother's home.

After six months passed, and with Mahmoud's father reunited with the family, they were able to acquire an apartment in Sidon with a Lebanese sponsor. Mahmoud and his siblings enrolled at the school in *'Ein El-Hilweh* camp. There was great concern over how they would be able to afford enrollment at university. While the two older siblings, Lina and Fadi, enrolled in UNRWA's Seblin Vocational School, Mahmoud went to the Beirut Arab University, and he was only able to do so with the help of his aunts and the PLO's Palestinian Students Fund. *"This fund was perhaps the most important thing set up by the PLO for young Palestinians; some of my friends were fully dependent on it. I hear that its services are now dwindling and that it is under-funded, this is a disaster. I can easily say that it would have been impossible for us to continue our studies without it."*

The 1990s were a time when the Islamist currents were hegemonic, "which made sense because what we saw of resistance to Israel and the US was carried out by Islamic currents, whether by Hizbollah in Lebanon or Hamas in Palestine." The main issue was the peace process, and a rift developed between those for and against the Oslo agreements and its ramifications.

"Those defending Oslo would say that it would provide us with a launching ground to liberate the rest of Palestine, as if Arafat was engaged in a strategy where he would somehow trick the US and Israel, those people were very embarrassed when the Aqsa Intifada erupted and construction of the apartheid wall began. Those from the Islamic currents saw Oslo as a way of getting the Palestinian leadership into Palestine to do Israel's dirty work and repress the Islamic resistance. I remember people talked about how it was a conspiracy to resettle the refugees; every time someone saw a new housing project being built they would report that it

was to permanently resettle us there, or if a high ranking foreign official would visit, it was to discuss ways to get rid of the right of return. Some put a lot of emphasis on making sure they had their UNRWA ration cards to prove that they were refugees in case compensation was going to be paid out.”

Mahmoud experienced a significant shift in his perception of Palestine with the advent of satellite television broadcasts and the internet, especially when he moved to Beirut to study architecture in 1995, and even more when he moved to Australia to complete his Masters degree. *“Haifa, Akka, Nazareth, Umm El-Fahem were places from my grandfather’s stories or from patriotic poems, now I could see live pictures of them. More shocking was seeing Tel Aviv, and seeing Israeli civilian politicians on television; I began to see Israel and Israelis as not being only soldiers at checkpoints shooting kids, but as a real colonial settlement project, they had kicked us out and saw themselves as being in Palestine to stay.”* Another important thing for me was based on remembering West Bank Palestinians in Kuwait who would hear our accents and call us Lebanese, through satellite TV I saw people like Azmi Bishara and Jamal Zahalka who spoke with the same accents as us, and they were there, in the towns and villages we were kicked out of, and they were talking about our return, and about preserving and developing their Palestinian identity.”

While in Australia, Mahmoud supplemented whatever support he could get from his family by working at a convenience store. He would communicate regularly with people in Palestine through the internet, which is how he met Nadia, and the two would soon fall in love. Upon graduation, he discovered that he could not stay in Australia. He returned to Lebanon, where the situation of Palestinian youths was, as it continues to be, very difficult. With very little in the way of job opportunities most young Palestinian men looked for a way to find a way to leave Lebanon, and Mahmoud was no exception. He got the chance to immigrate to Canada, a place where he could also arrange to meet Nadia and ask for her hand, and so it was that in 2005 he arrived in Toronto. It is here that Mahmoud’s talent as an artist and architect have been able to flourish as he completes project after project of some of the most innovative architectural designs around the country, and it is here that he was finally able to unite with his sweetheart after years of phone calls and internet conversations.

As we end our conversation talking about the projects he has worked on, Mahmoud tells me *“while things are finally looking good for me, I still feel a sense of hollowness since I do not have the chance to use my skills and research to help build my own country and people. Wherever I have lived, Palestinians have been the most vulnerable with no one to really represent and protect us; look at what’s happening to Palestinians in Iraq and Nahr El-Bared camp. My dream is to live in a place that I belong to culturally; geographically; politically; to feel a part of it; and to use whatever skills and resources I have as an architect and as a person to make it a free and thriving place. Even though I have never been allowed to be there, I know that the only place that I can feel and do this is Palestine.”*

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Stealing the River, 'Trespassing' on Our Own Land

Hussein and Ghada Mubaraki (*father and daughter*) - Abu Snaan, 1948 Palestine

By Isabelle Humphries*



Depopulated village of Al-Nahr.
(source: palestineremembered.com)

Al-Nahr. Fourteen kilometers north-east of Akka stands a tall palm tree on the site of what was once the small village of Al-Nahr. Nearby one can see the remains of two of the village houses, a grave that was part of the village cemetery, and the cactus and fig trees that remind the passerby that Palestinians lived here. Al-Nahr (*the river*), together with its twin village Al-Tall (*the hill*) and several other villages in the area were destroyed and depopulated on 20-21 May 1948 in the second phase of Operation Ben-Ami. According to Israeli historian Benny Morris, the commander of the Carmeli Brigade that executed this operation ordered his battalion commanders to "attack in order to conquer, to kill among the men, to destroy and burn the villages of Al-Kabri, Umm al-Faraj and Al-Nahr". According to Morris, this razing of the villages was done "both to punish the villagers... and to make sure the villagers could and would never return." [Morris (1987), *The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem, 1947-1949*. Cambridge Univ. Press, p.125]

What did military government mean? The military rule was made because of the people who fled... If there wasn't military rule we could have gone home. They made the military government so that all people were [permanently] exiled from their villages. - Hussein Mubaraki

Like approximately 300,000 other Palestinian refugees, Hussein Mubaraki and his daughter Ghada live within a few kilometres of their family village. Classified as 'Present Absentees', while free to live in Israel, the Mubaraki family are not allowed to live on their ancestral lands in the village of Al-Nahr in the Western Galilee.

Between 1948 and 1966 all Palestinians remaining in the new Jewish state lived under military rule, bound by curfews and geographic limits just as the Palestinians of the 1967 occupied territory are today. Permission to go beyond such boundaries – even to visit family – required lengthy waits for permits which were very often refused. It was this tight military enclosure – resulting in the killing, injury and imprisonment of those who dared to trespass – that prevented the return of the refugees, even those carrying Israeli ID cards and citizenship.

Ghada was born in 1958, 10 years after the occupation, in the coastal town of Akka. With the vast majority of the original Palestinians of Akka displaced to Lebanon or further afield, in 1958 many of the Palestinians in Akka were internally displaced like the Mubarak family. The inhabitants were crowded into the Old City as Jewish immigrants moved into the homes of the depopulated newer neighborhoods.

There was never a time when Ghada was unaware of where her father Hussein's family was from. She grew up on stories of al-Nahr, its water (the name means river in Arabic), its fertile lands, the orange trees. And with that were the indescribable memories. Her aunt, her father's younger sister, was only 12 years old as they fled the village. She was carrying the youngest brother, a newborn, an uncle whom Ghada would never get to know; for as they fled the child was shot in its older sister's arms. Like many families taking flight, they had no choice but to bury the baby and carry on their way.

Sitting on his sofa in Abu Snaan village Hussein pulls out photocopies of the title deeds (*tabo*) to his family land, his first Israeli identity card which named his place of birth as al-Nahr in Hebrew script, and even correspondence of his father with British Mandate Authorities. Hussein Mubaraki has kept all the evidence of the 77 dunams of orchards and arable land that they owned within the 6000 dunam village.

Unlike the village of Saffuriyya (*see Ziad Awaisy profile*), only a handful of al-Nahr's inhabitants managed to remain in the Galilee. I ask Hussein why he thinks his father Ali did not end up in Lebanon.

The people who were old back then they said this – ‘There were people when the Turkish came here, and the people remained in their homes. And when they waved the white flag...there wasn’t a problem... And the Turkish went and the British came and the people who raised a white flag stayed in their homes. When the Jewish came they recognized neither white nor black flag! They wanted the land. Why?-to bring the Jews from outside.



Hussein Mubarak (father), Ghada Mubarak (daughter), al-Nahr.

In early months and years, Palestinians on either side of the border did not know what would happen – a new war? New expulsions? There were indeed further expulsions – in 1949 some 700 refugees were forced onto trucks in Kafr Yassif by the army. Hussein’s parents were taken from their shelter in Abu Snaan village (next to Kafr Yassif) and placed behind the iron fence in which refugees to be deported were gathered. It was only after intervention by a local leader that they were some of the lucky few who escaped this transfer.

Even in such frightening circumstances, people continued to resist in whatever way they could, even if it meant, as in the case of many political activists, that they risked their own expulsion.

In Kafr Yassif there were communists. When they put the people in the army trucks they came out and lay down in front of the trucks to prevent them from sending people away... [But to no avail] we were just 150,000 Arabs left here then...

Ghada was brought up hearing the story of how in the first months of exile, her grandfather watched as bulldozers dug up his trees before his own eyes. Her grandfather and father, like all Palestinians remaining in Israel, were forced into the only work available – manual labour for Jewish employers – in their case being forced to work on their own land for the benefit of Jewish companies.



Hussein Mubarak – first identity papers in new Jewish state name place of birth, al-Nahr.

You saw our land today? Did you see the bananas? They make gold from our land – that’s land with water! They came from Europe and it was free for them! They took our land and now I must buy bananas and eggs from them!! We pay money for the fruits of our land! He’s a king and we are nothing.

The words of her grandfather and his watching of the destruction of “our land” echo today in Ghada’s head as we get out of the car and stand at a locked gate trying to reach the land which is now deemed ‘private’.

‘How did he feel as he stood here back then? I shiver when I think of it... All his life he kept the ‘tabo’ [land deed] and he said; “Take care after I die that it’s your right, this land is your right, it’s for you, for all the family; maybe one day they’ll give it back to us. It was his dream you know that maybe he would come back one day to his village.”

Under military rule the only day of the year that Palestinians in Israel were allowed to roam the land freely was the day of their Nakba – the day when Israelis celebrate ‘independence’. As a child she recalls the whole family going to drink water from the stream and to pick fruit on this day. Her grandmother would describe every part of the land to her – where they slept, where they ate, where they sat.

And then one day the family came and discovered that the water had been diverted to the neighbouring moshav (Israeli agricultural settlement). In the early 1970s – although military rule over Palestinian citizens had ended, Israel found other ways of keeping the refugees from even



Colours of wall paintings still remain on the one house left partially standing in the village, Beit Afifi.

visiting, let alone returning, to their lands and villages. One Nakba Day visit, internally displaced villagers of al-Nahr found a locked gate and soldiers barring their way.

How the people cried when they stopped us They didn't let us go inside. I was about 11 or 12 years... at that age how I felt sad... I belonged to this place... Even though I wasn't born here, but I felt that they had taken something from me, it's my right, this land is my right.

Although born a decade after the Nakba, the village was always something that belonged to Ghada. She watched her father greeting the other people of the village whenever he saw them, always talking about life in al-Nahr. She recalls as a young girl becoming angry and shouting at her father – ‘Coward – why did you leave our village?’ And then my father explained to me slowly and quietly how they had no choice – there was nothing they could do.’

Despite the end of the military rule that her parents had suffered, growing up in Akka and attending school in the 1970s was not an easy time. Born into an Egyptian family living in Akka during the British Mandate, Ghada's mother Nefisa was active in the Communist Party during the 1950s, leading women's demonstrations and at times arrested for her activities.

With the example of her mother and father, Ghada learned about Palestine, the Nakba and to struggle for her rights as a Palestinian in Israel – yet she quickly realised this was something that many of their neighbours were too frightened to do.

They [her parents with the Communists] went to all the houses and said 'Don't put your vote for the Zionist parties.' People - they were afraid you know and they didn't like ... the Communist people... And my mother she visited people; she tried to convince them not to be afraid of the Israelis. And that's how she was – very strong.

Under pressure and threats from all sides - from Israeli security police to charities to Jewish employers - Palestinians in Israel were subjected to a new Israeli second-class identity. Those who questioned it faced severe penalties. Enrolling at the Terra Sancta school in Akka, the young Ghada discovered that she would be punished for even saying that she was from al-Nahr – ‘You are an Israeli!’ she was told sharply by the headteacher. History teachers could not teach about Palestine (and still can't) – teachers with Communist affiliations knew they could be fired. Ghada recalls demonstrations when two teachers were dismissed by the Ministry of Education for ‘political activity’.

Despite the dangers, politics and Palestine were always part of her life. Demonstrations and strikes continued – ‘I remember so many’ – from a funeral parade for Egyptian leader Nasser, to protesting assassinations of Palestinian leaders to a march against the Akka visit of Meir Kahane, a Zionist leader who advocated the transfer of the Palestinians who remained.

Married to a fellow activist in Nazareth, sadly Ghada was widowed at a young age and returned with her young son to live with her parents. By this stage her family had moved to Abu Snaan village – a village which was home to many internal refugees and crucially for Hussein, where he could buy a small piece of land which was impossible in Akka. ‘For him he missed the land, to be part of it.’

Today Ghada's son, Hussein and Nefisa's grandchild, lives in Sweden. But Ghada has no doubt that he will always know where he comes from, his heritage and his rights. For this is what she brought him up to know and to struggle for.

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The Home of My Youth

Charles Tarazi - New York and London, United States and England

By Claudia Pena*

In 1948, Palestine was beautiful and vibrant. There were fields of olive trees, people everywhere, much commerce, and a thriving society. Palestinian culture was rich in its food, familial traditions, music and dance. Muslims, Christians and Jews lived side by side, all part of the same social fabric.

Charles Tarazi was twelve years old when his family could no longer stay safe in Palestine. Zionist terrorism was rampant- assassinations were out of control and several massacres had already taken place. One day, the Irgun terrorist group blew up a British military encampment near Charles' sister's catholic boarding school in downtown Haifa. Their vantage point from the house made it seem as if the school had been bombed because smoke careened off the rooftop. It wasn't until the end of the day that they found out his sister was safe. His parents decided it was time for them to flee the danger.

Along with his mother, brother and sister, Charles took a long and arduous trip by train and traveled through Gaza, Rafah and the Sinai until they reached Egypt a day and half later. Though his father had been the Deputy Head of the Municipality of Haifa and the family enjoyed the comforts of middle-class status, Egypt only offered Charles' father unemployment and heartache. In fact, Palestinians were denied employment until the Egyptian Revolution in 1952. Luckily, they had friends and family in Egypt who helped keep them afloat through the most difficult times.

Upon arrival in Egypt, the Tarazis thought they would return to Palestine within a few months. They never expected that 60 years later, there would still be no return in sight for Palestinian refugees. They had faith in the United Nations and the superpowers and believed a resolution would be reached. In May, when word of the Israeli Declaration of Independence reached Egypt, Charles remembers people were upset... yet they still hoped.

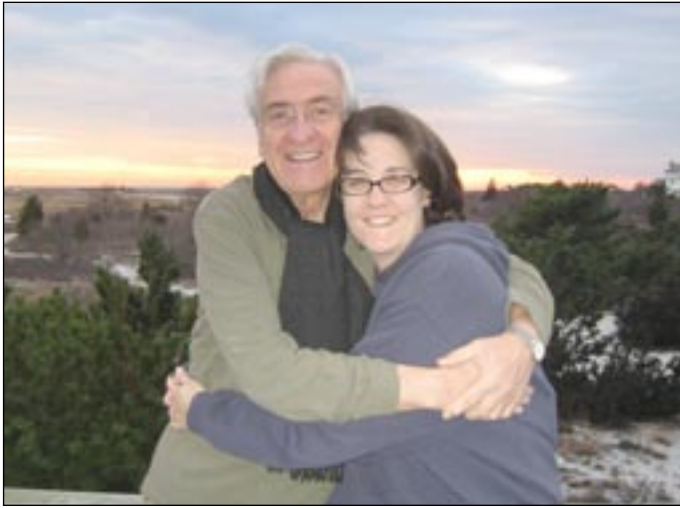
As the years wore on, it was difficult to retain that hope. At age 22, Charles left Egypt by convincing United States Senator Thye of Minnesota that he qualified for a visa under the 1957 Immigration and Nationality Act otherwise known as the Refugee-Escapee Act. The Senator wrote a letter on Charles' behalf and soon thereafter, the United States Consulate in Cairo contacted Charles with the good news.

Though Charles was interested in engineering, he felt as if he didn't have a choice to pursue his true aspirations and instead needed to take advantage of what was available. So, he went into commerce. After hitting the pavement in a bitterly cold, selfish and inhospitable New York January, he finally found employment in the metal business. Several years later, he fell in love, married and had three daughters. Though his daughters are American/British citizens, they have always been taught about their Palestinian heritage.



General view of Haifa in 1935.
(source: palestineremembered.com)

Haifa. One of Palestine's major port cities, with its own airport, oil refinery, and tobacco, fishing, textile, grain, ice, soap, and other industries, Haifa was a booming town and the birthplace of the Palestinian labor movement in the 1920s. The city also boasted three Arabic newspapers, and according to many accounts, its Palestinian-Arab majority and substantial Jewish community had established bonds of friendship and comradeship. The Zionist plan to takeover the city, Operation Misbarayim (scissors), was implemented on April 21-23, and consisted of dividing the historic city into three parts beginning with the Jewish neighborhood, and systematically depopulating each of the three Arab neighborhoods, pushing many of the inhabitants into the sea. This was done under the watchful eye of British troops, who not only stood idly by in neglect of their duty to protect the lives and properties of the city's civilians, but actively helped Zionist forces isolate the Palestinian resistance in the city, turning back 300 fighters from nearby Al-Tira who aimed to reinforce the city's crumbling defences. As part of the prior agreement between David Ben Gurion and King Abdullah of Jordan, nearby Jordanian troops were given strict orders not to come to the aid of the city. Out of the 61,000 Palestinian Arabs who used to call Haifa home, only 3,566 Palestinians were allowed to stay. The remaining population were in constant fear on their lives and properties, and many of them witnessed the looting of their homes and possessions by the Zionists. Since Israel still maintains and enforces the "Law Of Absentees", all Haifa's industries, farms, buses, cars, railroads, cattle, and real estate have been looted and become Israeli property.



Charles and his daughter Monica.

In 1998, Charles' daughter, Monica, decided to study Arabic at Birzeit University in Palestine. It had been 50 years since he'd last been to Palestine so Charles decided to visit her at her behest. Though he was adverse to crossing into Israeli territory, Charles agreed to show Monica his childhood neighborhood in Haifa.

They began the trip with a map but after a while, Charles realized he knew exactly where he was. Monica was incredulous yet Charles still knew the neighborhood well enough after 50 years that he needed no map to find home. They got out of the car and began walking until finally a woman popped her head out of an old friend's house and asked "Can I help you?" Charles explained that he'd grown up in that neighborhood and hadn't been back since 1948.

He proceeded to tell the woman what her own apartment looked like from the inside as he had spent much time there as a child. The woman knew the people who currently lived in Charles' childhood home and agreed to introduce them so that Monica and Charles could see their house as well. The house was exactly the same and brought Charles a flood of memories. He could hardly believe he was there.

As serendipity would have it, months later, part of the house was available to rent. Monica was given the opportunity to stay in her father's old house and slept in the bedroom where her grandfather slept until 1948.



Charles as a child sitting on a wall in Haifa.

Charles returned to Palestine again a few months later in order to share his homeland with his other daughters, Fiona and Nadia. While driving in Haifa he stopped at a grocery store that was once owned by family friends of his. Charles approached the man standing outside and asked, "Is this store still owned by the same family?" The man replied, "Yes, why do you want to know?" Charles said, "The son of the store owner was my best friend as a child." To that, the man looked him straight in the eyes and responded "Charles?" They hugged and felt overwhelmed with emotion as they rekindled a childhood friendship after 50 years. Distance may have separated them, but the friendship had endured all that came to pass since 1948.

The idea of abandoning Palestine never occurred to Charles. Even after 60 years, he is a Palestinian, he believes in their righteous cause and will never abandon the dream of a state for all Palestinians and a respected national identity free from denigration. He continues to support his people's struggle for freedom by taking part in cultural events, political rallies and supporting activist organizations. He believes these are the duties of every Palestinian.

** Claudia Pena is in her third year at UCLA School of Law. She serves as a member of Law Students for Justice in Palestine and plans to work in the field of human rights upon graduation.*

In a Heartbeat: Loss and Longing in *al-Mahjar*, A Pacific Northwest Story

Hashim and Samer Al-Huneidi - Oregon, United States

By Zaha Hassan*

“In a heartbeat.” That is how fast it must have taken 18 year old Hashim and the rest of the Al-Huneidi family to realize after the massacre of 426 residents of their town, Al-Lydd, that they would have to flee to safer ground. “In a heartbeat.” That is also how fast Hashim’s son, Samer, would return to Al-Lydd today—if he only could. An amazing declaration from Samer who has only known Palestine from the stories of his father and family elders, and from a few summer vacations. How is one able to leave all that one knows and all that is familiar to live in a homeland that is the stuff of legend?



Hashim Al-Huneidi's property which shows a new building built in front of the family home. The building is currently being used as a restaurant by the occupant of Samer's family home, Robert Ben Ano. The Al-Huneidi family home is located in the back and is slated for demolition by the Israeli authorities.

Thirteen thousand miles away, in Oregon, is just about as far as one can get from Palestine. Samer is forty-nine years old and is married with teenage children. He works as an engineer for the state. He has a good life by anyone’s measure—but he would leave it all to “go home.” He tells me that his children would do the same just as easily.

Samer comes from a notable Al-Lydd family: his grandfather, Abdel Mu’ti Al-Huneidi, and great uncle, Salim Al-Huneidi, were mayors of the town in the 1930s. Samer’s grandfather and his great uncle died in internecine fighting before the Zionist occupation of Al-Lydd on July 11, 1948. Samer tells of how his father joined over 55,000 others on the road from Al-Lydd to Ramallah. He tells the story with detail one would expect from someone who had actually lived through the Nakba, someone who had made the long march during the height of the brutal summer’s heat with the thousands of others to an unknown future.

The story of how the Al-Huneidi family survived and made it out of Al-Lydd, to Ramallah, to Nablus where Samer’s maternal grandfather, Al-Shaikh Mahmoud Amin Al Taher, was from, to Amman, to Kuwait, and then to the US, is remarkable enough. Even more remarkable, however, is Samer’s personal story—how the descendant of refugees has maintained his connection to Al-Lydd and his dream of return.

Samer was not content to passively take in the knowledge of his family history and the stories about his family’s olive and fruit trees, the smell of jasmine wafting in the air of Al-Lydd in a Palestinian Spring, or the celebrations that took place under the roof of the family home. In 1998, Samer was getting ready to travel to the Middle East to bury his mother, Ummama. Prior to his travel, he had obtained the name and phone number of the man who was currently occupying his family home in Al-Lydd. Samer had visited Al-Lydd several times through the years and he knew that his family home was still standing. Samer was cautioned not to try to approach the house by a Palestinian resident of Al-Lydd who was among the approximately eleven hundred original residents who took their chances and did not flee the town in 1948. In one of Samer’s visits to Al-Lydd in 1996, Samer knocked on the door of his father’s home. The occupant of the home was out but his teenage daughter gave Samer her father’s contact information and allowed Samer to take photos of the outside of the house.

Al-Lydd. A major Palestinian city before 1948, Al-Lydd’s 19,000 Palestinians were reduced to 1,052 after the Zionist assault that lasted several months due to Palestinian resistance. To overcome this resistance, the Zionist military forces used airborne fighter bombers for the first time to bomb the city and its nearby airport. Soon after the city’s occupation on 11 July 1948, the Israeli army committed its largest massacre in Palestine, which resulted in the murder of 426 men, women, and children. At least, 176 of these people were slaughtered in Dahmash mosque, the city’s main place of worship. Most of the city’s inhabitants were forced to flee to Ramallah, and many continued to Jordan. 350 Palestinians died *en route* due to exhaustion and dehydration. One of these refugees was Ismail Shammout (d.2007), considered the Dean of Palestinian artists, who depicted the exodus from Al-Lydd in his early paintings. Al-Lydd was renamed Lod by the Israeli government. Also on the lands of Al-Lydd lie the colonies of Zeitan in the north, Yagel nearby the airport, Ahi’Eser between them, and Ginnaton to the east.



Ismail Shammout's "We Shall Return", 1954



Hashim's identity document

When Samer returned to the US, he called the occupant of his family house. For two years, Samer talked with Robert ben Ano almost monthly. They talked about their lives, their family, and their work. Samer learned that Robert was a Moroccan Jew who immigrated to Israel in 1949 at the age of two. Speaking together in Arabic, Samer learned that Robert owned a successful construction business, he was married to an Iraqi Jew, and they had three children: two daughters, and a son.

When Samer's mother passed away in 1998 and Samer was set to travel to the region, Robert invited Samer to stay with him in Al-Lydd. Samer was excited by the prospect but he had one important condition: Robert would have to agree that Samer was not coming for a visit to Robert's home—Samer was coming to *his* home. With perhaps a little discomfort, Robert agreed.

When Samer arrived at his family home, he was greeted warmly by Robert and his wife. Samer however perceived some tension in the air. Samer stayed for four days and slept in a room that he later learned was his aunts'. Robert took Samer around the town and introduced him to other Palestinians living in Al-Lydd. They ate together at a local restaurant and spent the time talking together and with other townspeople. Robert told Samer that he had his own Arabic restaurant that he built on part of the Al-Huneidi property. Samer learned from the Palestinian inhabitants of Al-Lydd that Robert was well-liked among Palestinians and was kind to those in need.



Samer with his parents and his brother.

When it was time for Samer to leave, Samer's feelings were a bit mixed: on the one hand he had met a friend, a good and decent person; but on the other hand, he was leaving his family home in the same way his father had left: never knowing if he would ever return—or if he ever could. Being in such an emotional state at the Ben Gurion Airport before a security check is never a good idea for a traveler of Palestinian descent, especially not one named Al-Huneidi with multiple entry and exit visas in his passport. Samer spent four hours in an Israeli interrogation room before admitting to officials that he had visited Robert. When they learned Samer had visited Robert, the security officials left the room, returned a few minutes later, and then, without explanation, let Samer get on his plane.

When Samer returned to the US, he found a voice message on his home phone from Robert who called to make sure that he arrived home safely. Evidently, the security officials had called Robert to ask about Samer and Robert assured them that Samer was a friend. Samer and Robert have maintained their friendship since that visit in 1998.

Samer has learned that the Israeli government is planning to demolish the family home along with many other Palestinian homes and businesses that still stand in what is today called Lod. The Israeli government is offering Robert US \$250,000 for the house; Robert wants half a million. To Samer, it is priceless; it stands as evidence of the crime that was committed against his family, it represents his identity as a Palestinian and a material connection to that identity, and it embodies Al-Nakba as it affected his family and countless others.

Today, Samer does not know if his house still exists. Regardless of whether it remains or whether it has been demolished like so many other Palestinian homes in Al-Lydd in favor of a high rise apartment complex for new Jewish immigrants, Samer assures me that he will not cease in the search for justice for his family—so long as there is still a beat in his heart.

**Zaha Hassan is a Palestinian-American attorney living and working in the Pacific Northwest. She is also a member of the steering committee of the US Campaign to End the Israeli Occupation.*

I Miss the Air

Fatima Ahmad Owdeh – Deheishe camp, West Bank, Occupied Palestinian Territory

by Karine Mac Allister*

I was around 17-18 years old when we were expelled from our village, Deir Aban. This was 18 October 1948. We had heard that the Zionists had occupied Akka, Jaffa, and many villages and that massacres occurred, such as in Deir Yassin. We heard that the Zionists had put the dead and injured people into a hole and buried them alive in Deir Yassin, the same day that we heard that Abdelqader Husseini was killed. A street was later built on top of them. We were very afraid and when we heard about the story of Deir Yassin, all the civilians in the village went to hide in the mountains. Only the fighters remained, we had one gun per fifteen persons in the village. We stayed in the mountains for four months, until the Zionists attacked the village. Eighteen fighters were killed during the clashes and we had no choice but to leave in search of a safer place. I remember the names of all the fighters who died as well as the names of the two women who were killed by a bomb while picking fruits, some were members of her family. We all left on foot to al Khadr while the fighters went to Hebron. We lived under the trees in al Khadr, in the rain and cold.



Depopulated village of Deir Aban, 2007. (©BADIL)

We eventually found a cave to rent in Beit Sahour and five families moved there. We lived in very harsh conditions, without electricity or money and with limited water - we had only two water tanks for all the families, if we wanted more, we had to pay. We had brought nothing from our houses. We managed to survive by picking herbs and plants from the mountains. Without basic facilities, it was not a life. We did not feel welcomed by people, although they were also Palestinians, people were accusing us of having left our homes, which made us feel bad. We lived in the cave for around 12 years. During that time, I got married.

I wanted to move to Deheisheh camp, to be with other refugees, but my husband refused because we had been told that during the winter, the tents would flood and that people had to move into the UNRWA school and my husband did not like the idea of living all together crowded into one room without any privacy. While my husband kept refusing to go to Deheisheh camp, I decided in 1960 to go myself with our children, in the end he followed. Life in the camp was better, we were all the same, all refugees, nobody was asking questions about who we were and where we were from. We have since then lived in the camp. I had 4 boys and 3 girls.

In Deir Aban, we had our land from which we could live, we had cows, camels and sheep, to make milk and cheese, we also baked bread. We exchanged our products with others. We were self-sufficient. In the camp, we have nothing - no land and no work, we can no longer be farmers. All we have is the house provided by UNRWA. I miss everything, the mint, the tomatoes, the water, the freedom to go to the sea or walk in the mountains. *I miss the air.*

I went back to Dir Aban several times since 1948. The last time I went was in 1999, but we can no longer go with the Wall and the closures. When I went, I could not eat from the trees because I felt bad that we had left such a beautiful place. At the same time, we had no choice but to leave. Our exile is still something that tears me apart until today.

Deir Aban. A circular village centred around the intersection of five roads with the 'Umari mosque in the middle, Deir Aban was home to over two-thousand Palestinians. While the villagers were exposed to several Zionist raids and skirmishes starting in January 1948, the village held out until 19 October 1948, when it was the first village targetted in Operation ha-Har, signalling the end of the second truce of the war. The village's inhabitants and the few Egyptian troops stationed there were exposed to concentrated artillery and mortar shelling in a surprise attack that completely depopulated the village, sending the villagers east towards the Bethlehem and Hebron hills. In 1950, the colonies of Tzor'a, Machseya, Beyt Shemesh, and Yish'i were established on the village lands. Refugees from the village have established an Arabic language website that you can visit at: <http://www.deraban.com>



Three generations of refugees: Fatima with her son and grandson, 2008 (©BADIL)

Deir Yassin Massacre

Early in the morning of Friday, April 9, 1948, commandos of the Irgun, headed by Menachem Begin, and the Stern Gang attacked Deir Yassin, a village with about 750 Palestinian residents. It was several weeks before the end of the British Mandate. The village lay outside of the area that the United Nations recommended be included in a future Jewish State. Deir Yassin had a peaceful reputation and was even said by a Jewish newspaper to have driven out some Arab militants. But it was located on high ground in the corridor between Tel Aviv and Jerusalem and one plan, kept secret until years afterwards, called for it to be destroyed and the residents evacuated to make way for a small airfield that would supply the beleaguered Jewish residents of Jerusalem. By noon over 100 people, half of them women and children, had been systematically murdered. Four commandos died at the hands of resisting Palestinians using old Mausers and muskets. Twenty-five male villagers were loaded into trucks, paraded through the Zakhron Yosef quarter in Jerusalem, and then taken to a stone quarry along the road between Givat Shaul and Deir Yassin and shot to death. The remaining residents were driven to Arab East Jerusalem. (<http://www.deiryassin.org>)



In the camp, while life was better than in the cave, I became worried for my children, because Israeli soldiers would regularly attack us. When the army came in the 1970s and 80s, I used to fight the soldiers and they would run away. I was strong at the time. Since the beginning of the second Intifada, however, I can no longer challenge and fight the soldiers because I know they have killed many people, including some of

my relatives. I used to fight back and beat them with my shoes, but now, I am afraid, because they shoot immediately, no discussion! The soldiers often came to arrest my sons, and when they would not find them, they beat me. Two of my sons went to jail, we know that the soldiers can come anytime to arrest anyone or destroy a house. I cry all the time about those who were killed, injured and arrested because of the conflict. I visit all the families in the camp who have lost people or whose children have been arrested.

We are refugees, we have lost everything. Our life is in our village, although we are among Palestinians, we do not belong here, we belong to our land.



Fatima at the well of her village, Deir Aban in the 1990s.

For me, the Nakba is to be forced out from our land, it is the loss of our country. I feel that the Nakba continues, because we are still in this situation, without our land. I never forget, I always think before I go to bed about my land, my village, the people I used to know... the past comes back to me. I always explain to my grandchildren and my great grandchildren about our land in Deir Aban and about how to go back. *The Israelis thought that we would no longer want to return home once the first generation died – they were wrong, we have transmitted the cause and love of our country to our children.*

I feel nobody supports us, no Arab, European or other country. I would like to beat Condoleeza Rice and Abbas with my shoes! I think that the Ramallah government follows the Israeli-American agenda; they are only looking for power and money and do not have the Palestinian cause at heart. I don't think the Palestinians should work with the Americans or normalize with the Israelis. *We should not let the Israelis steal our land, we shouldn't sell our cause, we must continue to resist.* I hope that the Palestinian leadership will change and be strong again, because currently, my only hope is the future generations, the children of our children. I know that in the end, we will win. We will resist and one day have the support we need to win. *For me, peace will only come once we return to our land.* It is also hard for me to imagine living with people who have persecuted us, I don't think I would feel safe.

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The Darker it is, the Closer We are to the Break of Dawn

Rafat Abu Ghali - Al-Shabora refugee camp, Gaza Strip, Occupied Palestinian Territory

by Rafat Abu Ghali

My family's name is Abu Ghali and my family comes from Bir Saba. We used to own 48,000sq meters of cultivatable land. People used to cultivate their land in winter and move to another area called Sidna Ali, near Jaffa. There, they used to rent land lots and cultivate them. During the harvest season they would go back to Bir Saba. In 1933, the British came and expelled the Arabs from Sidna Ali in order to settle Jewish immigrants on their lands. They offered compensation to the land owners. The compensation was one camel, twelve cans of oils, and 20,000sq meters of land with a house built on it in Moqibla area near Jenin. Most people accepted the offer, among them was Khalil Abu Ghali, my grandfather. Those who rejected the offer were expelled by force. A Jewish settlement called Kabus was built there.

The Zionist schemes started in Tel Aviv and Jaffa. Arab owners understood the real intention of these schemes; they were offered two-storey houses built on Palestinian lands. According to the plan, the ground floor was to be occupied by Palestinian land owners while the first floor was for Jewish immigrants. When violence erupted, the Jewish residents started firing from the first floor on their Palestinian neighbors. The British did not allow Arabs to own guns, but they provided weapons for the Jews.

The Zionist forces secretly brought four trucks loaded with weapons for military training and armament, but were seen by a Palestinian man living in the area. The man was from Shawabka clan and his clan received death threats from the Zionists, who told them not to tell anyone about the weapons they saw or they would all be killed. The British were informed and confiscated the weapons without punishing the Zionists. One day later, Zionist forces attacked the homes of the Shawabka clan, killing five people. While Khalil Abu Ghali was going to sell his orange harvest in Ramat Gan, he saw dead people lying on the ground and injured people. Their relatives, from Shawabka clan, were crying in anger. He went back home because he was afraid to be killed by the Zionists. This is also the reason why he left to Gaza with his family and relatives. Some of his relatives went to Gaza while others went to Jenin in the West Bank. Zionist forces hunted down the Palestinians to kill them while they were escaping to Gaza.

There was a notable incident which involved the poisoning of a water well. People saw Zionists put poison in the well and removed the poison bottle immediately. They tried hard to purify the water but were unsuccessful. My grandfather, Khalil Abu Ghali, came to fill twelve jars of water from the well but people told him not to do so because the well had been poisoned. Unfortunately, he thought people did not want him to fill his jars to keep the water for themselves and their livestock. He filled his jars and paid no attention to their warnings. He took the water to his family who used the water for drinking in the evening. The following



Orange harvest being prepared for sale in Yaffa. (source: palestineremembered.com)



Rafat Abu Ghali.



Rafat's father.

morning, everyone from his family fell ill and started vomiting; especially Khalil's 12 year-old daughter, Tamam. She went into a coma and died instantly. However, Tamam was not the only victim. Other people died and some suffered from hair loss because of the poisoned water. Those who drank camel milk recovered soon while people who refused to drink it stayed in hospital for two months for treatment. They left the area and moved to another area called Hirb Thiab.

The planes started bombing Gaza and people were forced to move towards Al-Bureij camp in Gaza. The Zionists kept hunting them down. People had to run to Rafah and stayed there ever since. All of my family members are registered refugees with UNRWA. They benefited from the food rations that UNRWA used to give to Palestinian refugees in the early years after 1948.

The Nakba affected us very badly. We lost everything. It was a dramatic change for our family. We moved from the very top to the very bottom overnight. We were living on our own lands, growing our crops and breeding livestock. We used to depend on organic crops and livestock. We became homeless refugees, waiting for other nations to give us something to eat. We still tell our children about our land. They know their original land very well. It is inscribed in our hearts and minds.

Being a refugee means a lot to me. Being a refugee, I cannot forget that I have rights to fight for. It means that my family and I are looking forward to regaining our stolen land from the oppressors.

Socially, one of the main impacts of the Nakba is that the differences between people from different villages and towns melted away. In many places, marriage used to take place only within the same clan or village. Nowadays people marry their daughters to people from distant places and clans. The Nakba also changed our professions. We were land owners and farmers. We were less educated then. Now we work as teachers, doctors, engineers, mechanics, nurses, social workers, and builders. We changed our professions because we were forced to, in order to adapt to the new living conditions associated with our situation as refugees in Gaza.



Train station in Bir Saba. (source: palestineremembered.com)

I studied English in India. I chose this profession because of the job market. There has been a need for English teachers in Gaza. I worked for the armed forces for a while as a translator but I did not like it. I felt that teaching at university is better and more rewarding in terms of academic status and professional development. Currently I am working at Al-Aqsa University as a full time lecturer. I live in Shabara refugee camp in Rafah. I live there because it is the place my parents came as refugees 60 years ago.



Mass house demolition in Rafah, Gaza 2004. (©WAFA)

There has been a misconception about solving the refugee problem. The international community has always been ambivalent when it comes to Palestinians. The solution is simple: return the refugees to their original land and compensate them for their losses. One state solution is fine, but we do not want to be second class citizens living under a colonial power. Jews, Christians and Muslims can live side by side, but the last word should be for Palestinians, the indigenous people of Palestine. Criminals who committed heinous crimes against us should face justice as well.

A just solution means the return of rights, all rights and the punishment of all criminals. The responses of the UN and other international organizations were nice to look at and read, but they were never applied. They cannot be applied when they concern the rights of Palestinians such as the right of return. Why don't we have a UNHCR in Palestine? I think that the UN and other international bodies are accomplices by being silent. Why does the UN use force in other places of the world and not here? We need more than words and humanitarian aid from the UN and the international community.

As for the peace process, it not effective enough for us. The Israelis have left Gaza but they are still bombing us from the sky. We live in the prison where we were born; no movement, no travel, no leisure, no security, nothing at all! We miss a lot of the basic things which are available to all free nations.

I do not know what will happen to me or to my children. Our best weapon is education, which is, unfortunately, deteriorating. We have to stick hard to our books and pencils because education is the only effective weapon to fight the occupation. My slogan is Education! Education – in order to face occupation.

Sometimes I think that our kids have a bleak future. There is not enough space in the Gaza strip. People are suffering now and life is worse than ever. We are living under the most extraordinarily difficult circumstances. I think, however, that the darker it is, the closer we are to the break of dawn. The situation cannot remain as bad as it is now.

60 Years of Nakba is Simply My Life

Mustapha Khaled Awad - Brussels, Belgium

By Maysa A. Hajjaj*



Arch still standing in Al-Sumariyya, 2008 (@Maqbul Nassar).

Al-Sumariyya. Knowing that they would soon come under attack, the villagers of Sumariyya had evacuated most of the women, children, and elderly to Akka and other neighboring villages before the Carmeli Brigade descended upon the village on 14 May 1948. Repeating the same tactic used for the ethnic cleansing of most Palestinian villages, the Brigade attacked from the South and Northwest, leaving a passage to the East for villagers to escape. The village's resistance fighters attempted to repel the attack from the northwest, but suffered very heavy casualties. The village was mostly destroyed. Only one of the rooms from the mosque, and few of the walls and arches from some of the village buildings remain standing. One month after the destruction of Sumariyya, the village was leveled by the Jewish National Fund with authorization from David Ben-Gurion, and in January 1949 the kibbutzes of Lochamey ha-Geta'ot and Shamrat were constructed on the village lands.



Mustapha in Belgium.

His name is “Mustapha” as he likes to write it and for others to use ... a young Palestinian man living in Belgium as a political refugee.

I first met Mustapha when I came to Belgium as a Masters student from Palestine. But actually I can say that I met him long before that, in my neighbourhood in Abu-Dis or on Rukab street in Ramallah, or maybe on one of my trips into the occupied land of “1948”, where his home village Al-Sumariyya is located, in the north of Palestine. A Palestinian, alone, missing his people, without laughs or tears ... without wedding ceremonies or funerals ... without LIFE. I saw him in the faces of the people of my country, looking tired and so consumed, yet full of hope and faith.

I might have been shocked a little when I first heard that he was in Belgium as a political refugee. I could not quite understand why he would do that; leave. Yet for him, it was the only way to escape the daily obstacles and for once, be free to think and maybe to get rid of the pain.

When I was asked to interview a Palestinian refugee here in Belgium, Mustapha's name quickly popped into my head. In fact he was the first and only one I thought of for this interview, and this, although I had already met quite a good number of Palestinians; as one would anywhere in the world. I called him at mid-day “Mustapha dear, do you have free time this weekend? I want to interview you... it's about you being a Palestinian refugee...” I didn't continue my sentence nor had I given him more details before he replied “yes, sure... anything for Palestine.”

When he arrived at my place, the first thing he said was “Ah Maysa, tell me what do you have for me?” with the same smile that he always shares. “Well, ok let's start” I said... “tell me your story...”

I am Mustapha Khaled Awad from Al-Sumariyya a little village in Akka district where my grandfather lived with his family before they were ethnically cleansed in the 1948 war and went to south Lebanon and then to Sidon, after which they were given tents to live in, establishing the Palestinian refugee camp of Ein el-Hilweh. Later on they were able to build something like a “house” and start settling down. But when Israel invaded and occupied Lebanon in 1982, the whole family had to move again to what they believed was a more secure and safer place... they were moving from one place to another until they eventually decided to go back to Ein el-Hilweh, where they have lived until now.

The Nakba changed us – and this is for all Palestinian refugees- from a person who has his own land, house, job, family - a LIFE - into someone who is excluded from all of this. To be a Palestinian refugee for me means to be a homeless person, displaced from his homeland, expelled and unwanted by any other country, including the Arab world. The Nakba did not

change my personal identity; it is the others who started calling me “Palestinian refugee” instead of “Palestinian”. We have preserved our culture and traditions throughout the years and we will keep doing this for ever.

60 years of Nakba simply is my life and add to that new generations of Palestinian refugees. And because of what is happening in Palestine these days, we - the Palestinian refugees - are now more attached to our cause and land than ever. There has never been coexistence between Israelis and Palestinians since they kicked us out, and there never will be ... for me, I will remain a Palestinian refugee in Lebanon with the minimum human rights until I go back to my homeland.



Mustapha raising Belgians' awareness about Palestine.

I was born in 1982 in Ein el-Hilweh refugee camp, just when the Israeli invasion began. I went to an UNRWA school but didn't continue my higher education for personal reasons; moreover, to complete your education in that period [civil war and Israeli occupation] was difficult because there was no high school in the camp. I worked for a company while also being a member of a “political organization.” After that, and because of the difficulties of living in Lebanon as a Palestinian refugee combined with my own problems with that organization, I decided to leave Lebanon and travel to Belgium. I arrived in Belgium illegally. I thought I might be able to make a new start here, and now I work here.

In Belgium, I try to help Palestinian refugees in general and mainly those in Lebanon. We organize festivals under the theme of the right of return and collect money to help build medical clinics and hospitals. We also organize vigils and demonstrations and a lot of other different activities related to Palestine and the refugees issue.

I believe that the best and only solution is for the Israeli occupation to end and for us to have our own country with Jerusalem as the capital of Palestine and for the refugees to return to the lands from which they were expelled and not only to return to a future Palestinian half-state and receive compensation. This is what I call a ‘fair solution’.

The UN recognized that Palestinian refugees have the right to return to their own lands - UN Resolution 194- but it was never implemented and it became just another number on another document... I really think that the international community has always had an obvious bias towards Israel, which has guaranteed it unconditional support.

The peace process depends on the Israeli withdrawal from Palestine and that's it... Palestinian refugees will always stick to their cause and land. No one can ever question it or think that the 60 years or even more can make them integrate into the places where they live now and to forget their homeland... and the right of return will always be the number one issue in their lives, regardless of the years or the difficulties they face. And I believe that the day will come when we will all go back to Palestine and prove to the whole world that we are the nation of peace on the land of peace.

* *Maysa A. Hajjaj is from Jerusalem, Palestine, and is currently doing her Masters degree in management at the VUB “vrije universiteit brussels” in Brussels.*

We are the Children of the Apostles

Reverend Lilian Mattar-Patey – La Salle, Canada

by Hazem Jamjoum



Cafe Europe on Zion Square, 1935. (source: palestineremembered.com)

Jerusalem, the Eternal Capital. A hub of political, social, cultural and economic life for the Arabs and Jews who lived in the city before 1948, Jerusalem has held a renowned deep religious significance for adherents of the three monotheistic religions of the world. It is for this reason that the UN Partition Plan (Resolution 181) of 1947 set this city aside as a *corpus separatum* to be administered by the international community. When news of the Partition Plan reached the Christians and Muslims of Jerusalem, they spontaneously broke out into riots across the city. The response from the Zionist Irgun and Stern gangs was to detonate bombs targeting these Arab civilians. The Jerusalem commander of the *Haganah*, commanding over 5000 troops, ordered the expulsion of the Arab inhabitants of Jerusalem's mixed and predominantly Jewish neighborhoods; a task which had been mostly completed by January 1948. The villages to the west of the holy city, including Romeima, Lifta, and Sheikh Badr, were also depopulated and occupied in the same period. On 7 February 1948, David Ben Gurion told the Mapai council: "From your entry into Jerusalem, through Lifta, Romeima... there are no Arabs. One hundred percent Jews... in many Arab neighborhoods in the west one sees not a single Arab. I do not assume that this will change... What has happened to Jerusalem... is likely to happen in many parts of the country." (continued on page 59)

While she was only two years old when her family was forced to flee their West Jerusalem home, Reverend Mattar was told the story so often that it is deeply entrenched as part of her own memory. Her father, Suleiman Hanna Mattar, was a successful banker with Barclays bank in Haifa, and the bank had moved him to Jerusalem. In the weeks before the Zionist attack on Jerusalem, her sister's closest Jewish friends had told her that there was going to be trouble for Arabs, her father had also been told that if they did not leave their home they would all be killed. So it was obvious when the sounds and tremors of explosions began to fill the house that they needed to leave.

Her mother had just finished baking bread which was cooling on the kitchen table when the bombing began. Her father rounded up the family, taking them out the back door. The gunfire was too heavy to head for the car, so they had to walk. He told them that if they were separated they should head toward the monastery on the Mount of Olives. To keep the younger kids calm, the oldest brother invented the game 'jump in the whole so the bullets will miss us,' and their mother told them that they were going out on a picnic. Anxious for the safety of her children, she left her purse in the house.

Flooded with refugees, the monastery was hesitant to allow people to stay, but Lilian's father convinced them each day that they needed another day in the small room that the nine family members were crowded into. He wanted to find a way to get back to the house and get some of the essential things from what the family had left behind, and even tried to get to Cyprus to get into the Zionist controlled areas, but even that was impossible; 'infiltrators,' as they were called, were shot on sight. At the time he did not know that the house had been looted and blown up. With all of these difficulties, the most painful moment for him, as he would later tell the young Lilian, was when she came to him at the monastery and told him that she was hungry. The once wealthy banker could not afford to feed his two year old daughter.

After a few weeks had passed, Mr. Mattar received a letter from a Swedish friend offering him and his family a place to stay in her Jerusalem home. She had been returning there when the attack began, and hoisted a white flag in an attempt to stay safe, but was shot at nonetheless. The family stayed with her for five years. It was on the balcony of that house overlooking the depopulated Western part of the city that Lilian saw her father cry for the first time. "*He loved Haifa, Jerusalem, Kufr Kanna and had bought land in all of those places that he planned to give to his kids when they grew up and married. He and my older brother, who died earlier this year, planned to return to them all, and thought and spoke about return every day until their dying moments.*"

Lilian vividly remembers her schoolgirl days in the 1950s and 60s at the Schmidt Girl's College under Jordanian rule. One day, a group of Palestinian resistance fighters came into the class telling the girls that "every Palestinian should be trained to fight." The teacher was disapprovingly caught off guard, a feeling that turned to dismay when the presenters asked the girls which of them would want to be trained and Lilian was the first to raise her hand, inspiring the rest of the class to follow suit. This event inspired her to join demonstrations calling for the return of the refugees and their properties, beaming with pride as she carried her Palestinian flag. She even began weight lifting,

seeing the activity as part of that duty to get trained, which did not go over well with her father who abhorred violence and prayed daily for peace. He also did not consider it appropriate for girls to train with weights.

After graduating, Lilian followed most of her older siblings to the United States to continue her studies, working part time at a bank in New York. This is where she was in June 1967 when Israel occupied what was left of Palestine. It was difficult to communicate with her family. One day her mother came to New York. When Lilian asked why she had come alone and without her father, the tragic answer was that he was dead.

In 1952, and in spite of being told that he was ineligible as an Arab, Mr. Mattar had persevered and gotten the job as the Warden of the Garden Tomb in Jerusalem, a sight believed by some Protestants to be the burial place of Christ. In the aftermath of the June 1967 occupation, during which he had refused to leave his beloved city, he answered a knock on the door, and was shot dead by Israeli soldiers as soon as he opened it. He was buried there, and soon his grave was attracting the attention of tourists and pilgrims and visited as a holy shrine. This displeased the Israeli authorities, who demanded that the family exhume the body and bury him somewhere else, otherwise they would do it themselves. It was Lilian who traveled back to Palestine to do this, ultimately burying him in Beit Jala beside Dr. Lambi, a beloved family friend who had operated a Tuberculosis clinic for Palestinians and passed away while visiting the Mattars years before.



Fire in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, Jerusalem, 1948.
(©Orient House Archives)

Lilian had decided to move back to her homeland with her Canadian husband, whom she had recently married, and began a job teaching the children of diplomats at an Anglican school on Prophet Street in West Jerusalem keeping her Palestinian identity to herself. Her plan was to raise money to establish an orphanage for Palestinian children. To do this she began to take on extra work, teaching at an orphanage in the afternoons and giving private lessons to girls from the Schmidt College in the evening. Before two years had elapsed, the difficulties of fundraising, the desire of her husband to return to Canada, and recurring episodes of harassment each time her Palestinian identity became known to her West Jerusalem surroundings all combined to send Lilian to Canada.

In Canada, Lilian maintained her connection to Palestine by seeking and joining any groups that worked for the Palestinian cause, and instilling in her children the memory of their grandfather, as she completed her degree in Psychology and Religion and accompanied her husband from city to city around the country as he changed jobs. At best, most churches ignored the plight of the Palestinians, a fact that distressed Lilian until she discovered the work of Rev. Al Forrest, editor of the United Church's publication *The Observer*, who openly supported Palestinian rights and, when she finally met him, told her about how he had been harassed for these views. He inspired her to join the United Church of Canada, the church in which she was ordained in 1985.

As a Minister in the Church, Reverend Lilian Mattar has often included the plight of Palestinians in her sermons and had to defend her views in the face of strong support for Zionism. She played a key role in educating the congregation about the truth of the Palestinian Nakba, and joined the effort to bring the Church to reevaluate its investments and pass resolutions favoring ethical investment so that it is not supporting Israel's crimes against the Palestinians.

When asked about her thoughts about the future for Palestinian refugees, she said *"this two state solution that they are talking about is terrible, it divides us, and strips us of what is rightfully ours, as if that land isn't ours to begin with. In reality we need to all work together. I am very proud of being a Palestinian Arab; when we were younger, my mother used to tell us that we are the descendants of the Apostles, she would say: 'where do you think those descendants went? It's us!'"*

From al Damoun to Nahr el Bared Camp: A Journey of Pain

Hussein Loubani - Nahr el Bared camp, Lebanon

By Mahmoud Zeidan*



Land of Al-Damoun in 2005.
(©Salam Diab).

Al-Damoun Demoralized by the fall of the nearby city of Akka, many of Al-Damoun's villagers fled their homes when the Sheva' (Seventh) Brigade of the Israeli army began its artillery assault on the village. The assault came as part of Operation Dekel in mid-July 1948. The village was completely razed to the ground after its occupation, and while its lands have not been used for any significant Israeli settlement, part of the village's lands are used for agriculture by the nearby settlement of Yas'ur (built on the lands of the neighboring destroyed village of Al-Birwa).

*One day we will return to our own Home,
And succumb to tender hopes.
We will return no matter how much time passes,
And how much distance separate us.*
A song by prominent singer Fairouz

Hussein Loubani keeps singing these verses because there he had left his childhood and pleasures: the pigeons, the hens, the rabbits, the sheep, the house, the district, the shop of Kamel Sh'aban, the mosque, the church, the cactus, the river, the hill, the school, the pupils, and his teachers: Shafiq Obeid and Khalil Bitar. All these are behind his craving desire to return to his village in Palestine.

Hussein was 9 years old when in 1948 he left his village, Al-Damoun, 9km from Akka. He still remembers those last days minute by minute.

"Our teachers in the village were living in Akka; by the end of April, they couldn't come to school anymore. Consequently, we stopped going to school. As a child, I started to see armed people guarding the village."

The Jewish armed gangs attacked neighboring villages and soon attacked Al-Damoun. This began a series of journeys the young Hussein with children and women of his village had undergone. First, they spread out into the orchards of the village. *"We slept under the olive trees for around one month till the Jewish gangs started bombing us there, so we left to Mi'ar village, which is 10km far from ours."*

Al-Damoun was soon occupied, and the Jewish gangs moved to Mi'ar. Hussein and his people continued moving farther from Al-Damoun towards the unknown. *"In a July night, we reached Salameh valley, and we slept there for around 2 months."*

On 31 August his mother gave birth to a girl; they called her Salma, after the name of the valley. Then the family continued their awful journey among the thorns and under difficult weather. Hussein was holding his blind grandfather's hand along with his younger brothers. They walked 25 km until they reached a bordering village called Buqai'a. By that time his father as well as other refugees had spent all their money. They didn't have anything to eat.

While in Buqai'a, the Jewish militants arrived on a tank and stationed themselves near the school. It was the first time Hussein saw soldiers up close. "A soldier gave us biscuits and taught us a song. In two hours we learned it by heart... I kept singing it even after we settled in Lebanon till one day my father heard me singing it. He slapped me and said, "isn't it enough that they occupied our land, and you are singing in rejoice for them?" At that moment I realized that we were singing the Haganah (Israeli army) anthem.

The soldiers called on loudspeakers ordering all displaced people who arrived to Buqai'a to leave it, otherwise they would be killed or imprisoned. Then the Jewish gangs killed three men and dragged them on the sidewalk. The child Hussein saw killing for the first time in his life, and for all the displaced people it was a threat that forced them to leave the village.

The Loubanis along with others continued the journey out to Suhmata, where the planes chased them. "On the way, I asked a soldier to give me a drink of water. He said, 'Go to Haj Amin in Lebanon and ask him.' I hadn't heard of Lebanon before that time. We continued our journey till we arrived to the Lebanese borders."



Hussein in his office showing old photos.

This trip was full of agony. It was at the same time interrupted by glimpses of luck and, as is always the case with kids, some fun. "We were thirsty... there was a well on the way, but the queue was so long for us to win a sip of water. We continued our way till we reached Rmeish, the first Lebanese village on the borders. We tried to buy water there but couldn't. We were told to drink from an open pool that had a dead pig in it."

It was only when Hussein reached the Shi'ite village of Bint Jbeil, that he could get a sip of water for himself and his family simply because the woman realized his name was Hussein, and his father's was Ali, named after Shi'ite imams. In the evening, trucks arrived and carried people to Tyre, and there a train was waiting for them. Someone called: "Those who want to go to Aleppo get into the train." The wagons of the train had no seats; it was designed to transport animals. About forty people jumped into each wagon.

"I remember smiling for the first time in that journey. I got in a train for the first time in my life, and didn't worry about its unknown destination." The journey ended on 7 October 1948 in Tripoli after the Syrian authorities blocked the borders to stop the entry of refugees. "So we stayed 10 days living in the wagons on bits of donations that philanthropists and associations from Tripoli were giving."

Life in the city wasn't easy. It was hard for Hussein's father, the peasant, to find any job in the city. Hussein, the eldest among his brothers and sisters, had to work in a bakery to bring bread for his family. "I didn't have the chance to go to the schools of the city. My father was happy for the bread and the little money I brought."

The Palestinian refugees lived in the hangars of the port till June 1950, when UNRWA built Nahr el Bared camp. And it was only after that when UNRWA started providing rations for refugees that Hussein managed to overcome his father's reluctance to send him to school. "I joined school and was always the first in my class. Besides, I kept working in the fields, bakeries and a quarry to help my family. These works stripped me of my childhood but helped me continue my education." The Loubanis' suffering continued until Hussein got his baccalaureate certificate in 1960 and became a teacher at UNRWA schools. "I won't forget the happiness and pride that filled my father's heart when I put the first salary in my father's hand and kissed it."



Remains of the train Hussein took as a child to go to Tripoli in 1948.



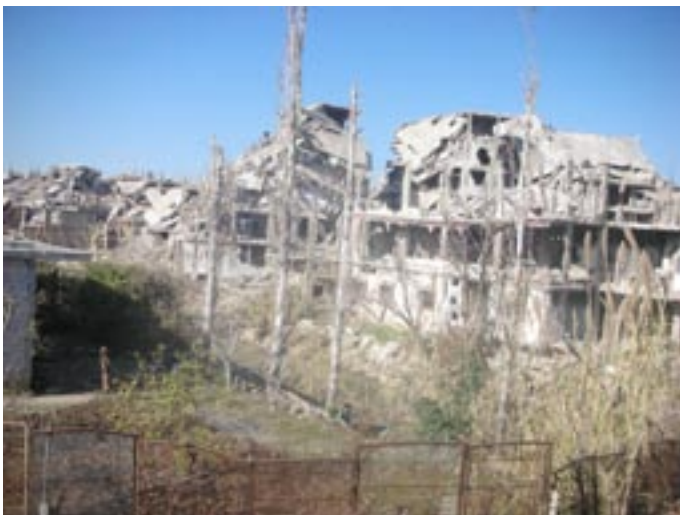
Hussein as a part of a scout group in Jerusalem, al Aqsa Mosque, 1956.

By 1960, life improved for the family. However, frustrations and harassments had not ended in general. The camp was a target from inside by the *Deuxieme Bureau*, the Lebanese Army intelligence office, and by the Israeli raids from outside. When Hussein had relatives from other camps visiting, he had to go to the intelligence office to declare their arrival and intended stay. Palestinian freedom of movement was highly restricted. This went on until 1969, when the Cairo Agreement was signed between the PLO and Lebanon. On the other hand, the camp was continually subjected to Israeli raids. On 20 May, 2007, the latest disaster, the war against Nahr el Bared between the Lebanese army and Fateh Al-Islam, leveled it to the ground and plunged it back to zero, “*exactly the same as the day we left Al-Damoun in 1948.*”

This ongoing Nakba and continuous suffering for 60 years, characterized by pain, deprivation, and humiliation, could not bend Hussein’s will and steadfastness. He insisted on doing something for himself and his people. When he grew older, he joined the Arab Nationalist Movement, enrolled in a scout group that enabled him to visit Jerusalem in 1956. This visit constituted a landmark in his life where he wrote his first diaries that paved the way to his later career as a folklorist and writer. Among other works, he has written *The Dictionary of Palestinian Proverbs*. Furthermore, he established a music band for youth in the camp.

After 60 years, Hussein feels that perhaps the logical outcome of the Nakba would have been the destruction of the Palestinians as it is not easy for victimized refugees to behave positively as if in a normal country. However, Hussein insisted on resisting the Nakba and working for return to his lost paradise by all means. In 1965 he graduated with a B.A. in Arabic. He also started writing. So far he has written around 25 books, 18 of them are on Palestine and Palestinians. “*The Israelis wanted us to dissolve in the normality of everyday life of Arab societies hosting us, and to be lost in the labyrinth of exiles. But we refused such a painful reality. Like other Palestinians, I considered education as a way out of the dreadful poverty and ignorance.*”

Hussein succeeded in accumulating his own large library. His wide knowledge in the field of folklore makes him an authority in this field. His only dream now is to communicate with specialists in the field inside Palestine and to see formal Palestinian institutions encouraging and supporting people like him.



Destruction of Nahr El-Bared Refugee Camp, Lebanon 2008 (©Rania Madi)

Hussein believes the solution to his problem is in his return, only return, that brings things back to their normal course. Hussein does not believe that the Oslo peace process will lead to the implementation of his right to go back, and consequently he does not trust the international community which is under the hegemony of the big powers; “*We counted on the UN to implement its issued resolutions for 60 years, mainly Resolution 194. Had it been implemented, a lot of bloodshed would have been spared.*” He adds, “*The peace I believe in is the one that is going to remove pain and harm from the afflicted and prevent the slaughter and the infliction of further injustices. Otherwise, the future is bleak.*”

* Mahmoud Zeidan is a cofounder of Aidoun Group and the Nakba archive.

Stripped of Our Home and Left with the Shed

Hala George and her family - Edinburgh, Scotland*

by Hala George

Nothing in the disruption to me and my family described here compares to the continued suffering and desperation of those driven off their lands in Gaza, the West Bank and Lebanon.

My father's family are descendants of the Crusaders and originally came from Malta via Greece centuries ago, hence the name and the fair features. My father, Anise Saleem George, was born in Haifa in 1906, his father Saleem was a grain merchant. My father was the only son amongst five sisters, all born and raised in Palestine. My mother Haifa Urban was born in Safad, Palestine in November 1909 and raised in Jerusalem. I was born at the Tiberias Church of Scotland hospital in 1945, the youngest of three sisters; Salwa and Olive.

In 1948 my father was working in Nablus, where we lived in a rented house. Four of his sisters and his mother lived in that part of Palestine which became Israel after the Nakba. We became residents of the West Bank (under Jordanian jurisdiction) and were unable to return to my father's house in Nazareth. From then on, we were severed from all of our relatives, my mother's family were similarly cut off. No mail, no phone, no connection. After some years Christians were allowed to cross from Israel for one or two days at Christmas. The crossing point was The Mendelbaum Gate in the 'No Man's Land', but we did not know until the day before whether we were allowed to cross or not. One aunt was married and her husband was working in Lebanon. She left Palestine in fear and went to live in Beirut. My grandmother, who I only met once, went to join her. My grandfather had died many years earlier. She left out of fear and wanted to be with her daughter for support. She died without seeing the rest of her children again.

I lived in Nablus and then Ramallah until I was 19. In 1964 I came to Leith Hospital in Edinburgh (Scotland) to do my nursing course. Although my sisters and I went to private schools, there was not enough money for higher education. The nursing training was free, we even had some pocket-money! I never saw my father again as he died suddenly in 1965. In 1967 the Israeli invasion and occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip (i.e. the rest of historic Palestine) occurred. I had completed my training but I only had a student visa so I could not stay or obtain work in Britain. I desperately wanted to go home. I contacted the Jordanian embassy in London, but they responded that they had no control over the West Bank and could not help me. In March 1968, after writing numerous letters my status in Britain was regularized and in April the Israelis granted me a two month visa to visit the occupied West Bank. Keeping documents and certificates remains very important to establish one's background and identity as so many have been destroyed by Israel.

The second time I visited was in 1973, this time with a British passport, but because of my place of birth I was taken out of the queue at the Allenby Bridge and was kept standing in



Hala, her parents and sisters.



The wedding of Hala's parents.

the sun for eight hours and then physically searched. The presents I had bought for my mother were taken, the excuse was security. I often wondered what kind of security threat there was in a blouse, a scarf and chocolates.

In 1996, I took the chance of a 3-day cruise from Cyprus which stayed one full day in Haifa to visit my aunt in Nazareth. This time, I was delayed several hours before being allowed off the boat - my place of birth was the problem - and I only got two hours to see my aunt and cousins.

Life was hard for me in the 1960s in Scotland, and although I made some very good friends, I experienced a lot of racism, mainly because no one shared our history. I was completely alone. One heard about the Six Day war on the BBC, but we had no telephone and my only contact with home was through the Red Cross. It was devastating.

There was little foreign travel, people were more interested in Sandie Shaw and the Beatles than in a far away war. The first time they took notice was when Leila Khaled hijacked a plane in 1969, that was when people had a wee giggle and said 'Hala you look like Leila Khaled'. That and when the first Intifada (1988) started and we saw youth with stones confronting heavily armed troops.

There will never be peace without justice. Unfortunately Israel continues its oppressive and illegal occupation flouting the rule of law with the total and unconditional support of the USA. The media continues its unfair coverage; when Palestinians use arms and weapons they are described as terrorists, Israeli soldiers are never murderers neither are American and British soldiers in Iraq and Afghanistan. The United Nations is ineffective, most of the countries of the Third World get told how to vote, otherwise they are threatened with aid and trade cuts.

When ordinary people in Scotland discuss with me and ask what is the solution, "surely there ought to be a compromise?" I tell them that it is as if someone took your house, the garden and garage, your passport and your job, leaving you the small shed at the back of your garden (with no water either), and then asks you to compromise. And they do understand. Unfortunately governments do not always reflect the will of the people. The Israeli public suffers like the British and American public because they are misinformed, which makes peace further away than ever.

**Badil would like to thank the Scottish Palestine Solidarity Campaign for their help.*

Only One Place we Belong

Mary Shoufani - Athens, Greece

by Mary Shoufani

My name is Mary Rayya. I am from Al-Bassa village in Akka District in northern Palestine. My village was totally demolished and destroyed and renamed Shelomi settlement. The whole population of my village, Christians and Muslims, was expelled in 1948. They were allowed by the Lebanese army to go to south Lebanon, to the town of Al-Nabatiyyah. Then they were moved again further north to Al-Damour. The Christian population of my village was convinced to move further north to live among the Christians in the northern suburb of Beirut. They lived in tents for almost 2 years and then UNRWA intervened and built a camp for them in Dbayeh (established in 1956). Our camp had 4 streets with barracks built on both sides; it was very crowded with houses stuck on top of one another.



UNRWA built us a school which was sponsored by the Catholic Pope Missionary. It was a public primary school, later a high school was added. The whole population of our camp was catholic with 5 Maronite christian families. Our camp was built in that part of Beirut in the hope that we would integrate in the Lebanese community or that was what the Lebanese government hoped for. But that did not happen. We lived in a very closed community, we never had any relations with our Lebanese neighbors. We did not feel welcomed by them, they looked upon us as primitive, uneducated and uncivilized. My father used to say to us that "sooner or later they will kick us out from here." We were never allowed to join Lebanese schools and that is why UNRWA built us a school and when we finished school we used to go abroad or to universities in the western part of Beirut, where the majority were Muslims and more compassionate towards us. We used to work outside the camp, within the nearby Lebanese community, as agricultural and construction workers. The first generation of Palestinian university graduates, went to work in Arab countries such as the United Arab Emirates, Libya, and Kuwait, which financially helped their families and contributed to raising the standard of living of people in the camp.

In the camp, we had our own shops (small mini-markets), our own clinic (we had doctors from UNRWA coming twice a week), our own nurses who took care of us until the doctors would come, our own school, etc. So we lived our life the same way we lived it in Palestine; we cooked the same food, we celebrated our Christmas, Easter and all the holidays the same way as we did in our village. Life in the camp was however not exactly the same, because in our villages in Palestine we owned our own land; in the camp, as in all of Lebanon, we were not allowed to own.

We stayed in the camp until the civil war broke out. We were expelled by the right-wing Lebanese Christian forces in February 1976. My family lost one brother in the civil war, he was killed by the Phalanges. Our camp lost about 40 people, most of them between 17 and 35 years old. The camp was partially destroyed during the civil war. Most of us had to go and live in the western part of Beirut while few stayed in the camp. We joined the schools there and eventually went to university. I studied in the American University of Beirut and my brothers went to the United

Al-Bassa was a thriving town of over 3,400 people when it was attacked by Zionist forces on 14 May 1948, the day Israel was declared a state. A major coastal stop between Palestine and Lebanon, the town boasted several schools, two mosques and two churches, one of which is still standing. The village was completely depopulated, and on its lands stand the Israeli settlements of Kefar Ro'sh ha-Niqra, Leman, Shelomi, Matzuva, Betset, & Khanita, as well as an Israeli military airport. The refugees of Al-Bassa have created a website that you can visit at <http://www.albassa.com>



Destruction of Dbayeh camp, Lebanon.

States and Turkey; my parents sent them away because they did not want to lose another son.

I studied business administration, although I never worked in that field. I worked for 3 years as an executive secretary in one of the oil companies in Abu Dhabi and then for a few months as a teacher in Athens and then I had to quit to take care of my children.

My family was forced to leave Lebanon and moved to Canada in 2003 because my brothers, while holding refugee travel documents, could not find work due to a law that prohibits Palestinians from working in over 70 types of professions. They also could not get visas to work in Arab states. All of my family is separated and now lives in either Canada or Arab countries. I moved to Greece with my

husband after his work transferred him there.

The Nakba immensely affected my whole family. We never felt that we belonged anywhere. Even my brothers who are now Canadian citizens and work in Canada do not feel that they belong to the Canadian community. We have great difficulty adjusting and integrating to any society. I also do not feel that I belong to the Greek community, although in Greece I am not afraid to say that I am Palestinian because the Greeks are very supportive and compassionate towards Palestinians and we feel very welcome here. Yet, to me, it is not home. Palestine is my home and there is where I should live and raise my children and theirs. In order to preserve our identity, we raise our children and teach them that they are Palestinians and that they should never think of themselves as anything other than that. This is the conflict we are living in; our children live in European and Canadian communities, yet they should conform to our Palestinian values, culture and traditions. It is a big problem for us to raise our children with conflicting identities, but I think we have no other choice. They should know and maintain the bond to their country.

I have recently been involved with the right of return committee and I hope to continue to contribute to their work, but my problem is that I am living in a community that has little interest in what is going on around us, especially regarding the Palestinian refugees. I think that the Palestinians have suffered an immense injustice inflicted by the international community and the United Nations, which is controlled by the United States. Since 1948 and due to the total blind international support for Israel, not one resolution issued by the United Nations has been implemented, while we see that other minor resolutions adopted by the United Nations and not related to the Palestinian issue are easily implemented. That is why I think there will be no solution to the Palestinian problem and no peace in Palestine and the region until there is a change in the balance of power.

This could happen if the Palestinians reunite their forces, change their strategies and direct it towards fighting Israel and revealing its nature: a discriminatory apartheid-like regime over the Palestinian people in the 1967 occupied territory, 1948 Palestinian territories and in exile, and impose on Israel and the whole world a new strategy of negotiations towards peace that takes into consideration forming an independent state for Palestinians with Jerusalem as its capital and the return of the refugees. Of course this will not happen in the short run simply because the Zionists and their allies will not allow it unless Israel suffers a major defeat. This will take time, I know that, but to us this is the only solution.

I Dream of a Free Palestine

Abu Rafik Masad - Santiago, Chile*

by Abu Rafik Masad

Like all young Palestinians who were born and grew up under Zionist occupation, we have never known freedom, but this value was and remains the most coveted, regardless of the cost or sacrifice.

My family is from Al-Bakaa neighbourhood in Jerusalem. In June 1948, my family was forced to flee under attacks from Zionist forces. They took nothing, only the key. My family came to Bethlehem where I was born and grew up. After high school, I went to the University of Bethlehem, but I was always looking for academic possibilities abroad to be free from the oppression, school-closures, and the permanent and violent actions of the occupying troops. I eventually had the opportunity to study in Chile, I did not hesitate one second, sent my application and was accepted at several universities.

I went to study Civil Engineering at the University of Santiago, which was a big challenge. It was essential for me to demonstrate that the Palestinians are strong - the word failure is not in our dictionary. So I finished my studies in record time; it was a very happy and pleasant experience. Despite the fact that at the time Chile was under a cruel dictatorship, it did not compare to the military occupation we lived in Palestine. The dictatorship was carried out by mercenaries and special forces against the political opposition, while the occupation is against an entire people. The occupation is a war against our people; it involves a number of unlawful policies and measures carried out by the Israeli government and army to make people's life impossible in order to force them to leave - it aims to displace Palestinians and acquire their lands.

As a newcomer to Chile, I remember that one day while I was on the bicycle, I went in the wrong direction and a policeman signalled to alert me, but I was filled with the trauma of the occupation, and seeing the men in uniforms gave me a shock and without thinking, I accelerated, hit the policeman and ran away. Soon after, I understood that in Chile, despite the dictatorship, the uniformed men, in general are not necessarily enemies.



Abu Rafik's family, his wife, Mrs. Farha Masad (Um Rafik) and his two sons, Rafik and Sebastian.

At the University everybody called me "the Palestinian", I had the affection and respect of all my classmates and teachers. We studied very hard, but also enjoyed life. Despite the pleasant stay, I felt it was my obligation - my national duty - to return to Palestine.

In Palestine, I worked as an engineer for four years, always with the pain of not being able to live in freedom - when one gets used to freedom, it is difficult to live without it. I also worked in Jordan but for political reasons I was forced to leave and return to Chile, where I succeeded professionally.



Jaffa Street, Jerusalem, 1935.
(©Israeli Press Office)

Jerusalem (continued from page 50) Faced with a poorly trained Arab resistance force, armed mostly with antiquated weapons, the Zionists launches Operation Nachshon on 6 April 1948 as the part of Plan Dalet aiming to raze and depopulate all Palestinian villages between Jerusalem and the coast to the west. The Deir Yassin Massacre (see page 44) was the Irgun and Stern contribution to this operation. By 30 April 1948, the Haganah launched its concerted attacks on the western neighborhoods of the holy city after two weeks of heavy artillery bombing. By 2 May, the Qatamon neighborhood was taken and later looted. Starting on May 13, Operation Kilshon (pitchfork) involved the handing over of Jerusalem neighborhoods by the British to the Zionist military, who watched David Ben Gurion declare "the establishment of the Jewish state in Palestine, to be called Israel" the next day. By May 27, the Israeli forces had taken everything to the west of the Old City.

All of the Palestinian land and property now occupied by Israel was confiscated as Absentee Property and by late May Jewish settlers had begun to take over the houses of the approximately 23,000 Palestinian refugees from the city. Those Arab Palestinians who were able to remain were concentrated in the Baqaa neighborhood surrounded by barbed wire fence. [Based on Nathan Krystall, "The Fall of the New City 1947-1950" in Salim Tamari (ed.), *Jerusalem 1948: The Arab Neighborhoods and their Fate in the War*, Jerusalem & Bethlehem: Institute of Jerusalem Studies & Badil Resource Center, 2002 (2nd ed.)]



Aerial view of Al-Bakaa neighborhood in Jerusalem (source: palestineremembered.com).



Abu Rafik Masad.

I think my successes are primarily due to our character – steadfast, honest and tenacious - and our culture of survival; values that we have acquired and developed throughout our struggle for freedom.

I dream of returning to my house in Jerusalem – Palestine - to live in safety, dignity and freedom like other peoples of the world and to sleep on our land, under the shade of an almond tree. This is the best gift life could give me. I dream of a free and sovereign Palestine where our people can live in harmony, tolerance, respect and true democracy. For me, the best solution to this conflict and the refugee issue is the one state solution; a democratic state for all peoples to live in full equality without discrimination based on religion, race, colour or sex.

A Family Twice Expelled

Walid and Arjan El Fassed – Vlaardingen, The Netherlands

By Arjan El Fassed*

On 11 november 1963 an old airplane landed on Schiphol Airport in Amsterdam. On board the plane that arrived from Amman were 65 young Palestinians from Nablus. The young men were contracted by Romi, a Dutch company specialised in refining vegetable oils. Most of the men were working at The Jordan Vegetable Oil Industries in Nablus. With the help of Dutch experts the company made a restart and in order to educate the young workers, they would work in the Netherlands for two years and then go back to Palestine. The Netherlands was experiencing a shortage of workers at the time. Two years later, in a letter to the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs asking permission to extend their work permits, the CEO of Romi said that the company would go bankrupt if the Palestinians would not be allowed to stay for another two years. In 1965 their contract was extended for another two years until November 1967.



Al-Ramleh: A Palestinian Arab gathering in Al-Ramleh, before being forcibly displaced in 1948 (source: palestineremembered.com)

Three months after the 1967 War, Israel conducted a census in the West Bank, East Jerusalem and the Gaza Strip. Only Palestinians registered in the census were considered by the Israeli authorities to be legal residents of the occupied territory. My father, born in Wadi Al-Joz in Jerusalem, was one of the 60,000 West Bank Palestinians who were abroad at the time of the War and so were not included in the census.

Um Naji, my grandmother from my mother's side, is from Ramleh. Um Naji and her family had to leave Ramleh in July 1948. It is cool on the veranda of the family home in Nablus where she told me this story, and the view is breathtaking. They had to leave everything. Of the seventeen thousand Palestinians that lived in Ramleh at that time, only four hundred managed to stay. Just before the 1948 War, one-fifth of the total urban population lived in Ramleh and A-Lydd. *'It is the area where we landed. Ben Gurion airport is built on top'.*

On July 12, Yitzhak Rabin, later a Prime Minister of Israel and Nobel Peace Prize recipient, gave the order that the people of Lydda had to be driven in the direction of Beit Nabala. He issued a similar order for Ramleh. The city had been earlier hit in a bomb attack on a vegetable market in February 1948. Two days after the order, armed forces entered the city. My grandmother told me that they went from door to door, arresting people and plundering the town. They had to leave. They walked for hours. Refugees were harassed by soldiers. They had to leave their belongings. Properties were stolen and people were chased off their land. Some died on their way out. Um Naji's family first went to Jerusalem and left Jerusalem in 1949 to Jordan and Syria. Only her and her eldest son stayed in Jerusalem.

"I was in the Netherlands when the Israeli army invaded Nablus in June 1967," says my father. *"I was worried about my parents and my sisters. I tried to find out about their well-being through the Red Cross."* In the Netherlands there was no lack of support for Israel. At the office where my mother used to work, employees were collecting donations for Israel. In various places in the Netherlands rallies were organized to express Dutch support for Israel during the war.

Ramleh. A twin city of Al-Lydd, the two cities comprised 20% of Palestine's urban population before the Nakba. The commander in charge of Operation Dani, which ethnically cleansed the twin cities, was Yitzhak Rabin, later a Prime Minister of Israel and Nobel Peace Prize recipient. At 1:30pm on July 12, 1948 he commanded his brigade: "1. The inhabitants of Lydda must be expelled quickly without attention to age. They should be directed towards Beit Nabala. Yiftah [Brigade headquarters] must determine the method and inform [Operation] Dani HQ and the 8th Brigade. 2. Implement immediately." Soon after the city's occupation, the Zionists made an agreement with its inhabitants that they could stay. But soon after, the Zionists reneged on their promise and detained over 3,000 men in a concentration camp, and on the same day started looting the city. On July 14th, 1948, the city's inhabitants were ethnically cleansed out of the city. From the 17,000 Palestinians who used to call al-Ramla home, 400 were allowed to stay. Israel has kept the city by the same name, adding colonies at Ahismakh in the north east, Matsliah in the south, and Yad Ramban in the southeast.



Walid's family; his mother, sisters and him.

"To avoid discussions on the conflict, I used to say that I was from Jordan" admitted my father. "Also at the factory in Vlaardingen we didn't discuss politics with our fellow workers. I tried to follow the news on an old radio."

On the first day of the 1967 War, my father's oldest sister was in labor with her firstborn. She was in a hospital in Jerusalem. Her mother, her husband and his mother were present. On Monday morning, June 5, 1967, at half past five, her daughter was born. One hour later, while Israeli jets were bombing the Egyptian airstrips, they left the hospital. Outside, sirens could be heard. My uncle drove his Volkswagen Beattle as fast as he could to Ramallah, where they spent the rest of the day and night in the basement of

their home. On the second day of the War they drove to Nablus. They spent the night with my aunt, who had just given birth to her third child. She was hiding with her children in a safe room. The shops were closed and a number of people were killed in Nablus due to various bombardments. A number of people had fled the city. They followed the route the Jordanian army took when it withdrew. Also a number of refugees that had arrived in Nablus in 1948 left the city to Jordan. Some of them were killed on the road.



Walid, his sister and mother in Nablus. "I miss my family, my social life, the vegetable market in the Kasba in Nablus and family barbecues on Fridays the most."

The next day, June 7, the day the Israeli army invaded Nablus, my aunt, her husband and their baby left the city with my grandmother, back to Ramallah. The war was still going on. There was shooting and no one knew where it was safe. On their way to Ramallah they discovered that the road was closed. Ramallah was being hit. My uncle tried to drive back to Nablus but they didn't manage to enter the town. The Israeli army had closed all roads towards the city. They decided to make their way to the Jordan Valley and just after Israeli jets bombed the bridge over the Jordan river they managed to cross it. Through Salt they arrived in Amman where they were safe. They spent two weeks with one of the brothers of my grandmother, who had lived in Amman after his family fled Jerusalem in 1949. My grandmother wanted to return to Nablus. It was dangerous but not impossible. Together with a group of other refugees they crossed the river by foot. Shots were fired from the other side. My uncle, his wife and their baby crossed the river back to Palestine a couple of days later and drove in the direction of Tubas. They first went to Nablus and later to Ramallah. Since then my family has stayed in Palestine. Other family members live scattered across the region in Lebanon, Syria and Jordan. A year after the war, my father was granted Dutch citizenship. Since that time he has only been able to visit his hometown Nablus as a tourist, only allowed to stay there, if he is lucky, for three months, the length of a visitor's visa.

** Arjan El Fassed is cofounder of The Electronic Intifada and the author of the forthcoming book 'Niet iedereen kan stenen gooien' [Not just everyone is good at throwing stones: A Dutch Palestinian in search of his roots and identity] (Uitgeverij Nieuwland, 2008).*

Not just everyone is good at throwing stones: A Dutch Palestinian in search of his roots and identity

Raised in the Netherlands, Arjan El Fassed, son of a Palestinian father and a Dutch mother, searched his family history in Palestine. He saw powerlessness and corruption on the Palestinian side and oppression from the Israeli side. By means of events within his family over several generations, the history of the Palestinian people is told in a personal and convincing manner. 'Not just everyone is good at throwing stones' is a fascinating tale of a search to roots, identity and legitimacy.

Website in Dutch: <http://www.nietiedereenkanstenengooien.nl>



We Loved the Land and the Land Loved Us

Mohammad Manasra - Växjö, Sweden

by Hazem Jamjoum

“The Palestinian peasant is an educated peasant.” Mohammad’s father’s words accompany the constant ringing in his ears that started when he was injured by a car bomb meant to kill him on the streets of Baghdad. “We were farmers, we knew the land, we loved the land and the land loved us.” It was this love of the land that led the villagers of ‘Ayn Ghazal, on the slopes of Mount Carmel to fiercely resist the Zionist onslaught in 1948. Despite the significant imbalance in the level of training and armament that clearly favored the Zionist forces fighting to clear the area of its indigenous inhabitants, the defenders of ‘Ayn Ghazal, Ijzim and Jaba’ relentlessly fought to keep their families alive and on their land. “The Zionists called our three villages the ‘dirty triangle’ because they couldn’t defeat us, even though they were heavily armed with modern guns and artillery and planes while every three of the Palestinian resistance fighters had to share a rifle!”



Mohammad’s father was one of these rifle-sharing fighters. Most of his direct family had been killed in the 1930s and 40s because of their involvement in the Arab Revolt against Zionist colonization and British occupation, and his shoulders bore the responsibility of continuing the family line. He fought nonetheless, and when the Zionists finally entered the village, he was one of the few who had stayed despite the heavy aerial and artillery bombardment. He was arrested and taken to a prison camp where he spent a year before his release and expulsion. Meanwhile, his wife and children had been evacuated with the Iraqi army and the Red Cross to the southern Iraqi city of Basra, where he would follow in 1949.

“Those early years in Iraq were horrible.” Mohammad, born in 1955 in Baghdad recalls these events as if they were his own memories. “We were put in an army barracks with fifteen other families with nothing but a piece of cloth separating each family; the barracks was surrounded by barbed wire fence, and the food was army rations, lentil soup in the morning, rice and sauce in the afternoon, and *kubab* for dinner. Imagine, peasants who were used to tilling their land and eating from it reduced to this.” The Iraqi government had decided that the Palestinians were guests in Iraq, and refused UNRWA presence in the country, committing to take care of any and all humanitarian functions that the UN agency was supposed to fulfill.

The family moved to Baghdad where the growing Palestinian refugee community developed its consciousness of imparting the meaning of being a Palestinian refugee to the younger generation, the generation into which Mohammad was born. The Free-Officers revolution toppled the Iraqi monarchy on 14 July 1958, and the new President of Iraq, Abdul-Karim Qasim created a Palestinian battalion called the Al-Qadisiya Brigade, which was meant to grow into an army that would liberate Palestine. Many of Mohammad’s family members joined, and later moved on to join the Palestinian revolution in Jordan and Lebanon. “My family and I have always supported anything that could lead to the liberation of Palestine, whether morally, financially or with our own bodies.”

‘Ayn Ghazzal. Situated on the higher slopes of Haifa’s Mount Carmel near the main road between Haifa and Jaffa, ‘Ayn Ghazzal’s 2,500 inhabitants lived a good life split between agriculture and working in nearby Haifa. It was one of the three villages, with Jaba’ and Ijzim, that formed a triangle on Mount Carmel that fiercely resisted the ethnic cleansing. The village was attacked by the Haganah on 20 May, on 8 June, and again on 8 July 1948, with the Palestinian resistance fighters successfully defending their villages and repelling the attacks. It was not until late July that a combined Israeli force assembled from the Golani, Carmeli, and Alexandroni brigades took advantage of a declared truce to launch a large-scale invasion by land and sea. Despite the size of the assault, the resistance of the tenacious villages held out for two days before the Israeli troops managed to occupy them. Many of the villagers who fled during the assault were shot as they tried to reach safety bringing the number of villagers who were killed or went missing to 130. Today, the only building remaining from ‘Ayn Ghazzal is the shrine of Muslim holy man Shaykh Shahada which had been maintained by the villagers. The Israeli settlement of ‘Ofer was built on the village’s lands in 1950.



Mohammad as a young man.

The 1963 coup brought the Iraqi Ba'ath Party to power. However, this did not cause any disruption to official Iraqi support for Palestinian liberation. If anything, the policies of "treating Palestinians as Iraqis except in the field of citizenship and mandatory military service were codified in the law." Under the Ba'ath regime, Mohammad completed his state-funded secondary education and later graduated from the prestigious University of Baghdad in 1983 with a degree in law. "I could have studied engineering [which requires a higher average], but chose law because I wanted to know our rights as Palestinians. I focused on international law, because I wanted to fight for our rights as refugees and people who have had our land, our whole country stolen from us."

"Until 1994, Palestinians in Iraq were respected and truly treated as equals. We were not, however, given preferential treatment the way that many [Palestinians and Iraqis] say; we lived off of our hard work, and many of us had to struggle to feed our families. Our community is full of very hard workers." After Iraq's defeat by the US-led coalition that opposed Iraq's occupation of Kuwait, the world imposed a brutal sanctions regime on the country that ultimately killed over 1.5 million Iraqis, at least a third of whom were children. One of the results of the sanctions regime was skyrocketing inflation in the Iraqi economy. "The sanctions era was particularly hard on Palestinians because in 1994 the Iraqi government passed Law 2.3 which banned any foreign economic activity in the country, and this law was interpreted as applying to the Palestinian community in Iraq. This meant that we Palestinians, who had been living in the country for over forty years, could not renew work licenses, could not open businesses, could not be officially employed, we were not even allowed to sign contracts!"

The only exceptions to Law 2.3 (1994) were doctors and lawyers who were constitutionally protected, and in 1998 Mohammad was elected as Chair of the Palestinian Lawyers' Union in Iraq. "My number one priority, as decided by the Union's membership, was to change the interpretation of Law 2.3 so that it would not apply to us." However, despite his petitions, nothing changed. "I don't think the petitions ever reached Saddam. The law's application to Palestinians was only reversed when two married Palestinian doctors who were friends of mine developed a very important new medication, and met with Saddam. He asked them if they had any requests, and they told him about the effect of Law 2.3 on our community. He was shocked, and while they were sitting with him, he demanded a pen and paper and wrote a law that reiterated the existing law that Palestinians were to be treated as Iraqis, adding that Law 2.3 (1994) would not apply to Palestinians, and that anyone from an employee to a minister who did not comply would be punished with six months in jail before a presidential review of his or her case. This enabled our community to rebuild their lives."

The respite was short-lived; in March 2003 the US invasion of Iraq began the systematic destruction of the country. As with all who lived in Iraq, the future became uncertain, and foreign nationals were mostly evacuated by their embassies. "Before this, we Palestinians never heard of divisions, Sunni-Shi'i, Christian-Muslim, Iraqi-Palestinian, this was all foreign to us. At first, the community did not face any real threat over and above what all Iraqis were facing, but "we were a small community, and none of the international agencies even cared to consider us, the PLO barely recognized us as part of the Palestinian refugees waiting to return to Palestine, so there was a great risk in the new environment of lawlessness."

The first signs of anti-Palestinian sentiment in Iraq began to emerge a few months after the occupation; local landlords began evicting Palestinian tenants in government subsidized housing. Since all of the official Palestinian institutions had been shut down, Mohammad joined a group of Palestinian professionals in forming the Association for the Human Rights of Palestinians in Iraq that was officially registered with the new Iraqi government. "We lobbied the UNHCR to pay

attention to us, and they helped us do a census of Palestinians in Iraq [counting 23,000 after the US invasion] and set up a refugee camp for the 700 families that were evicted in the Haifa Sports Club stadium. We called it the Al-Awda Refugee Camp. This was the first time in history that Palestinians in Iraq were officially registered with anyone as refugees.”

The situation continued to deteriorate. In March 2004, the Allawi government decreed that any Palestinian activity with the exception of sports was to be considered terrorism. Later that year, as students headed for their colleges to begin a new school-year, they discovered that they had been expelled for being Palestinian. Mohammad and the human rights association he’d helped found successfully campaigned to have them reinstated. “The big disaster came in 2005, when the Ja’fari government came to power.” He adds, “we do not need to go into the fairness of that election.” In May 2005, a bomb exploded in *Baghdad al-Jadida*, a neighborhood of the Iraqi capital. Fifty-eight people were killed, and over 200 injured. “Within one hour, the Iraqi army arrested four Palestinians based on the confession of someone that we all knew was mentally ill, and then showed the four men on television, having clearly been tortured, confessing to the bombing. The television then decided to interview Iraqis on the street about the confessions, and the reactions that they televised showed people saying that they wanted to kick the Palestinians out, and kill them, and burn their houses down. Since that day, over 500 Palestinians have been killed or gone missing in Iraq.”



Palestinian refugee talking to a UN aid worker in Al-Tanf camp, Iraq.

Following the *Baghdad Al-Jadida* bombing Palestinian communities lived under self-imposed house-arrest. Palestinian houses in the *Huriya* neighborhood were blown up, Palestinians’ bodies would be found in garbage dumpsters and on the street, community members went missing, death-threats became commonplace, and many started fleeing to the borders with Jordan and Syria. Many Palestinians had already tried to get into Jordan from Iraq since 2003, but the Jordanian government had not let them enter and set up the Ruwaished camp on the border between the two countries with 200 families at the time, most of these have already been relocated and the camp has been shut down since 2007. In 2005, many more tried to enter Jordan, but the Jordanian army sent tanks and troops to stop them. Syria was also hesitant to let Palestinians enter and in 2006 Al-Tanf and Al-Walid camps were set up on that border. “We tried to pressure the Syrians to let them cross into Syria, and eventually the UNHCR managed to get the Syrians to agree to set up a camp on their side of the border in Al-Hasakeh; this camp is called Al-Hol.” These camps were similar to desert prison camps; refugees are not allowed to leave, and health and education services are largely improvised by the refugees themselves.

Mohammad himself stayed in Baghdad, working relentlessly and without pay to try to secure some protection for those who stayed, to get those arrested out of jail, and to find countries that would take in Palestinians from Iraq. He received verbal death threats, his office was blown up, as was a car identical to his in an operation that was presumably directed at him. Later, his own car was blown up, and he was shot at twice, the second time he was seriously injured and pronounced dead. “Al-Jazeera carried a story announcing that I had been assassinated! I’ve been injured in my leg, shoulder and head, and now have a constant ringing in my ears.” As a result, Mohammad moved from the *Al-Baladiyah* Palestinian neighborhood to feel a little safer as he continue his work, and on 22 February 2006, the neighborhood was raided by the *Mehdi Army* killing 7 Palestinians.



Palestinian refugee youth painting the colors of the Palestinian flag on a map of Palestine in Al-Tanf camp.

On 27 July 2006 came another major assault on the neighborhood, but this time it aimed to completely eliminate the Palestinian presence. Palestinian youth used what light arms were available to defend their neighborhood, often sharing weapons. Mohammad frantically called every embassy and UN agency in his phonebook. After eight of the Palestinian defenders were killed and four wounded, the US-Iraqi army intervened to stop the assault, but Mohammad was told that he and his family were as good as dead if he stayed one more day in Iraq. That same night, he and his family were smuggled into Syria where his family stayed for a year, as he used a forged passport to get to Turkey and from there to Sweden where he applied for refugee status and managed to bring his family in 2007.

In Sweden, he discovered that it would take him seven years of study to become a lawyer. While most people would have settled for jobs as taxi drivers or convenience store operators, this ‘educated peasant’ enrolled in multiple simultaneous preparatory courses through which he hopes to do seven years of study in three. He now juggles morning and afternoon programs, with weekly observation visits to the local courthouse, in addition to maintaining his full-time workload trying to get Palestinians still in Iraq and in Iraq-Syria-Jordan border camps relocated somewhere safe; as well as helping those who manage to make it into Sweden find homes, work, and

medical treatment. “When people tell me it is hopeless, and that we can’t hope to accomplish much, I tell them ‘it doesn’t matter! If we can rescue 100 or 50 or ten or even just one, that is reason enough to do everything we can.’ What else can I say; the lawyer who took over my role in the human rights organization we set up was tortured and had hot oil poured over his body, one of my brothers was tortured and still has a massive gash in his leg, one of my nephews was tortured in front of his younger brother who developed brain cancer from the trauma, and these are just a fraction of the stories from only my direct family.” Mohammad is one of the few Palestinians from Iraq who is even willing to share some stories, because his family have left Iraq, the vast majority of Palestinian refugees from Iraq and their stories will probably remain hidden for years and perhaps be buried with their narrators because of the understandable fear for their own and their families’ safety.

As he narrates his life story, Mohammad continually refers to the right of return’s centrality to everything he has encountered. “Look,” he exclaims as his next class approaches, “none of this would have happened if we were still in Palestine, none of this would have happened if we had been allowed to return to Palestine. The bottomline is that all of this could have been averted if we had our own country to be safe in. I consider all of my work to rescue Palestinians in Iraq as a part of my work for Palestinian refugee rights, and the right of return is the first of these rights. In Iraq I was a refugee, in Sweden I am a refugee, wherever we go we are refugees; the only ID I have is an expired travel document issued to Palestinian refugees. This is why I have collected 1000 signatures to petition lawyers’ organizations to take Israel to the International Court of Justice to get them to implement this right. It is our ancestors’ legacy that we never leave our land, that we never let go of ‘Ayn Ghazzal, that we never forget that it is us and our families who are Palestine, and that ultimately we have to return to our beloved land, and that its love will return to us.”

Our Struggle is One and the Same

Ziad Awaisy – Nazareth, 1948 Palestine

By Isabelle Humphries*



Saffuriyya in the 1940s (source: palestineremembered.com).

Ziad Awaisy was born the second of five children in 1974, in the Saffafra neighbourhood of Nazareth. For his parents, both refugees of Saffuriyya, this was a great achievement – a son was born in their own home. Their first daughter was born the year before when – more than a quarter of a century after the Nakba - they were still living in a two roomed house with the father's parents and brothers' families.

Founded by some of the 4,500 refugees of Saffuriyya, the Saffafra neighbourhood today continues to shelter an internally displaced majority awaiting their return. The hillside looks over the lands of the village. Ziad's grandparents were some of the first to come to the land of Saffafra in the late 1950s – after spending some months in Bint Jbeil in Lebanon they managed successfully (unlike many others killed or turned back) to return over the border. In the early 1960s refugees began to gather from the surrounding villages to which they had fled. Many people spent over twenty years in shacks and caves before being able to afford to build. Today, as in all Palestinian towns in Israel, the neighbourhood is overcrowded and land a scarce resource.

As a young child I always knew I was from Saffuriyya, I heard it all the time – “You are not from Nazareth” – Everybody said this. I remember my older cousins talking about it. I knew it before I knew what it meant.

Ziad describes sitting with his grandmother and grandfather, whom he lived with, and listening to their stories. He says that while his nieces and nephews today know exactly where they are from, for him the difference was that he actually heard it direct from his grandparents – “*I would absorb it from them, watch their movements as they were talking, follow their expressions*”. Most painful to recall is his late grandmother whom he asked to accompany him to the land of Saffuriyya many times – “*And she would refuse saying – ‘If you take me back there you will have to leave me there.’”*

Growing up in the neighbourhood of Saffafra helps maintain a refugee village identity still today. Unlike some refugees dispersed across Palestine and the rest of the world, in Saffafra a large part of one village remains together. The neighbourhood has its physical markers of memory – two schools named Al-Kastel (after Saffuriyya's well) and Al-Qalaa (after the Saffuriyya castle). ‘Sabra and Shatila Street’ was built in summer 1982 by one of the Communist summer work camps – after the massacre the people named it after the camps where many fellow Saffuriyyans died.

Saffuriyya Perched atop a hill like a bird (possibly the origin of its name “Sefre” meaning bird in Syriac) Saffuriyya was the administrative centre of Palestine during the Roman period, and has been mentioned in many of the travel writings of those that visited and wrote about Palestine. The people of the town fiercely resisted the destruction of their village and the displacement of its over 4,500 inhabitants; but a combination of aerial bombardment and a surprise artillery and infantry attack caused most of the townspeople to seek shelter in neighboring lands. This did not stop them from returning when the assault had ended, resulting in a concerted Israeli effort to load the returnees onto trucks, displacing them to other areas. Only a few houses remain on the site, including those of ‘Abd al-Majid Sulayman and ‘Ali Mawjuda. Otherwise the site is covered by a pine forest planted by the Jewish National Fund to commemorate a number of persons and occasions (such as Guatemala's independence day). Zahir al-Umar's fortress still stands atop the hill, though some of its walls have collapsed. It is ringed by excavation sites. On the northern side of the village the monastery of Saint Anna still remains and serves as an orphanage for Palestinian children. There is also a Roman Orthodox church. Along the southern road to the village there is a synagogue that was originally a Muslim shrine. Next to it lies a recently built Israeli cemetery. The fertile village lands are now used by the Israeli settlements Tzippori, ha-Solelim, Allon ha-Galil Hosh'aya, and Chanton.



Ziad Awaisy.

When Ziad finished elementary school his father wanted to send him to a high school in Nazareth to get the educational opportunities that, as a refugee, he himself had not got. At first he found it extremely hard to integrate socially feeling like a village outsider even though Saffafra is part of Nazareth and *“despite the fact that we all faced the same difficult situation as Palestinians in Israel.”*

At school he became politically active. Although his parents were not activists they taught him to identify with the Palestinian people, and to struggle for what one believes to be right. He became active on the school council, motivating students to organize on whatever was the issue of the day – one event that stands out in his mind is the students horror at the 1991 US bombing of the al-Amiriyyeh shelter in Iraq.

Going to university is the time when many Palestinians inside Israel first have to deal with the Jewish community on a daily basis. In 1993 Ziad went to study physiotherapy at Tel Aviv University – and continued to immerse himself in the activist community, now more specifically with the *Jebha* (Arab Communists). As well as engaging with local university issues – discrimination against Palestinian Arabs in allocation of housing; an issue which persists today – students were campaigning on the bloody events of the day, from the Baruch Goldstein Hebron massacre to the first Qana massacre.

Palestinians in Israel have little choice but to work within Israeli society, and working as a physiotherapist in the main hospital in Haifa poses a daily challenge. *“I stick to my opinions and I am not afraid to let them know what I think even if that threatens my job. They know exactly who I am and what I think about all issues – including the right of return.”*

Despite his assertiveness, and of course the fact that many of the hospital patients are Palestinian Arabs of the Galilee, the work causes pain and difficulty. On the day of this interview Ziad had had to go to work following the killing of 100 Palestinians in Gaza – *“I just didn’t want to talk to anybody.”*

Sometimes he thinks of giving it all up – going to volunteer in a hospital in Gaza or Jenin. One of the hardest times was when his cousin was lying in the Haifa hospital close to death after being shot by police in October 2000. *“But leaving is in the end the last thing I would do – that is exactly what they want from us, the Palestinians inside – to leave.”*

When he returned to Saffafra after university he became more involved with the Saffuriyya committee – a recent triumph of which has been to legally change the name of the committee to include the word ‘return’ officially in the title. The committee organizes festivals and activities to raise awareness in the community, and campaigns to protect the cemeteries remaining on Saffuriyya land.

When I grew up it wasn’t enough just for me to feel what they [our grandparents] passed. I asked deeper questions about right and wrong, about power and weakness... and to try and see other aspects of life from this perspective. I feel more committed to pass on what my grandfather had been through – they didn’t pass it on as they should have because of the weight of the Nakba... because they were just struggling to see that their sons and daughters lived. I feel my responsibility and role and this now is heavier than that of the second generation. The third generation feels it heavier; and the Israelis should know this.

Palestinian refugees remaining in the Galilee know that in many ways life has been harder for refugees across borders, people who can not even see their land. It is most important for Ziad to get across to Palestinians throughout the Diaspora that the Palestinian internally displaced campaign is for all refugees to return. *“I want them to know about what we are doing, and that they are not forgotten. Our struggle is one and the same.”*

Struggling Alone for My Children's Future

Sa'diya Al-Liddawi - Al-Wihdat refugee camp, Amman, Jordan

By Anne Paq

The Al-Liddawi family lives in the middle of Al-Wihdat refugee camp in Amman, one of the biggest camps in Jordan. They come from Jaffa, but came to Jordan from Gaza, which means that they have a different status than most other Palestinian refugees in Jordan. They cannot have a Jordanian passport and have restricted access to services.

Born in 1963, Sa'diya, the mother, is the heart of the family. Since her husband Omar died in 2000, she has had to take care of her eight children on her own: Rula (24 years-old, married and pregnant, finished university); Rana (22 years-old finished university and just submitted her application to become a teacher); Mohammad (20 years-old, student in accounting); Khaled (19 years-old studying to become a surgeon); Saeed (17 years-old student in final year of high school); Ahmad (15 years-old); Mahmoud (14 years-old) and Rawan (12 years-old). All of them were born in Gaza except for Rawan, so they are all registered there and with the Israeli authority as Palestinians born in Gaza.

They live in very dire conditions as they have only a room, a lounge and a kitchen. They also have a small courtyard where things have piled up next to the few hens and rabbits they keep. This is their improved situation; a few years ago, they were obliged to live in one room with no proper toilets. A developer appalled by the bad conditions they were living in decided to help them by building two additional rooms, which is still not enough. They need an additional 7000JD to complete the work in the house.

In such a bad environment Sa'diya has accomplished miracles. She puts the education of her children as a first priority. She herself had to leave school when she was 14 because her family did not have the money for her to continue. She does not want the same thing to happen to her own children. She has struggled to push her children to get educated and she can be proud of the results. They are all good at school, and the older ones are in university. One is also immediately struck by their inner kindness which contrasts with the rough life of the refugee camp. She has also to struggle to get some help for Rawan who had problems at birth, which led to heavy surgery and the loss of one kidney. Later, Rawan got deeply burned on her arms. Some French doctors offered to perform a surgery for free but her case requires additional surgeries and help.



Jaffa (The Bride of the Sea) was Palestine's largest and most vibrant metropolis. It was the centre of Palestinian industry, producing cigarettes, cement, tile and roof tiles, iron casting, cotton processing, traditional handmade carpets, leather products, wood box industry for Jaffa oranges, textile, presses and was home to most of Palestine's publications. Its centrality to the Arab Palestinian society and economy forced the UN to include it in the proposed Arab state in the 1947 partition plan, which did not stop 5,000 Zionist troops from besieging the city for three months leading up to Israel's declaration of statehood. The poorly armed and trained defenders of Jaffa included tens of international volunteers who came to defend Palestine, notably from Yugoslavia. The majority of Jaffa's inhabitants were forced to flee using boats, ending up in other Palestinian coastal cities like Gaza, or further in Egypt and Lebanon. Soon after occupation, the Zionists blew up and bulldozed three-quarters of Jaffa's Arab section, and only the al-Ajami, Old City, and small part of al-Mansheyyah neighborhood survived demolition. Most of Jaffa's historic Suqs (markets) were destroyed, including Suq al-Nahaseen, Suq al-Balabseh, and Suq al-Maslakh. In 1954, Jaffa became a suburb of Tel Aviv, and since then both cities are known by Tel Aviv-Yafo. Jaffa's Old City neighborhood has been mostly converted to an Israeli artists' colony, the main port has been closed, and its main Clock Square now called Kikea Hagana (The Haganah's Square) in honor of the military force that destroyed the city and ethnically cleansed its people.

The Struggle for Jaffa Continues

Over 500 Arab Palestinian families of Jaffa currently face eviction at the hands of Israeli authorities who also plan to confiscate half the land of Jaffa's historic Tasso Cemetery. A major campaign to defend these families' right to stay in their homes and against the Judaization of Jaffa is underway. You can learn more at: <http://yaffastruggle.wordpress.com>



Land Day demonstration in Jaffa, March 29, 2008

Sa'diya's family history is, as with many Palestinian refugees, marked by several exiles. Her family was first expelled in 1948 and then she had to leave Gaza. In 1948, her father and mother came from Jaffa. They were terrified and fled on foot. Sa'diya was born in 1963 and grew up in Maghazi camp in the Gaza Strip. Her husband, Omar, was also a refugee, from Al-Qubaibeh, close to Ramle and they also fled to Gaza. Omar also had to flee Gaza during the 1967 war for fear of being arrested by the Israelis so he went to Jordan. Omar and Sa'diya's families were neighbors and during one of his visits to Gaza, he married her. Sa'diya was 17 years old at the time.

Life in Gaza was not easy and things got even more difficult when the first Intifada erupted. Sa'diya was going back and forth between Jordan and Gaza. Every time she gave birth she went to Gaza to register them there. Every time she fought to have Palestinian papers for her children. But since 1996, she has not been able to return to Gaza. She has not seen her family since then. She calls but the calls are very expensive. She thinks about them a lot, especially knowing what they are going through "*I wish I could help them and I miss them a lot.*" Omar was working in the mosque but he died in 2000 from an infection.

Left alone with all her children, she has struggled to earn money to put her children through school; she sells things, fixes and rents out bicycles, does some cleaning and sewing, and cooks humus. The family also gets some help from time to time from an orphans' aid agency.

Talking about their status and conditions as refugees she feels that "*we have no rights.*" She points out that as far as education is concerned the available resources are limited. UNRWA schools only provide the service until children reach the age of 15, then they cannot go to university without paying fees that are very expensive. Because they are from Gaza, their status is also different. They cannot have permanent Jordanian passports. They are considered Palestinian residents who can go back to Gaza. They were recently told that they could stay in Jordan only until the children completed their primary education. This means that they will be able to stay only until July. The Jordanian authorities have, however, said that they can stay since the Rafah border crossing is closed. When it opens they will have to go. But for Sa'diya there is nowhere to go back to; "*I do not have a place to stay and my relatives are very old.*" Sa'diya does not carry a Jordanian, but a Palestinian passport. Her husband did get a Jordanian passport and her name, as well as her children's names were marked under it, but it is no longer valid.



View of Baqa'a refugee camp, Jordan, 2008 (©Anne Paq).

For Sa'diya, the *Nakba* evokes painful thoughts: *"I feel the pain of my family and parents. I remember how my husband's brother was born between the cactus."* The *Nakba* is only part of the history of the suffering of her family, *"I cannot forget the past, the suffering of the war, and seeing the tanks."*

She recalls one episode when all of her family could get permission and went back to visit their land of origin in 1975. They visited the place where her aunt used to live. In Jaffa, where her parents lived, the house was closed. Some Jewish people told them: *"take your house if you want but go away! This is not your land!"* The house was inhabited by a black Jewish man who let them enter. The place was renovated. Looking around, Sa'diya felt "jealous" and "shocked". She is attached to the house of her parents, to its memory, as if she had actually lived there: *"I felt very angry because I remembered how we used to live there. We were many families but happy."* Until now the documents of the house remain with them.

Sa'diya believes in the peace process but in a peace that will not be only in words:

"We want to live with all of our rights, we want them to be real. The solution is to live in Palestine, to offer us a house where we can live peacefully, where children can go to school and afterwards get a job. We want to have a good life as all people. If only the Jewish people did not take our land, my children would have grown up on it and made something precious in our homeland. How can we return now, Jaffa is full of Jewish people? And there is no place for us in Gaza."

Sa'diya nevertheless hopes that nations will support peace. Some Arabic countries are trying to help, at least financially. She added: *"for all Palestinians, the blood must stop. The peace process has to be for all Palestinians or there will be no peace."*

Looking at the future, she states: *"now we live in Jordan but I wish my children can build Palestine. I want a good future for them. I am trying to keep them on the right path and take good care of them. I expect them to study in Jordan and then return when they have the opportunity. Our country needs doctors."*

One of her sons jumps into the conversation to say: *"I see myself as a creative teacher because I had many bad teachers. I want to make successful students who will go back to build Palestine. I do not remember Gaza as I was too small but it is not about memory, it is about the heart."*

As we left, one of her sons showed us proudly some research he made for school about his village of origin. The memory of all the places does not vanish with time and Sa'diya children's beautiful eyes smile when they start to talk about their future in Palestine.



Sa'diya's house in al-Wihdat refugee camp, Jordan, 2008 (©Anne Paq).



Sa'diya and three of her children (©Anne Paq).

A Chronology of the Nakba



Palestinian refugees fleeing the war near Tulkarem in 1948. (©ICRC)

1947

January: London Round Table Conference reopens.

February: British Foreign Secretary Ernest Bevin proposes variant of Morrison-Grady federal plan at London Conference and to Jewish Agency. Arab delegates and Jewish Agency reject proposal.

Bevin announces British submission of Palestine problem to United Nations.

March: Arab League blames Britain and US for deteriorating situation in Palestine.

April: UN General Assembly special session on Palestine problem leads to appointment of eleven-member Special Committee on Palestine (UNSCOP). Creation of Supervisor of Arab Property in the Northern District and the Committee for Abandoned Arab Property.

June: Stern Gang claims responsibility for letter bombs addressed to leading British government officials in London.

August: Haganah terrorist attack on Palestinian orange grower's house near Tel Aviv kills twelve occupants including mother and six children.

September 8: Publication of UNSCOP report. Majority of members recommend partition and minority recommend federal solution.

September 16 - 19: Arab League denounces UNSCOP partition recommendation and appoints Technical Military Committee to supervise Palestinian defense needs.

September 26: British Colonial Secretary Arthur Creech Jones announces Britain's decision to end Palestine Mandate.

September 29: Arab Higher Committee for Palestine rejects partition.

October 2: Jewish Agency announces acceptance of partition.

October 11: US endorses partition

October 29: Britain says it will leave Palestine in six months if no settlement is reached.

November 27: Technical Military Committee chairman warns of virtual impossibility of

overcoming Zionist forces with irregulars; urges prompt Arab action in organizing military forces; advocates training Palestinians to defend themselves.

November 29: UN General Assembly recommends slight variant of UNSCOP partition plan by 33 to 13 votes with 10 abstentions. Arab representatives walk out of assembly.

November 30: Haganah calls up all Jews in Palestine aged 17-25 to register for military service.

December: Haganah launches Plan Gimmel, designed to destabilize Palestinian population and occupy strategic positions in country.

Arab League organizes Arab Liberation Army (ALA), a voluntary force of Arab irregulars under guerrilla leader Fawzi al-Qawuqji to help Palestinians resist partition.

December 2: Palestinians start three-day strike protesting UN partition resolution. Intercommunal clashes result in death of eight Jews and six Palestinians.

December 5: US State Department announces US embargo on arms shipments to Palestine and Arab states.

December 8: Britain recommends to UN that Palestine Mandate be terminated on 15 May 1948 and independent Jewish and Palestinian states be established two weeks later.

December 8 - 17: Arab League declares partition of Palestine illegal; it resolves to provide 10,000 rifles, 3,000 volunteers (including 500 Palestinians) and additional 1,000,000 pounds.

December 15: British turns policing of Tel Aviv and Petah Tikva over to Jews and that of Jaffa to Palestinians.

December 17: Jewish Agency Executive reports that American Jews will be asked for \$250 million to help Jewish community in Palestine.

December 19: Haganah attacks village of Khisas (Safed district) killing ten Palestinians.

December 20: Haganah attacks village of Qazaza (Ramleh district).

December 1947 - January 1948: Arab Higher Committee organizes 275 local committees for defense of Palestinian towns and villages.

1948

January: British sells 20 Auster planes to Jewish authorities in Palestine.

Palestinian guerrilla leader ‘Abd al-Qadir al-Husseini secretly returns to Palestine after ten-year exile to organize resistance to partition.

January 8: First contingent of 330 ALA volunteers arrives in Palestine.

January 14: Haganah concludes \$12,280,000 arms deal with Czechoslovakia, including 24,500 rifles, 5,200 machine guns and 54 million rounds of ammunition.

January 16: British report to UN estimates 1,974 people killed or injured in Palestine from 30 November 1947 - 10 January 1948.

January 20: British administration announces that predominantly Jewish or Palestinian areas will be gradually handed over to local majority group in every area concerned.

January 21 & 28: Second and third contingents of 360 and 400 ALA irregulars arrive in Palestine. **January - March:** JNF leaders encourage eviction from villages of Haifa area.

February: Haganah office set up in US under name “Land and Labor” for recruitment of professional military personnel (MAHAL).

February 14: Ben-Gurion issues orders to Haganah commander in Jerusalem for conquest of whole city and its suburbs.

February 18: Haganah calls up men and women aged 25 - 35 for military service.

February 20: Ship Independence arrives at Tel Aviv with 280 volunteers under oath to Haganah on board, implementing policy of illegal immigration of military personnel.

February 24: US delegate to UN says role of Security Council regarding Palestine to keep peace, not enforce partition. Syrian delegate proposes appointment of Committee to explore possibility of Jewish Agency - Arab Higher Committee agreement.

February 27: Jewish Agency announces it will establish state even without backing of an international force.

March: Haganah creates Commission for Arab Property in the villages. Transjordanian prime minister Tawfiq Abu al-Huda secretly meets British foreign secretary Bevin. They agree that Transjordanian forces will enter Palestine at end of Mandate but will restrict themselves to area of Arab state outlined in Partition Plan.

March 2: US delegate tells Security Council US favors implementing partition by “peaceful measures” only.

March 5 - 7: Qawuqji enters Palestine and assumes command of ALA units in central Palestine. **March 6:** Haganah declares general mobilization.

March 10: British House of Commons votes to terminate Mandate on May 15th.

March 19 - 20: US delegate asks UN Security Council to suspend action on partition plan and to convene General Assembly special session to work on a trusteeship and truce if Jews also accept. Jewish Agency rejects trusteeship.

March 19: Ben-Gurion declares Jewish state dependent not on UN partition decision but on Jewish military preponderance.

March 25: President Truman secretly receives Chaim Weizmann at White House and pledges support for declaration of Jewish state on May 15th.

March 30 - May 15: Second coastal “clearing” operation carried out by Haganah Alexandroni brigade and other units.

Attacks and expulsions drive out almost all Palestinian communities from coastal area from Haifa to Jaffa prior to British withdrawal.

April 1: Ship Nora delivers first consignment of Czech arms in Haifa. UN Security Council resolutions call for a special session of General Assembly and agree to US proposal for truce to be arranged through Jewish Agency and Arab Higher Committee.

April 2: Haganah captures Palestinian village of Castel, west of Jerusalem, expelling its inhabitants. **April 5:** Palestinian and Zionist leaders object to US proposals presented to Security Council for temporary trusteeship agreement.

Haganah launches Operation Nachshon (first phase of Plan Dalet); Haganah Giv’ati Brigade and other units capture villages along Tel-Aviv - Jerusalem road from local Palestinian militia.

April 8: Haganah starts offensive against Palestinian town of Tiberias.

April 9: ‘Abd al-Qadir al-Husseini, charismatic Palestinian militia commander in Jerusalem district, is killed leading counterattack to recover Castel village.

Irgun and Stern Gang massacre some 120 inhabitants in village of Deir Yassin, western suburb of Jerusalem and three miles from Castel.

April 12: General Zionist Council decides to establish independent Jewish state in Palestine on May 16th.

April 13 - 20: Operation Har’el under Plan Dalet launched at conclusion of Operation Nachshon. Villages along Jerusalem road attacked and demolished.

All subsequent Haganah operations until May 15th undertaken within framework of Plan Dalet.

April 16: British evacuate town of Safed.

April 17: Security Council resolution calls for military and political truce. Haganah starts offensive against town of Safed.

April 20: US submits Palestine trusteeship plan to UN.

April 21: British suddenly evacuate residential quarters of Haifa.

April 22: Haganah launches Operation Misparayim to attack and occupy Haifa.

Resistance of local Palestinian militia in Haifa collapses.

Haifa’s Palestinian population flees under combined shelling and ground offensives.

April 25 - 31: Launching of Operation Chametz to conquer Jaffa, Haganah attacks suburban villages of Tell Rish, Yazur and Salameh.

April 26: Launching Operation Yevussi for conquest of whole of Jerusalem; Haganah attacks Palestinian residential quarter of Sheikh Jarrah in East Jerusalem, cutting off the city from north, but are forced to hand it over to the British. Haganah's attempt at cutting off Jerusalem from Jericho fails.

April 27: Haganah announces coordination of plans with Irgun.

April 28 - 30: Palestinian ALA unit under Michel Issa succeeds in fighting its way into Jaffa in order to break Haganah siege.

April 30: All Palestinian quarters in West Jerusalem occupied by Haganah and residents driven out.

May: Israel creates Supervisor of Abandoned Arab Property in Jaffa and Arab Properties Department.

May 1: Lebanon and Syria decide to send troops to Palestine at end of Mandate on May 15th.

May 2: Iraq dispatches troops to town of Mafraq, in Transjordan, en route to Palestine after May 15th. Three plane-loads of arms for Haganah arrive from France.

May 3: Between 175,000 and 200,000 Palestinian refugees are reported to have fled from areas taken by Zionists.

Jewish colonists from Gush Etzion, south of Jerusalem, ambush traffic on road to city.

May 4: Unit of Transjordan Arab Legion, operating in Palestine under British command, shells Gush Etzion in retaliation for ambush. British announces it is studying transitional trusteeship regime for Palestine to take effect at end of Mandate.

May 5: ALA unit under Michel Issa withdraws from Jaffa, ending city's resistance.

May 10: Haganah enters Jaffa.

May 11 - 12: Haganah captures Safed and surrounding villages.

May 12: State of emergency declared in all Arab countries and able-bodied Palestinian men barred entry to them.

Egyptian parliament decides to send troops to Palestine at end of Mandate.

May 12 - 14: Arrival of second and third Czech arms consignments for Haganah.

May 13: Arab Legion, ALA and local militia attack and capture Jewish settlements of Etzion bloc, retaliating for attacks on Hebron road.

Jaffa formally surrenders to Haganah.

May 14: State of Israel proclaimed in Tel Aviv at 4pm.

Haganah launches Operation Schifon for capture of Old City of Jerusalem.

May 15: British Mandate ends.

Declaration of State of Israel comes into effect.

President Truman recognizes State of Israel. First Egyptian troops cross border into Palestine and attack colonies of Kfar Darom and Nirim in Negev.

Three Transjordanian Arab Legion brigades cross Jordan River into Palestine.

Lebanese troops retake Lebanese villages of Malkiya and Qadas (on Lebanese border), attacked and captured earlier by Haganah.

May 17: Haganah captures Acre.

May 18: Syrian troops retake Palestinian town of Samakh, south of Lake Tiberias, and capture Zionist colonies of Shaar Hagolan and Masada.

Arab Legion units reach Latrun and consolidate blockade of coastal road to Jewish quarters in Jerusalem.

May 19: Haganah breaks into Old City of Jerusalem. Arab Legion comes to the rescue of Old City.

May 20: UN Security Council appoints Count Folke Bernadotte as its mediator in Palestine.

May 22: Security Council resolution calls for cease-fire.

June 11 - July 8: First truce.

June 20: Israel blocks refugee bank accounts.

June 21: Israel passes Abandoned Property Ordinance.

June 24: Israel passes Abandoned Areas Ordinance.

June 28 - 29: Count Bernadotte suggests economic, military and political union of Transjordan and Palestine containing Arab and Jewish states: Negev and central Palestine to go to Arabs, Western Galilee to Jews, Jerusalem to be part of Arab state with administrative autonomy to Jews, Haifa and Jaffa to be free ports and Lydda free airport. Rejected by both sides.

July: Israel creates Ministerial Committee for Abandoned Property.

July 7: Security Council calls for prolongation of truce.

July 15: Security Council resolution calls on governments and authorities concerned to issue indefinite cease-fire orders to their forces in Palestine to take effect within three weeks. Israel creates Custodian of Abandoned Property.

July 18 - October 15: Second truce.

September 16: Report by UN mediator Count Bernadotte proposed new partition of Palestine: Arab state to be annexed to Transjordan and to include Negev, al-Ramla and Lydda; Jewish state in all of Galilee; internationalization of Jerusalem; return or compensation of refugees. Rejected by Arab League and Israel.

September 17: Count Bernadotte murdered in Jerusalem by Stern Gang. Replaced by his American deputy Ralph Bunche.

November 4: UN Security Council resolution calls for withdrawal of forces to positions occupied prior to October 14 and establishment of permanent truce lines.

November 1948 - mid 1949: IDF expels inhabitants from villages 5-15 km inside Lebanese border, followed by expulsions from other Galilee villages.

December 22 - January 6, 1949: Operation Horev launched to drive Egyptians out of southern coastal strip and Negev.

Israeli troops move into Sinai until British pressure forces withdrawal.

December 27: IDF Alexandroni brigade's attack on isolated Egyptian forces in Faluja pocket is repulsed .

1949

January 27: Israeli government sells "first million" dunums of refugee land to the Jewish National Fund (JNF)

February 24: Israeli-Egyptian armistice: Egypt keeps coastal strip Gaza-Rafah and evacuates Faluja pocket.

End of February: IDF units intimidate 2-3,000 villagers into leaving Faluja pocket in violation of Israeli-Egyptian Armistice Agreement.

March: IDF Negev and Golani brigades complete occupation of Negev as far as Umm Rashrash/Eilat.

March 23: Israeli-Lebanese Armistice: Frontier of Mandate Palestine accepted; Israel withdraws from most of Lebanese territory.

April 3: Israeli-Jordanian Armistice: Jordan takes over Iraqi-held Nablus-Jenin-Tulkarem triangle but is forced to cede area around Wadi 'Ara; Israel controls Chadera-Afula road; existing status quo in Jerusalem accepted by IDF and Arab Legion.

July 20: Syrian-Israeli Armistice: demilitarized zones established around 'En Gev and Dardara (including Mishmar ha-Yarden).

Sources: Walid Khalidi (ed.), All That Remains, Washington DC: Institute for Palestine Studies, 1992; Michael Fischbach, Records of Dispossession: Palestinian Refugee Property and the Arab-Israeli Conflict, New York: Columbia University Press, 2003.

Upcoming Events Commemorating 60 years of Nakba

For an updated list of Nakba commemoration events please visit:

<http://www.badil.org/campaign40-60/calendar/calendar.html>

To add an event to this list, please contact mediaenglish@badil.org

March 2008

- 25-29 March, Canada

The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine speaking Tour

Featuring Professor Ilan Pappé

Montreal-Tuesday March 25, at 7:30pm at Concordia University H-110

Toronto- Wednesday, March 26, at 7:00 pm at the Health Sciences Auditorium, 6th Floor, 155 College St. (more info at www.necf.org)

Vancouver-Saturday, March 29, at 7:00 pm at the Vancouver Public Library, Central Branch, Alice Mackay room, lower level, 350 W. Georgia St. (at Homer). (more info: support@canpalnet.ca)

- 28 March, Greece

Palestine 1948-2008: 60 Year Infraction of International Law

Lawyers Union Hall (60 Acadimia St.), featuring Rania Madi and Ioanna Kotovic.

Organized by Al-Awda Greece

- 29 March, Toronto, Canada

Land Day Commemoration with Bishop Atallah Hanna

7pm at the Oasis Convention Centre. Visit: www.palestinehouse.com

- 25 March – 8 April, United States

Acknowledging the Past; Imagining the Future: Palestinians and Israelis on 1948 and the Right of Return

Badil and Zochrot Speaking Tour for Nakba 60

Boston (March 28) – Chicago (March 29-31) – Portland, Oregon (April 1-2) – Seattle (April 2-3) – New York (April 5) – Philadelphia (April 6-7)

For more information contact ahorowitz@afsc.org, or visit

<http://www.afsc.org/israel-palestine/badilzochrottouorganizers.html>

March 30: Land Day, Palestine

- 30 March

Public release of Nakba-60 Declaration with list of endorsing organizations by the ECCP and *Action Platform-Belgium*; launch of Nakba-60 media campaign in Belgium:

www.association-belgo-palestinienne.be/coordination-europeenne/presentation-eccp.htm

Contact: eccp@skynet.be, mirjam.vanbelle@oxfamsol.be

- 30 March, Tubas, Palestine

Heritage and Photo Exhibit Commemorating Land Day

organized by Fari'a Women's Committee, contact: uyac@uyac.org

- 30 March, Tulkarem, Palestine

Land Day film screenings at schools and community centres, contact uyac@uyac.org

Land Day

On 29 February 1976, the Israeli government announced that it planned to confiscate 21,000 dunum (5,500 acres) of Arab-owned land in order to create eight Jewish industrial centers. While government officials claimed that this expropriation was necessary in order to develop the region of Galilee, Israel's Palestinian citizenry perceived it as another attempt by Israel to geographically marginalize the state's Arab community and strip it of its agricultural livelihood. Their fears were later confirmed when Israel's Ministry of Agriculture declared the plan's primary purpose to be the creation of a Jewish majority in the Arab Galilee.

Almost immediately after the announcement of land expropriation was made, Palestinian community leaders in Israel met in an attempt to organize and communicate a unified message of objection, calling for a general strike. Anticipating Palestinian repudiation of the measure, Israeli authorities imposed a curfew on the lower Galilee on the evening of 29 March 1976. The following morning, Israeli police and military forces entered the striking Arab villages, a move which provoked some Arab youth into a stone-throwing demonstration. Israeli forces responded with live ammunition, indiscriminately opening fire upon the unarmed protesters. By the day's end, six residents of Sakhnin, Arabeh, Kufr Kana and Taibeh were killed, 96 others were injured and 300 arrested.

Israeli authorities eventually confiscated the land in question under the guise of "security." The territory was later converted to Jewish settlements and an Israeli military training camp.³ The events of 30 March 1976 have not been forgotten in the minds and hearts of the Palestinian people. To this day, Palestinians - whether Israeli citizens or not - annually mark March 30 as "Land Day" to demonstrate their connection to the land and to honor the memory of those who died defending Palestinian rights to the land.

(Excerpt adapted from Nadeem Muaddi, "The Significance of Land Day")



Land Day Poster (1984), by Abdel Rahman Al-Muzain.

April 2008

- 1 April, Portland, Oregon.

Badil-Zochrot Speaking Tour at Reed College

Sponsored by Americans United for Palestinian Human Rights and American Friends Service Committee.

- 6 April, Tubas, Palestine

Al-Awda Basketball Tournament, contact: uyac@uyac.org

9 April 2008 – 60th Anniversary of the Deir Yassin Massacre

- 12 April, Germany

Commemoration of the Nakba 1948

5:30pm. Organized by the Near East Peace Circle, Women in Black-Koeln, German-Palestinian Women's Association; at the Melanchthon-Akademie/Ev. Jugendpfarramt Kartäuserwall 24 b, Kölner Südstadt. Contact: Suraya_Hoffmann@gmx.de

- mid-April, Ramallah, Palestine

Fourth Popular Refugee Conference for a one-state vision and popular activation

organized by the *National Committee for the Commemoration of Nakba-60*
Contact: uyac@uyac.org, tel: +972-559-255584; or camp@badil.org

April 17th, Palestinian Prisoners Day

- 25 April – 25 May, Ramallah

Return Tent-Camp set up next to the Muqata'a as a site for cultural events and coordination of activities by the *National Committee for the Commemoration of Nakba-60*
Contact: uyac@uyac.org, tel: +972-559-255584; or camp@badil.org

- 25 April, Berne, Switzerland

Breaking the Logic of Displacement

Conference of the Forum For Human Rights in Palestine/Israel

9am-6pm (Kornhausforum Berne, Stadtsaal)

For more information visit: http://www.cfd-ch.org/e/peace/forum_conference.php

- 30 April – 2 May, Bil'in, Palestine

Third Annual Conference on Popular Struggle

Organized by the *Friends of Freedom and Justice – Bil'in Society*

Contact: ffj.bilin@yahoo.com; tel. +972-547-847 942; www.ffj-bilin.org

- “Free Gaza Boat” sailing to the Gaza Strip (date to be set)

Breaking the siege, commemorating the Nakba and demanding return

Visit: www.freegaza.org

- **Badil-Zochrot European Speaking Tour** (*tentative*)

Organized by the *Belgian Action Platform on Palestine*.

Contact: mirjam.vanbelle@oxfamsol.be

May 2008

60th Anniversary of the Palestinian Nakba

- May 2008, Portland, Oregon

Metro Area 40/60 Commemorations: 60th Anniversary of Al Nakba.

Demonstration, speaking events and teach ins throughout the month.

- 1 May, Ramallah, Palestine

2008 Al-Awda Award Festival

festive celebration of the winners of the 2nd Al-Awda Award:

Contact: camp@badil.org - www.badil.org

- 5 – 8 May, Bethlehem

Literary Festival in Bethlehem

Contact: victoriacatherine@yahoo.com

- 8 May - Israel's Independence Day (*Hebrew calendar*) – Day of the Palestinian Nakba:

Return March

Organized by the *Association for the Defense of the Rights of the Internally Displaced (ADRID)*

Contact: adrid@palnet.com; fax. +972-4-646-8241, tel. +972-4-600-1765

- 8 – 10 May, London, UK

“**Ila Haifa**”: an adaptation of Ghassan Kanafani's *Returning to Haifa* by PSC and the *al-Zaytouna Dabka group*;

10 May National Demonstration in central London to commemorate the Nakba and continuing dispossession and denial of Palestinian rights: www.palestinecampaign.org

- 10 May, Tulkarem, Palestine

Nakba 60 Art Exhibit and Human Chain, contact: uyac@uyac.org

- 10 May, Toronto/Montreal/Vancouver/Ottawa
Nakba Commemoration National Day of Action in Canada
contact Palestine House: info@palestinehouse.com; Coalition Against Israeli Apartheid:
endapartheid@riseup.net

- 16 May, New York, United States
Commemorating the 60th Anniversary of the Nakba (Palestinian Catastrophe)
Dag Hammarskjöld Park
For more information contact: Nakbah60th@gmail.com

- 25 May, Qalqilya, Palestine
Nakba 60 Forum and Discussion, contact: uyac@uyac.org

- **Zochrot's Nakba 60 Project – Rebuilding the Map of Palestine**
For more visit: <http://www.nakbainhebrew.org/index.php?id=556>
Contact: eytanb@netvision.net.il

- **Release & public presentation of “100 terms on the Nakba”**
Organized by BADIL, *Ibn Khaldoun Center, Palestine ROR Coalition*
Contact: resource@badil.org

- 15 May – NAKBA Commemoration DAY**
 - **Minute of Silence in Palestine and beyond**
public rallies and events in all major Palestinian cities and worldwide; global day of action of the *World Social Forum*.
Events in Palestine are organized by the *National Committee for the Commemoration of Nakba-60*. Contact: uyac@uyac.org, tel: +972-559-255584; or camp@badil.org

- 17 May, Belgium
Nakba-60 Action Day in Belgium. Contact: mirjam.vanbelle@oxfamsol.be

- 16-18 May, Anaheim, California
6th Al-Awda Annual Convention
Featuring Bishop Atallah Hanna, Supreme Justice Dr. Sheikh Taiseer Al Tamimi, Salman Abu Sitta, Dr. Adel Samara, Dr. Ilan Pappé, George Bisharat, Ghada Karmi, Dr. Saree Makdisi, and many more.
Visit: <http://al-awda.org/alert-conv6.html>

- 24-25 May, Portland, Oregon
Nakba Commemoration Event
Keynote Speaker Prof. George Bisharat, UC Hastings College of Law, Portland, Oregon.

- 27 May, Qalqilya Palestine
Photo and Heritage Exhibition, contact: uyac@uyac.org

June 2008

- Date TBA: Qalqilya, Palestine
Solidarity Hunger Strike with People of Azbat al-Tabib (village threatened with forcible displacement) contact uyac@uyac.org

- 7 June: Manchester, UK
“Palestine Lives 2008”: Palestine Solidarity Campaign Rally
 Visit: www.palestinecampaign.org

20 June – International Refugee Day

- 23 June 2008, Tel Aviv

Towards Return of Palestinian Refugees: Practices, Strategies and Vision - Conference

Organized by Zochrot. Contact ronaeven@yahoo.com, visit: www.zochrot.org

August 2008

- 8 – 10 August: Chicago, Illinois

U.S. Popular Palestinian National Conference: “Palestinians in the US: Reclaiming Our Voice, Asserting Our Narrative”

See: www.palestineconference.org and contact: palestineconferenceusa@yahoo.com

- 14 – 31 August: **The Peace Cycle – Palestine**: cycling from Amman, Jordan, to Palestinian communities and 1948 depopulated villages in Israel and then to the OPT.
 visit:www.thepeacecycle.com

September 2008

- 2 - 4 September, Paris

United Nations (OHCHR and UNESCO) Conference on 60 Years of UDHR

Opportunity for presentation on Nakba-60/right of return.

Contact: 60anniversary@ohchr.org and coordinate with: info@badil.org

- 7 – 8 September, Brussels

The Peace Cycle – Europe

Cyclists gather in Brussels for 2 days of media events and demand from the European

Parliament to take action for justice for the Palestinian people. see: www.thepeacecycle.com

16-18 September – Commemoration of Sabra and Shatila Massacres (1982)

- **European Social Forum** (tentative; date and venue to be determined)

October 2008

October, Toronto, Canada

First Annual Toronto Palestine Film Festival

visit: <http://www.tpff.ca>

December 2008

- 10 December - 60 years of UDHR
- 11 December - 60 Years of UNGAR 194

BDS Update

End of November 2007 to End of March 2008



A Panel at the First Palestinian BDS Conference, Ramallah, Palestine (©Tineke d'Haese)

Ramallah, occupied Palestinian territory - First Palestinian BDS Conference

22 November 2007 - The conference was convened by the Palestinian NGO Network (PNGO), the OPGAI-Coalition, PACBI and the Anti-Apartheid Wall Campaign. There was consensus among participants that building civil resistance is a priority in the current era, and that the Campaign for the Boycott of Israel can re-vitalize popular resistance and restore dignity to the Palestinian people. Work on the Palestinian BDS Campaign should be seen in this context and lead to the formation of an inclusive Steering Committee for the Campaign. Additional recommendations included:

1. For the local Palestinian BDS Campaign

General: Palestinian employment in Jewish settlements and Israel is to be excluded from the boycott, because it is a source of necessary income that has no current substitute.

Consumer Boycott

Study Israeli products in the Palestinian market: What are they? Where are they distributed? How do they enter?

Identify Israeli products which have Palestinian (or other) alternatives and mobilize for massive consumer boycotts against them;

Mobilize pressure to prevent entry of Israeli products (e.g. put up boxes for public complaints) where local alternatives exist;

Start dialogue with Palestinian companies about ways to support Palestinian national products and expand employment of the Palestinian work force.

Education

- Undertake a review of the Palestinian curriculum to ensure historical accuracy;
- Raise awareness and work with students at schools and universities to spread the culture of boycott;
- Request from the Ministry of Education to urge private schools to stop selling Israeli products in school cafeterias, and not to engage in normalization projects with Israeli organizations.

Media and Public Awareness-Raising

- Pressure Palestinian media to halt all advertisement of Israeli products;
- Organize public awareness campaigns (posters, stickers, etc.) about boycott, and request support from the local media.

Mechanisms for Campaign Building and Promotion

- Form popular boycott committees in all regions and sectors in order to: build public awareness about the importance of the campaign and the criteria for boycott and anti-normalization; initiate action and build a popular culture of boycott; and develop a response to those insisting on normalization;
- Build pressure on PA officials for ending normalization with Israel (end security coordination, rescind Paris Protocol on economic cooperation, etc.);
- Express Palestinian support for struggles in the “global south” (e.g., Africa, South America, Asia), in order to build mutual support.

2. For the Campaign in the Arab World

- Seek cooperation and coordination with anti-normalization committees in the Arab world;
- Lobby for re-activation of the Arab-League boycott committee;
- Raise the profile of BDS in the mainstream Arab media;
- Encourage Arab investors to invest in the Palestinian economy;
- Promote Palestinian products in Arab countries.

3. For the International/Global CampaignStrategy and Message

- Emphasize that the BDS campaign does not only target Israel's economy, but challenges Israel's legitimacy, being a colonial and apartheid state, as part of the international community. Therefore, efforts are needed not only to promote wide consumer boycotts, but also boycotts in the fields of academia, culture and sports;
- The Nakba-60 campaign in 2008 is a campaign for the boycott of Israel, including calling for a boycott of the “Israel at 60” celebrations.

Targets

- Select boycott targets that provide an opportunity for public education about Israel's apartheid regime.

Alliances

As work with the major (potential) allies (e.g., unions, faith-based organizations/churches, political parties) continues, give special attention to:

- Palestinian and other Arab media correspondents in the respective countries: brief them about BDS initiatives and encourage them to report them to audiences in Palestine and the Arab world;
- Support other struggles in the “global south” and struggles of marginalized communities in the “north,” and encourage links with the global BDS campaign;

Coordination

- For the time being, use existing websites (e.g. PACBI) and lists to update about and coordinate global activities and campaigns, until a centralized BDS website can take over that role;
- For the time being, the *International Coordinating Network on Palestine* (ICNP) serves as (symbolic, temporary) network for coordination of the global BDS campaign;
- Participants recommend a special BDS organizers conference to be held in November 2008, in order to formalize and improve the mechanism of global coordination.

Boycott Eden Springs Campaign Update

November 2007 to March 2008, Scotland - The Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations (SCVO) have cancelled the Eden Springs contracts at three of their offices: Edinburgh, Glasgow and Inverness. The Scottish Trades Union Congress (STUC) have removed Eden Springs water coolers from their offices. Edinburgh University students won the debate at their Student's Association General Meeting to cancel the university's Eden Springs contract. Napier University branch of the Education Institute of Scotland (EIS) passed a motion at their AGM to call for a cancellation of the university's Eden Springs contract. A motion will now be raised at EIS Scotland national conference. Caledonian University Students Parliament (student's representative council) voted to cancel Eden Springs contract - with no votes against. UNISON Scotland have removed Eden Springs from their offices, distributes information about the Eden Springs boycott through their water@work campaign and, following motion 53 on Palestine passed at UNISON national conference, supports the campaign to boycott Eden Springs. For more, see: www.scottishpsc.org.uk

Special appeal to Palestine solidarity groups in UK/Europe

Eden Springs Ltd, otherwise known as Mayanot Eden, is trying to raise credit to complete their buy-out of Groupe Danone (<http://www.globes.co.il/serveen/globes/DocView.asp?did=1000278592&fid=1725>). Let us send a message to European banks that any backing they give to this Israeli company will be at a high risk because we do not want Eden Springs in Europe. Let us work together to raise the boycott of Eden Springs across Europe! Contact us at campaign@scottishpsc.org.uk

Debate on Academic Boycott at Ryerson University

28 November 2007 - Toronto, Canada - Students at Ryerson University working through their student union (<http://www.rsuonline.ca>) and Students Against Israeli Apartheid (a campus network of anti-apartheid activists: <http://www.caiaweb.org>) pressured the university administration to hold an open debate on a boycott of Israeli academic institutions. This is the first time that such a debate has been held on a Canadian campus with the explicit support of the university administration, and signals both a major success of the anti-apartheid movement in Canada, as well as a potential turning point in the academic boycott campaign. Students mobilized to pressure

the university administration to hold this debate in response to a letter denouncing the British University and College Union's resolution to open a debate on Academic boycott, which was signed by tens of Canadian university presidents without consulting their universities' students. For a more detailed account of the debate, please see Justin Podur's article at: <http://www.zmag.org/content/showarticle.cfm?SectionID=107&ItemID=14403>

Largest Dutch trade union will increase pressure on Israel

29 November 2007 – The Netherlands – The largest Dutch trade union, FNV ABVAKABO, with over 350,000 members, sent a letter to the Palestinian Health Services Union and Public Services Union to assure the Palestinian trade unions that the union will put pressure on Israel to comply with international law. The planned solidarity conference of FNV ABVAKABO will involve more FNV affiliates and point out to the Dutch government and parliament their responsibility to hold Israel accountable for its non-compliance with international law.

For more, see: http://www.pacbi.org/boycott_news_more.php?id=A642_0_1_0_M

Address by Eddie Makue, General Secretary of the South African Council of Churches, on behalf of the End The Occupation Campaign in South Africa

29 November 2007 – Pretoria, South Africa – [Excerpt] “If Palestinians were inspired enough by our struggle that they called for global support for their struggle, we South Africans had to take up the weapons of struggle and march at their side. If the struggle to abolish apartheid in South Africa was an example of how people of conscience in the international community have historically shouldered the moral responsibility to fight injustice through diverse forms of boycott, divestment and sanctions, then we have no choice but to help shoulder the responsibility to abolish the apartheid that seeks to oppress and destroy the Palestinian people.”

See: http://www.endtheoccupation.org.za/Eddie_Makue_UN_Address.html

Arab states reject proposed UN eco-center for including Israel

5 December 2007, Cairo, Egypt - Arab officials have rejected a United Nations proposal to set up a regional environmental training center in the Middle East because it would include Israel.

See: <http://www.haaretz.com/hasen/spages/931558.html>

Aharon Shabtai, Israeli Poet Says No to both the Turin and Paris Book Fairs

7 December 2007 and 26 February 2008 - Shabtai explained that “the book event, or any other kind of exhibition in which the Israeli State is invited, is not a way to promote peace in the Middle East, and not a way to bring justice to the Palestinians, but only propaganda to give Israel an image of being a liberal and democratic society. A State which maintains an occupation and commits daily crimes against civilians does not deserve to be invited to whichever cultural week. We cannot accept to be part of that. Israel is not a democratic State but an apartheid State. We cannot support that State at all.” He added that “there is collaboration between the European governments and Israel. The Israeli invitation is part of it. Without the help of the United States, and now the help of France, Israel could not continue such a policy against the Palestinians. This help gives Israel the green light to go on attacking and killing the Palestinians, especially in Gaza. It is very sad to see that France, Germany, European countries -which have a history of persecution against the Jews- are taking part in the persecution of the Palestinian and Muslim peoples by Israel.”

For the full interview, see: http://www.pacbi.org/boycott_news_more.php?id=A676_0_1_0_M

Palestinian Delegation Withdraws from Madrid Just Peace Forum Protesting Serious Violations of the Decisions of the International Steering Committee

13 December - Madrid, Spain - The Palestinian civil society delegation from the occupied Palestinian Territory to the Forum for a Just Peace in the Middle East, planned for December 14 to 16 in Madrid, has decided not to participate in the Forum. Coordinators of the delegation learned that due to unprecedented pressure from the Israeli establishment, a substantial Israeli delegation was undemocratically and underhandedly “invited” to participate in the Forum without endorsing the Forum’s Reference Document. This was not only a significant breach of the key rule of participation; it was a contravention of the express will of the overwhelming majority of the International Committee, the decision-making steering committee of the conference.

For more, see: http://www.babelmed.net/Countries/Mediterranean/just_peace.php?c=2862&m=9&l=en

National Day of Action in Canada against Chapters and Indigo

15 December 2007 – Vancouver/Toronto/Montreal, Canada – The National Day of Action to boycott Chapters and Indigo bookstores is in response to their support for the execution of state-sponsored human rights violations in Israel. Pickets were organized to demand that majority shareholders Heather Reisman and Gerry Schwartz formally announce an end to their financial support for the Israeli military.

Letter of Support from Israelis to the United Methodist Church

22 January 2008 - Israel - Over 100 Israeli academics have signed a petition encouraging the United Methodist Church “to divest from companies that enable the occupation to continue, we the undersigned shall applaud your courageous initiative, and fervently hope that it will set an example for many others to follow...”

For the full petition, see: <http://www.petitiononline.com/Israelis/petition.html>

The London School of Economics Union Demands Divestment from Israel

15 January 2008 – England - The London School of Economics Students’ Union (LSESU) noted that 2008 marks the 60th anniversary of the Nakba - the expulsion of the great majority of Palestinian Arabs from their homes and homeland in historic Palestine - and voted overwhelmingly to call on its university and the National Union of Students (NUS) to:

1. Establish an LSESU campaign to lobby the school and NUS to divest from Israel and companies that a) provide military support for or weaponry to support the occupation; b) facilitate the building or maintenance of the illegal annexation wall or the demolition of Palestinian homes, or; c) operate on illegally occupied land and within Jewish-only settlements, with the goal of maintaining the divestment, in the case of said companies, until they cease such practices, and, in the case of Israel, until Israel stops its discriminatory regime and the oppression and colonization of Palestinians;
2. Actively support and work with Palestine solidarity organisations such as Jews for Justice for Palestinians (JfJfP) , BRICUP , Zochrot , ICAHD , and PSC that campaign to stop the occupation of Palestine and to end legalized racial and religious discrimination in Israel;
3. Affiliate our Union to the international campaign to end the siege on Gaza and engage in education campaigns to publicize the injustice of Israel’s discriminatory policies against the Palestinians and its illegal occupation.

To read the full motion, see: http://www.pacbi.org/boycott_news_more.php?id=A665_0_1_0_M

Tariq Ali Boycott Turin Book Fair

5 February 2008 – France – [Excerpt from Tariq Ali's letter] "When I agreed to participate in the Turin Book Fair, which I have done before, I had no idea that the 'guest of honour' was Israel and its 60th birthday. But this is also the 60th anniversary of what the Palestinian call the 'nakba,' the disaster that befell them that year, when they were expelled from their villages, some killed, women raped by the settlers. These facts are no longer disputed. So why did the Turin Book Fair not invite Palestinians in equal numbers? 30 Israeli writers and 30 Palestinian writers (and I promise you they exist and are very fine poets and novelists) might have been seen as a positive and peaceful gesture and a positive debate might have taken place. A literary version of Daniel Barenboim's Diwan Orchestra, half-Israeli, half-Palestinian. Such a move would have brought people together, but no. The cultural commissars know best. I have argued vigorously with some of the Israeli writers visiting the fair on other occasions and would have happily done the same again if conditions had been different. What they decided to do is an ugly provocation."

4th Annual Israeli Apartheid Week (IAW)

IAW is a series of events that ran for the fourth consecutive year in early February 2008, with coordinated events taking place between the 3rd and 18th of February in 25 cities across the USA, Canada, South Africa, Mexico, Norway, UK, and Palestine. The week was launched with a speech given by Dr. Azmi Beshara in Soweto, South Africa which was televised on Al-Jazeera, and broadcast to the audiences of opening night events in the other cities. The week's events included lectures, multimedia events, cultural performance, film screenings, demonstrations, and informational exhibits aimed at raising public awareness about the apartheid character of the Israeli state, the linkages between the Palestinian struggle and local struggles in the different countries in which the week was organized, and pushing forward the campaign for Boycotts, Divestment and Sanctions against the Israeli apartheid regime. More information can be found at <http://www.apartheidweek.org>

New York & London protesters call for Valentine's boycott of Leviev over Israeli Settlements

9 February 2008 – US – Protesters in New York and London called on shoppers to boycott the jewelry store of Lev Leviev because of his support for the construction of Israeli settlements on occupied Palestinian land in violation of international law as well as abuse of marginalized communities in Angola.

Green Party votes for Israel boycott

22 February, England – Delegates of the Green Party in England and Wales agreed to back the BDS campaign launched by Palestinian groups which urge broad boycotts of Israel similar to those imposed on apartheid South Africa.

ISESCO urges Paris Book Fair boycott

27 February 2008 - The Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization has called upon all its 50 member states to boycott the Paris Book Fair. In a statement ISESCO said "the crimes against humanity that Israel is perpetrating in the Palestinian territories... constitute, in themselves, a strong condemnation of Israel, making it unworthy of being welcomed as a guest of honour at an international book fair." The Lebanese Culture Minister Tarek Mitri announced that "Lebanon will not participate this year in protest at the cultural event's organisers' decision to select Israel as guest of honour." Twenty-five Egyptian groups have

announced that they will not take part, as has the Union of Algerian Writers. In Sanaa, the head of the state-run Public Book Authority, Dr Faris al-Saqqaf, told AFP that Yemen would not be participating at the request of the Arab League.

Swiss Air Force Chief Visit to Israel Cancelled

Upon hearing that Swiss Air Force Commander Lieutenant General Walter Knutti was scheduled to head a delegation to visit the Israeli air force from 2 to 4 March, 2008, Collectif Urgence Palestine (<http://urgencepalestine.ch>) and Groupe pour une Suisse sans Armée (<http://www.gssa.ch>) undertook a major mobilization to stop this delegation visit from taking place. As a result of their efforts, the visit was cancelled. contact tobia@gsoa.ch.

Edinburgh University cancels Prosor's talk

7 March 2008 – Scotland - The University of Edinburgh called off a lecture by Israeli Ambassador to Great Britain Ron Prosor as a result of efforts undertaken by the Scottish Palestine Solidarity Campaign (SPSC).

Ilan Pappé refuses to participate in the Salon du livre of Paris

3 March 2008 – [Excerpt from letter of Ilan Pappé] “I cannot myself participate in any direct way in the Salon. I suggest that we all convene a new date outside the days of the Salon so as not be associated with its celebrations of Israel's independence and its total denial of the Palestinian Nakba. However, I understand if « La Fabrique » and other participants would not accept this position, in which I case I will withdraw myself from the events.”

To read the letter, see: http://www.pacbi.org/boycott_news_more.php?id=A684_0_1_0_M

EJJP Calls for Immediate Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions against the Israeli Occupation

3 March 2008 - EJJP is a network of European Jewish groups campaigning against the Israeli occupation from ten European countries, including Germany, Italy, France and the UK. “We advocate for European suspension of the trade association agreement with Israel as a non-violent way to promote Palestinian rights and peace,” stated Dror Feiler, Chairperson of EJJP, and “this is the message we are taking to parliamentarians and politicians. Diplomats talk, but now is the time for action.” For more see: <http://www.ejpp.org/>



Remnants of al-Majdal
Source: www.palestineremembered.com

About the meaning of al-Majdal

al-Majdal is an Aramaic word meaning fortress. The town was known as Majdal Jad during the Canaanite period for the god of luck. Located in the south of Palestine, al-Majdal was a thriving Palestinian city with some 11,496 residents on the eve of the 1948 war. Majdalawis produced a wide variety of crops including oranges, grapes, olives and vegetables. Palestinian residents of the town owned 43,680 dunums of land. The town itself was built on 1,346 dunums.

The town of al-Majdal suffered heavy air and sea attacks during the latter half of the 1948 war in Palestine. Israeli military operations (Operation Yoav, also known as “10 Plagues”) aimed to secure control over the south of Palestine and force out the predominant Palestinian population. By November 1948, more than three-quarters of the city’s residents had fled to the Gaza Strip. Israel subsequently approved the resettlement of 3,000 Jews in Palestinian refugee homes in the town. In late 1949 Israel began to drive out the remaining Palestinian population using a combination of military force and administrative measures. The process was completed by 1951. Israel continues to employ similar measures in the 1967 occupied West Bank, including eastern Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip.

Palestinian refugees from al-Majdal now number over 71,000 persons. Like millions of other Palestinian refugees, Majdalawis are not allowed to return to their homes of origin. Israel opposes the return of the refugees due to their ethnic, national and religious origins. al-Majdal, BADIL’s quarterly magazine, reports about and promotes initiatives aimed at achieving durable solutions for Palestinian refugees and displaced persons based on international law and relevant resolutions of the United Nations.

“Although it is hard to live again with people who affected our life as refugees very badly, I do not mind to go back to Palestine and live with Jewish people, all together on the same land. The most important thing for me is to go back to the land I always dreamed of.” (Rawan, al-Tira)

“The peace process has to be for all Palestinians or there will be no peace.” (Sa’diya, Yaffa)

“The Israeli public suffers like the British and American public because they are misinformed, which makes peace further away than ever.” (Hala, Haifa/Safad)

“Leaving is in the end
the last thing I would do
– that is exactly what
they want from us, the
Palestinians inside – to
leave.”
(Ziad, Saffuryya)

"My dream is to live in a place that I belong to culturally; geographically; politically; to feel a part of it; and to use whatever skills and resources I have as an architect and as a person to make it a free and thriving place. I know that the only place that I can feel and do this is Palestine." (Mahmoud, Suhmata)

“I see myself as a creative teacher because I had many bad teachers. I want to make successful students who will go back to build Palestine. I do not remember Gaza as I was too small but it is not about memory, it is about the heart.” (Son of Sa’diya, Yaffa)