FORCED SECONDARY DISPLACEMENT

Palestinian Refugees in The Gaza Strip, Iraq, Jordan, and Libya
al-Majdal is a quarterly magazine of BADIL Resource Center that aims to raise public awareness and support for a just solution to Palestinian residency and refugee issues.

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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.

Learn more at www.badil.org

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Front Cover: Palestinians displaced in the Gaza Strip, 10 March 2009 (©Ehab Lutayef)

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Palestinian Refugees: a surplus population

Despite 20 years of peace diplomacy, the majority of the Palestinian people remain in forced exile, mainly as refugees and/or stateless persons vulnerable to persecution and renewed displacement in their host countries. The root causes of Palestinian displacement and dispossession remain unaddressed and there is no respect of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people to self-determination, national independence, sovereignty and return to the homes and properties from which they have been forcibly displaced, despite the United Nations's assertion that “full respect and the realization of these inalienable rights of the Palestinian people are indispensable for the solution of the question of Palestine”.

Instead, 20 years of peace diplomacy have resulted in a truncated Palestinian people, more than half of whom continue to be afforded the treatment of an “indistinct mass of refugees” or a “surplus population” expected to find individual solutions and to disappear from the political agenda of the peace makers.
The peace process inaugurated in October 1991 in Madrid was intended to achieve a comprehensive peace between Israel and the PLO and Arab states through the “Land for Peace” formula in which Israel was to make room for a Palestinian state in the 1967 Occupied Palestinian Territory (OPT) in exchange for recognition and the normalization of relations. Whilst the Madrid Conference itself did not produce an agreement, it effectively signaled the end of the first Palestinian intifada (uprising) and set the ball rolling for a process which would subsequently lead to the signing of the Declaration of Principles between Israel and the PLO in 1993, the establishment of the Palestinian Authority (PA) and inauguration of the U.S.-sponsored peace negotiations as the primary vehicle by which Palestinian rights were to be realized.

Despite these negotiations and the positive dynamics they were said to initiate, for Palestinians, the process has meant a growing encroachment of illegal colonial settlements and confiscation of their land, a marked increase in the restrictions of freedom of movement, their confinement in fragmented, bantustan-like “Areas A and B” comprising no more than 40% of the West Bank, the segregation of occupied East Jerusalem, the blockade of the Gaza Strip and the entrenchment of the systematic racial discrimination to which Palestinians are subject both in Israel and the OPT. Israel, on its part, has used the cover of negotiations to establish substantial economic, military and diplomatic relations with numerous Arab states whilst pursuing, in blatant violation of international law, its grand policy of population transfer against the Palestinian people with the aim and effect of altering the demographic composition of the OPT, including occupied East Jerusalem, as well as of areas located within its borders.

As a result, an estimated 129,000 Palestinians in the OPT have been forcibly displaced since 1967, with over 80,000 displaced as a result of the 2008/09 Israeli attack on Gaza. Forcible displacement is ongoing due to Israel’s incessant demolition of Palestinian homes, military operations and other practices aimed at dispossessing and displacing them. Those who have remained steadfast in their homes face a more precarious situation than ever before with communities in the path of the Wall (498,000 in 92 communities), Palestinian Bedouins, Palestinians residing in the Jordan Valley, Eastern Jerusalem, Hebron, Southern Gaza

Children in Gaza struggling for an education in the aftermath of Israel’s 2008/2009 assault. Israel has repeatedly targeted and destroyed Palestinian educational institutions. (© Jon Elmer)
and the Gaza Strip “buffer zone” all at imminent risk of displacement. Moreover, intentionally ambiguous military orders have been issued in the OPT, the vagaries of which provide Israel with a ‘legal’ framework to facilitate the wholesale expulsion of nearly all Palestinians residing in those areas.

Palestinian citizens of Israel too are victims of systematic forced removal from their ancestral lands and places of residence. As the world celebrated the holiday season, Israel spent Christmas time demolishing the homes of Palestinian families in Lydd displacing 67 members of the same family, whilst in the Naqab, the unrecognized Bedouin village of al Araqib, one of dozens of villages in the area slated for demolition, has been destroyed for the 18th times. In addition, Palestinian citizens of Israel face a raft of new discriminatory policies, currently at various stages of the legislative process, which supplement Israel’s apartheid system with features reminiscent of petty Apartheid in South Africa.

For Palestinian refugees, the past 20 years have posed a constant threat to their rights by a diplomatic community focused more on accommodating Israel’s “need” to define itself as an ethnic Jewish state than on the implementation of international law. The political institutions and procedures of the Palestinian Authority (PA) have been developed in such a way that the majority of the Palestinian refugees, those living in exile (as well as Palestinian citizens of Israel, including IDPs) have been left out of the PA’s “development and state-building” project in the OPT. Instead responsibility for assistance, protection and development of the Palestinian refugees has been delegated to the de facto inactive PLO and the international community, i.e., mainly UNRWA, “until a just and agreed solution in accordance with UN resolutions, including UNGA 194 is found”, thereby leaving Palestinian refugees without substantial representation or voice.

The neglect of refugees has been most prominent in relation to refugee exclusion from the peace process, a period during which refugee involvement in the decisions affecting their lives is indispensable. In contrast to many other conflict situations where refugee participation was ensured at the early stages of peace making, no mechanism has been established for the participation of the exiled Palestinians refugees in the peace negotiations since 1991 or their active involvement in the Palestinian body politic since 1994. For
Palestinian refugees, therefore, the peace process has meant no more than the occasional statements of Palestinian leaders which reaffirm the rights of the refugees, while no Palestinian strategy is in place for putting these rights into practice, and no platform is available for effective debate about strategies required for their realization.

For the estimated five million Palestinian refugees exiled to Arab states, the past 20 years have been a continuation of a precarious and uncertain existence. Whilst the three major Arab host states, alongside UNRWA, provide limited and varying access to public services to their Palestinian refugee populations, they do not pursue an active development strategy for Palestinian refugees arguing that this serves to prevent their permanent settlement. Whilst the ostensible purpose of this policy is to “support the Palestinian right to return” by helping to maintain the refugee community as a collective and “protect their national identity”, the consequences are that Palestinian refugee communities in many Arab countries face, often severe, discrimination as host states ignore the provisions of the Arab League's 1965 Protocol on the Treatment of Palestinians (Casablanca Protocol), violate their obligations under customary international law and human rights treaties to which they are signatories, and do not abide by the standards of the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, which most Arab states have not endorsed.

As the previous and current issues of al-Majdal show, such contempt for refugee rights has often paved the way for the forced expulsion of Palestinian refugees, and for their abuse by Arab governments as pawns in the achievement of regional geopolitical interests. In this issue, we continue to look at incidents of forced secondary displacement in/from Arab host states, including the plight of Palestinian refugees from Iraq now living in Chile, an interview with Bassem Sirhan regarding the expulsion of Palestinians from Libya in 1994-1995 and an interview with lawyer Anis Qassem regarding the complex legal status of Palestinian refugees living in Jordan and policies that lead to their displacement. Included in this issue is also a photostory from the occupied and blockaded Gaza Strip about the ongoing displacement of Palestinians caused by Israel's 2008/09 military assault as well as a special poetry feature covering struggles against forced displacement, colonialism and oppression.

The tragic incidents and stories of Palestinian refugees covered in these two issues of al-Majdal have occurred mainly because the United Nations and its members have lacked the political will to challenge Israel’s policy of forced population transfer and to protect Palestinian refugees as part of a people entitled to self-determination and return. Irrespective of the fact, that the UN has long recognized these rights, little has changed since May 1949, when the UN General Assembly, in response to U.S. pressure, resolved 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 welcomed Israel’s membership in the United Nations in a step which undermined parallel UN-led efforts for refugee return and comprehensive peace between Israel and Arab states.

The marginal importance placed by the international community on protecting the rights of Palestinian refugees in the context of peace making is evident in the limited powers afforded to UN agencies mandated to provide assistance and protection them. The UN Conciliation Commission for Palestine (UNCCP), the agency established in 1948 to provide protection for Palestinian refugees and facilitate comprehensive peace, has long been de-activated and de-funded; it merely publishes a one-page annual report stating that “it has nothing new to report” and neither UNRWA nor UNHCR have been mandated to search for just and durable solutions for all Palestinian refugees. In a situation where the UN Security Council and dominant UN member states do not promote their rights to return and self-determination, this means that Palestinians are without an effective agency to provide protection of these rights.
The staggering balance sheet of 20 years of failed peace making highlights the need for a new, rights-based approach that puts protection of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, including its refugees, and Israeli accountability, at center-stage. As under Apartheid South Africa, no progress can be achieved as long as Israel's oppressive regime is permitted to prevail and the peace process will not succeed so long as the focus is on which subset of rights Israel is willing to concede to Palestinians rather than how Palestinians’ inalienable rights are to be realized. The pieces included in the document section at the end of this issue of al-Majdal, including an update on recent achievements of the Palestinian civil society-led Campaign for Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) against Israel until it abides by international law, illustrate ongoing efforts in this regard.

Endnotes: See online version at: http://www.badil.org/al-majdal/
Impunity continues to prevail in the Occupied Palestinian Territory (OPT), a state of affairs clearly evident in the international response to Israel’s military offensive in the occupied Gaza Strip between 27 December 2008 – 18 January 2009 in which more than 1,400 Palestinians and 14 Israelis were killed. 83% of the Palestinian victims were Geneva-Convention protected civilians, most of them Palestinian refugees who had been forcibly displaced from their homes and properties to the Gaza Strip as a result of Israel's ethnic cleansing operation (the Nakba) of 1948.

Two years on from Israel's military assault on the occupied Gaza Strip, domestic investigations have failed to meet international standards; those responsible for war crimes and crimes against humanity have not been prosecuted, and no reparations have been provided to the victims. This section will give an overview of the Goldstone Report, explaining how it was initiated, the processes through which it has passed, and how the findings of the report can be taken forward to ensure justice for the victims.

The Findings of the Goldstone Report

During the attack on Gaza, the UN Human Rights Council (HRC) passed resolution number A/HRC/S-9/L.1 which condemned Israeli aggressions and called on the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights to report on alleged war crimes which occurred during the Israeli attack. On 3 April 2009, the HRC established an international independent Fact Finding Mission with the mandate “to investigate all violations of international human rights law and international humanitarian law that might have been
committed at any time in the context of the military operations that were conducted in Gaza during the period from 27 December 2008 and 18 January 2009, whether before, during or after.”

On 29th September 2009, the UN Fact Finding Mission on the Gaza Conflict, composed of South African Judge Richard Goldstone and his 3 person team, submitted its report to the Human Rights Council (12th session). The “Goldstone Report” entitled Human Rights in Palestine and Other Occupied Arab Territories: Report of the United Nations Fact Finding Mission on the Gaza Conflict confirmed that both Israeli forces and Palestinian armed groups had committed grave violations of international law, including war crimes and possible crimes against humanity.

The Goldstone Report documented Israel’s attacks on UN facilities, mosques and schools and the use of Palestinians as human shields. It also gave details of particularly horrific incidents, such as one in the Zeitoun district of Gaza in which Israeli soldiers gathered over a hundred members of the Samouni family into one house before opening fire with rockets and artillery shells, killing 29 members of the family and injuring dozens more. Alongside the documentation of killings, the report also verified reports of the wanton Israeli destruction of civilian infrastructure and private property in Gaza including the razing of a chicken farm and 31,000 chickens and the destruction of one of the raw sewage lagoons of the Gaza Waste Water Treatment plant, leading to the outflow of 200,000 cubic meters of raw sewage onto the neighboring farmland.

The Goldstone Report also found that, in the lead up to the Israeli military assault on Gaza, Israel imposed a blockade amounting to collective punishment and carried out a systematic policy of progressive isolation and deprivation of the Gaza Strip. During the military operation, houses, factories, wells, schools, hospitals, police stations and other public buildings were destroyed, with families, including the elderly and children, left living amid the rubble of their former dwellings long after the attacks ended, as no reconstruction has been possible due to the continuing blockade. Significant trauma, both immediate and long-term, has been suffered by the population of Gaza. The Gaza military operations were directed by Israel at the people of Gaza as a whole, in furtherance of an overall policy aimed at punishing the Gaza population, and in a deliberate policy of disproportionate force aimed at the civilian population.
The Roadmap to Accountability

The significance of the Goldstone Report's findings is the unprecedented “Roadmap of Accountability” which sets clear guidelines for achieving justice for war crimes victims. The Report noted with concern that the repeated publication of human rights reports and the lack of subsequent follow-up had created a situation which “emboldens Israel and her conviction of being untouchable” and had created a “justice crisis” for Palestinians, and committed itself to providing a framework to ensure that its findings were followed up on.

To do this, the Goldstone Report gave Israel and the Palestinian authorities six months to conduct domestic investigations into war crimes and possible crimes against humanity committed during Israel's assault and to prosecute those responsible. If after 6 months these domestic investigations did not meet the international standards of independence and impartiality, then the Goldstone report recommends a number of alternative avenues for ensuring accountability by calling on:

- UNHRC and the UN Security Council to submit the report for investigation to the ICC
- UN General Assembly to establish a reparation fund to provide compensation for Palestinians who had suffered damage or loss as a result of the Israeli assault
- UN General Assembly to ask the Government of Switzerland to convene a conference of the high contracting parties to the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949 on measures to enforce the Convention in the Occupied Palestinian Territory
- UN General Assembly to ask the UN Security Council to report on the measures taken to ensure accountability for serious violations of international humanitarian law and human rights and to consider what other action it might wish to take to ensure justice, such as that provided by UN Resolution 377, Uniting for Peace.
- State parties to the Geneva Conventions of 1949 to start criminal investigations in national courts, using universal jurisdiction, and where warranted, to arrest and prosecute perpetrators, significantly strengthening the legitimacy of lawsuits brought by Palestinian victims against Israeli suspects in courts abroad.

In addition to activating mechanisms for international justice, the Mission also recommends a number of other practical recommendations as a result of their findings including:

- A recommendation that the UN General Assembly promote an urgent discussion on the future legality of the use of certain munitions referred to in the report, in particular white phosphorous, flechettes and heavy metal such as tungsten.
- Calling on the Government of Israel to end the blockade on Gaza, to review its rules of engagement to bring them in line with international law, release political prisoners and cease the restrictions on Palestinian travel in the West Bank and between the West Bank, the Gaza Strip, East Jerusalem and the outside world.
- Calling on all Palestinian parties to respect international law
- Recommending that international law and human rights assume a central role in internationally-sponsored peace initiatives.

What has happened to the Goldstone Report and what are the next steps?

After its release on 29th September 2009, a vote on the report's findings was due to come up for discussion at the 12th session of the Human Rights Council on October 2nd 2009 but was deferred at
the request of the PLO/PA, under heavy international pressure. At the time BADIL and a number of other human rights organizations issued a statement entitled: *Justice delayed is Justice Denied* which condemned the decision of the Palestinian leadership to delay the vote and thereby put political considerations before the pursuit of justice for the victims of Israeli crimes. This intervention was part of a wider grassroots opposition to the PLO's decision which eventually lead to the PLO, on 11th of October 2009, to ask for the *Goldstone Report* to be brought before a special session of the UNHRC. At its 12th Special Session on October the 16th, the UNHRC resumed debate of the Report passing Resolution A/HRC/S-12/16 which endorsed the report and condemned Israeli actions in the West Bank, Gaza and East Jerusalem as well as criticizing Israel for failing to cooperate with the UN mission.

As a result, the Goldstone Report was then brought before the General Assembly which passed resolution A/Res/64/107 endorsing the report of the UNHRC, requesting that the UN Secretary General transmit the Goldstone Report to the Security Council, calling for independent inquiries by both Palestinians and Israelis and asking that the UN Secretary General report back within 3 months on the progress of the implementation of the resolution. The resolution also repeated the recommendation made in the Goldstone Report, that the Government of Switzerland, as the depository of the Geneva Convention reconvene a Conference of High Contracting Parties to the Fourth Geneva Convention to discuss measures to enforce the Convention in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. Support for the Goldstone Report and its implementation was again affirmed on 26th February 2010 by another UN General Assembly Resolution which reiterated the demands of the previous resolution and asked the Secretary General to again report, within 5 months, on the progress made towards the implementation of the resolution. The demand for accountability was reaffirmed by another UNHRC resolution, Resolution 13/9, which called for the establishment of an independent commission of human rights experts to review the progress made in implementing the recommendations of the Goldstone Report.

At its Fifteenth Session, the UNHRC received the report by the independent committee of legal experts which concluded that domestic investigations, on both sides, had failed to meet international standards of impartiality and promptness. The committee also criticized Israel for its lack of cooperation with the committee in its investigations, for ignoring the testimony of Palestinian witnesses and for failing to conduct any serious investigation into the conduct of the war. BADIL, as part of its work in the Human Rights Council of Palestine, insisted that international criminal justice be pursued and called on the UN Security Council to refer the situation to the ICC and reminded all states of their obligation to investigate and prosecute those suspected of perpetrating grave breaches of the Geneva Convention.

In response to the experts report, the Human Rights Council adopted a resolution, drafted by the PA/PLO, which once more extended the mandate of the experts' committee to report about the progress of the domestic investigation undertaken by Israel and the Palestinian authorities and failed to call for the activation of the international accountability mechanisms as recommended in the Goldstone Report. At this stage, the question of whether Israel's can be held accountable for crimes committed against the occupied and blockaded Palestinian people of Gaza will be answered in March 2011, when the Human Rights Council will decide in its seventeenth session whether to request action by the UN General Assembly and/or the Security Council. Palestinian and international human rights organizations, including BADIL, are calling for public pressure on all states, as well as the PA/PLO, to support a Human Rights Council resolution which affirms support for international accountability.
Calls for Public Action

- Raise public awareness about the lack of access to justice by the Palestinian people and the need to hold Israel accountable to international law in domestic courts abroad, as well as in the United Nations system.
- Inform and lobby decision makers to support international accountability mechanisms, as well as the rapid convening by the Government of Switzerland of a Conference of the High Contracting Parties to the Fourth Geneva Convention, which will determine ways to enforce Israel's respect of the Convention in the occupied West Bank, including Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip.
- Raise awareness and take action to end Israel's illegal blockade of the Gaza Strip.

For further links to BADIL statements and relevant UN documents please visit the BADIL website: http://www.badil.org/topics/goldstone/goldstone_report.htm
Special Poetry Feature

The following are some of the pieces contributed by various poets and writers from around the world related to the theme of the Palestinian Nakba.

Canto Divino

by Nathalie Handal

à ma mère
șe se 'l vero è vero'
-Dante, The Divine Comedy

Paradiso

Cantos
My uncle tells me he could hear silence crossing itself in deep song He says the tilting sky is like crushed pearls in a farmer’s sack ... That we can’t rush love in Jaffa, Haifa, Nazareth or Bethlehem we have to wait for heart-light to take madness back to its genesis ... Like we wait for white rose & sunlight sleep & lust wait for the snow filled hills to shine the longing hours like a wife waiting to be touched hard ...
My uncle tells me
we keep the darkest passages
of our poems in a room we make ours,
where a mysterious light
rests at the bottom of a curtain
like a canvas God delivers,
where lovers ask each other to kneel
to hide tobacco in someone else’s pocket,
let the fire they built die out slowly
like the slow movement of spirit
announcing where it has come from
...

It is the way glory moves here, he says
we don’t have to remember
what lies ahead, nor what we have to cross,
all roads are ours
...

It is the kind of home
where you can hide behind the only thing
you ever want to say
...

It is the place
that knows dream intimately
and when the vase falls & breaks,
we still walk away with flowers
...

Just imagine what we want to imagine,
just imagine berries against small stone walls
just imagine which door will open where,
which lips will kiss whom, which dress will be worn by her,
just imagine the gazelles, the seahorses waiting,
just imagine her freckled face against her lover’s
...

And her lover is suddenly found dead
a cigarette still lit on his lips,
a dictionary of mishaps in his hands,
a basket of feathers,
he refuses to die on the unpaved road,
that’s how she finds him,
still holding on to the clusters of wildflowers,
to the shadows that have abandoned their tales,
the language of birds mocking him,
the dream-hymn, the breath meditating
on what exile might mean, the spiders
covering his back,
that’s how she finds him,
coming to her quietly
quietly leaving her quietly
as the first tank passes by
as if they were not there

I wonder if my uncle is her lover
And I hear her scream:
La gloria di colui che tutto move
/ è / l’amor che move il sole e l’altra stelle

But there is an apocalypse in our garden,
paradise caught in a voice unknown to us:
How shall we sing the Lord’s Song in a strange land?

Our keys, knobs, even our doors are gone.
How shall we sing the Lord’s Song in a strange land?

Our villages have new names,
our owls sold.
How shall we sing the Lord’s Song in a strange land?

Our sleep shorter, our gaze
in the attic.
How shall we sing the Lord’s Song in a strange land?

Our night covered with fingerprints and shadowboxes.

How shall we sing the Lord’s Song in a strange land?
The slowness of our maidens, the song
and hard flesh against a rock of ice gone.

How shall we sing the Lord’s Song in a strange land?
The stale bread we never ate, the pond
we forgot to name elsewhere.

How shall we sing the Lord’s Song in a strange land?
Where are we?

Inferno

The Circles of Hell

Circle I 1948

In the April of our burial, bleeding
what is left of our death, what is left of us, like wet rags against earth
that beg song for mercy, beg heart for beat, beg truth for rebirth,
then look right in the beast’s eyes
and scream his name
which is now ours as well,
demand to show us our face
which they hide in their hands,
demand to show us our soul
which is caught in their prophesy:
Per me si va nella città dolente
Per me si va nell’eterno dolore,
per me si va tra la perduta gente

Now we share a common grief.

By the fire-gate I see a poet,
ask, why do you sit drawing a valley of butterflies,
where are your words?
In paradise.

And where are we now?
Hell is everywhere here here here...
And heaven?
It’s buried under.
Where are you going?
Leave me alone.
I can’t.
Jerusalem.
Can I come?
There is no deliverance
anywhere in the deepest pit of hell.
Will they take our soul?
Take the Diwan, and let’s follow
the horse.

Circle II 1967
Through the years,
I write my initials
to guide me back
but hell burns its entrances & exits
I hold on to my tinted photographs,
my fleur-de-lis,
negatives of shaved sheep
and one naked woman
with a captain’s hat
We take a beaten road,
see a crossed-eyed boy
a field of burnt hay
we meet high bidders and merchants,
their roots deep in prayer
like a thorn growing outside us.
Damn, what is this all about,
this land of scarecrows and webs

The poet tells me greet the old lady,
look deep into her eyes for the tulip.
The poet tells me greet the leopard,
who pulls out his tongue and licks my cheek.
The poet tells me greet the lion,
who looks at me, sees a labyrinth with
black cats glaring
The poet tells me greet the wolf,
before I answer, the wolf has gone
with what little we have left.
I ask the poet if that’s what exile means?
Exile is turning off one light after another
after another after another after another.

Circle III 1987
Another stone, like music like the maiden
moving wildly in our dream-night
like freedom like poets hunting for magic
like a hazy sky sewing eighty seven colors
around God’s light like love that
imagines
what it looks like when its hoping like I imagine you stripping or is it you who
imagines me,
like the thick paint on my shirt, like the archers
with rip fruit in their mouths, their
patiotic songs torn & stepped on, like the pulse
of a runner
approaching the finishing line, and the
rainbow
losing itself on the water, this is what we feel,
and before we can find the way to one
another’s lips,
our open umbrellas are taken away,
and love
imagines what it looks like when its aching,
when its filled with brooms not birds,
when is yearns, when its porcelain
angels are shattered
into a thousand pieces, when at the end
of freedom, all love finds
is more circles, and a row of empty sits.

Circle IV 2000
The mold on our body means nothing
to us.
We are closed to God.
I say to you, come closer
Say to the ocean, go farther
Say to you, go far
But no one’s paying attention
This time our stones have lost their omen.
This time the stain of our lovemaking
on the Prussian blue pillows, the
shadow dimming in a ode to departure,
the blessing we didn’t wait for,
means nothing to us.
In this new century
we count wings caught in hearts
and wonder what we will
find at the foot of the hill?

Circle V 2007
That I am not frightened even if
I’ve seen in their eyes
men who sink themselves,
even if when I place my hand
on the stone floor
hear footsteps falling from chests
hear notes trying to come out of
tangled strings,
a 5 a.m. cry
like the beating of pain with a stick.
Where are we?
What falls on either side
of our mouth: the lie half-broken, or
wrestling phantoms,
a way to praise the dark
and repent sin after sin after sin
after sin after sin after sin.
Where are we?
I hear:
We have left our shadows on grass.
I hear:
The Guardian of Butterflies
Under the snow
the quiet chaos of shaken waters
the old keys of Jerusalem
never rusting,
the voice hurrying to find
if God holds doubt,
understands the
unspoken earth, the hums
of small echoes.
It is red hour
we listen to preludes,
bathe, wipe ourselves
with the same towel, my hair too long for them to reach, my dreams lingering between burials somewhere guts hang while the enemy plays drums and I pretend to guard butterflies.

The Opera Singer

It is canto divino. A paradise that holds legend on its breath. That keeps the wheat fields yellow. The olive farms growing. But I can’t seem to find sunlight anymore. Peace has no hands nor feet. I sing freedom. Lose sight of the meteor. The smell of coffee. I walk through the fence.

The Priest

I am not a stranger pretending to be stranger. I enter the gospels and the verses of the Koran. I enter longing and find promise, enter promise and find despair enter despair and find exile enter exile and realize I left my stare in the last drop of water.

The Lantern Keeper

Where are the lanterns? The family albums. The windows. The addresses. We write once. We sleep in the half hour. We find time to wander. We exhaust love affairs in hotel rooms. We exhaust slogans. The dew breaker has gone. The coffin maker has gone. The bodies are nameless. The bones weeping. I am no longer a lantern keeper. Instead I recite telegrams I memorized when there was still light, and I knew where I was:

From Sumaiya to Ghassan:

Tell him I understand He had to fight a war. It was urgent

Tell him I still have his photo Drinking coffee with Mahmoud Playing Beethoven Thinking of Rachel

Tell him I have his quilt One thousand and ten threads Just say that I don’t Know how to weave

Tell him I opened the window yesterday Saw the a woman selling Cherries and apricots His favorite Her feet swollen Tell him I found the verse He has been looking for Its starts with Salaam Ends with Salaam Just one word

Tell him I forgive him For forgetting Who I am

From Ahmad to Moureed:

I saw you yesterday. Saw you coming With a red hat and something in your hands. It was you. I am certain. Who else would bow to the wind, wave to an old locksmith. It was you coming to announce something, deliver something. You looked different no longer like grandfather, or Ahmad no longer like Abu Waleed or like Ummi. You looked unafraid knew you were coming to say victory coming to recite

your favorite poem of Eluard and count the acres that has always been yours, coming to a village where every candle stands for a hero you name silently. I knew you would come one day to sing deep song, be close to the sun and the winter and the rooftops and the gardens and the groves and the trees.

We prepared a long table for you but they divided the table divided the table cloth divided our apricot jam our flowers our beds our neighbors they divided our house and even our cemeteries. I saw you yesterday. Saw you coming but that was before I saw the wall.

Circle VI Beyond

Shame
I won’t be here Shame Since the white pigeons will be arriving and the minaret will be glowing, since the sky will be but stars houses will have doorbells and the windows will be covered with dream-mists.

Shame
I won’t be here Shame Since the man who told me about his hallucinations will come to the teahouse to bring me his tarboush, the graying photo of his mother.

Shame
I won’t be here
Shame
Since kites will be flying everywhere
on the Strip, yesterday in darkness,
since the seaport will be open,
the waters clear, and the shadows of
men in trenches,
of children with candles in blackouts
will be over.

Shame
I won’t be here
Shame
When finally this will no longer be
truth:
peacocks turning wild in a man’s
despair’s,
a woman sleepwalking into her life,
agony filling hands with lines & loss,
fields closing onto themselves
like dying wings,
a lover seeing another lover
disappearing into someone else,
the long passages of books
keeping men living in their death.

Shame I won’t be here,
an indigo painting will be hung
the coffee shop will be empty
the beekeeper will bring
forty-eight grams of honey-powder,
the roads will lead to everywhere
but no one will remember how to drive.

Shame
I won’t be here
When you come to bring me roses
and it’s not me you find,
when in one hour one afternoon
Mahmoud will hand me one coin
tell me one last time the tale
of one winter he climbed
sixty flights of stairs to have
one glance of his home and
of the child in him staring at him.

Shame you won’t find me.
You will ask, have you seen her?
You will stop to see if
I am catching sins between roof
antennas,
crossing alleys of urine,
hiding from pollen behind chapel doors.
You will search through the valleys of
black maps
under the horse’s breath
under the jasmine trees
under the claws of wolves
in the refugees tombs
in the hay stacks that didn’t burn
in the hush of a dove
by the stream far from the cypress
groves
in the swan’s reverie and under the
joker’s hat.
You will even meet Timaeus who will
tell you
“the soul returns to its own star,
from which he believes it to have been
separated
when nature gave it for a form.”
Hopeful, you will think, but shame no
will listen
for everyone here dies waiting.
Shame you will not find me.
You will look one last time through the
desert’s grief,
in your mother’s house, under her
mattress
and the embroideries she refused
finished,
in the heart of the rival and under the
sleeves of
You will even go to death but death
will not wait, shame.

Shame
I won’t be here when you find me.
And you poet, will you be here?
I won’t,
but they won’t either.

What will be left—
A lonely prayer
An abyss
A land of broken glass
A closet of bells
Bones between the cracks of wood
like an overture trying to play
cucurrucucu pa lo ma...?

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**Purgatorio**

Canto

An undisturbed hush between us,
Eternity is close.
Si mi ricorda / 
ch’io vidi le due luci benedette, / 
pur come batter d’occhi si concorda, con le parole mover le fiammette.
“I remember to have seen the two blessed lights,
just as winking eyes keep time together,
move with the words their little flames.”

Move with their silence a canto divino: there will be there will be
sawfa ya koun sawfa ya koun.

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**Endnotes:** See online version at:
http://www.badil.org/al-majdal/
Yaffa

For my Teta

by Remi Kanazi

Whence you arrived upon these Commonwealth shores
Had you become versed
In the scores upon scores
Of injustices committed through introduced laws

No doubt you’ve read what the Lonely Planet said
That should you venture through Redfern you’re better off dead
But where are the Kangaroos, the Aborigines and Koalas?
And it’s ‘Murri’ country (not Queensland) from where come our Bananas

Bondi... is NOT the only tourist hotspot
For we’ve got the most beaches on the planet to choose
It’s mainly the Southern Sydney ones you’ll bound to find abuse
But if you’re looking for ‘iconic Australiana’ you’ll be amused

Your passport information will only ever state
That you’re welcomed in the ‘lucky country’
While others have had to wait
Because ‘others’ wear head dress and don’t even drink beer
And others may bed each other and ‘they’ we consider QUEER

Let’s get it straight, if you fart you’re a mate
If you’re devoid of social conscience... you’re in the gate
There are two types of people we really don’t want to buy
Those who are black and those who ask “why”?

Welcome to AUSFAILURE

Adam Hill is a Sydney based visual / performing artist and Educator who is celebrating a decade of solo art practice. Born in Western Sydney, Adam is genealogically connected to the Aboriginal peoples of Mid-North Coast, (Dhungatti Country) Australia. Adam is widely collected as a contemporary painter and has toured internationally both solo and accompanying dancers as a performer of the Yidaki. Adam continues to oppose Colonial Rule either on the continent of his ancestors or anywhere. Adam wholeheartedly supports the plight of his Palestinian brothers, sisters, aunts and uncles.

Remi Kanazi is a Palestinian-American poet and writer based in New York City. He is the co-founder of the political website, PoeticInjustice.net. His political commentary, which primarily focuses on Palestine, has been featured in numerous print and online publications. He recently appeared in the New York Arab-American Comedy Festival and has been regularly featured on the Al Jazeera English program, The Listening Post.
For Two Friends Murdered

by Michael Burton

A white bird
flying swallow-lightly through dark pillars
gives my soul the strength it needs.

Remembering my beloved
singing as the light falls softly
fills my heart with hope.

The knives and guns of this world’s wickedness
seem at times to be a force
in which all good
is utterly destroyed.

But love endures
and is the greater force.
We need to remember
when we feel overwhelmed by knives and guns.

The goodness that I still see shining in your eyes
cannot be taken from the world;
it shines on still.

This poem arose after the slaying of Alexis Tioseco and his girlfriend Nita on September 1st, 2009 in Manila. Alexis was an inspirational Filipino film critic who supported indigenous Filipino films and had dared to take a stand against the mainstream establishment.

Wall

by Dr. Max Lane

Ugly, dirty, casting cold shadows this wall.
Stealing land, stealing rights, stealing life
Not damming, but provoking strife

It zigs and zags and curls and snakes
Land and home and farm, it takes and takes
A moat for fortresses defending wealth
Perched on hilltops denizens of stealth

A people sliced and carved and chopped
Olive trees and leaders, both severed and lopped
Tears and screams are the traffic’s herald
Funeral marches, cars and trucks, remember the felled.

Black and scratched adorned with razor wire
They are the walls of a hearth where burns a blazing fire
Blank is the countenance along the fenced space
Deep are the furrows and scars cut into the mourner’s face.

The wall is cement, brick, wire and steel
Built by hand and machines who do not feel.
The wall is oppression, death and a dead mind’s greed
Tear it down with the strength that freedom’s spirit does breed.
Where the Magnolia Tree Blooms

by Valerie Khayat

Nothing calls.
Here, now
there is still home for me
here now.
I cannot go so easily
My heart cannot extend
the way it once did
to the same lengths.
Goodbyes are more frequent
and always more difficult to perform
heavier with finitude
and embraces, more narrow
to suffocate the stinging of departure

In the evening, tiny windows overflow with golden light
Letting out sounds of the everyday hiding life
a woman cleaning dishes, a young girl singing to the radio
a grandfather spoon feeding his grandchild on a balcony
While a bell tolls in the distance
in the garden it is the blue hour

This year, I turned twenty-five
here
She gave me the first gift he ever gave her
1945, Alessandria, she was nineteen
I have learned there is nothing to conquer
Not hearts, not lands
Only one’s silence

Paths get broken and mended again redirected
My body inhabits one place
my blood, many

A Tamil Mother’s Laugh

by Bhagavadas Sriskanthadas

It’s not a skeleton on stilts!
The stride of a scrawny woman.
Anguish engraved on her face.
Urgency gives gait purpose.
Swiftly, she reaches Chemmani*.
A cemetery filled with ‘mass graves’.
Her son rests here with other ‘terrorists’.
She laughed!

An arch at a distance.
A raven offers a harsh cry.
A sentry post; hidden by sand bags.
She turns and briskly walks.
Direction different though path the same.
Ancient temple in her sight again.
Head failed to tilt, sign of disrespect!
Here once she prayed; made offerings.
Not now!
She laughed!

She knew soldiers kidnapped her son.
Tortured, killed and dumped at Chemmani.
A pantheon of deities remain listless.
Like the vicious state.
A dereliction of duty!
She laughed!

*Name of a place where a cemetery, known for mass graves, is located in northern Sri Lanka.

Valerie Khayat is a performing poet/singer-songwriter and a graduate student in Media Studies at Concordia University. Valerie has been an active presence since 2004 in the artistic community from folk to poetry/spoken word taking part in various events, many in connection to non-profit and grassroots organizations. In 2007 she released her first book of poetry, The Road to Vesper, and her first full-length CD Resonance in blue.

Bhagavadas Sriskanthadas is a writer, poet and actor who writes in both English and Tamil. Also writes for newspapers and journals in English and Tamil. Has acted in plays, performed in Sydney, Canberra and Colombo.
The Narcicyst, or Yassin Alsalman is The Iraqi-Canadian MC. He seeks solace in the rhythm and the rhyme, producing impeccably-crafted and stirring songs using Soul, Middle Eastern Funk, and boom bap Hip-Hop as sonic touchstones. In the process, The Narcicyst has become known as “an emcee’s emcee”, garnering national and international attention for his provocative stances on cultural demonization, war, love and justice. He is currently featured in a lead role in City of Life as an actor, and is working on a follow-up album to his critically acclaimed independent album. He is also a published author and poet, releasing a book on Arab Identity “Fear of an Arab Planet” and an upcoming novel.

Danny Gardner was born in Tasmania in 1953 and is a novelist, poet and freelance journalist specializing in sport, travel, art and history. He has lived in England and the US, and been domiciled in Sydney since 1982. He has had numerous poems and articles published in Australian newspapers, magazines and anthologies and read his work extensively to live audiences in Great Britain and the United States. He has written two other novels; the Green Diary, and Beyond his Point. This poem was first published in Live Wires – Live Poets Press, 1997.
Salaam, Shalom
Shalom, Salaam
Don’t show me maps
and border plans
First set me free, untie my hands

Salaam, Shalom
Shalom, Salaam
What do we tell an unborn child
about the world he’ll grow to find?

Salaam, Shalom. I’m human too
Shalom, Salaam. I’m just like you

My hands - stretched out -
await your hands,
not some handouts
wrapped in kind words

Salaam, Shalom
Let’s talk some more,
but while we talk, please break the chains

Salaam, Shalom
Shalom, Salaam
By that far land we both hold dear,
let’s take an oath; let’s make it clear:
There’ll be no slaves and masters there

Ehab Lotayef is a Canadian poet of Egyptian origin. His latest collection “To Love a Palestinian Woman” was published by TSAR (www.tsarbooks.com) in 2010.
New Years Leaving Egypt

by Andy Young

When that war started
we were standing on the street
outside the coffee shop.

Everyone stopped to stare
at the television bolted
above the roasting coals.

Hands hacked the air,
the steam of tea,
and the ع, the letter
I can’t say, thickening
around us: it comes
from the place that closes
when we choke, a sound
like someone calling out
from under a fallen wall—

The next day, you took me
to the airport, pointed
out the prison trucks
on Abu Abbas Street,
the riot police sporting stylish
berets and effective batons.

I pictured you returning
alone, what might
happen in the weeks
before you came home
to me, blinked hard
as you translated the paper
where your president grinned
from the front page,
shaking hands with the leaders
as if to say it’s a deal; my president
somewhere behind the makers
sinking his seal into wax.

The next page: tiny bodies
with smashed heads cleaned
and wrapped in simple white.

In another shot
a dozen or more
lined up like comb tines,
stretching to the frame’s edges
in fabrics bright as packages,
elaborate scrawl of supplication
fastened at the middles and heads—they will recede as I pass over
Europe to land in America
where I will not hear the ع
which means eye—
doesn’t smoke look delicate
rising above the buildings,
from the distance of the seat’s
small screen? Phosphorous
whitens the plumes, sprays
sparks of fire in tidy fountains…

my sky would explode eight hours
before yours if
the night were not
called off

Mohammed Mohsen

Redone

By Mohammed Mohsen

Ripples in your shadow
Each time my hands erupt
As I sail ships from ice
Towards capitols
Sunk in between metal and petal
Yet to conjugate a few of the eternities
Where even beasts claim a will for love
As prayers drain each of the waves
Sea by sea
My blood is a red bird
Whirring
Somewhere
Beyond earth and bullet
Take my anchor and descend
The void deepest of your absence
Before I get to dissect the cloud
A pronoun in limbo.

The crack on the forehead
Of a grandmother
To the sweat of her daughter
Do remember that olive tree
Torn from the classic youth of a father
Do remember
That suspended tree
A wounded shrine where history
gathers
Each time the sky blinks
I die at a poem
Only to born as another, words wiser

Mohammed Mohsen (Third generation refugee from al-Lydd) is a Toronto based visual artist. His current art work explores issues of apathy and empathy through videogame based installation.
Palestinian Refugees in Jordan and the Revocation of Citizenship

Interview with Anis F. Kassim by Hazem Jamjoum

HJ: What legal status was afforded Palestinians who came under Jordanian control after the 1948 Nakba?

AK: On 19 May 1948, the Jordanian army entered the area of central Palestine that the Zionist forces were unable to occupy, and began the process of legally incorporating central Palestine into the Jordanian Kingdom. As part of this process, on 20 December 1949, the Jordanian Council of Ministries amended the 1928 Citizenship Law such that all Palestinians who took refuge in Jordan or who remained in the western areas controlled by Jordan at the time of the law’s entry into force, became full Jordanian citizens for all legal purposes. The law did not discriminate between Palestinian refugees displaced from the areas that Israel occupied in 1948 and those of the area that the Jordanian authorities renamed the “West Bank” in 1950. On one hand, this citizenship was forced upon the Palestinians who did not really have much of a say in the matter. On the other, this was a welcome move because it saved those Palestinians the hardship of living without citizenship.

HJ: How was the process for the revocation of citizenship complex?

AK: First of all, I should note that the law itself has not been officially amended, so what I am about to describe is still what is officially in effect today. First of all, the Jordanian Constitution, adopted in 1952, states that citizenship is a matter to be regulated by a law, and the Jordanian Citizenship Law was indeed...
adopted in 1954 replacing that of 1928 and its amendment. According to this law, it is possible to revoke the citizenship of a Jordanian citizen who is in the civil service of a foreign authority or government. The citizen must be notified by the Jordanian government to leave that service and, if the citizen does not comply, the Council of Ministries is the body with the authority that is able to decide to revoke his citizenship. Even if the Council does decide to revoke the citizenship, this decision must then be ratified by the King, and even then, the citizen whose citizenship was revoked has the right to challenge the Council of Ministries’ decision in the Jordanian High Court, and it is this court’s decision that is binding and final. These procedures are being completely ignored when the citizenship of a Jordanian of Palestinian origin is revoked.

**HJ:** Did the status of Palestinians in Jordan change after the 1967 War with the Israeli occupation of the West Bank?

**AK:** No. their status remained as Jordanian citizens.

**HJ:** When did the differentiation between Palestinian citizens of Jordan begin?

**AK:** Today we can speak of five kinds of Palestinian citizens of Jordan. The first differentiation came in the early 1980s when the Jordanian government was concerned that Israeli policies and practices aimed to squeeze out the Palestinian inhabitants of the occupied West Bank; to empty out the Palestinian territories to replace them with Jewish settlers. The Jordanian government then created the first real differentiation between its Palestinian citizens by issuing differentiated cards.

Those who lived habitually in the West Bank were issued green cards, while those who habitually lived in Jordan but had material and/or family connections in the West Bank were issued yellow cards. The sole purpose of these cards at the time was so that the Jordanian authorities at the King Hussein (Allenby) Bridge—the only crossing point between Jordan and the occupied West Bank—could monitor the movement of these card holders, enabling the Jordanian authorities to know how many Palestinian West Bankers had crossed into Jordan, and to ensure that they returned, essentially a kind of statistical device. Indeed, this was a wise policy in terms of countering the Zionist plans to continue the ethnic cleansing of Palestine.

The major turning point came with the Jordanian disengagement (fak al-irtibat) from the West Bank on 31 July 1988.

*Children in the narrow streets of al-Wihdat refugee camp, Jordan 2008. © Anne Paq, activestills.org*
**HJ:** What was the disengagement?

**AK:** Since 1948 when central Palestine came under Jordanian control, the Jordanian government has claimed the West Bank as part of the kingdom. By 1988, the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) had come to be recognized on an Arab and, to some extent, international level as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people, but the Israelis and Americans were still refusing to recognize the PLO, let alone to officially communicate with it. Jordan’s King Hussein shrewdly took the decision to disengage from the West Bank as a message to the United States and Israel that if they were going to negotiate with anyone over the fate of Palestinians in the West Bank, it should be with the PLO. In the famous speech he delivered on 31 July 1988 in which he declared the disengagement— and we have to remember that this was during the most intense period of the first Intifada— King Hussein stated that the purpose of the disengagement was to support the Palestinians’ struggle for self determination by relinquishing his claim to that territory.

**HJ:** How was the disengagement a “turning point” for Palestinians’ status as Jordanian citizens?

**AK:** When the disengagement was declared, the color of the cards (yellow and green), that had been used as a statistical device, became the criteria for determining the citizenship status of a citizen. The government issued instructions to the effect that those who habitually lived in the West Bank, that is green card holders, on 31 July 1988 were “Palestinian citizens,” while those who were living in Jordan or abroad were Jordanian. Put another way, over one-and-a-half million Palestinians went to bed on 31 July 1988 as Jordanian citizens, and woke up on 1 August 1988 as stateless persons.

**HJ:** You previously mentioned that we can speak of five kinds of Palestinian citizens of Jordan. What are the different kinds of status among Palestinians citizen of Jordan currently?

**AK:** The first category we can call hyphenated Palestinian-Jordanians. These are Palestinians who were in Jordan on the date of the disengagement with no material connection to the West Bank or Gaza Strip, or who were Jordanian citizenship holders abroad. These are regarded as Jordanians for all legal purposes.

The Palestinians in the second category are the green card holders whose citizenship was revoked by the government orders that I described earlier.

The Palestinians in the third category are the yellow card holders, who kept their citizenship after the disengagement, but many of whom have more recently faced the revocation of their Jordanian citizenship rights.

The fourth category is that of blue card holders. These are 1967 Palestinians refugees from the occupied Gaza Strip who are in Jordan and who were never given citizenship rights. They are in a very miserable position because, since they are not Jordanian, they cannot enjoy any of the benefits of citizenship in this country: they cannot access public schools or health services, they cannot get driving licenses, they cannot open bank accounts, or purchase land. They are mostly concentrated in the refugee camps in the Jerash area, specifically the one called “Gaza Refugee Camp” which is generally known as the worst of the refugee camps in Jordan in terms of living conditions. To build a tiny house in the camp, they need to get several permits from several government departments. While they receive some modest support from UNRWA, any support that comes from the rest of the society has to be approved by Jordanian security authorities.

The fifth, and newest, of the categories is that of Jerusalem residents. These have always been a special case: the Israelis consider them permanent residents of Israel without any citizenship rights, while for
Jordan they are citizens whose status was not affected by the disengagement. The problem now is that the Israelis, as part of their ongoing ethnic cleansing project, are revoking the residency rights of Palestinians in Jerusalem who cannot prove that their “center of life” is in that city, to use the terms of the Israeli High Court. The Jordanian government has yet to officially take a position on the Jordanian citizenship rights of these Jerusalemite Palestinian citizens of Jordan whose residency in Jerusalem has been revoked by Israel. This is now another emerging problem.

HJ: You mentioned that yellow card holders have been facing the revocation of their Jordanian citizenship in recent years. Can you expand on this?

AK: The main institution that handles this issue is the Follow-up and Inspection Department (al-mutaba’a wa al-taftish) of the Jordanian Ministry of Interior. To understand what’s happening you need to understand that the way Jordanian citizenship works since 1992 is that every citizen must have a “national number” (raqam watani). Anyone who does not have this number is not a citizen.

In recent years, the Follow-up and Inspection Department has been expanding on the scope of its authority in interpreting the 1988 government regulations dealing with the revocation of Palestinians’ Jordanian citizenship. We need to keep in mind also that these regulations were never made public, and that in fact no policy, let alone law, dealing with the revocation of Palestinians’ citizenship in Jordan has ever officially been made public. Originally, as I described, 31 July 1988 was treated as a cut-off date, if you were a green card holder in the West Bank, your citizenship was revoked, and otherwise you remained a citizen. The Department has since expanded to the revocation of citizenship from others under other pretexts.

For instance, many Palestinian citizens of Jordan were able to acquire Israeli-issued West Bank residency permits through such procedures as family-reunification since 1967. Of course, part of Israel’s ethnic cleansing policies manifested as revocation of West Bank residency permits over the years under various pretexts. For example, at one point West Bank residency permit holders who were away from the West Bank for more than three years had their residency revoked by the Israelis. The Follow-up and Inspection Department of the Jordanian Interior Ministry has revoked national numbers (i.e. citizenship) from many Palestinians who had their West Bank residency permits revoked by the Israelis under the pretext that these people should have kept these residency permits, and that the Palestinian should go and get the Israelis to reissue them their West Bank residency permits.

Another example is that of PLO or Palestinian Authority (PA) employees. Even though a Jordanian citizen can work for any other government, many Palestinian citizens of Jordan who have taken jobs in PA institutions have been stripped of their national numbers. A more recent example is that of the Jordanian parliamentary elections [November 2010]. Many of the Palestinians who went to register as voters were sent to the Follow-up and Inspection Department where they had their national numbers revoked.

Ultimately, however, it is difficult to discern a particular logic to the post-1988 revocations. In some cases, one person or group within the family has their citizenship revoked, while others in the same family remain citizens. With regards to employment in the PLO or PA, there are PA parliamentarians and ministers with Jordanian national numbers, while some Palestinian citizens of Jordan, for example, have had their citizenship revoked for working for a PA-owned Company or civil institution. We can only say that so far it seems very arbitrary. I should also add that this wave of citizenship revocation means that yellow card holders live with the perpetual fear of any interaction with the government bureaucracy, since this could result in being sent to the Follow-up and Inspection Department and having their citizenship revoked.
HJ: Is there a way to know how many Palestinians have had their Jordanian citizenship revoked since 1988?

AK: No, these numbers are kept secret by the Jordanian Ministry of Interior and are not made public. There are various estimates, but these numbers vary. The most well-known of these is that of the Human Rights Watch report that stated that over 2700 Palestinians citizens of Jordan had their citizenship revoked between 2004 and 2008, but this number is based on a journalistic article in a Jordanian newspaper, and so, in addition to not giving information on the years before or after the period, are not to be taken as authoritative.

HJ: What is the effect of the revocation of citizenship on the people involved?

AK: They become like the blue-card holders from the Gaza Strip that I talked about before without the ability to access any government services, open bank accounts, etc. It should be mentioned though that there is a potentially very dangerous situation for Jordan; if this trend continues it will become a “ghetto state.” When you forfeit a Jordanian’s citizenship and keep him in Jordan because you don’t have the power to send him to Palestine—because the Israelis of course refuse—you will end up with over a million stateless Palestinians within your borders, and who have nowhere to go.

HJ: Earlier you described the Jordanian law of citizenship and the various levels of government and judiciary through which the revocation of citizenship must pass to become final. Can Palestinians who have had their Jordanian citizenship revoked make use of what you described as an advanced citizenship law to challenge the Follow-up and Inspection Department’s actions?

AK: As I described above, there is no question that the revocations of citizenship that the Jordanian authorities have carried out since 1988 contradict the written law and indeed the constitution. Under the law, the revocation of citizenship must follow the procedures I spoke about earlier, and are not the subject to such things as the
color of your card or regulations. As it stands, however, a junior officer of the Follow-up and Inspection Department can decide the fate of a citizen’s citizenship rights. It is now a more simple matter to revoke a yellow card-carrying citizen from his citizenship than it is to revoke their driving license! With the revocation of a driving license, the citizen has the right to challenge the revocation in a court. The Inspection and Follow-up Department is indeed the only government department that is not subject to judicial review.

The government justifies this by stating that the revocation of citizenship by this Department is an “act of state.” There is one judge, Justice Farouq Kilani, who was president of the Jordanian High Court of Justice who did challenge the government’s position, and stated that citizenship is a matter regulated by law and not regulations, and that therefore the actions of the Department are null and void. As a result of his ruling—this was in 1998—the Minister of Justice demanded his resignation, and Kilani resigned. He subsequently gave two public lectures on the topic, and wrote a book called Independence of the Judiciary, an excellent treatise in which he describes in detail both his landmark ruling and his encounter with the Justice Minister. His ruling was very correct, constitutionally sound and legally unchallenged. The Jordanian judiciary has a long tradition of reviewing administrative decisions, including decisions involving citizenship. As it stands now, the situation in Jordan is very suffocating on this issue of citizenship revocation because there is no right to appeal since the government treats these decisions as “acts of state,” and it is practically impossible to take these issues to an international court.

It is also important to mention that there is no refugee law in Jordan. As such, once the citizenship is revoked, the Palestinian refugee is left with no political, civil or economic rights.

HJ: Besides the position that citizenship revocation is an “act of state,” how does the Jordanian government justify stripping its Palestinian citizens of their citizenship rights and rendering them stateless?

AK: There have been several justifications or excuses given. Jordanian officials maintain, for example, that the revocations are designed to force Palestinians to stay in Palestine, to stop the Zionist leadership from implementing its ethnic cleansing project. This argument is usually framed within the paradigm of the “alternative homeland” project, the Israeli right-wing’s position that Palestinians have a homeland, and this homeland is Jordan. We do not debate the importance of these goals, and of full-fledged rejection of the “alternative homeland” project on all fronts. Mixing this in with the issue of Palestinian citizenship rights in Jordan is like mixing apples and pears. The “alternative homeland” is a national issue, and thus should not be treated solely at the Jordanian level, but through Jordanian-Palestinian-Arab coordination as an Arab summit item. Such a political issue should not and cannot be mixed with a human rights issue such as the rights of Palestinian citizens of Jordan. Moreover, the people who are fighting the “alternative homeland” project are the Palestinians themselves who have fought it with their own bodies in these decades of spilled Palestinian blood. Actually, if Jordanian officials are sincere about their political position, they should take more credible action against the Israelis to force them to leave the Palestinians in peace and to allow the refugees to return, as is their internationally recognized right.

Furthermore, as a sovereign state, the Jordanian government could have taken steps during the negotiation of the Wadi Araba Israeli-Jordanian peace settlement to insist on such things as allowing Jordanian citizens to maintain their West Bank residency permits, and to restore those that had been stripped. As it stands now, the Jordanian government does not have the power to push for such a residency permit to be issued to an individual, and so by stripping them of their Jordanian citizenship, these individuals are left stranded with nowhere to go. But also as it stands, the Jordanian government can stop security coordination with Israel, and can stop the marketing of Israeli products in Jordan. Lately, the Jordanian Ministry of Industry has allowed the entry of 2500 types of Israeli products into the Jordanian market.
Another justification that Jordanian officials forward is that they are not revoking citizenship, rather they are “correcting the situation” of certain individuals who were wrongly classified, that all they are doing is simply dropping the national number. “Correcting the situation” is the new catch-phrase you see. They say this to avoid contradiction of the Follow-up and Inspection Department’s actions with the law and constitution, but the fact remains that simply dropping the national number is in effect the total revocation of citizenship.

HJ: Do you see any way that this situation can be reversed?

AK: The January 2010 report of Human Rights Watch® about the citizenship revocation raised some awareness both locally, on an Arab level as well as internationally, but this was short-lived and has not alleviated the situation. This issue requires an international campaign of human rights organizations because there is no venue left to air your grievances. Ultimately, the situation would best be alleviated by addressing the root-cause of the situation of these Palestinians, which is the implementation of Palestinians’ right to return to the lands from which they were displaced. Until then however, more attention needs to be given to this thus-far largely-ignored issue, and the Jordanian laws and constitution need to be respected and implemented by restoring the citizenship of those whose rights were revoked, and ensuring that the law is followed in any future case of citizenship revocation.

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From Haifa, to Baghdad and then Santiago: Chile’s Palestinian refugee community, past and present.

by Douglas Smith

From the outset, Chile is probably one of the last countries one would consider when trying to understand the effects of the Nakba and the depth of the ongoing Palestinian refugee crisis. Geopolitically, it could not be any farther away from the conflict and the displacement imposed on Palestinian refugees. However, recent events, as well as a long history of the world’s largest Palestinian community outside the Middle East, tell a different story.

In the Spring of 2008, 117 Palestinian refugees arrived in Chile, fleeing the horrors of the US invasion in Iraq, where they lived as refugees, having been expelled by Zionist forces during the 1948 Nakba. After the completion of their two-year resettlement program, the question of Chile’s significance in the Palestinian refugee community worldwide, their struggle for the right to return and for fair treatment before its implementation, is ever more relevant and present.

Al-Tanf refugee camp and endless displacement

With frequent sandstorms, sub-zero temperatures by night, scorching heat by day, constant threat from scorpions and nearby freight traffic, it was no surprise that Al-Tanf refugee camp made it to the “top five worst situated refugee camps in the world,” according to Refugees International. However, it was not poor planning that lead to the conditions of this camp, but rather the ongoing policies of foreign intervention in
the Middle East, made worse by the refusal to allow certain people, displaced as a result of this violence, the freedom to cross international borders to get to safety. In effect, the refusal at the Syrian border forced fleeing Palestinians themselves to build the camp later known as Al-Tanf. Many of these refugees are stateless Palestinians who were expelled from their homes in 1948 by Zionist militias. Around 5,000 of them from Haifa and its surrounding villages fled to Baghdad and now find themselves once again having to start a new life, in new countries, even farther from the place they identify as home.

After the 2003 U.S. invasion of Iraq, sectarian violence soared in the instability of the newly installed Iraqi government. In this climate, Palestinian refugees in Iraq became targets of sectarian violence as they were, often erroneously, considered sympathizers of Saddam Hussein and other times simply for being Palestinian. They soon found themselves in a situation, like many other communities in Iraq at that time, in which their neighbourhood was being shelled, their family members and friends kidnapped, tortured and killed. Much of the torture was carried out by armed militias and government forces infiltrated by sectarian militias.

Under Hussein’s regime, Palestinians living in Iraq were often used as political capital in the Iraqi regime's discourse on wider Middle East politics, as well as internal unrest. Essentially, soon after Hussein came to power, he voiced public support for Palestinian resistance and granted Palestinians living in Iraq nearly the same rights as Iraqi citizens. But their acceptance into Iraqi society only fueled resentment, especially amongst the Shi’a majority who, like many other marginalized ethnic and religious groups, were often the target of brutal government repression.

However, in spite of the support and recognition that Palestinians had received, the travel documents issued to some Palestinians by the Hussein regime during that period (as opposed to the general ID cards which all Palestinians received) were never recognized by any other state, including the new Iraqi government. So, when they tried to flee to neighboring countries, along with so many other Iraqis, they were turned down at both the Jordanian and Syrian borders for lack of acceptable travel documents. And thus refugee camps such as Al Tanf, where the 117 Palestinians now resettled in Chile were living, were spontaneously set up by the refugees in the “no man’s land” between Iraq and Syria, in which over 1300 of them ended up languishing for years until its closure in February 2010.

In essence, although the community was mostly comprised of refugees from the 1948 Nakba, due to its establishment, smaller numbers of Palestinians fleeing the 1967 occupation of the West Bank, and the 1991 expulsion of Palestinians from Kuwait, meaning that some families had experienced forced displacement for the third or fourth time in less than 60 years.
Local and international solidarity

The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), which maintained the isolated camp by trucking in all its supplies of water and food, set out to try to find host countries for those living in Al Tanf. It was at that point that Palestine solidarity activist and documentary filmmaker, Adam Shapiro, got involved and started to communicate with people in potential host countries to help facilitate their resettlement. One of those countries was Chile, where there was more support than initially expected.

Chile is a country which has suffered waves of displacement, after thousands of its citizens were exiled during the Augusto Pinochet dictatorship, which took power in a western-backed military coup in 1973. Here, the UNHCR found genuine sympathy and understanding among the then recently elected socialist government of President Michel Bachelet. “A lot of people in the Bachelet government [including the President] had also experienced exile and torture under the Pinochet regime,” said Shapiro, having spoken to people in the Chilean government. One prominent example was leftist Senator, Alejandro Navarro, who had a track record of fighting for systematically oppressed people, such as the indigenous Mapuches in Chile.

Finally, after months of organizational meetings, 117 Palestinians from Al Tanf refugee camp arrived in Santiago, Chile (the first half in April and the second in May 2008) to a series of huge, welcome celebrations all throughout the center of the country, marking Chile’s very first state sponsored resettlement program.

In an interview with Yasna Mussa, journalist with the Federación Palestina de Chile (Palestinian Federation of Chile), when asked what Chile’s recent resettlement program meant to her, she said that, on the one hand, the Palestinian community appreciates the government’s solidarity, but also explained that, “it’s not enough; it’s not enough when they continue signing trade and even security accords with the state of Israel, while Chilean citizens (of Palestinian origin) are being mistreated at the border and not being allowed to enter into Palestine, solely because of their Arab background. This is racism.”

The long history of the Chilean Palestinian community

Palestinians first started to immigrate to Chile in the late 1800s. Many of the first migrants were motivated by economic interests that ranged from business interests for some, to a way out of poverty for others. Since that time, Palestinians have become an integral part of Chilean society, in which many now hold influential business and political positions.

Although most of the Palestinian community in Chile hails from this era, the fact that an established community already existed in Chile encouraged many Palestinians to seek refuge there. The community can be traced back to Palestinians who fled the forced Ottoman military conscriptions of World War I. Two more waves of immigrants came after the 1948 Nakba and the subsequent 1967 occupation, during which Israel took control of all the rest of Historic Palestine, as per the borders drawn by the British Mandate.

The total number of Palestinians in Chile is anywhere between around 250,000 to 400,000, depending on the source. The vast majority of those within the Palestinian community in Chile are Orthodox Christians who come from Beit Jala, and other towns and villages in the Bethlehem district. Even less is known about the number of Palestinians who came as refugees; it would, however, be safe to say it is in the thousands.

Life as a refugee in Chile

Walking along the side street Rio de Janeiro in the Barrio Patronato, one is surrounded by Palestinian businesses including a Falafel restaurant, an Arab sweet shop and a café called Café Hamule. It was here that one of the Palestinians from the group that arrived from Iraq, in 2008, named Bassem, was working behind
the counter. Many others have also found work in similar establishments, providing ready-made desserts and foods to other community restaurants that wanted to bring them into the fold through familiar trades. But, for others, finding a source of livelihood was not so simple. Although nearly everyone in this new addition to the Palestinian community could trace their roots to Haifa and its environs, their professional and educational backgrounds ranged from those who were university professors to others who were barely literate.

The resettlement program that was worked out between the Chilean government and the UNHCR consisted of monthly financial support for living expenses, according to the needs and size of the family and housing and other programs aimed at helping them settle into their new surroundings. Initially, although many of them have since found more permanent accommodations, they were given housing in four different neighborhoods: two in Santiago’s Recoleta and Ñuñoa districts, and two in the smaller cities of La Calera and San Felipe.

However, on the ground, the actual support was carried out by an institution called the Vicaría de la Solidaridad (Vicariate of Solidarity). This is a community organization, founded by, and linked to, the Catholic Church, that is unique to Chile. It was born out of the tough situation Chileans faced during the dictatorship, in which most other organizations that were able to help with human rights cases were disbanded or worked clandestinely. Since that time, the Vicariate has been instrumental in giving day to day support to refugees in Chile and was consequently chosen to run part of the resettlement program on behalf of the UNHCR.

One of the Vicariate’s interpreters who worked directly with the refugees, Ishaq El-Masou, who is also Palestinian and came to Chile after 1967, spoke at length about the hardships they faced upon arrival. Even the support from the Palestinian community in Chile, who at first came out in great numbers to welcome them and lend a hand, he explained, was as if “a honeymoon had come to an end,” due to how it dwindled shortly thereafter down to a core group of dedicated individuals. He also added that, although the governmental subsidy ended as of 31 May 2010, the Vicariate will continue their assistance in every way possible, especially in severe cases such as one family whose father passed away, leaving behind a wife and four children.

However, perhaps the biggest challenge facing the newly arrived Palestinians, who often do not share the same religion or speak the same language, has more to do with social class than anything else, especially among members of the well-established Palestinian community. Marcelo Devilat Marzouka, from the Unión General de
Estudiantes Palestinos (General Union of Palestinian Students), recounted the situation of a 15 year old teenager named Ahmad, who began to participate in cultural events, above all with the Dabke troupe, after their arrival in 2008. Although there was definitely a language barrier, (as Marcelo himself was one of the only Arabic speakers) it had more to do with the fact that the commute was too much for Ahmad, because the other Palestinian youth, from third and fourth generation well-established families, held the Dabke practices in neighbourhoods that were not easily accessible by public transportation, which eventually lead him to stop coming. However, it is people like Ahmad who will likely be a decisive force in Chile, in terms of Palestinian solidarity, as it seems that, in a country where not all Palestinians share the same consciousness of the displacement and exile, the Nakba and its memory in itself has proven to have a form of politicization.

Endnotes: See online version at: http://www.badii.org/al-majdal/

“Douglas Smith is an activist, researcher and graduate student based out of Montreal”

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**Update – Where are the Palestinian refugees in/from Iraq?**

December 2010

At the onset of the U.S.-led war on Iraq in 2003, there were at least 34,000 Palestinian refugees living in Iraq (although the true figure could well be tens of thousands more); their exact number and whereabouts were unknown. In 2003 UNHCR registered 23,000 Palestinian refugees in Iraq, however the process was interrupted for security reasons. Four temporary camps were established in no-man’s-land and border areas with Jordan and Syria for Palestinian refugees fleeing persecution but not having access to a country that would provide protection to them (see: “Searching for Solutions for Palestinian Refugees Stuck in and Fleeing Iraq”, al Majdal, issue No.33, Spring 2007).

By the end of 2010, fewer than 15,000 Palestinian refugees have remained in Iraq; 12,000 of them were registered in Baghdad in 2008. Two of the temporary camps have been closed, and a total of 18 countries have accepted Palestinians refugees from Iraq, mostly from the border camps (Al Waleed, Al Tanf and Al Hol) but also a small number from Baghdad.

No records exist about the whereabouts of more than 10,000 additional Palestinian refugees who were living in Iraq prior to the onset of the war in 2003. They are likely to have fled Iraq without assistance and protection provided by any country or UN agency.

- **Ruweished camp**: closed in October 2007.
- **Al-Tanf camp**: closed in February 2010.
- **Al Waleed camp (Iraq)**: 264 Palestinian refugees (down from 1,367 end of December 2008).
- **Al-Hol camp (Syria)**: 441 Palestinian refugees from Iraq. (includes Palestinian refugees from Iraq moved from Al-Tanf camp upon its closure)

Palestinian refugees from Iraq Estimated Populations:

- **Syria**: up to 2,500-3,000 Palestinian refugees from Iraq in the country.
- **Jordan**: 500 Palestinian refugees from Iraq who have a Jordanian spouse, but the number is probably higher.
- **Lebanon**: 300-400 Palestinian refugees from Iraq.
- **Turkey**: Probably a few hundred.
- **India**: 70 Palestinian refugees from Iraq (unclear).

Resettled Palestinian refugees from Iraq since 2007:

- **USA**: 1,125 Palestinian refugees from Iraq (almost all from al Waleed camp).
- **Canada**: 198 Palestinian refugees from Iraq.
- **Brazil**: 117 Palestinian refugees from Iraq (from Ruweished camp).
- **Chile**: 116 Palestinian refugees from Iraq.
- **New Zealand**: 22 Palestinian refugees from Iraq (from Ruweished camp).
- **Italy**: 169 Palestinian refugees from Iraq.
- **Norway**: 400 Palestinian refugees from Iraq.
- **Australia**: 63 Palestinian refugees from Iraq.
- **Great Britain**: 80 Palestinian refugees from Iraq.
- **Finland**: 34 Palestinian refugees from Iraq.
- **Denmark**: 46 Palestinian refugees from Iraq.
- **France**: 115 Palestinian refugees from Iraq.
- **Switzerland**: 12 Palestinian refugees from Iraq.
- **Belgium**: 10 Palestinian refugees from Iraq.
- **Sweden**: 613 Palestinian refugees from Iraq.
- **Netherlands**: 29 Palestinian refugees from Iraq.

For previous estimates of Palestinian refugees in and fleeing Iraq see “When Solutions are not Solutions: Palestinian Refugees stranded in and fleeing from Iraq”, al Majdal, issue No. 35, Autumn 2007.
Israel’s military assault on the Gaza Strip, codenamed “Operation Cast Lead”, took place between 27 December 2008 and 18 January 2009. Three weeks of almost uninterrupted Israeli aerial bombardments, artillery shelling from land and sea, and ground operations resulted in the killing of 1,414 people, including 313 children and 116 women, and over 5,000 injured. In addition, Israel’s attack also targeted public and private civilian property and infrastructure throughout Gaza, encompassing residential neighborhoods, hospitals, schools, universities, government ministries, water/sewer lines, electricity generating stations, greenhouses, commercial establishments, infrastructure and roads.

By the attack’s end, an estimated 2.6 percent of homes in Gaza were completely destroyed and an additional 20 percent sustained serious damage, forcing 80-90,000 people out of their homes to live in the open air in the middle of winter. Two years later, more than 20,000 Palestinians are still displaced and living in dire conditions.

The majority of those displaced, as with the majority of Palestinians in Gaza more generally, were refugees from the 1948 Nakba and the destruction of their houses represents the second time that these Palestinians have been deprived of their homes in a continuing story of dispossession and displacement.

The Israeli assault on Gaza in 2008/9 rather than representing a change in policy, merely represents an escalation in the targeting of Palestinian homes, especially for those located in the “security buffer zone” near the borders. One of the families visited had lost their home in 2006 as a result of Israeli shelling and four years later are still living in a house made of corrugated iron while they struggle to rebuild their home. With almost no raw construction materials being allowed into Gaza, those displaced are forced to continue to live in poor conditions. Some displaced persons live with relatives in overcrowded apartments, rent accommodation or live in tents. All are waiting for durable solutions and justice.
Kamel Sweelim, Beit Hanoun  
Refugees from 1948

Israel destroyed Kamal’s property in stages from the early 2000’s onwards, culminating in the destruction of all the land in 2006, leaving only his house standing. Despite the dire conditions, the family were determined to stay living in the midst of the rubble.

On the first day of the Israeli attack in 2008, the army turned up at the property and announced through speakers that the family had five minutes to leave their house. The family were kept at a distance by the army and watched as soldiers demolished their homes. Kamal recalls the demolition: “The bulldozers started to smash our house piece by piece from different angles. They were making holes through the walls. My kids were also watching the demolition.” The soldiers ordered them not to return and forced them to walk miles to a safer area where they sought shelter in a school. Kamal’s family now live in a small rented house with four rooms.

The five houses and thirty dunums of land bought by Kamal’s father in 1948 housed fifty members of Kamal’s extended family and had a variety of fruits and vegetables planted on them.
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Kamal’s mother, Maleha, still remembers 1948 when her family was forced to leave her village in what was to become Israel. Aged 13 at the time, she recalls: “We had a lot of beautiful land there but the fighting was so intense that we were forced to flee, reaching Rafah with nothing except a few camels. When we settled in Beit Hanoun, my husband put all his money into buying 36 dunums of land and we thought we would be secure.”

“I used to have a rose tree of seven colours in front of my house. I grew it myself and would pay whatever it takes just to see it again. Until this moment, we are not able to go back to our land to farm or to rebuild our houses.”

Photo: Kamal picking fruit from one of his remaining trees. Most of his farmland is still inaccessible and has become part of the security buffer zone. Shootings in the area have become routine with a number of casualties recorded among people who come to the area to collect gravel.

Photo: Kamal’s mother, Maleha, shows the picture of her husband who died from a heart attack on January 14, 2009 shortly after being informed of the destruction of his home.
Mona Abu Saleh, Beit Hanoun

Refugees from Demrah

Mona Abu Saleh’s house, located near the ‘security buffer zone’, was destroyed during Operation Cast Lead on the 8th January. Two of her sons and her husband were arrested together in March 2008 while another son is disabled and needs surgery but has had his referral refused because his father is a prisoner. She lives with her 12 children, the youngest son of which, Mustapha, was only one year old when his father was arrested.

“In the last war they destroyed my house and now I have to rent this apartment. At first, we did not want to leave the house but when the bombing got nearer we got scared and decided to leave. There were also bulldozers which started to destroy the land nearby as we left. We did not take anything from the house, I cannot describe my feeling. Everything memorable in that house was gone. The house was 180 square meters and we had space around the house with a lovely garden full of olive trees.”

Photo: Mona and two of her children in front of their rented house.
Photo: Mona Abu Saleh and her children sit below the poster commemorating the arrests of their father and two brothers.

Photo: Mona stands on the remains of her house demolished in January 2009.
Samira and Silmi Abu Shalouf, Al Zhara in the central Gaza Strip

Refugees from Marsaba.

The house of the Abu Shalouf family was destroyed during Operation Cast Lead on 17 January 2009. They have 12 children aged between 6 and 25 years old and their house was 120m² with 320 m² of land on which they had a small chicken farm and some rabbits.
When their home of 27 years was destroyed, the family had nowhere to go and moved into an unfurnished government building in which 40 other families also live and from which they can be evicted at any time. The children’s family have been severely traumatized by the ordeal, are still afraid and suffer nightmares. One of the children has a speech problem while others have uncontrollable bouts of anger. One daughter was injured during a bombing of the house in 2004 and one son was arrested when he was 18 years old and had been in jail for six years.
Ahmad, aged 17, was shot in the leg on 13 October in the ‘security zone’ while collecting gravel for building with his cousin and brother. The trio were around 600 meters away from the Green Line and were given no warning shots before being fired upon. The bones in Ahmad’s leg were smashed and he may require an artificial device in order to be able to walk again properly.

Ahmad left school when he was 15 years old and earned between six and eight dollars a day collecting building gravel as it was the only job he could find. Ahmad says that when he eventually recovers he will have no choice but to return to collecting gravel: “We have a family of 17 and I have to support them.”

Ahmad and his family live on the outskirts of a Bedouin village in northern Gaza with a direct view of the Wall which lies just a few kilometers away. The family moved to this area after their 200m² house in Beit Hanoun was destroyed by shelling during an Israeli military operation in the summer of 2006.
Photo: The family now lives on government land in structures made of corrugated iron while they await the rebuilding of their home.

Photo: In order to expand their living space, the family have added an old bus which acts as an extra room.
In 1994, after the signing of the Oslo Accords between the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) and Israel, the Qadhafi government in Libya sought to show its objection to the agreements by expelling the Palestinian community residing in the country. One of the Palestinians living in Libya at the time was Professor Bassem Sirhan, we spoke to him about the Libyan policy of expulsion and the injustice that befell the Palestinian community.

Can you tell us something about the composition of the Palestinian community in Libya and the conditions they lived under until 1995?

Libya is not a host country for Palestinians (i.e. Palestinians are not refugees there), as is the case with Lebanon, Syria and Jordan; it is rather one which imports skilled labor in the technical, scientific and professional fields; therefore, the residency of any Palestinian in Libya is based on a personal or individual contract with the state and its institutions, or with Libyan companies or foreign companies operating in Libya. Libya calls itself “The Land of Arabs” and its leader has been referred to by the late President Jamal Abdul-Nasser, as “The Trustee of Arab Nationalism”; it does not require any Arab to hold an entry visa or a residency permit, regardless of the position he will be assuming or the purpose of his stay. As for residency permits, they aim to allow their holders to open bank accounts in order for them to be able to repatriate half of their income in hard currency to their country of origin.

The Palestinian community in Libya was very small in comparison to Palestinian communities in other Arab host states or in Arab states which import skilled labor, according to Libyan estimates, and as per
a census conducted by the Libyan Foreign Security Agency in 1995, after the eruption of the crisis, the number of Palestinians in Libya stood at 30,000, a very small number when compared to the number of immigrants from other Arab countries. The number of Palestinians in Libya did not constitute any economic burden on the country, especially since they are highly qualified, efficient, productive and devoted, which has been the opinion of Libyan officials over the years. If the Libyan government had extended a helping hand to Palestinian resistance or liberation movements, the same did not apply to Palestinians working in Libya, who did not receive, during the twenty-five-year period, any dinar as donation or sign of gratitude.

What happened in 1994?

In his speech during the Sept 1 1994. celebrations, Colonel Mouamer Qadhafi announced his plan to expel Palestinians residing in his country in order to prove to the whole world that PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat had failed to establish a state and, therefore, was unable to fulfill the demands of the Palestinian struggle. Palestinians residing in Libya originally thought that the Colonel's speech was nothing more than a maneuver intended to politically attack the fragile peace accord between Arafat and Israel. Things went on in an ordinary and normal manner during the months of September, October and November, 1994, as Palestinians were allowed to enter and leave Libya, and their labor contracts with ministries, government agencies and various corporations (public and private) were renewed without problems and they could secure new labor contracts.

So when Colonel Qadhafi ordered, by phone, the Labor Ministry not to renew any labor contracts involving Palestinians and to further refrain from ratifying (granting final approval to) any new labor contract involving a Palestinian, even those who had obtained the necessary prior approvals from the ministries concerned, Palestinians were stunned and started feeling deep concern and uncertainty. Furthermore, the Passports and Immigration Department was informed, again via a telephone call, that it may not grant or renew residency to any Palestinian, irrespective of his profession or area of practice; this affected all Palestinians, from medical school professionals to junior technicians.

What were the feelings and reaction of the Palestinian community?

For a number of reasons these developments were met with combined feelings of doubt, shock and astonishment, mainly because Colonel Qadhafi, during his long years in power, had been one of the Arab leaders who showed the most support for Palestinians and their cause, and had sponsored and granted assistance to Palestinian resistance movements. Above all, since Colonel Qadhafi had assumed power, Palestinians working in Libya enjoyed favorable treatment, similar to that given to Libyans. At the same time, Palestinians, whether as a community or resistance movements, had been a prime and solid ally of Qadhafi's regime. On occasions, Libyan forces even joined Palestinians in Al-Biqaa valley in Lebanon, and Libya generously armed Palestinian resistance fighters.

Palestinians in Libya, for the above reasons and more, sought to find a reasonable explanation for the Libyan actions; they could find no justification. Palestinians had not committed any political crime against the Libyan regime and did not adopt any stance that may have jeopardized, even indirectly, the reputation and position of Libya. For example, they did not support Arafat's moves or the Oslo Accords, neither explicitly nor in writing. The contrary is true, I was able to sense that most Palestinians in Libya opposed the Oslo Accords.

How did the crisis develop?

The official position of the Libyan government became clear in the period between mid-December 1994 and mid-February 1995, as the Libyan government adopted the following measures: (1) Deleting names of Palestinians from the lists of renewable labor contracts which were sent by the various ministries to the...
Labor Ministry; (2) Returning all new labor contracts which were sent by these ministries to the Labor Ministry for ratification; (3) Refusing, at the Passport administration, to grant residency to any Palestinian requesting a new residency permit or whose residency had expired; (4) Circulating news that the Libyan government prohibits any Palestinian entry to Libya; and (5) Preventing any Palestinian who had left Libya, whether on a business trip or to meet with family members, from returning, even if his residency permit was valid and despite the fact that he would still be entitled to receive from the Libyan government certain labor rights and compensation.

The most crucial element in the rise of tension and evolution of the crisis came in an interview with Colonel Qadhafi conducted by Ahmad Al-Hauni, editor in chief of *Al Arab* (an Arabic newspaper published in London), in mid-February, 1995. Qadhafi responded to a question regarding the Palestinian community in Libya by stating that: “Arafat and the United States, Israel and others declare that the Palestinian cause has been resolved finally and exclusively. This is not true, as there are millions of Palestinian refugees who are still out of their homeland. And as I care about the Palestinian cause, and in order to achieve the best interest of Palestinians, I will expel the thirty thousand Palestinians who currently live in my land, and try to secure their return to Gaza and Jericho. If Israel would not let them in, while Egypt does not allow them to pass through its territories, then I shall set a great camp for them on the Egyptian-Libyan borders.” Qadhafi also added that “all of what I will be doing is for their best interest. No matter how they suffer, and even if they remain in the camp for years to come, this would still be for their national interest. And the whole world would come to the conclusion that the settlement is a big lie, and that Palestinians are still refugees. I hereby call on all Arab states hosting Palestinian refugees to act likewise...”.

As the Colonel’s statements are considered government policy in Libya, Palestinians there could not help but feel concerned about the thought of having to stay in a camp in the empty desert, with all the misery and suffering that would bring about, including depriving their children of the opportunity of seeking education. The major fear for some of them derived from the fact that they might not be able to return to any other state. It is hard to describe the state of chaos and fear that the Palestinian community in Libya passed through during 1995, and this was compounded by the fact that the Libyan government, including its agencies and administrations, acted passively and did not make any statements to ease the tension. The response Palestinian employees received from the various public authorities, and the Ministries of Health and Education regarding their status was: “Nothing new—we did not receive any information or instructions recently. We hope it turns out OK.”

A few days later the Colonel, in his speech on the Fateh Revolution Day (September 1, 1995), expressed his determination to expel Palestinians and called on Arab States to follow suit, while covering his arbitrary decision with revolutionary, nationalist and patriotic rhetoric. It seems that the political pressure coming from Egypt did not allow the Colonel to proceed with his plans to expel all 30,000 Palestinians in Libya. For the Palestinians not formally expelled, being left in Libya without work or income is equivalent to expelling them to the borders.

**Where did the expelled Palestinians go?**

Hundreds of Palestinians were expelled during the first stage. Egypt barred 143 of them from crossing its borders, so they were practically left in no-man’s land near the Saloum border post while Libya refused to take them back. Later on, a group of 150 Palestinians, after being stranded for weeks on the Libyan Border, crossed into Egypt en route to Jordan and the Gaza strip. A second group of 40 Palestinians reportedly headed for Rafah, on the Egyptian border with Gaza hoping to enter the Palestinian-controlled area.
By September 1995 there were thirty-two Palestinians in the Egyptian-Libyan no-man’s land, thirty-six at the Rafah crossings and 1,500 in Tubrok Camp, all living in severe conditions and facing humiliation every day. Furthermore, internal Libyan flights were conducted twice daily, each carrying 300 Palestinians from various cities in Libya to the camp at Tubrok, a coastal town in northern Libya. From September 1995 onwards, the number of Palestinians in the makeshift camp at Saloum (Al-Awda Camp) varied from 200 to 600, and maybe more. Most were low-income earners who had no other country to go after being expelled from Libya.

A number of expelled Palestinians left Libya by sea. Syria sent a ship to carry more than 600 expelled Palestinians carrying Syrian documents, after they got stranded on board a ship opposite the coast of Cyprus, which denied them the right to enter its territory and did not allow their ship to dock in its ports. Al-Hayat Daily newspaper reported that 608 Palestinians returned to Syria, while 13 of them carrying Jordanian documents returned to Jordan. Thirty Palestinians from the ship became trapped after being denied entry to Cyprus and were offered to be allowed to go back to Libya by Libyan authorities, which sent a ship for that purpose; however, they refused to board the ship, and preferred to stay where they were. Lebanon on its part turned back several hundred Palestinians who arrived from Libya on two ships in late August 1995. Their entry was made subject to obtaining an entry visa, even for those holding Lebanese travel documents.

On October 26, 1995, Colonel Qadhafi decided to suspend his decision to expel Palestinians for three to six months, citing the need to give students a chance to finish the academic year as a justification for this move. The Colonel explicitly stated, however, that upon the lapse of that period, the world would witness thousands of Palestinians leaving Libya, with the aim of forcing the international community to recognize the Palestinian refugees’ right to return to their homeland. During this period approximately 200 evicted Palestinians remained waiting at the Al-Awda Camp.

In May 1996, and after the expiration of the aforementioned period, the Libyan authorities re-embarked on an extensive process to expel the Palestinians who were still in Libya. The number of Palestinians living in Libya went down from 30,000 before the crisis erupted in September 1995, to 17,000 in May 1996. Rumor had it that the Libyan authorities’ plan was to group together all Palestinians in Libya and start expelling them according to the dates when they finish their academic year. It was also said that Libya has started to cleanup and reorganize the Al-Awda Camp.

The United Nations agencies undertook to provide humanitarian aid to the expelled Palestinians who were stuck in the middle of the desert, as evidenced by UNRWA’s press release no. HQ/7/95 of September 13, 1995, and the joint statement on Forced Movement of Palestinians from Libya, which was issued by the UNHCR and UNRWA on September 29, 1995. While it was understood that these matters were within the jurisdiction of the sovereign states concerned the two press releases emphasized that the humanitarian dimension of this developing situation called for the immediate attention. According to the first press release, and as a result of the Libyan action, several countries in UNRWA’s area of operations started imposing restrictions on the entry of Palestinians, even on those who had right of residence.

**What were the conditions like for the Palestinians in Al-Awda Camp?**

As the winter of 1995 approached, expelled Palestinians feared diseases which normally spread in an area where the weather fluctuated between heavy rainfall and a scarcity of water. By mid-October, 1995, several children of the stranded Palestinians were sick and two people were reported dead. As the camp was hit by torrential rains, floods and sandstorms, conditions were deteriorating and hygiene was poor.
From a humanitarian point of view the expelled Palestinians lived in severe conditions compounded by the fact that the UNRWA was unable to provide refugees with food or health services on a regular basis since it operates neither in Libya nor in Egypt and because Palestinians are excluded from the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, meaning that they were prevented from receiving UNHCR’s full support. The camp was in an area with a high density of land-mines planted during the Egyptian-Libyan hostilities of 1975-1980, in addition to a large population of snakes and scorpions. The camp site did not have sources of water and the residents often had to use their modest savings to buy food from Msaed, the closest Libyan town. The camp residents lived in tents threatened to be torn down during the winter because of heavy rain and flooding. In sum, the living conditions of refugees in the Al-Awda Camp were below any humanly acceptable level.

What efforts were made to pressure the Libyan authorities and help the Palestinians?

From the start, none of the powers, parties and revolutionary and Arab-national personalities agreed with Qadhafi’s theory or with the resulting measures that targeted Palestinians. Palestinian resistance-movement leaders opposing the Oslo Agreement exhausted all reasonable efforts to convince their ally, Colonel Qadhafi, to give-up his strict stance. The Colonel remained unmoved and instead requested them to back up his decision and to support his ideas. A high level delegation representing the coalition of ten Palestinian factions opposed to Arafat arrived in Tripoli to hold talks with Libyan officials on Qadhafi’s decision to deport thousands of Palestinians but to no avail. The newly established Palestinian Authority submitted a memo to the League of Arab States, requesting that the Palestinians not pay the price for Libya’s official position on the peace accords with Israel, and called on Libya to respect the 1965 Protocol for Organizing the Residence of Palestinians in Arab countries which granted refugees the same rights to residency and employment as those granted to citizens of hosting Arab states.

The secretary general of the Arab League, Dr. Ahmad Esmat Abdel-Majeed, and Egyptian President Mohammed Hosni Mubarak, tried their best to convince Qadhafi that his idea about returning Palestinians to their homes was not practical and would result in nothing but more disaster. Expectedly, the governments of Syria, Lebanon and Jordan did not respond positively to the Colonel’s call to expel Palestinians hosted in these countries to the Palestinian borders. If the Colonel was attempting to utilize the Palestinian card to lift the pressure he had been subjected to or ease the embargo imposed upon Libya, then this card failed and did not accomplish any of its goals. It has been indisputably proved that 30,000 Palestinians means nothing to the Western world, especially the United States.

Perhaps the most effective resistance came from the evicted Palestinians themselves. Under these inhuman conditions, the expelled Palestinians stranded in the Saloum camp had to react, especially given the apparent failure of the diplomatic efforts and humanitarian calls. News items told about expelled Palestinians placing their tents near the Egyptian Saloum-borders security point, expelled Palestinians protesting on the two sides of the highway linking Egypt with Libya and on occasions actually closing the international highway and threatening to close it again and again, and about them entering hunger and medicine strikes. It was made clear by the residents of the Al-Awda camp, that death would be better than this continuing saga of endless human suffering.

How did the crisis eventually end?

In a surprise move in January 1997, the Libyan authorities offered to take back Palestinians refugees, and further dispatched a Palestinian delegation to the tent camp to convince the refugees to return; the refugees hurled sticks and stones at them and accused the delegation of being Libyan agents “who wanted them to go back without guarantees.” The refugees sought written guarantees that they would return to their...
jobs and homes. The Libyan move to return Palestinians was issued by parliamentary committees, which emphasized the Palestinian people's right to return to their homeland and the fact that since such return is impossible for the time being, the expelled Palestinians were offered to return to Libya. Faced with the refugees' constant refusal to return to Libya without written guarantees, the Libyan authorities sought the mediation of the Palestinian Authority, but it was made clear by the refugees themselves that they were not planning to return without receiving the said guarantees first; since they have no other Arab state to return to. Any return to Libya without securing houses and jobs for them would prove meaningless.

The agony and suffering of the Palestinian refugees who were stranded on the Egyptian-Libyan border came to an end in a rather unexpected way. After spending two years in the desert, Libyan soldiers forcefully evacuated the Al-Awda camp, and ordered Palestinians residing in it (250 of them) to take buses to Tubrok while carrying all their personal belongings. A UNHCR spokesperson in Cairo expressed his satisfaction with the latest development and declared that "evacuating the camp was the only possible solution."

**What has happened to the Palestinians who left Libya?**

The Palestinians from Gaza who had no residence permit in the Gaza Strip were stuck in Libya and are still there today. Those Palestinians who had residence permits in Lebanon and Syria suffered the least as they were able to return to these countries and, to my knowledge, continue a fairly normal existence. A number of professionals who I know well ended up finding well-paid jobs in the Gulf, while a still smaller number emigrated to Europe and Canada. But the majority simply looked for a living in Syria and Lebanon.

Although the change in Libyan policy brought an end to the suffering of hundreds of Palestinians, it is important to keep in mind that thousands of Palestinians had already been expelled by that time and were not offered the chance to return to their jobs, especially since by then they were living in other Arab countries, mainly Egypt, Syria and Jordan. The world media was unable to clearly specify the number of expelled Palestinians; what may be true, though, is that their number may be as high as 15,000 of the 30,000 Palestinians who once constituted the Palestinian community in Libya.

This interview is based on an article in The Palestine Yearbook of International Law, Vol IX, 1996/97 p363-374, a longer article in Arabic in the Journal of Palestine Studies (Majallat Al-Dirasat Al-Filastinyah, Issue 29, Winter 1997 and correspondence with the author.

*Bassem Sirhan is a Professor of Sociology, a Palestinian writer and a refugee in Lebanon. Professor Sirhan earned his PhD from American University in Washington D.C and has taught in Libya, in the Western Mountain University - College of Education (Yefren) from Sept. 1992 to July 1995 and has lived and worked in Lebanon, Kuwait, Bahrain and Qatar. His research focuses on exiled Palestinian communities in Lebanon, Syria and Kuwait.

*Endnotes: See online version at: http://www.badil.org/al-majdal/*
However long it takes

by Rosemary Sayigh

It’s rare that books about Palestine focus on the Palestinian people rather than the territory or the issue, but here is one that does this skillfully while providing the reader with the relevant politico-historical framework. The author lives in the West Bank. This means that the people whose stories he tells are ones he has met many times over and often lived with. His gaze is warm and human, respectful and responsive. His text conveys in all their complexity both a tentacular occupation, and the myriad resistances through which Palestinians mobilize themselves to survive and outlast it.

From the vantage point of his home in Aida camp, Rich Wiles experiences the occupation at first-hand. The frequent forays of the Israeli Occupation Forces (IOF) into the camp leave dead and wounded, homes destroyed, youths and boys arrested. A military jeep comes upon 14-year old Mahmoud alone in an alley with his dog, scoops him up, beats him, and throws him into a military cell. From here he is transferred to Acion Detention Center, then to Ofer, then to Telmond prison. Charged with throwing stones and carrying a knife, he is fined $5,000, and sentenced to more than three months in prison. Many similar cases have been documented, but Rich Wiles fills out the details and consequences of this typical Occupation event: the other child prisoners; the inadequate food; self-scarring in protest; a gas attack by guards; the visit of a 10-year old brother (but they can’t hug each other through the reinforced glass). There’s a welcome party with fireworks when Mahmoud finally gets home, but his dog has died, and he “doesn’t want to go out any more”.

Rich visits other West Bank camps – Al-Ayn and Balata near Nablus, Jenin – and records the experiences of other survivors of Occupation attacks. As the IOF carry out house-to-house searches in Al-Ayn “Armour-plated lorries and bulldozers, personnel-carriers and jeeps filled every street”. He succeeds in penetrating Al-Ayn in the later days of the siege, and meets Sena and Mahmoud. They spent the attack with their children in their bathroom, only to have their home dynamited, without any reason given. Rich meets a man who points to a mound of rubble and tells him, “forty of us used to share this house, five families in total”. Planted on the mound is a red flag, symbol of resistance and the death of martyrs. Such sieges, deaths, arrests and home demolitions are the everyday life of West Bank camps.

Military force is the main but not the only weapon of the Occupation. Another is the checkpoints and permits that constrain mobility. When octogenarian Abu Waleed al-Azzeh is in hospital in Jerusalem, only eight kilometers from Aida camp, none of his extended family can obtain permits to visit him. Since children under 16 do not require permits, it is decided that Abu-Waleed’s oldest grandson, Miras (13-years), will make the trip. Rich accompanies him to guarantee safe passage through the checkpoints. People’s struggles to maintain relationships in spite of the Occupation is a major theme of ‘Behind the Wall’. It takes Aisha 16 hours to get from Bethlehem to the prison in Naqab where her son is a prisoner, and another five hours to return. They communicate through glass. Aisha tells Rich of delight...
at seeing her son again – “He is even more handsome!” To her this is more important than the endless delays and the body search. Her words show the politicization that occupation brings: “They put us through all this... to try to make us not want to go through it all again... We do all this to support the prisoners and cheer them up”.

The Occupation is brutal but also absurd, an aspect Rich illustrates through the story of Mahadi and Susi. Cousins, from the same village, engaged to be married, Mahadi lives inside Aida camp, while Susu lives less than three hundred metres away from the edge of the camp. The building of the Wall has made it impossible for them to meet. The Occupation has reclassified the land after building the Wall, so that Susu now lives in Israel and needs permission as a West Banker to be there. Her application is refused, making her a prisoner inside her own house. As an inhabitant of Aida camp, Mahadi is equally unable to reach Susu: He is turned back at the checkpoint. He searches for a tunnel under the Wall. They talk by phone and wave from roof tops. They talk to each through the metal gate in the Wall. Eventually the couple works out a way to marry: Rich comments, “Some elements of humanity simply cannot be shackled”. In the divided village of Battir on the old ‘Green Line’, Hadr lives with his two young daughters on the ‘Palestinian’ side. Four years ago his wife crossed to Jordan to look after her sick father. Israel has not allowed her to return, and the Jordanians have not allowed Hadr to join his wife.

"Girl on the Roof" - Jenin Refugee Camp. (© Rich Wiles/ www.richwiles.com)
It’s through such carefully told individual stories that Wiles portrays lives intended to be unlivable, made so by deaths, imprisonments, home demolitions, immobility, unemployment, the rising costs of basic foodstuffs, and absence of hope of a better future. All these contribute to pressure towards ‘quiet transfer’. The Apartheid Wall has added enormously to this unique form of colonization, cutting villagers off from their lands and urban markets, isolating once thriving regional centres such as Bethlehem and Tulkaram, and further de-developing an already desperate Palestinian economy. Judged illegal by the International Court of Justice in 2004, the Wall when finished will expropriate 9.5% of the West Bank. A symbol of Israeli dominance and international complicity, the Wall has called out many kinds of Palestinians resistance: graffiti, art work, weekly protests, tunneling and finding gaps, keeping farms and businesses going. Such persistence against the odds points to a crucial element in Palestinian resistance: not being deterred by failure. Not one of the people Rich records mentions emigration.

Though the Wall looms nine meters tall at the edge of Aida camp, allowing the IOF to look and shoot at will from its watch towers into the camp, the shabab go down almost daily to challenge the IOF with stones. A youth from Aida camp, Yasser ‘the Wall’, climbs a Wall watchtower and hangs a Fatah flag there. Then he manages to make a small hole in the Wall by laying fires along its base. Prison holds no fears for Yasser: “What have I got to lose? Let them take me to their prison. It can be no worse than this life anyway!”

The Wall has made life harder for everyone on its route. Abu Ali used to move between his home and his chicken restaurant inside Al-Ram by showing his ID at the check point. Now they want a written permission as well as a number. Unable to get permission Abu Ali slips back through razor wire to keep his shop open, though there are few customers in this newly created No-Man’s-Land. He daren’t go home again for fear of getting stuck there. While Rich is Al-Ram he sees two old women trying and failing to reach Jerusalem through the sewage tunnels under the Wall. He sees workers who prize their way into Jerusalem through cracks and razor wire. A teenage boy gives him a jaunty smile as he climbs the Wall. Rich comments “While Israel can and does control many aspects of Palestinian life it seems the one thing it cannot always occupy is people’s minds”.

Many forms of resistance emerge from the stories of the people Rich encounters. The life story of Ibrahim, whose Pavement Café in Hebron is surrounded by settlers and IOF, reads like political history told in colloquial Palestinian. The struggle to get educated that students in Nablus express during the Operation Hot Winter of 2007 has been part of the Palestinian struggle since before 1948. Memory work -- visits to home villages -- has been going on informally since 1967, and now is mediated through NGOs and cyberspace. Rich accompanies children from Aida camp to what remains of Ras Abu ‘Ammar and Beit Jibreen, describing how children bring back earth, stones, prickly pears, and excited stories to their families. Unable to enter the settlement built over his village, Mohammad says, “The right to return to my village will come one day however long it takes”. Finding family names scratched on the wall of his grandfather’s home, Miras adds his own.

Palestinians’ capacity to celebrate happy events -- the release of a prisoner, a wedding – is surely one of their strengths. Another is an ability to turn suffering into black humour. Yet another is intuiting the Occupation’s aim and finding and appropriate counter measures. When Aisha says that the Occupation seeks to make people give up by making life unlivable, she concludes that sustaining family and community ties come what may is the best form of resistance.
Though the reader of ‘Behind the Wall’ encounters a wide range of Palestinians, women and men, young and old, one cannot help remarking Rich’s special affinity for children. This comes out not only in attention to malnourished infants in a ‘Bethlehem’ hospital, or to children wounded or arrested during IOF raids. It’s more a capacity to describe them so that they stay in the mind, whether it’s two and a half year old Gangoon who tells the IOF soldier checking the bus to “Give us your IDs!”; or three year old Jamileh, walking radiant around Balata camp in her Eid dress with her ‘brother’ Rich; or Yasser ‘the Wall’ who, parentless, “defended himself, his camp and his rights”; or little Tasbeeh, whose home in Balata is stormed by the IOF a few hours after her birth, endangering her eardrum; or Miras, shot in the stomach while playing with his cousins on the balcony, who stays strong in hospital to reassure his father. Later, Miras becomes one of a group learning photography with Rich; it’s good to know that his photos of the camp are different from the others because he “chose to look for beauty”. This is a book that all supporters of the Palestinian struggle will want to give to family and friends.

Rosemary Sayigh is an anthropologist and oral historian living in Beirut, author of Palestinians: From peasants to Revolutionaries (1979) and Too Many Enemies: The Palestinian Experience in Lebanon (1994).
The majority of Palestinian voices are still being ignored

by Rich Wiles

A quick search for ‘Palestine’ on Amazon.com (the world’s biggest book retailer) reveals over 15,000 available entries. There is clearly no shortage of literature on the subject, much as there is no shortage of discussion or opinion around the world. Many of the books written pre-Nakba were structured within two main categories. Some were traditional ‘adventurer’ type travel journals almost exclusively penned by authors from the ‘privileged minority’ of the colonialist states, whilst others looked through religious and political perspectives including the reams of early Zionist literature. Post-1948, Palestine-related literature was dominated by accounts lauding the establishment of the Zionist dream. Again, these works were almost exclusively written by ‘Westerners’, which is unsurprising when acknowledging the fact that the creation of ‘Israel’, and the ethnic cleansing that formed an intrinsic part of that process, was a European-style colonialist project.

Since the release of previously restricted government archives in the mid-1980’s, a huge amount of Israeli ‘revisionist’ history has been published which has shed light on the ethnic cleansing of Palestinians in 1948. Whilst Israel’s so-called ‘New Historians’ have received much attention for their ‘uncovering’ of Palestinian expulsions during al-Nakba, and whilst their works do indeed provide valuable insights into the how the Zionist movement achieved its aim of transferring Palestinians, earlier works by Palestinian scholars such as Walid Khalidi and others had made almost identical claims without receiving the same level of recognition.
Winter 2010

Where the work of Khalidi differed from that of many of the New Historians, putting aside the fact that he began researching and publishing nearly 30 years before the Israeli academics, was in his references. Khalidi largely referenced Palestinians who had first hand experience of al-Nakba, whilst the New Historians such as Benny Morris almost exclusively sourced information from de-classified Israeli documents. Khalidi’s work was dismissed by many as one-sided and biased, whilst the work of the New Historians was considered radical and groundbreaking. Ilan Pappe’s widely acclaimed book ‘The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine’ (2006, One World – London) detailed Plan Dalet from de-classified sources amongst its proof that al-Nakba was a planned process of ethnic cleansing, yet some 45 years earlier Walid Khalidi published his comparatively unknown paper ‘Plan Dalet: The Zionist Masterplan for the Conquest of Palestine’ (Middle East Forum, November 1961). In reality, the literature of the New Historians was unique not in its convictions, but simply in the fact that these ideas were at last being written about by Israelis which gave it much greater credence in the Western world.

Since the outbreak of the Second Intifada, several ‘international’ have published books attempting to convey the realities of life for Palestinians as they have witnessed it whilst supporting ‘non-violent resistance’ projects, or working for international NGO’s in the remnants of Palestine. So many people have opinions they want to express, often with good intentions, yet invariably these fall into categories that are intentionally palatable to a Western audience. These practices drag the international ‘understanding’ of Palestine into mainstream Western ideals where they can be safely pigeon-holed inside a framework that is acceptable to both Western publishers and their readerships. There are of course some very valuable exceptions to these norms, although these books make up a tiny minority with the support of generally alternative presses.

The international ‘solidarity’ movements and segments of the left often fall into exactly the same trap. Their eagerness to support ‘non-violent Palestinian resistance’ at the expense of the all encompassing Palestinian concept of ‘mucawameh’ (resistance) is one such example. I have lost count of the number of times I have listened to ‘peace activists’ promoting non-violence projects as opposed to Palestinian resistance in general, or trade unionists who claim to ‘support Palestine’ whilst keeping open avenues of communication with the Zionist Histadrut believing that doing so follows their interpretation of a Marxist agenda. In a similar vein, many ‘solidarity activists’ eagerly campaign for bans of Settlements’ produce without fully endorsing the 2005 Palestinian civil-society call for Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS). Similarly, in the vast halls of academia around the western world, non-Palestinian academics discuss the intellectual polemics of the one-state versus two-state debate from the safety of their well stocked libraries and comfortable armchairs without actually Palestinians what shape their own future should take. The notion in certain circles seems to be that ‘we will support Palestine but only on our terms’.

Through such practices, people are incorporating personal agendas into a struggle that is not their own, whether intentionally or otherwise, although few of them have ever actually ‘lived’ that struggle. This does not deny or refute the fact that everyone is entitled to have and express an opinion, but the problems arise when the opinions of Western ‘experts’ are considered of greater value than those who by definition truly understand what it means to be Palestinian – the Palestinians themselves. This ‘intellectual imperialism’ can be extremely damaging to Palestine and the global understanding of it.

The voices of the people who have truly lived the struggle, and who have suffered its consequences are all too often neglected, yet there can be no better opportunity to understand Palestine than by listening to its people. Through Behind the Wall: Life, Love, and Struggle in Palestine I attempted to create this kind of platform; a solid base from which uncensored and un-sanitized Palestinian voices could be heard in their own words. Palestinian stories should be told by Palestinians, they should be listened to, and, if one is intending to
stand in solidarity with Palestine, they should be acted upon according to a manner promoted by, and in full support of, those same people. When wanting to profess solidarity with a people who have struggled with intense dignity and inspirational *sumoud* (steadfastness) for over six decades, people should not attempt to pigeon-hole the Palestinian struggle into a box that is acceptable by the states that continue in their historic role of dictating the global political climate through warfare and their control of natural resources and commodities.

At the heart of Palestine’s struggle is the refugee case, which remains almost a taboo subject in many forum including in the seemingly endless and fruitless ‘Peace Process’, which seems on the verge of what one can only hope is a final collapse. Time and again, in speeches and in op-eds around the world, ‘pro-Palestinian’ commentators speak of ‘over 40 years of Occupation’ as if the unjust colonial appropriation of 78% of Palestinian land pre-1967 were somehow morally different from the occupation of the remainder of Palestine. Similarly, the estimated three quarters of a million Palestinians who were ethnically cleansed from their homes during al-Nakba and the 7 million or so Palestinians who were born as refugees following these events are treated as political lepers whose insistence upon their rights, including the Right of Return, is regarded as quixotic and even malicious.

It is not too late to go back to the beginning and look at all this again, but this time through Palestinian eyes. Look at how this began, how it developed, how it is sustained, and how it progresses today through the ongoing Nakba. Without hearing the voices of Palestine’s refugees, and listening to their stories with a clear eye on the historical and contemporary context, the voices of the vast majority of all Palestinians alive in the world today will continue to be ignored.

*Back in Tents Again* - Nablus.  
(© Rich Wiles/ www.richwiles.com)

**Rich Wiles** is a photographic artist, independent writer, and activist based in Palestine. His photographic exhibitions from Palestine have been exhibited widely around the world. Since 2005, Rich Wiles has been the Coordinator of International Relations at Lajee Center in Aida Refugee Camp.
Final Statement: Global Palestine Right of Return Coalition-10th Annual Meeting-Beirut 5-11 December 2010

Under the motto "our right to return to our homeland is inalienable and not to be nullified by a statute of limitations," the Global Palestine Right of Return Coalition conducted its tenth meeting in Beirut between the fifth and the eleventh of December 2010 in the Shatila and Mar Elias camps. The meeting was hosted by the Centre for Refugee Rights / Aidoun and the Coordination Forum of NGOs Working in the Palestinian Refugee Communities in Lebanon, with the participation of a number of guests, observers and experts interested in the issue of refugees and their right to return.

The official meeting commenced at the UNESCO Palace on Monday, 6/12/2010 under the auspices of Lebanese Minister of Information Dr. Tarek Mitri and the presence of representatives of the Embassy of Palestine as well as the various Palestinian factions and a number of Lebanese parties. Dr. Tarek Mitri gave a speech in which he stressed the support of the Lebanese people and government of the right of refugees to return to their homes and their right to a dignified and decent life until they return.

In a speech on behalf of the coalition, Jaber Suleiman, stressed that it will uphold the refugees right of return. He also reviewed the coalition’s activities and efforts during the past year, as well as the challenges facing the refugee issue. Furthermore, he said that granting Palestinian refugees in Lebanon basic human rights does not conflict with or negate their right to return. Dr. Salman Abu Sitta also gave a historic overview of the Zionist settlement, occupation and usurpation of Palestinian territories.

The coalition mourned the loss of the late Abdullah Hourani, general coordinator of the Palestine Popular Assembly for Defending the Right of Return in the camps of the Gaza Strip, who passed away in Amman Jordan as he was ready to attend the tenth meeting. The participants extended a salute and tribute to his pure soul, and valued his historic role in defending the national cause and the rights of Palestinian refugees, at the forefront of which is the right of return.

The coalition also sent a message of solidarity in support of the detained activist Ameer Makhoul, who is imprisoned by the occupation. The coalition values his role in strengthening the resilience of those who reside in land occupied in 1948, in the face of the racist Zionist regime’s plans, procedures and practices to enact a racial policy of Judiazation and ethnic cleansing.

As part of the annual meeting of the coalition, participants met with some of the representatives of the Lebanese parliamentary blocks, and the Chairperson of the Lebanese / Palestinian Dialogue Committee created under the Lebanese Prime Minister office. During the meeting the coalition discussed the need to ensure the civil, social, economic and cultural rights of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon, in order to enhance their steadfastness and to work for their return to the homes from which they were expelled. The coalition assured Lebanon that it respects its sovereignty, stability and security, and the need to alleviate the suffering of the Palestinians in the camps, stressing their firm rejection of any attempts to settle them permanently in Lebanon.

And in honor of the souls of Palestinian martyrs, members of the coalition visited the martyrs’ cemetery in Shatila and laid a wreath of flowers at the mass grave of the martyrs of Sabra & Shatila massacre.

The coalition held its internal meetings over a two day period (6 - 7/12/2010). The reports of the coordinators of the committees in different regions were discussed in depth, during the meetings. In addition, the participants examined the obstacles facing the coalition’s work, and discussed the internal Rules of Procedure in an effort to develop it in a way which is commensurate with the directions to be taken in the next stage.

Additionally, the meeting discussed the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions Campaign / BDS, against Israel. In doing so, mechanisms which should be utilized to promote and expand the boycott in Palestine, the Arab world and the world in general as tool to serve the Palestinian people’s struggle for their legitimate rights, were discussed. As for the round-table discussions, they addressed the critical Palestinian situation, in light of the continued division in the field of the Palestinian national struggle. They also discussed the aggressive Zionist policies against the Palestinian people and their land, as well as the dim prospects of the negotiations, which have been stalled for years due to Israeli intransigence and U.S. support for the position of the Zionist stance. Moreover, these negotiations failed because they were not grounded in resolutions set by international law. The meeting stressed the need to address the policy of forced displacement, confiscation of land and illegal settlement expansion, as well as the continued construction of the separation wall, the Judaization of Jerusalem’s neighborhoods and holy sites, the...
continuing siege of the Gaza Strip, and the pressure and blackmail to recognize the Jewishness of the state. Such policies seek to obliterate Palestinian national rights and perpetuate the occupation and the apartheid regime.

In the light of the deliberations and discussions which were characterized by a spirit of high responsibility, participants concluded that:

**First: on the political level:**

1. The right of the Palestinian people to return to their homes from which they were expelled in 1948 and to restitute their own property. The material and moral compensation for their losses is a historic and legal right based on the principles of international humanitarian law and the international law of human rights, and is also grounded in international resolutions, particularly UNGA Resolution 194.

2. Upholding the unity of the refugee issue within the context of the unity of the land and the people in Mandatory Palestine and in exile, and the categorical rejection of all attempts to partition this issue or resolve the refugee issue in any country under any pretext or circumstance.

3. The need to consolidate the discourse on the right of return and elevate it to an extent which harnesses and unifies the energies of the Palestinian people and all its committees. The expansion of this discourse to include the cultural and educational dimensions of the Palestinian refugee community's lives.

4. The Rejection of any settlement to the Palestinian/Arab – Zionist conflict which is not anchored on the basis of national inalienable rights, international law and the resolutions of the international community, and to emphasize that the terms of reference of the current purposed settlements such the Roadmap Plan and the Arab Peace Initiative do not meet the minimum rights of our people but only perpetuate the arrogance of the Zionists in their attempt to blur national rights, especially the right of refugees to return to their original homes.

5. Call upon all Palestinian parties of different persuasions to work hard to ensure immediate reconciliation between the warring Palestinian factions in order to restore national unity, and to end the state of division, which will strengthen the steadfastness of the Palestinian people in their struggle to confront the aggressive policies of Zionism, and to acquire legitimate national rights.

6. The return of the Palestinian people to their original homes is a right not to be nullified by a statute of limitations, and is not up for a referendum vote, as it is an inalienable individual and collective right which cannot be bartered with any other right. Ending the conflict is not possible without resolving the issue of refugees through a just and durable solution based on the implementation of UNGA Resolution 194.

**Second: at the domestic level and the Plan of Action Coalition:**

- Maintain the popular character of Al-Awda movement as a mass movement which represents the interests of refugees and express their rights, in particular the right to return to their original homes. This should be done without getting involved in the battle for political representation, and out of concern for strengthening the representation of the Palestinian people in the PLO, since it can be considered the national unifying entity of the Palestinian people. It is also imperative to reform the PLOs institutions based on democratic principles which ensure the involvement of all national Palestinian factions, while emphasizing that Al-Awda movement is an integral part of the Palestinian liberation movement and one of its key pillars.

- Cementing the organizational structures of Al-Awda groups in every arena and expanding popular participation in its activities, particularly by young people, and launching a dialogue and exchange of ideas and information among themselves in order to develop and elaborate an encompassing form of organization for Al-Awda's work to better meet the challenges faced by the issue of return.

- Develop more systematic efforts to raise the problems faced by Palestinian refugees in the some of the Arab host countries, especially Lebanon, in order to grant them temporary protection and effectively secure their basic human rights, to strengthen their steadfastness until they return to their homes, which requires a practical stance against resettlement and displacement, and the provision of a decent life for Refugees.

- Further the efforts to inform the international community of protection gaps facing Palestinian refugees and the possibilities inherent in addressing them. This requires that the relevant international bodies, especially UNRWA and the High Commissioner for Refugees / UNHCR assume their responsibilities and raise the level
of awareness and care to the concerns of the refugees. It is also necessary to reactivate the role of the UN Conciliation Commission for Palestine (UNCCP).

• strengthening the role of the coalition in the international campaign to boycott, divest and sanction Israel within the framework effectively contributing to building a solid network of international solidarity in order to further the isolation of the Zionist state, and activate the mechanisms which ensure the fulfillment of the Palestinian people’s international rights, particularly the right of return of Palestinian refugees to their original homes.

• Emphasize the need of the institutions of the PLO to uphold its responsibility towards the Palestinian refugees in all places they are present, which calls for activating the Department of Refugee Affairs in the Palestinian Liberation Organization and elevating its work, in a manner commensurate with the challenges faced by the refugee issue.

• Calling upon the Palestinian Liberation Organization to take an active role in the follow-up to launching Judge Goldstone’s report, in United Nations bodies, and enhance coordination between them and Palestinian NGOs and relevant international groups, to ensure that the Zionist war criminals are brought to trial for crimes they have committed against the Palestinian people.

• Promote the participation of women in various aspects of national Palestinian activities and encourage them to play a more active role especially in feminist organizations working in the refugee community, which enables improving the coalition’s endeavors to defend the rights of refugees.

In conclusion, the coalition salutes the masses of the Palestinian people in all places to which they were displaced, whose presence confirms that the issue of return is the unified national character of the struggle of the Palestinian people, of all different affiliations. This requires all of us to shoulder our national responsibilities, each from his position, towards unity, which is our strongest and most lasting weapon to meet the challenges and restore our national rights, foremost the right of return

And we shall return,
Beirut 11/12/2010

Participants in the tenth meeting

Members:
• Centre for Refugee Rights / Aidoun- Lebanon
• Coordination Forum of NGOs working in the Palestinian Refugee Communities / Lebanon (Beit Atfal Al-Somoud , Norwegian People’s Aid( NPA), Popular Aid for Relief and Development (PARD) , Najdeh Association)
• Badil - Resource Center for Palestinian Residency and Refugee Rights - Palestine
• Union of Youth Activity Centers (UYAC) - Palestine
• Union of Women’s Activity Centers (UWAC) - Palestine
• Committee for the Defense of Palestinian Refugee Rights and Yafa Cultural Center - Palestine
• Executive Office of the Popular Committees of Refugees - West Bank / Palestine
The Gathering of Inhabitants of the Destroyed Towns and Villages – Ramallah / Palestine
• Palestine Right of Return Confederation - Europe
• Al-Awda Coalition- United States of America
• Aidoun Group – Syria

Guests:
• Jordanian Women’s Union - Jordan
• Right of Return conference - London
• Department of Refugee Affairs / PLO - Palestine
• Palestine Remembered: Jordan / America
JOINT OPEN LETTER:
Re: EU-Israel Sub-Committee on Political Dialogue and Cooperation,
15 December 2010

To: Mr. Thomas Dupla Del Moral, Middle East Director, External Relations Directorate General, European Commission

Dear Mr. Dupla Del Moral,

Re: EU-Israel Sub-Committee on Political Dialogue and Cooperation, 15 December 2010

As Palestinian human rights organisations committed to the protection and promotion of human rights in the Occupied Palestinian Territory (OPT), in light of the upcoming EU-Israel Subcommittee Meeting on Political Dialogue and Cooperation, scheduled for 15 December 2010, we would like to express our strong concerns regarding Israel’s continuing settlement construction.

For over four decades Israel has engaged in a policy of consolidating its territorial, administrative and legal control over the OPT, constituent of the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip, by establishing and expanding its illegal settlements. Settlements and their associated infrastructure of Israeli-only by-pass roads, checkpoints, roadblocks and the Annexation Wall, control 42% of the West Bank. Built on lands illegally confiscated from Palestinians, the settlement infrastructure fragments the occupied territory into separate enclaves, preventing the Palestinian people from making use of their land and natural resources, and exercising their right to self-determination.

In addition to having a devastating impact on Palestinian freedom of movement, family life and access to education, food, health care and other services, Israel’s settlement enterprise has further resulted in the creation of two parallel and unequal societies in the OPT – a superior Israeli settler society and a dominated and disadvantaged Palestinian society that is denied its fundamental human rights.

In November 2009, in response to international criticism, Israel declared a ten-month moratorium on settlement construction in the West Bank. With the expiration of the moratorium on 26 September 2010, construction in the West Bank has resumed at an even greater rate. In its Council Conclusions of December 2009, the EU supported the moratorium as a “first step in the right direction” and in October 2010, following her visit to Israel and the OPT, the EU High Representative Ashton called on “Israel to continue the moratorium.” Earlier this week the High Representative noted “with regret that Israel has not been in a position to accept an extension of the moratorium, as requested by the US, the EU and the Quartet.”

While we appreciate the EU’s attempts to challenge Israel’s settlement activity, it is crucial to acknowledge that the moratorium amounts to nothing more than a hollow political gesture. The terms of the “freeze” were so narrow as to effectively allow much construction to continue. For example, construction in and around occupied East Jerusalem, of public buildings or for security needs as well as ongoing construction were exempted from the moratorium. Furthermore, the moratorium allowed the Civil Administration to single-handedly permit construction in a wide set of circumstances, including for “public safety” and in other undefined exceptional cases. These factors, in conjunction with a lack of enforcement by the Israeli authorities of even the most limited terms of the moratorium, means that settlement construction has continued with almost no change of pace during the alleged “freeze.”

Israel’s settlement policy in the OPT is in blatant violation of international law. Settlement activity violates the international humanitarian law prohibitions of population transfer and of unlawful and wanton destruction of property not justified by military necessity, which constitute war crimes amounting to grave breaches of the Fourth Geneva Convention. Israel’s discriminatory policies further violate the International Convention on the Suppression and Punishment of the Crime of Apartheid and the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries.
and Peoples as well as various human rights instruments (for an in depth legal and technical analysis kindly find enclosed Al-Haq's Position Paper "Unmasking the ‘Freeze’: Israel’s alleged Moratorium on Settlement Construction Whitewashes Egregious Violations of International Law").

In conclusion, and as affirmed in the EU Council Conclusions of December 2009, settlements “are illegal under international law, constitute an obstacle to peace and threaten to make a two-state solution impossible.” Israel’s settlement policy cannot be redressed with political measures such as the recent moratorium. The terms of the moratorium do not represent a halt to the violations caused by the construction and presence of settlements in the OPT, thus disregarding Israel’s continuous breaches of international law and contradicting the EU’s demands for an immediate end to “all settlement activities in East Jerusalem and the rest of the West Bank.”

In light of the above and in view of the upcoming EU-Israel Subcommittee Meeting on Political Dialogue and Cooperation, the Palestinian human rights community urges the EU to reaffirm its demand on Israel to “reverse its settlement policy and to freeze all settlement activity” as expressed in the 2004 Council Conclusions. The EU must further ensure a prompt “abolition of financial and tax incentives and direct and indirect subsidies, and the withdrawal of exemptions benefiting the settlements and their inhabitants,” as affirmed in the 2005 Council Conclusions. Moreover, the EU must send Israel a clear message affirming that the upgrade of EU-Israel relations will remain frozen until Israel adheres to its obligations under international law and EU demands relating to Israel’s settlement policy are met.

Finally, the EU must reject deceptive notions of a temporary settlement “freeze” and instead insist on adherence to the fundamental principles of international law. International law unequivocally states that the only remedy to Israel’s settlement policy in the OPT, and the only basis for a just and lasting peace in the context of the Israel-Palestine conflict, is an immediate, unambiguous and permanent end to all settlement activity.

Sincerely,

The Palestinian Council of Human Rights Organisations
BADIL report submitted for upcoming review of Israel's performance under the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights

BADIL's report to the UN Committee on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (CESCR) provides evidence of Israel's ongoing and systematic violation of the rights to self-determination and non-discrimination of all Palestinians under its jurisdiction or effective control, thereby preventing the enjoyment of all other economic, social and cultural rights, including the rights to work, education, protection of the family, an adequate standard of living and health.

BADIL's report draws attention to the fact that the scope of Israel's Covenant violations has increased since CESCR reviewed Israel's performance in 1998, 2001 and 2003. It urges the Committee to examine Israeli legislation, policies and practices which have given rise to a system of institutionalized racial discrimination, forced population transfer and territorial expansion that affects the Covenant-enshrined rights of Palestinian citizens, refugees and those under occupation since 1967. BADIL also urges CESCR to undertake its review in the light of recent reports, including by two UN Special Rapporteurs on the Situation of Human Rights in the Palestinian Territories Occupied since 1967, which conclude that Israel's oppressive regime over the Palestinian people amounts to colonialism and apartheid.

BADIL, alongside other Palestinian rights organizations, submitted the report as part of a coordinated effort to aid the Committee in its formation of the list of issues for the State Party's consideration. The report notes with concern that a 2001 letter from the Committee alerting of the fact that Israel's human rights violations had reached a “crisis situation” and recommending that the UN Economic and Social Council take action under articles 21 and 22 of the Covenant has gone unheeded. BADIL strongly urges the Committee to examine thoroughly Israel’s system of institutionalized racial discrimination and denial of self-determination and issue the strongest possible Concluding Observations focused on developing practical recommendations.

The Full report can be downloaded from the OHCHR website:
http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/cescr/docs/ngos/BADIL_Israel45.doc

and from the BADIL website here:
BDS Campaign Update
(June - December 2010)

Glasgow shops join boycott of all Israeli produce
30 August 2010 – Following a campaign by Friends of Al Aqsa and the Scottish Palestine Solidarity Campaign, Asian shops in a key area of Glasgow declare themselves free of Israeli produce. A number of shopkeepers were unaware that they were even stocking Israeli goods and thanked campaigners for helping them to correctly identify Israeli goods.

Israeli actors call for a boycott of cultural center in the Israeli colony of Ariel
31 August 2010 – A group of 200 Israeli artists have vowed not to play in the new cultural center in the illegal Israeli colony of Ariel or any of the Israeli settlements in the occupied West Bank. The boycotting artists were supported by over 150 Israeli academics and a protest of over 300 activists outside a Tel Aviv theater company that had agreed to perform in Ariel. Palestinian groups welcome the boycott but insist on a morally consistent boycott on all Israeli state-funded cultural institutions in line with the 2005 Palestinian BDS call.

Pro-Israeli media sources and think tanks report an acceleration of the BDS movement
5 September 2010 – Israeli newspaper Haaretz reports on the growing economic and political effects of the global BDS movement. Reports by Israeli think tank, the REUT institute and pro-Israeli lobbies such as AIPAC and J-Street call for the formation of an anti-boycott strategy to counter the growing effectiveness of the BDS campaign.
Palestine conference in India endorses the Palestinian BDS Campaign

22nd–23rd September 2010 – With the support of the Palestinian National Committee for Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions, Indian intellectuals and activists organized the “Just Peace for Palestine” conference in New Delhi, India. The conference concluded with a resolution which called upon “the Indian government to end its military ties with Israel and return to its earlier commitment to the cause of the Palestinian people.” The conference also affirmed that “the world must declare that Israel is an apartheid state. It must call for global boycott and sanctions on Israel as long as it continues its illegal occupation of Palestine and its apartheid policies.” The resolution appealed to “people in India to join the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) campaign as a show of solidarity with the Palestinian people and their just struggle.” A plan of action was announced, in which several steps to show solidarity with Palestinians were outlined, particularly the launching of BDS campaigns and other measures by people’s action groups in the Asian region. More information on the conference can be found on the PACBI website: http://www.pacbi.org/etemplate.php?id=1376

University of Johannesburg cancels long-term academic links with Ben-Gurion University

30 September 2010 - The Senate of the University of Johannesburg votes "not to continue a long-standing relationship with Ben Gurion University (BGU) in Israel in its present form" and to set conditions "for the relationship to continue." The UJ Senate set an ultimatum of six months for BGU to end its complicity with the Israeli occupation army and to end policies of racial discrimination against Palestinians. The decision came after a campaign endorsed by over 250 South African academics including the heads of the four South African universities and prominent leaders such as Archbishop Desmond Tutu, Breyten Breytenbach, John Dugard, Antjie Krog, Barney Pityana, and Kader Asmal.

Irish government scraps ‘Israeli bullets deal

11 October 2010 – The Irish government refused to grant Israel Military Industries the contract to supply 10 million bullets to the Irish Defence Forces. The contract for the 5.56 x 45mm rounds, to be bought over a five-year period, has instead gone to Belgian and Brazilian arms manufacturers. The announcement came after a seven month campaign by the Irish PSC against the granting of the contract to any Israeli company. The campaign involved a lobby of the government, a letter writing campaign and protested outside the Defence Minister Tony Killeen's constituency office.

Norwegian campaign for Academic and Cultural Boycott launched with over 100 Signatures

13 October 2010 - A Norwegian petition calling for an institutional cultural and academic boycott of Israel (in line with the PACBI guidelines) has gathered 100 impressive signatories -- academics, writers, musicians, other cultural workers, and sports celebrities, including Egil "Drillo" Olsen, the coach of the Norwegian national soccer team, who is a huge celebrity in Norway.

Five countries boycott tourism conference in Jerusalem

15 October 2010 - An OECD ‘High Level Roundtable’ on tourism due to take place in West Jerusalem was thrown into chaos by the decision of five countries not to attend and the disclosure by several others that only low-level delegations will take part. Following attempts by Israel to use the conference to further its territorial claims on Jerusalem and concerns raised by Palestinian civil society and its international supporters that the conference serves to whitewash Israeli violations of international law, the UK, Sweden, Ireland, Turkey and South Africa announced that they would be not be taking part. Although the UK denied that its refusal to attend was politically
motivated, Sweden and Turkey openly stated that their withdrawals are political in nature. In a further blow to the credibility of the ‘high level’ conference at which ‘senior government officials’ were expected to discuss tourism policy, a number of countries will not send tourism ministers and instead low-ranking officials will represent member country governments.

Veolia and Alstom attempt to sell shares in Jerusalem Light Railway - BNC Calls for an intensification of Campaign

15 October 2010 - Veolia and Alstom, the two French companies involved in the construction and management of a tramway linking west Jerusalem with illegal Israeli colonial settlements in Occupied Palestinian Territory, are both reported to be selling their shares in the consortium that manages the project after a long and determined BDS campaign against the companies. The campaign contributed to the exclusion of both companies from major pension funds in the Netherlands, Sweden and Denmark as well as the loss of nearly a staggering €5bn internationally, including the loss by Veolia of a €3.5bn contract to operate subways in Stockholm County, a contract it had held for ten years. While the sale of the shares does constitute a success for the BDS campaign, the continuation of the companies’ complicity and profiteering from the project, and in other illegal projects in Palestine and their refusal to pay compensation to the Palestinian victims means that they should continue to be the targets of concerted BDS action.

Coalition of Women for Peace release report on Complicity of Israeli Bank in the Occupation

19 October 2010 - Who Profits from the Occupation, the research project of The Coalition of Women for Peace, initiated in response to the Palestinian call for Boycott Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) against Israel, released a report on the direct involvement of Israeli banks in illegal settlements. The report entitled ‘Financing the Occupation: the Direct Involvement of Israeli Banks in Illegal Settlement Activity and Control Over the Palestinian Banking Market’ identifies six categories of the involvement of Israeli banks and is a useful resource for activists campaigning against financial institutions responsible for maintaining the financial framework of the occupation. A full copy of the report is available on the Who Profits website at: http://www.whoprofits.org/articlefiles/WhoProfits-IsraeliBanks2010.pdf

City Council of Cigales removes Eden Springs water from its buildings

21st October 2010 – The Spanish town of Cigales became the second town in the province of Valladolid to join to the international BDS movement by removing the Israeli bottled water Eden Springs Ltd. from all its municipal buildings. The move came after a strong mobilization of the towns inhabitants, including demonstrations, petitions and public awareness campaigns and comes in the wake of a similar decision by the City Council of Villanueva de Duero and the teachers and workers of the Nursing School of the University of Valladolid who requested the removal of Eden Springs from the bottled water vending machines. Eden Springs is an Israeli-owned company and is sourced from the illegally occupied Golan Heights.

War on Want release new report on BDS

November 2010 – British anti-poverty charity War on Want published a new report exposing companies profiting from the occupation. The report highlights the need for the global community to take action to support the Palestinian people in the struggle for their right and explains the logic and success of the growing BDS movement. A full copy of the report is available on the War on Want website: http://www.waronwant.org/attachments/Boycott,%20Divestment,%20Sanctions.pdf
South African Artists Against Apartheid Launched
1 November 2010 – After Cape Town Opera (CTO) announce their intention to perform “Porgy and Bess” in Tel Aviv, hundreds of South Africans including Desmond Tutu and the South African Civil Society Conference (comprising over 300 delegates from 56 mass-based civil society organisations) join a letter by Israeli BDS activists calling on the CTO to cancel its tour. Whilst the tour did go ahead, Israeli BDS activists performed a mock performance outside the theater in protest (http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wElyrFOOnKPk&feature=related) and as a result of the mass mobilization against CTO performing, activists announce the launch of South African Artists Against Apartheid to implement a sustained campaign of cultural boycott against Israel (http://www.southafricanartistsagainstapartheid.com/2010/11/declaration.html).

Africa Israel says no plans to build more settlements
3 November 2010 - Africa Israel, the flagship company of Israeli billionaire Lev Leviev, announced that it is no longer involved in Israeli settlement projects and that it has no plans for future settlement activities. Africa Israel subsequently denied that this was a political decision. However, in the last few years numerous organizations, firms, governments and celebrities have exerted pressure and severed their relationships with Leviev and his companies over their involvement in settlement construction and other human rights abuses, in response to a boycott campaign initiated by Adalah-NY.

BDS moves forward in Australia after landmark Conference
4 November 2010 – Over 150 Palestine solidarity activists gathered in Melbourne, Australia for a two-day conference in support of the Palestinian BDS call. In addition to the conference, the Electrical Trades Union, the Australian Manufacturing Workers Union, the Construction Forestry Mining and Energy Union, the Queensland branch of the Rail Tram and Bus Union and the Finance Sector Union have all passed resolutions supporting the international boycott, divestment and sanctions campaign against Israel.

Major Dutch pension fund divests from Israeli occupation
12 November 2010 - The major Dutch pension fund Pensioenfonds Zorg en Welzijn (PFZW), which has investments totaling €97bn has divested from almost all the Israeli companies in its portfolio. PGGM, the manager of the major Dutch pension fund PFZW, has adopted a new guideline for socially responsible investment in companies which operate in conflict zones. In addition, PFZM has also entered into discussions with Motorola, Veolia and Alstom to raise its concerns about human rights issues.

De Paul University suspends sales of Israeli Humous
19 November 2010 – De Paul University in Chicago has agreed to suspend the sale of Israeli hummus brand Sabra. Upon discovering that Chartwells, the provider of dining services at the university had introduced of the brand to the campus, student activists compiled information on the company’s vocal and material support for the Israeli Army and had the product removed in less than two weeks. The campaign to ban Sabra has already spread to a number of the other 156 college and university campuses in the United States for whom Chartwells provides catering services.

Montreal hosts successful BDS Conference against Israeli Apartheid
22nd-24th November 2010 – A conference organized by BDS activists in Canada brought together over 600 hundred people concerned with social justice and the rights of Palestinians. The conference included 2 days of workshops,
a hiphop concert and speaker plenaries and concluded with resolutions to strengthen Canadian BDS networks by agreeing to organize for the BDS international day of action on 30th March, expand Israeli Apartheid Week and commit to spread the cultural boycott of Israel.

Tindersticks Cancel Tel Aviv Show

23 November 2010 – English indie rock band the Tindersticks cancel their show in Tel Aviv following a concerted campaign by the Palestinian Campaign for the Academic and Cultural Boycott of Israel (PACBI). In a press release Tindersticks cited their reason as being their wish not to “defy a rapidly growing movement with whose aims we agree”.

Palestinian civil society reaffirms support for persecuted French activists

23 November 2010 – In response to attempts by the French government to prosecute activists involved in the global BDS campaign, the Palestinian Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions National Committee (BNC) urged the French government to immediately cease all undemocratic, repressive measures against its own conscientious citizens who promote or engage in non-violent boycotts, divestment and sanctions (BDS) campaigns against Israel until it complies with international law. The BNC also called upon the State of France to respect its own legal obligations under international law, cease its role as the EU's largest supplier of military equipment to Israel, and undertake further measures, including sanctions, in order to bring to an end Israel's unlawful regime of occupation, colonialism and apartheid over the Palestinian people.

BDS Dabka flashmob in 5 cities video

29 November 2010 – In recognition of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, activists in the 5 cities of Geneva, Toronto, Utrecht, Paris and Geel organized Dabka flashmobs to raise awareness of the campaign for BDS against Israel until it complies with international law. The full video is available online at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Oyprxqz3P1E

Argentinian workers' movements and community radios take up BDS

November 2010 - November saw a flurry of BDS activities in Argentina, where workers from the recovered factories movement, along with the global umbrella organization for community radio, committed to active support of the Palestinian BDS call. Workers in 205 factories reclaimed since the 2001 financial crisis pledged to “ensure that our work sites, our businesses and factories, [...] will be spaces free of Israeli apartheid. We resolve to ensure we do not have contracts and business between our recovered companies and Israeli companies, the State of Israel or companies that support the State of Israel.” In addition to committing to raise awareness in Argentina about the Palestinian struggle, workers will be encouraged to “participate in and support global and national BDS initiatives [and] require the State of Argentina to cut relations with the State of Israel until such time as the end of apartheid and freedom of the Palestinian people is achieved.” In the city of La Plata, Argentina, the World Association of Community Radio Broadcasters (AMARC) bringing together 4,000 community radios across 115 countries also broke new ground when they issued a statement supporting the BDS movement at the tenth Global Conference of Community Radio broadcasters.

IWW supports Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions movement in support of Palestinian rights

2 December 2010 – The Industrial Workers of the World (IWW or Wobblies) has officially voted to support
the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement in support of Palestinian rights. The “Resolution in Support of the Workers of Palestine/Israel” was adopted in an overwhelming vote both at the IWW’s convention in Minneapolis and by the membership via referendum. This vote makes the IWW the first union in the US and the third union in Canada to officially support the Palestinian United Call for Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions.

Human Rights Watch calls for US and EU Sanctions against Israel over Illegal Settlements

19 December 2010 – In a 166-page report into Israeli practices in the Occupied West Bank and East Jerusalem, Human Rights Watch concluded that Palestinians face severe systematic discrimination due to their racial, ethnic and national origins. The report also focused on the role of settlements and called for a suspension by the EU and US of any support which would facilitate the maintenance and continued growth of the settlements, in order that they not be implicated in Israel's grave breaches of international law. The report can be found in full on the HRW website: http://www.hrw.org/node/95061
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**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 Nakba. 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, and Israel has Hebraized the name of their town as “Ashkelon.” 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.
al-Majdal is a quarterly magazine of BADIL Resource Center that aims to raise public awareness and support for a just and durable solution to Palestinian residency and refugee issues.