

# al\_majdal



a quarterly magazine of  
BADIL Resource Center for Palestinian Residency & Refugee Rights

Issue No. 44 (Summer - Autumn 2010)

## Forced Secondary Displacement

Palestinian refugees in Arab host countries



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.

Front Cover photo: View of al-Tanaf camp on the Syrian-Iraqi border, November 2008. ©Gloria Nafziger

Back cover photo: al-Tanaf refugee camp, on the Syrian-Iraqi border, 14 August 2009 (Courtesy of Flickr Images)

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## How Many Times Displaced?

*Destruction in Nar el Bared refugee camp after the assault by Lebanese forces against Fatah al Islam militants. During the fighting most of the camp's residents were forced to flee in what many of them described as a "Second Nakba" (Matthew Castel/JustImages.org)*



**T**he central aspect of Palestine's Ongoing Nakba since 1948 is the forcible displacement of the indigenous Palestinian people from their homeland and the denial of their return by Israel.

According to Badil's 2008 Survey of Palestinian Refugees and Internally Displaced Persons, only one third of the Palestinian people are persons who have never been forced to leave their homes, while almost seventy percent are refugees or internally displaced persons, victims of the forced displacement induced by Israel's ongoing policy of population transfer (ethnic cleansing). Approximately two thirds of these displaced Palestinians continue to live as refugees in forced exile outside the borders of their homeland, the British Mandate territory of Palestine – the state of Israel and the occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip of today. This issue of *al-Majdal*, and the one that will follow, are dedicated to these Palestinian refugees whose stories are as diverse as their experiences of dispersal and loss as they have struggled to return. For many of these refugees, the recurring theme in their stories is the number of times they have had to move from one place to another, the tribulations they had to overcome as they sought to legalize their presence in the countries in which they live, the harassment, the politicization of their cases, the imprisonment, and the deportations. All of this happens while they are following the ongoing tragedy of the occupation and colonization of their homeland and its extensions in the refugee camps.

This issue of *al-Majdal*, and the one that will follow, look at the cases of mass forced displacement among Palestinian refugees in their host states, what is often termed multiple, recurring, or secondary displacement, namely: the ongoing displacement of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon since 1948, and most recently the destruction of the Nahr el-Bared refugee camp in 2007; the mass deportation of Palestinians from Kuwait and other Arab Gulf states in the wake of the 1990-1991 Gulf War; the expulsion of Palestinian refugees

from Libya after the signing of the Oslo agreements; and the plight of Palestinian refugees in Iraq after the U.S.-led occupation of that country in 2003.

Both issues open with poetry and prose pieces by writers around the world who use their art form as part of struggles against colonialism, forced displacement, and oppression. While largely rooted in the specificities of each case, the poems clearly convey the commonalities between the different struggles around the world. Also clear is the richness, vibrancy and power of the cultural resistance to colonialism, forced displacement, and oppression represented by the mostly young writers who have contributed to these two issues of *al-Majdal*.

In looking at the secondary displacement of Palestinian refugees, the events covered are by no means a complete list of forced displacement en masse that Palestinian refugees have experienced since the 1948 Nakba, nor do the articles covering these events purport comprehensiveness in their exposition or analysis. The secondary displacement of Palestinian refugees is a topic that has received far less attention than it deserves, a fact evidenced by the dearth of research and writing on the history and consequences of these events. Our goal has been to provide a solid introduction to each of these heinous events, the victims of which – for the most part – have yet to receive any kind of redress, apology or even recognition of the injustice or crimes committed against them.

While much of the secondary displacement and involuntary migration of Palestinian refugees within and across borders of host countries take place on an individual and family level, they have largely been caused by a lack of effective protection afforded by host countries and the PLO in its role as their national representative, and by policies and practices of discrimination and forced expulsion which target them as a collective, national group. Ultimately, however, the special vulnerability of Palestinian refugees at moments of secondary displacement derives from their statelessness, caused by Israel's particular regime of apartheid and ethnic cleansing which systematically strips Palestinians of their status as citizens in their homeland as soon as they are displaced across borders. Unlike migrant communities, which are usually able to seek refuge in their own country when turmoil erupts in a host state and they fear for their safety, stateless Palestinian refugees have no home country to return to. Unlike other refugees who flee persecution, stateless Palestinian refugees carry no passport that would allow them to seek temporary shelter in another country. When Palestinian, Iraqi, Sudanese and Yemeni residents in Kuwait feared for their safety after the withdrawal of Iraqi troops in 1991, for example, all fled back to their own countries except for Palestinians who were denied entry by Israel and became stranded on the borders of neighboring Arab states. This Palestinian exception exists precisely because of the exceptionalism with which Israel has been allowed to maintain its criminal regime of apartheid and ethnic cleansing without being held accountable by the international community.

Israel's impunity has enabled it not only to continue to deny the rights of displaced Palestinians, but to continue to forcibly displace Palestinians throughout the territory effectively under its control. Palestinian citizens of Israel, especially those in the urban ghettos of the "mixed cities" (Jaffa, Lydd, Ramla and Akka) and the "unrecognized villages" (concentrated in the north and south of the country) have faced eviction, home demolition and land confiscation on an almost weekly basis. This year – 2010 – has been bitterly typical in this regard. On 17 August, Israeli forces demolished Al-Araqib, a Palestinian village in the Naqab (Negev) for the fourth time in the span of twenty days, forcibly displacing 300 Palestinians. In occupied East Jerusalem, nine Palestinian families were evicted from the Kirrech building in the Old City on July 29, and since then only one of the families has been given permission to return. On the Palestinian Authority-administered side of the wall, and according to the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), Israeli forces destroyed over 230 structures, effectively displacing and/or affecting over

1100 Palestinians, including 400 children, between January and July 2010. Israeli forces destroyed a total of 126 structures in Al-Farisiya, a West Bank village in the Jordan Valley area, on 19 July and 5 August; 129 Palestinians were forcibly displaced as a result. Hundreds of thousands of Palestinians throughout the British Mandate territory of Palestine are currently at risk of forced displacement.

As these demolitions and forced evictions continue, the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) is considering whether to continue direct negotiations with Israel given its refusal to renew the temporary 'settlement freeze' - a freeze which in actuality only slowed construction in settlements by 16% over its 10-month duration. Even if negotiations do proceed, why would anyone be compelled to think that this round of negotiations will be any different from those that preceded? The one thing that Palestinians have - their rights under international law - are again excluded from the negotiation process, the United States - the broker of these talks - has made their allegiance to Israel clear time and again, and the Palestinian negotiators are at their weakest having lost control of the Gaza Strip, and their popularity and legitimacy in the West Bank. On top of this, Israel's right-wing foreign minister Avigdor Lieberman has been making thinly veiled threats of transfer towards Palestinian citizens of Israel at the UN and suggesting that instead of dealing with the substantial issues, negotiations should instead focus on "coming up with a long-term intermediate agreement" a process which he envisages "could take a few decades". All the while Israeli officials calculate that they have everything to gain by prolonging the so-called peace process as a smokescreen for continuing colonization of Palestinian land and displacement of its people.

It has become painfully clear that a new and principled strategy, including boycott, divestment and sanctions of Israel, is needed, if we are to be serious about tackling the root causes of Palestinian displacement and dispossession, about holding Israel accountable for its massive human rights violations and crimes under international law, and about protecting the rights of the Palestinian people, foremost among them the rights of forcibly displaced Palestinians to return, restitution and compensation. Only if these rights are implemented can we be sure that stateless Palestinian refugees will find the protection they are entitled to, as victims of colonialism, apartheid and ethnic cleansing, as stateless refugees, and as human beings.



*Palestinian refugees leaving Nahr el Bared refugee camp (Wafa)*

## The Palestinian Civil Society Campaign for Boycotts, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) Marks 5 Years

by Michael Deas and Hind Awwad



South African protestors call for a boycott of Israeli Apartheid. Johannesburg, 2009. (BDSmovement.net)

In meeting rooms and conference halls, on high streets and university campuses, the Palestine solidarity movement is changing. In the dozen years following the signing of the Oslo Accords, few doubted the determination and resolve of solidarity campaigns, but there were fears that they were beginning to lose direction. Today, as we mark the fifth anniversary of the 2005 Palestinian Civil Society Call for a campaign of boycotts, divestment and sanctions (BDS) against Israel until it complies with international law, a truly global movement is rapidly emerging whose concrete forms of solidarity is not only changing the discourse surrounding the Palestinian struggle, but are also achieving concrete results towards the isolation of the Israeli regime. .

The BDS movement is deeply rooted in the rich history of Palestinian civil resistance against Zionist colonization – especially anti-normalization campaigns that rejected acceptance of apartheid Israel as a normal state – and begun to take form with the outbreak of the Second Intifada in 2000. But it was the rights-based approach of the Palestinian Civil Society Call on 9 July 2005, a year after the historic advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice that ruled Israel’s wall – as well as colonies -- in Occupied Palestinian Territory to be illegal, which set into motion a new form of Palestinian resistance and international solidarity. Based on international law and established principles of human rights, the BDS call identifies the inalienable rights of each of the three parts of the Palestinian people, namely those living inside land occupied in 1967, Palestinian citizens of Israel and the approximately seven million Palestinian refugees. The Call urges for various forms of boycott until Israel complies with international law by:

*Ending its occupation of lands occupied in June 1967 and dismantling the Wall;  
Recognizing the fundamental rights of Palestinian citizens of Israel to full equality  
Respecting, protecting and promoting the rights of Palestinian refugees to return in accordance with UN Resolution 194.*

The call was endorsed by more than 170 Palestinian political parties, mass organizations, trade unions and other civil society movements and organizations, and provides a clear expression of the will of the Palestinian people. In adopting a rights-based approach, the call activates the universality of international law and human rights within the Palestinian context and unifies Palestinians as well as internationals regardless of their visions of a solution to the colonial conflict, allowing them to resist or provide solidarity alongside each other to achieve the implementation of the indisputable rights of the Palestinian people.

The Palestinian BDS National Committee (BNC), established in April 2008, has emerged as the principal anchor of the global BDS movement. A wide civil society coalition representing major sectors of Palestinian society, the BNC has played the leading role in initiating international action, giving advice to BDS activists around the world, and participating in national and international BDS-related forums. The BNC has partnered with solidarity groups in implementing BDS campaigns that are gradual, sustainable and appropriate to the local political context. These organizational principles, the rights-based approach of BDS, the near-consensus in Palestinian civil society in support of the 2005 BDS Call and the still-fresh memory of the boycott campaign against Apartheid South Africa have all combined in such a way that have allowed trade unions, faith groups, cultural workers, NGOs, solidarity groups and people of conscience of diverse political and ideological backgrounds to respond to the BDS Call with visible, creative and effective, but substantially varied, action.

The effectiveness and diversity of the campaign is evident in the victories it has achieved thus far, especially in response to the Gaza Massacre and, more recently and even more profoundly, Israel's attack on the Freedom Flotilla. An examination of the BDS responses to the attack on the Flotilla provides insight into the strength of our movement.

Just days after the flotilla attack, the Swedish Dockworkers Union announced that they would heed the Palestinian civil society appeal – endorsed by the entire Palestinian trade union movement – by implementing a blockade of Israeli ships and cargo that would eventually block the movement of 500 tones of cargo. Dockworkers in Oakland, California, refused to cross the picket line of community protestors, thus delaying unloading an Israeli cargo ship for twenty-four hours, and Indian as well as Turkish dockworkers unions also announced similar blockades. Elsewhere in the trade union movement, the Belgian trade union federation (FGTB) and a coalition of Basque trade unions adopted strong BDS positions, the British union UNISON reiterated its support for the boycott and suspended relations with the Histadrut, and the South African Municipal Workers Union (SAMWU) decided to launch a campaign to make every municipality in South Africa an "Apartheid Israel free zone." Just days before the flotilla attack, the British University and College Union (UCU) advanced the boycott campaign substantially by voting to begin a process to boycott the colony-college of Ariel, located in the OPT and to sever links with the Histadrut.

There was an unprecedented advance made in the realm of cultural boycott also. Hollywood superstars Meg Ryan and Dustin Hoffman cancelled their attendance at the 2010 Jerusalem Film Festival following the Flotilla Attack. Platinum selling band The Pixies, The Gorillaz Sound System and The Klaxons all cancelled scheduled concerts. A series of bestselling authors, of the weight of Henning Mankell, Alice Walker and Iain Banks, also joined the call for boycotting Israel. These developments added to the previous waves of cultural and arts figures cancelling performances in Israel, such as Elvis Costello and Gil Scott-Heron, or endorsing BDS, like John Berger, Naomi Klein, Ken Loach, Judith Butler and John Greyson.

Also in the wake of the flotilla attack, Swansea City Council in Wales became the latest in a long line of western European cities to exclude Veolia from future public services contracts over its role in building the Jerusalem Light rail that will link west Jerusalem to East Jerusalem, cementing Israel's hold over the illegal colonial settlements there. These extraordinary efforts by grassroots BDS campaigners were considerably

amplified by the decision of the state operated Norwegian Pension Fund, several Swedish pension funds and a number of private banks including Deutsche Bank, one of the largest in the world, to divest from Israeli arms company Elbit Systems, due to its complicity in Israeli violations of international law.

In the US, Middle East Study Committee of the General Assembly of the US Presbyterian Church has released a report recommending that the US Presbyterian Church endorses the *Kairos Palestine* document drawn up by leading Palestinian Christian figures calling upon churches all over the world, among other items, to endorse BDS as a theologically and morally principled non-violent reaction to Israeli oppression. The UK Methodist Church 2010 congress voted to endorse the Kairos Palestine document and implement a boycott of produce from illegal Israeli colonial settlements.

BDS victories like these, and there is space here only for a small sample, are only possible because of the long-term, determined campaigning at the grassroots level. This process of movement building itself generates additional benefits besides the victories themselves. BDS campaigns are themselves great educational and outreach tools, and one of their distinctive elements is their focus on the Apartheid analysis of Israeli oppression. This description, born not of convenience but out of its accuracy in reflecting the UN definition of the term, as stated in the International Convention for the Suppression and Punishment of the Crime of Apartheid, places the BDS movement firmly in the rich tradition of international solidarity that contributed to equality in South Africa and helped achieve justice and equal rights in many other contexts..

As the BDS movement has developed, so too has its political and material apparatus of effective mobilization. Accurate research that informs BDS strategies takes place not only in Palestine but also in each of the countries that host solidarity movements. Broad coalitions, such as those against Dexia Bank (over its Israeli division) in Belgium and against Israeli state-owned exporters Agrexco in France and Italy, include dozens of organizations in such a way that is bringing solidarity with Palestine into the mainstream of civil society. The clear anti-racist, rights based foundations of the BDS movement has also empowered conscientious Israelis and progressive Jewish groups all over the world to become active partners in our movement. The 2005 BDS Call came from the majority of Palestinian civil society; as campaigns have grown, strong bonds of solidarity between specific sectors of Palestinian society, such as trade unionists, cultural workers and religious groups, and their



Protestors in London commemorate 60 years since the Palestinian Nakba. 2008.

counterparts in other parts of the world have developed, allowing people in the Global North and increasingly in the Global South as well to identify more clearly with the Palestinian struggle for self determination and freedom, further strengthening commitment and determination.

BDS has started to penetrate the Western mainstream enough to receive mainstream media coverage. CNN, a harbinger of pro-Zionist propaganda, recently carried a favorable interview with a founding member of the BDS movement. El Pais, the Financial Times, The Guardian and Associated Press all covered positively or at least fairly the growth of BDS in response to the flotilla attack. Online news sensation The Huffington Post recently published an editorial advocating BDS written by Stéphane Frédéric Hessel, a Holocaust survivor and former French diplomat who participated in the drafting of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948, to be followed by another pro-BDS article by Alice Walker. Dr. Mustafa Barghouti even managed to advocate for BDS from the op-ed pages of the New York Times, setting a precedent. Naomi Kelin published several pieces in the Guardian and the Nation in the same vein.

But it is not only partners, friends or neutral observers of the BDS movement that recognize its rapid growth and potential. At the time of writing, the Israeli Knesset is debating proposed legislation that if passed would implement heavy fines against all citizens of Israel that advocate or assist BDS and would also bar international BDS activists from entering the country. Israeli think tank the REUT Institute is openly discussing the establishment of a 'war room' to counter BDS, and big lobby organizations such as AIPAC and its more "modern," younger edition, J Street, are developing anti-BDS strategies. This is matched by repressive measures by pro-Zionist governments in countries such as Canada and France, where state-sanctioned political and judicial witch-hunts target BDS activists and activism.

Other challenges exist too. While the organizational principles of context sensitivity, gradualness and sustainability have allowed our movement to develop far beyond the most ambitious plans, a boycott of settlement goods alone can be morally and practically problematic if it is not part of a strategy to develop a full boycott of all Israeli products. There are signs that some campaigns may be heading this way. This problem stems mainly from a double standard that is alarming. Unlike any other state that commits similar violations of international law and human rights, Israel is treated with unwarranted exceptionalism. States are the entities that bear full responsibility under international law for their acts; it therefore makes no sense to punish the Israeli colonies, say, while letting off the hook the *state* that has built those colonies and kept them alive and thriving. In every other situation, there is no debate that the state should be subjected to punitive measures if it violates human rights and the law. Only Israel is treated differently. Another concern in this respect is the so far minor attempts some on the Zionist "left" to sideline the Palestinian leadership and reference for the global BDS campaign, by co-opting and distorting the strategies and discourse of the movement, as well as striving to hijack the crucial role of reference for the movement.

The spectacular momentum of the BDS movement means it has every potential to overcome these challenges, with enough awareness and principled action. The boycott of South African Apartheid took a decade to take off as a visible campaign in a small number of European countries and at least a further decade to have any noticeable impact in the Western mainstream. By comparison, activists in over 35 countries, including countries in Latin America and the Far East, took part a BNC-initiated global day of BDS action, and the Israeli state is responding to the movement as if it were an "existential threat." Trade Unions, political parties, cultural superstars and global financial institutions are increasingly joining or indirectly supporting the BDS campaign. As a founding member of the BDS campaign has said, "our South Africa moment has arrived." Let us continue to use BDS as an effective, creative and comprehensive platform to end Israeli injustice and achieve Palestinian freedom, justice and equality.

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**Michael Deas** is the BDS National Committee (BNC) Coordinator in Europe. **Hind Awwad** is the BNC Coordinator in Palestine.

## Poetry & Prose on 62 Years of Nakba

The following are some of the pieces contributed by various poets and writers from around the world on the theme of sixty-two years of Nakba. Other contributions will be published in the Autumn 2010 issue of al-Majdal.



### -Untitled-



*photo participated in 2010  
Al Awda Award (Bilal Abu  
Alia, 17 years old)*

*by Nizar Wattad*

This is just  
a break, pause, breathing  
room to move these aching  
joints, pulled, stretched  
to a point past pain  
to a place where the harvests are  
ours again this is just

A reminder, to remember how much  
better the heft, and the heave

of rough sacks filled with olives  
plucked lightly from trees how much  
better than the ache, and the pull, and the stretch  
of time between us  
and our catastrophe  
Limbs  
sore with atrophy, I can tell  
these walls are closing in.

---

**Nizar Wattad** is a Los Angeles-based screenwriter and hip-hop artist, born in Palestine and raised in the Tennessee hills. He is currently penning feature films for Walt Disney Pictures, ART, and Golden Globe-winning director Hany Abu-Assad. His musical endeavors include executive-producing the first Arab-American hip-hop compilation *Free the P* and sold-out performances around the world.



## 2010 and Waiting

by Rafeef Ziadah

Chronologies  
 with no purpose  
 just dates upon dates and dates  
 to remind us we once existed over There.  
 Years are only names for massacres  
 48  
 67  
 2010 and waiting  
 the dead are numbered  
 listed, graphed, mapped  
 and clustered in phosphorus  
 wrapped neatly in statistic.

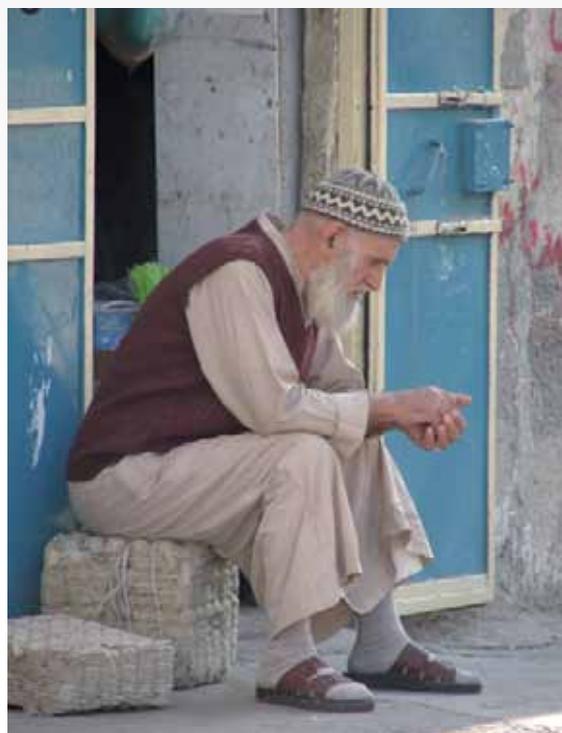
2010 and waiting  
 long enough in visa lines  
 to carve out a home of fake smiles and documents  
 to know I am from There and unwanted anywhere else.  
 The There they accuse us of  
 The There of stories told in shelters in Beirut  
 by grandparents  
 voices trembling  
 not knowing if they will see There again.  
 "the Oranges There taste different, ya benti"

2010 and waiting  
 to negotiate or not negotiate  
 to apologize for our own Nakba  
 accept exile and pray forgetfulness  
 and "be practical" child  
 be "pragmatic" child  
 "the refugees are the last stumbling block"  
 so they negotiate us away  
 "they will never let you return" child  
 as if we need permission to be from There  
 or had a choice to be from somewhere else.

2010 and waiting  
 for another boat to break another siege  
 for mothers to make miracles raising children

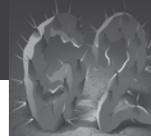
only on water and lentils and no shoes for school  
 for some to let us be human and work  
 others to just let us be.  
 Palestinian and return.

There will be more boats  
 I will sit in one - curled up in a memory  
 that still smells of lead and concrete  
 my children will learn to play  
 by a beach in Yaffa, they will tell stories  
 of how long we waited  
 to come back There.  
 2010 and waiting.



*Palestinian man in Dheisha refugee camp, 2009. This photograph was awarded third place in the 2010 Al Awda Award. (Sanna al-Ayaisaah, 14 years old)*

**Rafeef Ziadah** is a third generation Palestinian refugee to Lebanon. She is a poet / activist and PhD. candidate in Political Science. Rafeef is a founding member of the Coalition Against Israeli Apartheid (Toronto). She recently released her debut album **Hadeel**, which you can listen to at [www.rafeefziadah.ca](http://www.rafeefziadah.ca)



## for the Intifada

by Harsha Walia

I think of this land  
poised  
between the terror  
of war and the horror  
of peace  
un-rolling its magic distances  
its secret pocket  
is only a  
miniscule strip of land,  
still more important  
than their lives.

devastation and  
dull sleep  
hanging on  
checkpoints, from  
where only quiet  
walking  
instructs.

sun-blackened landscape.  
full of new ends and no  
beginnings. Palestine,  
a place of  
erasures  
little has changed, occupiers known as  
liberators.

The oasis in the Middle East  
mutilates, annihilates, imprisons,  
sterilizes, demolishes, starves,  
kills, rapes, dehumanizes  
lies

injustice is what we know as  
democracy

here

As we breathe a Palestinian child  
is dying.

It is no luxury to choose  
life

Bodies Bombarded

Blockaded

winds carry screams

from tank demolitions

missiles skid across the skies

sickled

smells

thousands of raging  
limbs  
from night to  
night  
to now  
blood and bullets feed the  
soil  
under lead skies

a Palestinian woman occupies very  
little space  
in the world  
no place is small enough  
to contain her grief  
walls, fences, borders, cages  
trying to break the lonely darkness  
of the nights softness, her tears drip,  
trembling like rain  
on rooftops  
ideas refusing to settle into words

children bond to the whims of Israeli  
genocide,  
thoughts take no shape,  
tormenting  
the tenderness  
of motherhood and the infinite  
rage  
of a suicide bomber

how many times can one be  
a refugee.

You are ready to kill  
but are you ready to live  
in between the painful relics of  
yesterday and the  
resurrection of hope  
and imagination  
kept alive,  
like bitter fruit out of season.  
like shadows seeking the sun  
prophets of yearning.  
I cannot free myself of  
Palestine,  
until Palestine is free of



*Palestinian youth throwing stones at Israeli soldiers near the Apartheid Wall in the West Bank. (Wafa)*

our complicity  
when the dead are  
enough to matter.

How do we lay  
Siege  
to Occupation  
to Empire  
to Settlements, to Reservations, to  
Bantustans

Stop it, strip it, surpass  
the Physics of  
power  
armed police guarding the gates of the  
free-market  
Heavens  
place sanctions against  
this well-endowed Peace  
Industry  
because there is not enough  
Money  
to make off justice.

I wonder  
why do I have  
a connection  
to something worlds away  
this land of Palestine.  
There is no  
chosen  
people, my people in  
Palestine  
will be free  
Turtle Island<sup>1</sup> will be  
liberated  
till then, my heart beats  
for this Intifada this Insurrection. This  
Inquilab.<sup>2</sup>

**Harsha Walia** is a South Asian activist and writer based in Vancouver, the traditional territories of the Indigenous Coast Salish people, in Canada. She is an activist in anti-capitalist, anti-imperialist struggles including Palestine solidarity, immigrant and refugee rights, and feminist movements and was recently named one of the most influential Indo-Canadians by the Vancouver Sun newspaper. She can be reached at [hwalia8@gmail.com](mailto:hwalia8@gmail.com).

<sup>1</sup> Turtle Island: Indigenous peoples term for North America, a land that has been colonized not discovered.

<sup>2</sup> Inquilab: Hindi/Urdu/Punjabi phrase for Revolution.



## Haunted Cornfields and Olive Groves

by Zainab Amadahy



One of the West Bank military checkpoints, September 2008 (© Anne Paq/BADIL)

Refugees from far off lands they came  
People welcomed them and healed their pain  
Love and kindness helped them to survive  
They grew stronger and began to thrive

Myth overcame both reason and care.  
Newcomers lost all their will to share  
Indigenous peoples killed and terrorized  
Driven from their lands, erased despised

Written out of books on history  
Reserves and occupied territories  
Residential schools, depleted uranium bombs  
Outdoor prisons, checkpoints and  
The Wall

Stolen sisters, children prisoners  
Shop to quell your conscience when it stirs  
Convince yourself this is democracy  
And peacekeepers defend our liberty

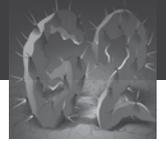
Colonial mind and genocide  
Will not return your pride  
Stolen land and apartheid  
A legacy you can't deny

Light the fire of your shame  
To burn and rape the land  
Rename, reshape you can't escape  
Haunted places where you stand

But spirits on the ground will someday rise.  
Joining hands we will become allies  
Stories different and yet the same  
Ancestors will rise and call our names

Together we'll decolonize  
Our minds, bodies and souls  
Good spirits and hearts will heal our lands  
Peace and justice is our goal

*Zainab Amadahy is a writer and activist of African American, First Nations and European heritage. Highlights of her publications include the novel *Moons of Palmares* (1998, Sister Vision Press) as well as an essay in the anthology *Strong Women's Stories: Native Vision & Community Activism*, (Lawrence & Anderson, 2004, Sumach Press). Most recently Zainab contributed to *In Breach of the Colonial Contract* (Arlo Kemp, ED) by co-authoring "Indigenous Peoples and Black People in Canada: Settlers or Allies?". Many of her recent articles can be found on [rabble.ca](http://rabble.ca). As an artist and activist based in Toronto Zainab has worked with a variety of organizations to support decolonization, social justice and First Nations struggles.*



## Aisha

by Soha al-Jurf

The night my father's family fled from their home in al Kayriyya in April of 1948, the Haganah was already several weeks into its military offensive throughout Palestine. My father was five years old.

My father describes waking that night not to the sounds of bombs overhead, but to an eerie gold glow pulsing hot in the night sky, penetrating his closed eyelids like broad flashes of lightening. His first thought was that his house was in flames; his second thought was of his baby sister Aisha, who lay sleeping in a bassinet next to his bed.

With each explosive flash, streams of dark, moving figures were illuminated, advancing steadily through the streets in one continuous, shadowy mass. The sounds of the mortars came later; what he heard first was the marching of feet. The hollow thumps of large-footed boots, the bare-footed slaps of plastic slippers, the rapid scuttling of tiny shoes. He heard no voices; only the shuffling of soles against loose dirt and gravel, alternating with cracks of gunfire and the persistent pounding of explosives.

When his mother entered his room soon after his eyes had opened, he knew that they would not be waiting any longer to see if the violence would abate; their time had come to leave.

My grandmother placed a few items, including her infant daughter, in a large cheesecloth and handed it to my father. "Tie all four corners together, *y'ibni*," she said. "Don't let your sister fall out onto the ground. We have a long journey ahead of us. Even if you are tired, you have to hold on and don't let go."

He nodded to his mother and she kissed him on both cheeks before disappearing into the dark rooms of the house to prepare herself for their journey.

He set the bundle down gently on the kitchen table. In it was Aisha, wearing a clean white cotton dress. When she moved, several pieces of gold jewelry and a large key—the key to the front door of his home—slid off of Aisha's chest and fell with a muffled clunk onto the cloth.

When he stepped out onto his front veranda, his mother was standing with her back to him, watching their neighbors walk slowly by in droves. They started to walk, with thousands of other Palestinians from nearby villages preceding and following them. As they proceeded, they inquired about the whereabouts of the rest of the family,

and they were guided this way and that, into and out of makeshift camps and colonies of tents that were popping up everywhere.

The ninth day of my father's journey with his mother began similarly to the others, except that a few hours into their march, Aisha began to writhe and wail. He unwrapped the cloth and saw that she was bright pink; sweat drenched both her hair and her cotton dress. A family who saw them gave them a bottle of cold water, a scarce commodity. My father quickly removed her dress and diaper, and they poured the cool water over Aisha's body. Aisha settled down, and after a few more miles of walking, she finally fell asleep.

By the end of the ninth day, my father and his mother settled under an olive to rest, and my father placed Aisha gently on the ground. He lifted the ruffle at the bottom edge of her cotton dress and slipped his palm carefully underneath and touched her tiny belly. It was cold. He placed his other palm on her forehead. It was also cold. Looking at her in the evening light, her face appeared to have a bluish tint to it, though he assumed, at first, that her skin was simply reflecting the color of twilight. He reached under her back and supported her head, lifting her up off the cloth. Her body was limp.

"Aisha," he cooed gently into the crook of her neck. "*Hayati*," he whispered. She didn't stir.

He repeated her name several times, and when she didn't respond, he held her at arms' length to regard her more fully. Her chubby arms hung by her sides.

"Aisha," he said, more forcefully than before, this time drawing his mother's attention.

"What is it, *y'ibni*?" she asked. "Is anything wrong?"

No longer content to wait for her son's response, she instinctively reached into his arms and took her infant child, hugging Aisha's body to her breast. Aisha's head rolled heavily to one side.

"*Aisha! Ya binti*, Aisha!" Over and over again my grandmother rocked back and forth, pressing the motionless baby into her body, patting her back, blowing frantically into her face, as if a mother's breath could bring her child back to life.

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**Soha Al-Jurf** is a Palestinian-American writer. She works as speech-language pathologist at the UCSF Voice and Swallowing Center in San Francisco.

## (d)earth

by Junie Désil

**-I-**

Walking, dismembered, limbs  
floating.  
Floating tendrils pieces of flesh-  
string barely holding.  
Souls floating aimlessly crashing  
Into the earth where  
we've buried loved ones,  
lying in unmarked temporary  
graves of rubble.  
Can't find where those  
who've gone before  
those who've come after  
keep our spirit company  
keep our spirit rooted

**-II-**

Turn the soil over you'll find  
splinters of bone  
some white- some ivory coloured  
splintered sharp pieces.  
Some with gristle on.  
Listen.  
Ear to the ground  
hearing bones grating against bone  
splinters stabbing the earth,  
pus flowing like helpless tears

Yet this land cradles these bones;  
intermingling in their afterlife  
they've had  
500 plus years to become  
acquainted.

Holding memories of:

Conquest, colonization,  
corporate greed, international  
waste.

**-III-**

There is a dearth of resources:  
food  
security  
Conversely, UN food  
falls from the sky  
as manna from heaven  
landing on Haitian soil gone  
fallow.  
A miracle that brings on  
hunger pangs,  
as soil lies untended  
barren cradling the souls of the  
departed.

**-IV-**

Up in Haiti's central plateau  
yellow dirt  
processed into dirt cookies.  
The recipe though not precise:  
dirt  
salt  
vegetable shortening.  
Pat into cookies then,  
dry in hot scorching sun.

**-V-**

What happens when one ingests  
the souls



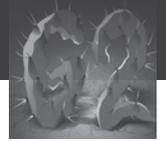
*UN Peacekeeping soldier in Haiti aiming his gun at a Haitian child. The UN mission in Haiti has come under attack for their role in the deaths of civilians and grassroots activists.*

of the undead for food?  
Does one receive special  
dispensation  
under such  
(un)usual circumstances?

**-VI-**

Dry earth. broken up. scarred clay.  
Desolate broken earth  
sustaining  
the most tenacious people Haitians  
putting down roots.  
Life.  
There is growth  
Again.

*Junie Désil is a member of the Hogan's Alley Memorial Project, a grassroots cultural organization which formed in 2002 dedicated to keeping the black history of Vancouver alive and part of the present. Junie is a Haitian-Canadian poet who has performed at many events and festivals and her work has appeared in numerous print media. She has been featured on CBC's Definitely Not The Opera.*



## History Books

by Luke Haralampou

I'm sick of hearing about Captain Cook  
He was not the worst of the bunch, check in your  
history books.  
He had orders to show Indigenous people respect  
It's just a pity that he landed with a cargo full of  
convicts.

Who didn't care about respect, they had to fight to  
survive;  
They came from a city where rats could eat you alive  
And they were full of anger themselves,  
They'd just spent months in a cell trapped with pain  
and gangrenous health  
And brains full of hate.  
And that hate spread like a wildfire and it was taken  
out on every black man woman and child.  
And their brains were full of Darwin's theories of  
evolution  
It formed the basis of executions.  
And that's the basis of this artistic revolution:  
No man is better than any other man or more advanced.  
Look what we've done to this place and tell me we  
are more advanced...  
No we're not we were wrong, say it again;  
No we're not we were wrong!...  
That's the sound of change my friends.

For the first hundred years we had a frontier landscape  
With no laws to follow or cops to enforce a mandate.  
By the time there were laws and things became illegal



First Nation Chiefs  
in Canada, 1867.  
(archives, Canada)

The government gave the public guns to kill  
Aboriginal people.  
Because they were 'squatting' on pristine white  
farmland  
So now we got rich and sit and judge them from our  
armchairs.  
The same thing happened with the Nazi's didn't it?  
Where my ancestors were marched up a mountain and  
pushed of a cliff.  
That's what happened to the grandparents of these  
Yanyuwa kids  
So now we make music to share a common reason  
to live  
And if an N.T. teacher doesn't care about what their  
history is  
You think they 're going to come to class and listen  
to shit?  
Shit, you better listen to this  
Because Hip-hop's is the only place a real education  
still exists.

---

**Luke Haralampou** aka Lesson Emcee is a poet, hiphop artist, anthropologist and community development artsworquer based in Melbourne Australia. His work ranges from decolonising information relating to Indigenous Australians by disseminating work that re-educates the wider public, to working on Aboriginal Language preservation music programs in the Northern Territory. As a musician Lesson's own work is available online at [www.lesson.bandcamp.com](http://www.lesson.bandcamp.com), Luka is most well-known for his powerful performances and passionate belief in education as the agent for change.

This poem won the 2009 Brisbane Slam Heat 1. Watch the video at: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iwRi3fi8j6A> Luke can be reached at: [haralampou.luke@gmail.com](mailto:haralampou.luke@gmail.com)

## Sedo's Sister

by *Dalia Marina*



*The Apartheid Wall in Al-Ram, north Jerusalem. 2008. (Flickr.com)*

sedo's sister carries no ID  
not orange  
green  
citizen nor resident  
in her nightgown uniform.  
a refugee of Ram  
squeezed through the crack of two enclosing cement slabs

the musrara  
sedo's sister  
resist the winding grasp of american dollars  
as they align  
corner to corner  
in perfect symmetry  
defining the edges of the city  
weighing inwards on the skeletal frames  
of amto's hips  
rib cage  
skull

"aja waleed w 'alaytlo bayda", she repeats  
"Waleed came and I fried him an egg."  
i have no idea who Waleed is,  
but he comes as many times in a day as there are minutes  
and amto fries him an egg  
w inshallah, when the musrara spills into Ram  
through the crack of two crumbling cement slabs  
and the lie of a united quds becomes a truth  
there will be as many eggs in a day as there are minutes  
to fry for Waleed when he comes

*Dalia Marina is a Palestinian American musician, student and organizer. She was born and raised in the Bay Area, California.*

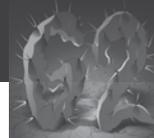
## We

by *Ghayath Almadhoun*

We, who are strewn about in fragments, whose flesh flies through the air like raindrops, offer our profound apologies to everyone in this civilized world, men, women and children, because we have unintentionally appeared in their peaceful homes without asking permission. We apologize for stamping our severed body parts into their snow-white memory, because we have violated the image of the normal, whole human being in their eyes, because we have had the impertinence to leap suddenly on to news bulletins and the pages of the internet and the press, naked except for our blood and charred remains. We apologize to all those who did not have the courage to look directly at our injuries for fear they would be too horrified, and to those unable to finish their evening meals after they had unexpectedly seen fresh images of us on television. We apologize for the suffering we caused to all who saw us like that, unembellished, with no attempt having been made to put us back together or reassemble our remains before we appeared on their screens. We also apologize to the Israeli soldiers who took the trouble to press the buttons in their aircraft and tanks to blow us to pieces, and we are sorry for how hideous we looked after they aimed their shells and bombs straight at our soft heads, and for the hours they are now going to spend in psychiatrists' clinics, trying to become human again, like they were before our transformation into repulsive body parts that pursue them whenever they try to sleep. We are the things you have seen on your screens and in the press, and if you made an effort to fit the pieces together, like a jigsaw, you would get a clear picture of us, so clear that you would be unable to do a thing.

*Translated from Arabic by Catherine Cobham.*

*Ghayath Almadhoun is a 30 year old journalist and poet. He has been writing since the age of 15 and his widely-acclaimed first poetry book "Poems that fell down by mistake" was published in 2004 by the Arab Writers Union and was awarded the Mazra'a prize in Syria in 2005.*



## Baghdad

*by Ahmed Habib*

What's my relationship to God?  
Where was he when they killed Baghdad?  
City left to rot  
Perpetrators took pride in the act and no one was caught  
Systematic theft of life key to the murder plot  
Canadian flags were used to choke me trying to convince  
me that I forgot  
How my home looked before its soul was wrapped up in  
a knot  
And scribbled on dirty Dinars dripping in blood mixed  
with oil drops  
My brothers were filling graves and babies went missing  
from their cots  
And generations were sold to the nearest nation building  
shop  
Where massacres would be carried out by the cops  
And kids turned thugs tell you stop  
And drop  
your name and which religion you chose to adopt  
And wrong answers will mean that you're popped  
Unless of course you died from the bombs that were  
dropped  
Or the thirteen years of sanctions that killed one point  
five million in what was another forgotten holocaust  
And yes, Iraqis are being killed at their own cost  
Meaning that they are paying for everything from  
American marines to a so called government that is  
mourning when these baby killers are lost  
Or applauding soldiers lucky enough to get shot  
or smart enough to gain a lesson taught  
in that Fallujah resists till the last pop  
And what, now they want a podium to stand on top?  
And now preach their regrets for the Iraqi people  
thats like telling the indigenous that liberation is gonna  
come from the steeple  
or that Palestinians will see no evil just as long as they  
forget about the destroyed villages under the feet of Tel  
Avivers  
and all these other racist ways in which we perceive  
people's rights  
telling Iraqis when to fight  
and its ok to write just as long as you don't ignite  
a gunfight in the middle of the night  
to take back what's rightfully mine  
i need to see each line as a piece of shrapnel in the spine  
of those fighting this so called divine battle

where people are turned into cattle  
waiting to be slaughtered  
as the days get hotter  
coffins decorate our sons and daughters  
we have two of the longest sweetest rivers but we're still  
searching for water  
we all knew that Operation Iraqi Freedom meant death  
and none of us mistook any of the promises as a new  
breath  
instead, we looked at it as an excuse for more theft  
and now look what's left  
what's my option  
now that I've been sold in an auction  
where Canada won me or hopefully lost in  
but Iraq will be back as women refuse to die jumping  
back in your face from the graves in which they were  
tossed in  
we must  
we don't even have trust  
for neighbors that share the same wind gust  
it is to Syria and Amman that are future is being bussed  
and Baghdad how can you be gone?  
I dream of kissing you in the nights of Ramadan  
with the lighter on  
keep your hat tighter on  
there's a military jet fighter on his way  
and today he plans to take away the right to play  
and the right to sway  
and say what's on your mind  
like hi my name is Baghdad and I love Palestine  
and thieves will meet with thugs in ways that are  
clandestine  
behind mosques  
and sing songs  
of how long they pretend to have struggled  
not knowing all they bring is trouble and rubble  
and strengthen the bubble  
in which we live  
Baghdad who will you forgive  
will i be able to come back, stand, and live with  
i am ashamed  
you are brave  
standing in the face of thieves and soldiers using their  
rifles to rape cripple and maim  
and all i can do is write poetry that's lame.

**Ahmed Habib** is a Toronto-based Iraqi journalist and poet. Listen to a recording of this poem at:  
<http://soundcloud.com/bighead-2/baghdad-the-remix>

From the BADIL Refugee Survey 2008-2009

## Secondary Forced Displacement in Host Countries: An Overview



*The remains of Dewana refugee camp (Tel eZa'tar), Lebanon after an attack by right-wing Christian militias. 1976 (UNRWA archives)*

**M**any Palestinians who sought refuge outside their homeland experienced further forced displacement. With their right to a nationality, identity and travel document denied by Israel, they became stateless refugees<sup>1</sup> who have been particularly vulnerable to the impacts of armed conflicts and human rights violations in their respective host countries.

In the 1950s, Arab Gulf oil-producing states expelled striking Palestinian workers. When factions within the PLO challenged the power of the Hashemite Kingdom in 1970, vast numbers of Palestinians were expelled (between 18,000 and 20,000) and their camps demolished. This war, known as "Black September", also resulted in the expulsion of the PLO from Jordan and its relocation to Lebanon.

In south Lebanon, Israeli warplanes bombed and destroyed the al-Nabatiya refugee camp near the city of al-Nabatiya in 1974. Refugees were displaced to Ein al-Hilwe refugee camp and other camps in Beirut. Two years later, right-wing Lebanese Christian militias backed by Syrian army reinforcements razed Tel e-Za'tar (Dekwana) and Jisr al-Basha refugee camps in eastern Beirut, massacring an estimated 2000 people.<sup>2</sup> Refugees were displaced yet again to Ein al-Hilwe and other Beirut camps. The 1982 Israeli invasion of Lebanon led to the massacre of several thousand Palestinian refugees in the Beirut refugee camp of Shatila and the adjacent neighborhood of Sabra, by Israeli-allied Christian Phalangists in September 1982. Palestinian refugees were also displaced as a result of the "war of the camps" (1985-87) between the Lebanese army and PLO forces that remained after the departure of the PLO.<sup>3</sup>

According to UNRWA estimates, during the 1980s and following Israel's military invasion of Lebanon, 57 percent of homes in the eight refugee camps in the Beirut, Saida and Tyre areas were destroyed, with another 36 percent damaged in aerial bombardment, ground fighting, and subsequent bulldozing. The vast scale of the damage affected some 73,500 refugees – 90 percent of the camp population in those areas.

Close to 200,000 Palestinian refugees were displaced and some 30,000 killed between 1982 and the late 1980s, as a result of Israel's invasion, the departure of the PLO forces (14,000) to Tunisia, Libya, Sudan, Yemen and Syria, and the subsequent civil war.<sup>4</sup> Since the 1980s, it is estimated that about 100,000 Palestinians have emigrated from Lebanon or sought protection from persecution in the Gulf countries and Northern Europe, mainly in Germany, Sweden and Denmark.<sup>5</sup>

**Table 1.3 Refugee Camps Destroyed in Lebanon**

<i>Camp</i>	<i>Land Area</i>	<i>Population</i>	<i>Year of Destruction</i>
<b><i>Official Camps</i></b>			
al-Nabatiya (South)	103,455	6,500	1974
Dhbaia (Beirut)	83,576	5,500	1975
Jisr al-Basha (Beirut)	22,000	3,000	1976
Al-Dekwana (Tel eZa'tar) (Beirut)	56,646	15,100	1976
Meih Meih (Sida)	54,040	4,500	1982
Naher al-Bared		31,400	2007
<b><i>Unofficial Camps</i></b>			
al-Maslakh (Eastern Beirut)		1,250	1975
Burj Hammud (Eastern Beirut)		4,500	1976
Al-Naba'a (Eastern Beirut)		1,450	1976
Hursh Shatila (Western Beirut)		3,600	1985
Al-Hai al-Gharbi Shatila (Western Beirut)		1,450	1985
Al-Daouq (Western Beirut)		3,250	1985
<b><i>Marginal Camps</i></b>			
Al-Shawakir (Sur)		82	1986
Ras al-Ein (Sur)		75	1986

Source: Ali Sha'aban, Hussein, *Palestinian Refugees in Lebanon: From Hosting to Discrimination*. Jerusalem: Passia, 2002. Some of the displaced refugees from Dhbaia camp who remained in Lebanon later returned to the camp during the mid-1990s, but most of the camp housing is occupied by other refugees, including displaced Lebanese and Palestinians. After 1982, some Palestinian refugees, especially from other areas, found shelter in Meih Meih camp. On Naher al Bared (2007), see: "Internally displaced Persons from Nahr el Bared Camp as of 7 August 2007" UNRWA, August 2007 and "Nahr el Bared Palestine Refugee Camp UNRWA Relief, Recovery and Reconstruction Framework 2008-2011", UNRWA, May 2008.



*The destruction of Nahr el Bared refugee camp. Lebanon September 2007 (Photo courtesy of nahrelbared.net)*

In Kuwait, during the 1991 Gulf War, most of the Palestinian population (350,000–400,000) was forced to leave the country as collective punishment for PLO support for Iraq. Most Palestinians in Kuwait were UNRWA-registered 1948 refugees with Jordanian passports or Egyptian travel documents. Palestinians were mainly displaced to Jordan (250,000–280,000) and Iraq (2,000). Those with residency status in the OPT (30,000–40,000) were able to return. The PLO estimated that only some 27,000 Palestinians remained in Kuwait.<sup>6</sup>

In 1994, Libya announced its intention to expel Palestinians (35,000) as an expression of its dissatisfaction with the Oslo peace process. Measures taken by the Libyan government included non-renewal of Palestinian residency permits and cancellation of valid ones. In September 1995, Libyan President Qaddafi expelled thousands of Palestinians from Libya on ships and trucks. Some were allowed entry into Jordan, the OPT, Syria and Lebanon, but many who had no valid travel documents were left stranded in extremely harsh conditions in the Saloum refugee camp on the border between Egypt and Libya. In January 1997, the Libyan parliament announced that Palestinians who had been stranded for 16 months at the Egyptian border could return to Libya.<sup>7</sup>

In Iraq, the situation of Palestinian refugees has dramatically deteriorated since 2003 as a result of the U.S.-led war and occupation. Palestinian refugees are not only victims of the general violence, but are also persecuted on grounds of nationality. Persecution has taken the form of eviction from their homes, arbitrary detention, kidnapping, torture, rape, and extra-judicial killings. The U.S./U.K. forces and the Iraqi authorities are unable or unwilling to protect Palestinian refugees in Iraq. Of a population estimated at 34,000 persons in 2003, over 15,000 have left Iraq. The whereabouts and legal status of those who have fled remain largely unknown to UN agencies because of the difficulties of working in Iraq, as well as financial constraints. Some Palestinian refugees have been reported by UNHCR offices in locations as far a field as India and Thailand.

Palestinians fleeing the violence of Iraq were denied entry to Syria and Jordan, except for a small group placed in al Hol camp (340 people) just inside the Syrian border. A second group of 940 refugees ended up in a camp in the seven kilometer long no-man's-land between Syria and Iraq at al Tanf, while a third group of 1,750 was blocked from entering this zone and were placed in a camp at al Waleed, on the Iraqi side of the border.<sup>8</sup> By

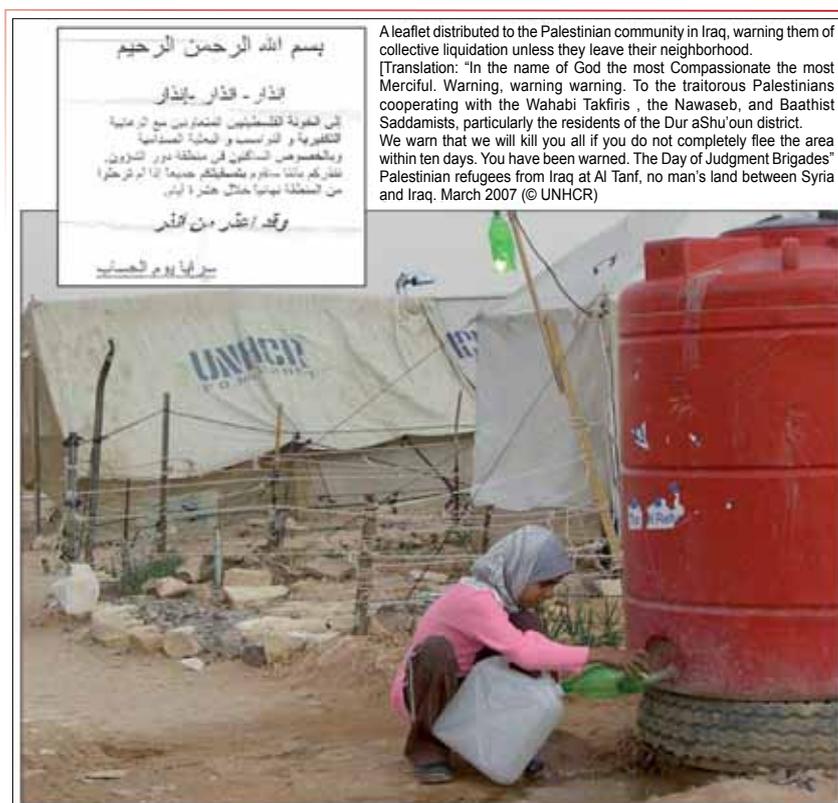
2008, more than 2,600 Palestinian refugees from Iraq were still stranded in these camps. Another 4,000 are believed to be living in Damascus illegally after entering the country using forged passports.<sup>9</sup>

In April 2008, the Chilean government began resettling 116 Palestinians from the al-Tanf camp.<sup>10</sup> In 2008 the PLO also reached a tri-partite humanitarian relocation agreement with UNHCR and the Sudanese government as a temporary solution for the plight of Palestinians in the camps of al Tanf and al Waleed. The agreement is yet to be implemented. In July 2009, the U.S. State Department confirmed that it would resettle 1,350 Palestinian refugees from Iraq to begin that fall.<sup>11</sup> About 10,000 Palestinian refugees, mainly the most vulnerable who are unable to flee, are believed to have remained in Baghdad. Other Palestinian refugees fleeing Iraq have been resettled in Iceland and Sweden.

Israel's war with Lebanon in the summer of 2006 (12 July - 14 August) led to inflows and outflows of displaced persons from Palestinian refugee camps. Although the camps were not generally directly targeted, on many occasions bombing and shelling took place in the immediate vicinity of the camps.<sup>12</sup> Moreover, as many as 25,000 Palestinian refugees residing outside the camps in the southern villages near the Israeli border faced the same conditions as the Lebanese population.<sup>13</sup> Around 16,000 Palestinian refugees were displaced both within Lebanon and to neighboring countries.<sup>14</sup> The Palestinian refugee camps of Rashidieh, al-Buss, Burj al-Shamali, Mieh Mieh, and Ein el-Hilweh hosted internally displaced Lebanese and Palestinians.<sup>15</sup> The majority of these IDPs returned to their homes after the end of hostilities. The war exacerbated the vulnerability of Palestinian refugees.<sup>16</sup>

Between May and September 2007, the Nahr el Bared refugee camp in northern Lebanon was destroyed displacing some 31,400 Palestinian refugees.<sup>17</sup> 105 days of fighting between the fundamentalist *Fateh al Islam* group and the Lebanese army leveled most of the camp, including entire residential blocks, commercial properties, mosques, UNRWA facilities, water reservoirs, sewage and electricity networks, roads and telephone lines. The majority of families fleeing the conflict sought refuge in and around the Beddawi refugee camp on the outskirts of Tripoli, nearly doubling this camp's population overnight.<sup>18</sup> Nearly 1,000 families were scattered elsewhere throughout Lebanon.<sup>19</sup>

The destruction of the camp on the 60<sup>th</sup> year of the Nakba engendered comparisons amongst the refugee population that it had experienced a "second Nakba" losing everything their families had worked for over six decades.<sup>20</sup> UNRWA rebuilding efforts are expected to be complete by mid-2011.

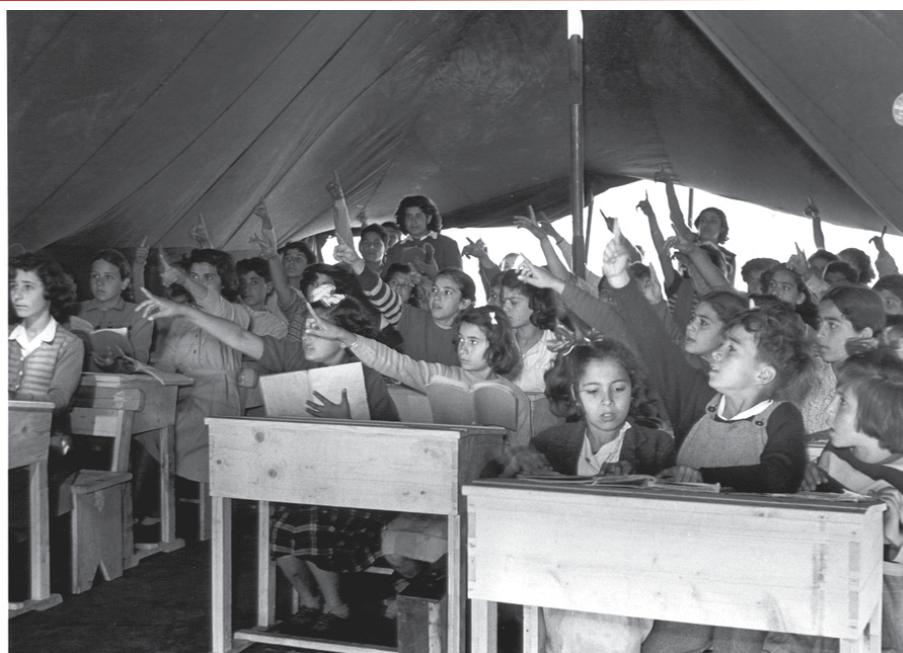


A leaflet distributed to the Palestinian community in Iraq, warning them of collective liquidation unless they leave their neighborhood. [Translation: "In the name of God the most Compassionate the most Merciful. Warning, warning warning. To the traitorous Palestinians cooperating with the Wahabi Takfiris , the Nawaseb, and Baathist Saddamists, particularly the residents of the Dur aShu'oun district. We warn that we will kill you all if you do not completely flee the area within ten days. You have been warned. The Day of Judgment Brigades" Palestinian refugees from Iraq at Al Tanf, no man's land between Syria and Iraq. March 2007 (© UNHCR)

Endnotes: See online version at: <http://www.badil.org/al-majdal>

## Overview of Palestinian Forced Displacement in and from Lebanon 1948-1990

by Mahmoud El Ali



Children at school in the Mar Elias refugee camp, early years. (UNRWA archives)

### Introduction

The Palestinian refugees in Lebanon – who numbered around 104,000 in 1948 – can be considered the largest stateless group of Palestinians received by a host state. Several factors have affected the demographic distribution of these refugees in Lebanon since the 1948 Nakba. In this article I will try to briefly highlight the main factors that determined the distribution of the refugees to different places within and beyond the borders of Lebanon.

According to the *Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement*, such displacement takes place when people are obliged to leave their homes as a "result of or in order to avoid the effects of armed conflict, situations of generalized violence, violations of human rights or natural or human-made disasters, and who have not crossed an internationally recognized State border." Palestinian refugees in Lebanon have faced almost all of these triggers, resulting in their displacement to other parts of Lebanon. In addition, there are many factors which have pushed the Palestinian refugees either to emigrate from Lebanon, or to seek asylum beyond its borders.

The secondary displacement of Palestinian refugees was mainly a result of the vision that the Lebanese political class had of itself, and of its country, in the context of the various religious sects that compose Lebanese society, combined with this class's view of the Palestinian presence in Lebanon and the Palestinian liberation struggle. The collective displacement of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon in the years under examination can be divided into two historical periods. The first period begins with the arrival of the Palestinians expelled by Zionist forces during the 1948 Nakba, and ends with the signing of the Cairo

Accords between the PLO and the Lebanese state in 1969, in which the Lebanese government legalized the activities of the Palestinian resistance within its sovereign borders. The second period begins with the 1969 Cairo Accords and continues until the late 1980's; it is a period marked by the primacy of the Palestinian military presence as a factor in Lebanese and regional politics.

It must be noted that in neither of these periods were refugees given a say in choosing to where they would be displaced. Yet, each stage was shaped by the influence of the Palestinian presence on Lebanese soil, on the one hand, and/or on the Lebanese religious sectarian structure on the other. Moreover, the models of interaction of the refugees within the host community, and the political status and affiliation of the refugees with political actors, played a vital role in the displacement of Palestinians in Lebanon. I make this distinction between the two eras based on the evolution of the Palestinian community, and its transformation from a passive actor into an active agent in Lebanese politics, a transformation that was brought about mainly by the emergence of the armed Palestinian resistance and the legalization of its presence in 1969.

### **Concentration and Segregation: The 1948-1969 Years**

The collected data, regarding the distribution of the Palestinian refugees who received relief from UNRWA between 1948 and 1951, shows that they were spread over 126 locations in different parts of Lebanon.<sup>1</sup> During this period, the distribution of the Palestinian refugees as to housing was assessed by UNRWA in the 1948-1951 period as follows: 76.91% in rented houses or with relatives and friends; 20.16% in ordinary tents; and 11.93% in monasteries, churches, mosques, barracks, and cottages.<sup>2</sup> By the mid-1950s, the refugees were gradually concentrated in fifteen refugee camps, and in other UN administered areas that were not considered or recognized as official camps. Both official and unofficial camps were located near the main cities. A minority of the refugees had the financial means to live outside the camps, and have thus had better opportunities to earn their living through finding adequate jobs. The majority of the refugees did not have such an option as they were mainly lower class peasants and workers in Palestine, and had lost what little they did have through the course of their uprooting and Israel's denial of their return. In what follows I discuss some of the main triggers of Palestinian displacement during this period.

#### **Natural Hazards, Drastic and Harsh Living Conditions.**

The majority of Baddawi camp inhabitants had settled in the city of Tripoli in the early years of the exodus. They had mostly inhabited the old castle which was used for horses, and it was given the title of the military khan (inn). When the Abu Ali river which runs through Tripoli flooded in 1955, the khan was severely affected and UNRWA was obliged to find an alternative place for this group of refugees. In addition, there were other refugees scattered in some areas of the south-eastern Bekaa, where the unbearably harsh winter conditions led UNRWA to transfer this group of refugees to the same newly-established camp.

The refugees who lived in Goro camp were similarly treated. The site was that of an old French army barracks in Baalbek. When the building began to fall apart, the state allowed UNRWA to build a new section in Rashidieh camp in 1963, and the refugees who lived in Goro were transferred to the new part of Rashidieh.<sup>3</sup>

#### **Interests of the Property Owners that Hosted the Refugees**

Jisr Al Basha camp was established in 1952 to accommodate Palestinian Catholics who fled from Haifa, Acre, and Jaffa. To begin with, the population found shelter in Azarieh, in Furn Al Shouback. When the property's owner sold the dwelling, the Lebanese government and UNRWA reached an agreement to rent a land plot in Jisr Al-Basha to accommodate the Christian Refugees.

Another Palestinian Christian group, most of whom were from Haifa, Acre and Jaffa, and who fled to Beirut on board a ship before 15 May 1948, were transferred to the Orthodox monastery of Mar Elias near UNESCO's headquarters. When the monastery administration discovered that the refugees were not allowed to return to Palestine, they agreed, in 1952, to lease the property to UNRWA who established a camp for the 90 families (500 people) who were hosted there. The camp was thus established on a nearby site as an endowment gifted by the Orthodox monastery. In the same context, the Palestinian Catholics who initially sought refuge at the Saint Josef Catholic monastery of Dbayyeh were transferred to Dbayyeh camp when it was established by UNRWA in 1956.

### **The Interest of the State.**

The main reason for transferring refugees from the villages near the Lebanon-Palestine border was the state's fear of Israeli reprisal for Palestinians attempting to return to Palestine, or to carry out attacks on the Zionist settlers on the other side. Since the issue of the refugees was not settled within the frame of negotiations, which were carried out between the Arabs and Israel following the expulsion of the Palestinians, the Lebanese state worked on moving the Palestinian refugees residing in the villages of southern Lebanon, bordering the part of Palestine occupied in 1948. The inhabitants of Salha village were hosted in a village established by the prominent Shi'ite leader Ahmed Al-Asaad in 1956. Ahmed Al-Asaad was accused by the then Lebanese president Camille Chamoun of arming the population in order to stir up troubles with his political rivals. As a result, the inhabitants were transferred to Nabatiyeh camp. Another group of refugees living in different villages surrounding Marjayoun district, near the border, were transferred by the government to live in Nabatiyah camp. Yet another group of refugees in southern Lebanon were moved to Burj El-Shamali camp which was established by UNRWA in 1955 on state land. Meanwhile, the refugees who were living in the Armenian village of Anjar in the Beqaa faced the same transfer, following a dispute between some of the refugees' families and the Armenian families who were living in the area. Again, in 1963, the government moved refugees living near an excavation site near El-Buss – near Tyre – to Rashidiyeh camp.<sup>4</sup> These included refugees living under the railway bridge on the same site, and a few families who were living on privately owned properties.

### **Economic Factors and the International Community**

The factors affecting the external displacement outside Lebanon were mainly economic motivated by the growing opportunities for working abroad in the Arab countries, and similarly, albeit to a lesser extent, opportunities in European countries.

Palestinian refugees faced severe obstacles when it came to applying for a travel document, and once the document was issued, the refugees' UNRWA rations were suspended. Furthermore, both Arab and other countries placed their own set of difficult restrictions on Palestinian workers. A very small number of highly-qualified Palestinian refugees were granted work permits in Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and Libya during this period. In the course of looking for better work opportunities, a small number of graduates from UNRWA's Siblin technical training center were given the option to pursue their studies abroad. These students who had this chance left for Germany and Sweden, and some of them have chosen, and managed, to stay abroad.

It is also important to note that UNRWA encouraged the refugees to emigrate during the 1950s, and played a role in assisting a considerable number of families to emigrate to Africa, North America, and Australia, on the condition they give up their relief assistance. Although the refugees, as a collective, opposed this approach - seeing in it a conspiracy to resettle Palestinian refugees - a considerable number of families applied for immigration through UNRWA, and many did emigrate. UNRWA, assisted by the General Directorate of Palestinian Affairs, conducted a comprehensive census on the registered Palestinian refugees residing in Lebanon in 1962. In the process, they crossed off 1,187 people and 2938 families from their records, because they did not find them at their given addresses in Lebanon. It is likely that many of those crossed off had moved abroad.<sup>5</sup>

## The Palestinian Revolution : 1969-1990

The emergence of the Palestinian military resistance had a positive impact on the living conditions of the Palestinian refugees in Lebanon. When the PLO started to formalize its presence, it established different institutions which helped in providing a social safety net for large numbers of Palestinians, as well as the Lebanese who were affiliated with Palestinian organizations. Before the withdrawal of the resistance from Lebanon in 1982, the PLO had provided 10,000 jobs directly, and over 30,000 jobs indirectly.<sup>6</sup> This did not, however, hinder job seekers from traveling abroad to secure better economic conditions. Meanwhile, the freedom of movement for Palestinians enabled thousands of them to travel abroad with less complication than before. Tens of thousands of Palestinians left to work abroad, particularly in the oil-rich Gulf States and Libya. Moreover, during the same period, many younger refugees sought work and education in Western Europe.

However, the 1969 Cairo Accords did not put an end to the rising tension between the Palestinian resistance on one hand and the Lebanese army, militias and government on the other, as each party sought to assert its control over parts of the country.

On 2 May 1973, the Lebanese Army, supported by Lebanese right wing militias, attacked the largely Palestinian neighborhood of Sabra in Beirut as well as the Shatila, Burj el-Barjneh, Tal el-Zaatar, and Dbayyeh camps. During these incidents the Hawker Hunter jets bombed the Palestinian artillery positions in Burj el Barjneh camp.

Nevertheless, the continuous growth of the Palestinian political and military presence in Lebanon, and the support provided by Islamic religious sects and the Lebanese national movement, ignited the Lebanese civil war, which

started in 1975, following the collapse of the Lebanese state's administrative apparatus and the split in the army. The split resulted in the control by Palestinian resistance, supported by the Lebanese national movement, over some areas of Lebanon, whereas the right-wing organizations, supported by the Syrians at first, and the Israelis later on, controlled other parts of the country.

While there is no space to delve into the complex realities of the Palestinian situation in Lebanon in the 1980s, it is evident that this era started to produce different factors that triggered the displacement of Palestinians. The major factors affecting this displacement were the political, and military situation created by Israel's continuous aggression against Lebanon in general, and the Palestinian military and civilian population in particular. These attacks reached a climax in 1982 when Israel invaded and occupied the southern part of Lebanon, including the capital Beirut. In addition, the Lebanese civil war and the U.S.-brokered removal of the Palestinian resistance in 1982, and the reinstatement of the state's authority thereafter all led to the sharp increase in Palestinian displacement, specifically to Europe. The emigration to Europe reached its peak after the war of the camps, in Tripoli and the Beqaa (1983-1985) and then in Beirut (1985-1987).



*UNRWA distribution center in Tyre, Lebanon. (UNRWA archives)*

### **Israeli Aggression**

Israeli aggression against Lebanon in this period can be classified in two main forms: the first was defined by Israel's attacks on Lebanon and the Palestinian civilian and military positions during the period from 1969 until 1978 by the use of artillery and air raids. The most violent air raid targeted Nabatieh camp in 1974. The residents of Nabatieh camp were the first group of Palestinians in Lebanon forced to flee collectively after their camp's destruction. In 1974, Israeli airplanes raided the camp and destroyed it completely causing the loss of 50 of the camp's inhabitants. Around 5,000 residents were obliged to flee to other areas including Beirut, Nabatieh town, Beqaa valley, Shieh village, while others headed to Baddawi camp in North Lebanon.

The second form began with the 1978 Israeli invasion of Lebanon. This invasion resulted in the military occupation of most of southern Lebanon, and the establishment of the so-called security zone. The invasion also resulted in the forced displacement of around 285,000 people from southern Lebanon, among them 65,000 Palestinians.

This continued with the Israeli invasion in 1982 and the raiding of the camps in the south, combined with the massacres committed through air raids in Burj El-Shamli camp, and the bombardment of Rashidieh and Ein El-Hilweh camps; these military campaigns led to the displacement of about a quarter of Rashidieh camp's population. The invasion reached its pinnacle in the Sabra and Shatila massacres, in which Lebanese fascist militias murdered 3,000 civilians with logistical support and under the supervision of the Israeli army. The invasion provoked great waves of refugee flight to other places in Lebanon.

Following the invasion, many of the refugees felt safer moving to Syria. These families and individuals found/took advantage of an opportunity created by Israel's aggression on the Lebanese-Syrian border during 9-10 June 1982, as the border was largely unpatrolled, thus making it easier for thousands of Palestinian civilians to enter Syria without obstacles. Most of the 8,000 displaced refugees who crossed the border in this period gathered near the Sayida Zainab shrine. Other refugees fled to the Gulf states and Europe, especially those who had family members abroad who were able to secure visas for their displaced relatives.

### **The Lebanese Civil War**

The Palestinian population in Lebanon was severely affected by the civil war, which occurred in two stages. The first stage (1975-1976) took place when the right-wing militias attacked three Palestinian camps in the eastern part of Beirut. The second (1983-1987) took place over two stages: the first took the form of internal conflict between the Palestinian factions over the issue of the policies towards peace, which mainly affected camps in Beirut and the north. The other was related to the Amal movement's war on the camps in Beirut and Southern Lebanon following the withdrawal of the Israeli forces south of the Litani river.

During the civil war which divided Lebanon along religious lines, right-wing militias committed massacres against the inhabitants of three camps in 1976: Dbayyeh, Tal al-Zaatar, and Jisr al-Basha. Thus refugees were forced to flee to other places in the country. Some of the residents of Dbayyeh found shelter in Mar Elias camp. Around 12,000 survivors of the 17,000 residents of Tal el-Zaatar were displaced to other areas in Lebanon, including Nahr el-Bared camp, and particularly to the Lebanese village of Damour which was raided by Palestinian forces in response to the fall of Tal el-Zaatar, whereupon the Christian inhabitants fled by boat to East Beirut. Additionally, refugees who fled Tal al-Zaatar headed towards Beqaa. Tal el-Zaatar and Jisr El-Basha were totally destroyed and Dbayyeh camp was partially destroyed. In this context the refugees from Jisr el-Basha fled towards East Beirut. In addition there were around 10,000 Palestinians living in slaughterhouses in Nabaa and Karantina who were forced to escape towards the western part of Beirut when the phalanges (*Kata'ib*) raided the area and destroyed the majority of the shelters. Many refugees tried to leave Lebanon altogether during this period, and a considerable number managed to migrate towards Europe, mainly Germany.

## The “War of the Camps”

In 1982, the U.S. brokered an agreement by which, among other things, Israel was to withdraw South of the Litani river. In return, the Syrians were to maintain order north of the river and ensure that the PLO's military presence was eliminated. It was a time of intense confusion for the Palestinian liberation movement, and the disputes over the Palestinian liberation strategy, and accountability for the 1982 defeat, resulted in military clashes between Palestinian factions – many of them backed by other regional powers – that characterized the 1983-1985 period. The internal "war of the camps" erupted in northern Lebanon and the Beqaa' areas. New waves of forcibly displaced Palestinians were the direct consequence.

After Israel's withdrawal to southern Lebanon, Syria's main agent in fulfilling its commitment to eradicate the Palestinian political and military presence in Lebanon was the Amal movement. Amal, which controlled East Beirut with Kamal Jumblatt's Progressive Socialist Party (PSP), applied strict measures on the movement of Palestinian refugees, placing military checkpoints at camp entrances, and humiliating Palestinians as they passed in and out. The abduction, torture, and disappearance of Palestinian refugees during this period still constitutes an important part of the collective trauma of this community today. Moreover, under the banner of ridding the Palestinian community of "Arafatists," Amal and other Syrian-backed groups – including some Palestinian factions – besieged and indiscriminately attacked several refugee camps. The resulting "war of the camps" (more accurately, war on the camps) claimed the lives of 9,094 Palestinians, and wounded 1,722. Almost fifty-thousand Palestinians were displaced in the violence that also destroyed 96% of Shatila camp, 65% of Burj el-Barajneh camp and 25% of Rashidiyeh camp. Mass waves of displacement were the direct consequence of the war of the camps as people, particularly youth, fled fearing murder, harassment, and detention. The displacement reached its peak between 1987 and 1989 when the violence expanded to the rest of the camps in Beirut and southern Lebanon.

## Discriminatory Laws Following the PLO Withdrawal

Within a few months of the withdrawal by the Palestinian resistance from Lebanon, the Lebanese Labor and Social Affairs Minister issued Decree number 1/289 (18 December 1982), in which foreigners were prohibited from working in approximately 72 professions. The main group of "foreigners" in the country were, of course, Palestinian refugees. This step came in tandem with the arbitrary arrests that targeted thousands of Palestinian men and youth in Beirut. In addition, the Security General that was headed by Zahi Elbustani, a pro-Phalangist member, applied new regulations for the issuance of travel documents to Palestinians. As a result of these measures, and according to unofficial information, around 17,000-20,000 Palestinians were de-registered by 1992, becoming non-ID residents of the country.<sup>7</sup> The implementation of the decrees started in the era of President Amin Gemayel, head of the right-wing Phalangist Party. Such discriminatory policies were also a major factor in the displacement of Palestinians from Lebanon.



*Palestinians in the aftermath of the Sabra and Shatila massacres (UNRWA archives)*

## Conclusion

The above-mentioned factors contributed extensively in re-shaping the demographic distribution of the Palestinian refugees in Lebanon. A 1989 UNRWA survey revealed that 4,122 families (23,080 people) had experienced forced displacement, accounting for 11.36% of the total number of UN registered refugees at that time in Lebanon.<sup>8</sup> A follow-up survey, conducted by UNRWA in 1992, showed that the displacement affected 5,963 Palestinian families in the 1971-1991 period. This survey was limited to those families that were still not settled in houses of their own, and thus excluded the families who fled from the demolished camps within or beyond the borders of Lebanon.

In this regard, Mohamed Kamel Dorai in a paper entitled "Palestinian Emigration from Lebanon to Northern Europe: Refugees, Networks and Transnational Practices" states that since the 1980s, about 100,000 Palestinians have emigrated from Lebanon to the Gulf countries and northern Europe, mainly Germany, Sweden, and Denmark.

Although it is difficult to know the exact number of refugees from Lebanon who were granted asylum status in Europe, some researchers such as Ralph Gadban have estimated that 80% of the 80,000 Palestinian refugees in Germany arrived from Lebanon.<sup>9</sup> Maged Elzeir noted in his thesis, *The Palestinian Community in Britain: Features of Exile and Attitudes toward the Right of Return*, that the number of Palestinians in the UK became apparent from the late 1970s onwards. According to Elzeir, this influx was a direct consequence of the civil war in Lebanon, as well as the Israeli invasion and occupation of Lebanon in 1978 and 1982 respectively. Other information reveals that a majority of the approximately 19,000 Palestinians living in Denmark today came to Denmark during the civil war in Lebanon, most of them coming from Wavel camp.

It is also of interest to note some of the other changes in the distribution of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon. For instance, Mar Elias camp has transformed from a majority Christian camp into a majority Muslim camp. Most of the the Palestinian Christians who used to live in the camp moved to Dbayeh camp or to other areas of West and East Beirut, while others have fled abroad. Now, more than 95% of the camp's inhabitants are those



Ein el Hilwah  
refugees camp  
1978

who were displaced from the destroyed camps such as Tal el-Zaatar. Half of the residents of today's Dbayeh camp, the only camp in East Beirut that was not completely destroyed, is composed of Lebanese families. Shatila camp is now considered a "cosmopolitan," rather than a Palestinian, camp, as the low housing prices have attracted poor and working-class migrant workers. This same phenomenon can be seen in Ein el-Hilweh and Baddawi camps. Another form of demographic change is the expansion of the Palestinian presence in the Beqaa Valley, in Saadnayel, Bar Elias, Taalabaya, and Chtoura. It is worth noting that Palestinians established their own communities after some built homes and settled in Beqaa. In addition, there has been

the foundation of new gatherings along the camp's boundaries, such as Al-Baraksat, Hamshari hospital, the railway, the Jewish orchard near Ein el-Hilweh, the immigrant's quarters on the outskirts of Baddawi and Nahr El-Bared camps, the Gaza hospital in Beirut's Sabra neighborhood, and others.

Endnotes: See online version at: <http://www.badil.org/al-majdal>

## The Ongoing Nakba in Lebanon: The Case of Nahr el-Bared Refugee Camp

by Marcy Newman



*A demonstration calling on the Lebanese government to protect civilians during the fighting in Nahr el Bared, 2007. (Paul Taggart)*

Picture a drawing simply depicting a man flying through the air with a caption by a young Palestinian child that reads, "I wish to become Superman so I can help all people, and fly over the checkpoint without having to give him a passing permit or identity card."<sup>1</sup> Imagine another drawing, a collage made up of Arabic words and black paint to form a road with the caption, "One year after the battle, we are still waiting to return home."<sup>2</sup> These are not words and images from Palestinians in Gaza. Nor are they from Palestinians in Jenin refugee camp. They were created by Palestinians in Nahr el-Bared refugee camp in northern Lebanon in a book that chronicles the war on their camp in the summer of 2007, their displacement, and their fight for their right to return to their camp.

The stories and representations of the children's experiences give some insight into the latest chapter of the ongoing Nakba for Palestinians in Lebanon. One girl's stick figure self-portrait narrates her story: "My problem is that when I see a house in Nahr El-Bared destroyed, and everything in it ruined, I feel sad and alone and sometimes I cry because we spent all our lives in it, and because we left it and ran away to Beddawi [refugee camp]."<sup>3</sup> A photograph of two Palestinian women and children sitting on a classroom floor with mattresses stacked behind them has a caption that reads, "Living in a school is not like living at home."<sup>4</sup> One girl shares a photograph of her parents and tells us, "My father says, 'Either back to Nahr El-Bared or back to Palestine. We don't want a third option.'"<sup>5</sup> And yet another such image depicts a black-and-white drawing of a building, with Palestinians standing in front carrying a colored-in Palestinian flag, with the caption, "We want to return to Nahr El-Bared."<sup>6</sup> Images of checkpoints surrounding Nahr el-Bared and temporary refugees in Beddawi refugee camp fill this book of testimonies. Photographs of destruction in the camps and of objects found, of

the new UNRWA barracks in the camp, and of weddings and new beginnings. Children tell stories of flight and of fear in confrontations with Fatah el-Islam and of their desire to return to the camp; "I wish to go back and see the house in which I spent the best days of my childhood."<sup>7</sup> Many of these narratives mark a shift in language from a right of return to Palestine to a right of return to Nahr el-Bared.

Nahr el-Bared refugee camp was not supposed to exist. It was not one of the sites where Palestinian refugees went to await their return to their homes and villages in northern Palestine and in its coastal cities. After their expulsion from Palestine, some refugees traveled north towards Syria: "people who settled there were on their way to Syria. When the Syrian government decided not to accept any more refugees, the border was closed and they were obliged to stay there. Later, UNRWA transformed the site into a camp."<sup>8</sup> Originally, the residents of Nahr el-Bared came from one particular village in Palestine: "In the 1950s, 90 percent of the people in the camp were from Saffuriya."<sup>9</sup> Today, people from Saffuriyya make up only about half the camp's residents. The change of the camp's demographics is related to the ongoing Nakba for Palestinians in Lebanon which includes forced displacement, expulsion, and massacres over the last sixty-two years.<sup>10</sup>

But the story of Nahr el-Bared is not only one of destruction or in-fighting. When the Palestinian Revolution came to Lebanon in 1969 their battle was not only with the Zionist enemy south of the border. They were also fighting to liberate the camps from the repressive maktab al-thani (Deuxième Bureau) which, beginning in the 1950s, functioned as the Lebanese government's agency for suppressing everything from political activity to housing regulations in the camps.<sup>11</sup> Many Lebanese supported the fedayeen by fighting alongside them against Zionist aggression, as well as demonstrating against the Lebanese authorities trying to repress dissent. It was also a time when Palestinian resistance achieved some important victories. One of those victories came when Nahr el-Bared was surrounded by the Lebanese army, like the other camps, but here the people were the first camp to liberate themselves as Rosemary Sayigh reveals in an interview with one of the fighters:

They brought tanks and the army tried to enter the camps. That day, we can remember with pride, we brought out the few guns that we had – there were eleven. We did well at first, but then we ran out of ammunition. A rumor ran around the camp that the ammunition was finished and we tried to calm the people by telling them that rescue would come from the Resistance. But we didn't really know whether it would come. But what was amazing was that people returned to what they had been in 1948, preferring to die rather than to live in humiliation. Women were hollering because it was the first time a gun had been seen defending the camp. It was the first battle that we didn't lose. The children were between the fighters, collecting the empty cartridges although the bullets were like rain. It was the first time that people held knives and sticks and stood in front of their homes, ready to fight.<sup>12</sup>

A few years later, in 1976, when Christian militias massacred Palestinians and Lebanese in the Tell el-Za'atar and Jisr el-Basha refugee camps during a fifty-three day siege, many Palestinians who survived fled to Nahr el-Bared among other refugee camps.<sup>13</sup>

The second victory came when the Lebanese Army and the PLO signed the Cairo Accords in 1969, which "allowed Palestinians resident in Lebanon 'to participate in the Palestinian revolution' and formally sanctioned Palestinian guerrilla activity to originate from certain border areas in Lebanon."<sup>14</sup> Technically the agreement was repealed by the Lebanese parliament in 1987, but has some important bearing on the more recent situation. Equally significant was a policy that made Palestinian lives more difficult, something that resonates with the more recent context. In 1982 Sayigh explains that "The government also unofficially requested UNRWA not to reissue ID cards that had been lost or destroyed; without ID cards, Palestinians were liable to be arrested."<sup>15</sup> Indeed, many were. During the war on Nahr el-Bared, non-ID Palestinian refugees became a high-risk group for those same reasons (there are between 3,000 and 5,000 Palestinians without IDs out of a total population

of 409,714 Palestinian refugees in Lebanon). Some Palestinians without IDs came from other countries; others had their papers lost or destroyed, often when their homes and camps were demolished; still others were born to non-ID parents.

Nahr el-Bared had 31,000 inhabitants when the fighting broke out between the Lebanese army and Fatah el-Islam on 20 May 2007. Fatah el-Islam was a militia that, according to Seymour Hersh, was created indirectly by then U.S. Vice President Dick Cheney, Saudi Prince Bandar, and current Prime Minister of Lebanon Sa'ad Hariri. The plan was for the U.S. to team up with what the U.S. views as "moderate" Sunni governments like Jordan, Saudi Arabia and Egypt and link them with Israel to fight Shi'a in the region. In 2005 Hariri "...paid forty-eight thousand dollars in bail for four members of an Islamic militant group from Dinniyeh. The men had been arrested while trying to establish an Islamic mini-state in northern Lebanon. The International Crisis Group noted that many of the militants 'had trained in al-Qaeda camps in Afghanistan.'"<sup>16</sup>

These men made up the initial core of Fatah el-Islam and were equipped with cash and weapons to fight Hezbollah. Some of them wound up in Ein el-Helweh refugee camp in the south before moving north to Beddawi refugee camp; in both of these camps the residents kicked them out. When Hariri's Mustaqbal (Future) Movement stopped paying their monthly stipend of \$700, some of these men turned to bank robbery and fighting broke out first in Tripoli then, a few kilometers north, in Nahr el-Bared, where the militants fled. Both the U.S. and Lebanon maintained that Syria was behind Fatah el-Islam, a claim that is illogical given Syria's alliance with Hezbollah. Aside from its leader Shahr al-Abbasi, Fatah el-Islam was not comprised of Palestinians; it was made up of mostly Yemeni, Tunisian, Saudi, Lebanese, and Bangladeshi militants whose primary concern was their antagonism towards Shi'a Muslims, not the liberation of Palestine. Many of the people in this militia did not even speak Arabic. Prior to the army's attack, both Nahr el-Bared and Ein el-Helweh were the two refugee camps with entrances controlled by the Lebanese army, a not-so-subtle indicator of their collaboration.

When fighting broke out, Palestinians were trapped and only allowed to flee after the first four days of fighting when the army called for a brief "truce." As they fled, many people from the camp described being attacked by yet another militia, a group whom they described as being affiliated with Hariri's Mustaqbal Movement. Much of this was surprising for Palestinians in this camp, many of whom are married to Lebanese spouses and had vibrant and intertwined social, economic, and familial ties with the surrounding Lebanese villages. In fact, as a result of these interrelations, Nahr el-Bared was a camp unlike any other: it had large villas, access to the sea, a dairy factory, shops where northern Lebanese shopped, and even agricultural areas. When they fled, most went to Beddawi refugee camp ten kilometers south which saw its population almost double over night from 15,000 to 27,000; a quarter of the people stayed in UNRWA schools and the rest in private homes.<sup>17</sup>

The refugees who fled called it a second Nakba: "The first one in 1948 was a black and white Nakba, it was



*Destruction of UNICEF building in Nahr el Bared, 1st April 2008. (Marcy Newman)*

easy to know who our enemies were. This one was more colourful."<sup>18</sup> But many Palestinians did not flee right away. For those who experienced their first Nakba in 1948 and then again in Tell el-Za'atar refugee camp in 1976, the past experience of forced displacement made them remain so as not to lose their homes and communities yet again. One woman noted "if they came here I wouldn't leave the camp. Even if they destroyed it. If I left I'd lose everything, if I stayed at least I'd die in my house."<sup>19</sup> Men, in particular, stayed behind to defend the camp and care for the wounded. When people did leave the camp they were routinely subjected to interrogation by the army and taken directly to prison, especially Palestinian men. Knowledge of these incidents also made many Palestinians refuse to leave. Melad Salameh was one who stayed behind. As a nurse at Shefa Clinic he wanted to tend to the wounded. When he left wearing a vest and cargo pants filled with medical equipment he was accused of treating Fatah el-Islam fighters and of being a member of the militia. He was one of those taken directly to prison. As soon as he was released, he began to treat people in Beddawi's Shefa Clinic where he witnessed up close the torture Palestinians from Nahr el-Bared experienced at the hands of their jailers in Yarzeh prison:

"Many of the injuries we received...were sustained under detention, inside the army detention centers. Many people came with signs of torture, abuse and beatings. We saw signs of electrical shocks as well, and some even reported sexual abuses, such as rape by bottle."<sup>20</sup>

Most Palestinians left hastily with only the clothes on their backs, sometimes with small plastic bags of medications, and some without any paper documentation, adding them to the list of non-ID Palestinians who could no longer move freely among the ever-increasing number of checkpoints scattered throughout the country. Even for those with IDs, many Palestinian men who worked outside the camps were afraid to go to work because, increasingly, Palestinian men were rounded up, detained, and harassed. Even Palestinians in places like Beirut who were not from the camps, particularly if their skin was dark, found themselves subjected to racial profiling as the Internal Security Forces (ISF) would approach them on the streets asking which side they were on. There were two possible choices: the Lebanese army or Fatah el-Islam.<sup>21</sup> Clearly not only political support from the U.S. seeped into Lebanon, but also its discourse.<sup>22</sup> Not surprisingly, then, during the summer's fighting the U.S., U.A.E., Saudi Arabia, and Jordan all supplied the Lebanese army with equipment.

Over the course of the summer Palestinians fled to other camps around the country. The homes in which they found refuge were often overcrowded, at times with thirty people to two-room flats with several people sharing each foam mattress on the floor.<sup>23</sup> Eventually Lebanon opened a couple of school buildings as housing for Palestinian families, but most Lebanese did not open up their homes to people from Nahr el-Bared. This is in sharp contrast to the Israeli war on Lebanon the previous summer during which Lebanese villagers in the south fled to Palestinian refugee camps where they were welcomed with open arms.

The tension caused by the Lebanese army's battle against the camp led to the Lebanese-Palestinian Dialogue Committee issuing a letter to all Palestinians, through Ambassador Khalil Makkawi and then Prime Minister Fouad Siniora, telling them that the attack on Nahr el-Bared was an act of "self-defense" and not an attack on Palestinians. Ironically, given the jingoistic billboards and attitudes that made all Palestinians suspect, the recipients should have been Lebanese.<sup>24</sup> What the letter and the army's behavior revealed was that Lebanese security depended upon Palestinian insecurity. This insecurity is not only about personal safety, but also about the right to return to their camp and to rebuild it the way they see fit. Early on Siniora made it clear that he had plans for rebuilding the camp, plans that signalled to many Palestinians that this was a premeditated, planned attack on the camp. For Palestinians Siniora's ideas about a "model camp", as he put it, was code for a return to the days of the Deuxième Bureau, of the government's control, suppression, and surveillance of the camps.

Unlike previous attacks on Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon, the number of martyrs was relatively small. Between its outbreak and its end on 4 September 2007, there were twenty-three Palestinians murdered by

the army, many of whom died because they bled to death as a result of a lack of plasma or blood supply or medical teams to handle the wounds (169 Lebanese soldiers, 287 Fatah el-Islam militants, and twenty-four Lebanese civilians were also killed). As with other massacres there were severe restrictions on ambulances and medical teams entering the camp during the fighting. Most of the Lebanese media, with the exception of Al-Akhbar and As-Safir, reported the attack on Nahr el-Bared from the Lebanese army's point of view; indeed the government threatened any news agency with lawsuits if its reporting did not support the troops. Palestinian victims were nameless and faceless and the line between them and Fatah el-Islam was purposefully blurred. International media found their work severely hindered and, until now, it is difficult for journalists to enter the camp as all non-residents must apply for entry permits from the army.

Likewise the return of Palestinians to their camp moved at a snail's pace. The excuse given by the government and army was that there were too many unexploded weapons. However, when compared to the previous summer's war with Israel that argument fails to hold water. In spite of the fact that there were millions of American-made cluster bombs throughout southern Lebanon, people returned home as soon as the Israeli forces retreated. What is more revealing is the fact that the interior of many homes inside the camp resembled Lebanese homes in south Lebanon, where one found homes looted, where soldiers had defecated on furniture, painted racist graffiti in the interior of homes, perched flags (Israeli flags in the case of southern Lebanon, Lebanese flags in the case of Nahr el-Bared) on top their destroyed homes, and shot bullets through refrigerators and Qur'ans alike.<sup>25</sup> This time, however, it was not the Zionist enemy but the Lebanese army perpetrating those violations. Indeed this is largely the reason for keeping both Palestinians, journalists and human rights workers out of the camp. It took an entire month before Palestinians were allowed into their homes again, on 9 October, but even then only 8,000 Palestinians (1,200 families) were allowed to return to their camp, 85% of which had been destroyed.<sup>26</sup>

There were two sections of the Nahr el-Bared refugee camp, and return was dependent upon which side people were from. Those who were allowed to return were only those from the "new camp." The rubble of the homes in the "old camp" has been cleared, but it is encircled with barbed wire, and people from the camp are forbidden from entering. Today most of the people have returned to the camp. Out of the original 5,550 families of Nahr el-Bared, only about 280 continue to live outside in camps in south Lebanon or Beirut. People from Nahr el-Bared who are in other camps such as Ein el-Helweh are fearful of growing tensions and are trying to return, but there is no housing for them in Nahr el-Bared as it is already overcrowded. Still there are others from the camp who have chosen not to go back because they would rather not deal with the continuing military blockade of the camp. All of them suffer from living in an open-air prison which in some ways resembles the Gaza Strip. The entire camp is now surrounded by army checkpoints for which one needs a special resident ID card or army permission to enter (now Lebanese citizens are allowed to enter without permission); one needs to provide justification for entering, including residents from the camp who have not yet returned. The Lebanese intelligence set up offices inside the camp as well. This is not only humiliating, but also affects the economic viability of rebuilding the shops and businesses. UNRWA has invested around three million dollars to reactivate Palestinian businesses, but there is a sixty-percent unemployment rate, and almost the entire population is dependent on UNRWA aid. There is no cash flow so people cannot afford to purchase items from each other and must rely on a barter and trade system.<sup>27</sup>

For those who returned to the camp, many live in one of the five housing units constructed by UNRWA which residents think of as "modern-day tents." They are poorly constructed pre-fabricated steel structures, or concrete rooms with steel roofs, that are intensely hot in the summer and cold in the winter and average about five people per one-room shelter. There is no privacy. Many of these already have huge cracks in the walls. Those who could fix their homes have done so on their own, without any outside help, but those who could afford to do so have been the minority. The army has also issued, in some cases, violent threats to many people rebuilding their homes "without a permit." In 2009, the municipal authorities stopped granting building permits to people from Nahr el-



*Palestinian refugees in Nahr el Bared, May 2008. (Marcy Newman)*

Bared, and the government has stopped any reconstruction initiatives under the pretext that title to the properties is disputed. In Nahr el-Bared, all property in the "new camp" is informally owned by Palestinians who bought it from the original Lebanese owners, but never officially registered it because of the Lebanese law that discriminates against Palestinians by forbidding them to own property. Rebuilding, then, has placed Palestinians under the mercy of the Lebanese government.<sup>28</sup> Indeed this seems to have been premeditated; recently it was revealed that Siniora

signed a contract with the U.S. for ISF equipment in exchange for interference with internal issues. This U.S.-funded project includes, for the first time since the Cairo Agreement, the installation of police stations in the camp with the aim of implementing Lebanese laws that by their nature discriminate against Palestinians.<sup>29</sup>

UNRWA has started to build 150 houses and are trying to find sources of funding for the rest. The Lebanese contractor, Al-Jihad, has been building at a very slow pace. The camp has now been de-mined and the rubble removed. But the rebuilding continues to be restricted to the area designated as the "new camp." Reconstruction in the "old camp" is also moving at a snail's pace.<sup>30</sup> There are eight packages for the camp, only five of which have been designed, but only a few buildings in the first package have started reconstruction and only two stories were built for each.<sup>31</sup> The stagnant pace of building, the imprisoned feeling of the people in the camp, resonant with the past experience of the Deuxième Bureau, has left people with a feeling of demoralization. Melad Saleme, a refugee from Jaffa, who now works with youth in the camp says, "we need to be rebuilding spirits and souls, not just houses."<sup>32</sup> The youth are especially fed up, and many go to great lengths to find ways of emigrating to Europe or elsewhere.

While the focus for Palestinians inside Nahr el-Bared may be on rebuilding or emigration, in nearby Beddawi camp the residents fear that their camp may be targeted and destroyed, repeating the experience of Nahr el-Bared.<sup>33</sup> Recently the army began building trenches around the camp and tightening security around it; people fear that soon they will also need special ID cards to enter their camp. To add to the stress, army helicopters occasionally fly over these two northern- most Palestinian refugee camps.<sup>34</sup> While this may appear to be a solely Lebanese enterprise, one must recall the initial role of the U.S. in creating Fatah el-Islam, the pretext for the Lebanese army's destruction of Nahr el-Bared. As with the agreement with former Prime Minister Siniora which will likely spread to a policing of all the camps in Lebanon, the American donation of twenty million dollars to rebuild Nahr el-Bared is not a gesture of philanthropy.<sup>35</sup> For Palestinians it seems like an attempt to wrest control over Palestinian lives as a proxy for the Israeli regime. The addition of Margot Ellis as UNRWA's new Deputy Commissioner General is another specter that Palestinian lives in the camps in Lebanon will experience a Zionist agenda at their expense.<sup>36</sup> Ellis' experience with USAID, America's imperial arm, is a harbinger that the Americans want greater control over the lives of Palestinians with the intended goal to encourage outward migration and eliminate the right of return.<sup>37</sup>

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Endnotes: See online version at: <http://www.badil.org/al-majdal>

## Palestinian Forced Displacement from Kuwait: The Overdue Accounting

by *Toufic Haddad*



*Palestinian refugees at the Kuwaiti border waiting to be deported, 1991. (Isabel Ellsen, Corbis)*

**T**he story of the Palestinian experience in Kuwait is a microcosm of the Palestinian experience overall in all its tragic footnotes. Yet the truth of what took place there – from the Palestinian experience of playing a formative role in the building this fledgling Arab state, to the ultimate moment the Palestinian community was cruelly forced out – is hardly a well-studied affair. Indeed, in researching this article, only a handful of scholarly articles in English on the subject were found. Of these, many lacked a sense for ‘the bigger picture’ of what was at stake, attempting to isolate these events from the historical and political processes and ideas which frame them, and deepen the signification of the expulsion of Palestinians from Kuwait.

Considering the fact that Palestinian displacement from Kuwait (and subsequently many of the Arab Gulf states including Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Qatar and the UAE), was approximately equivalent to the number of Palestinians forcibly displaced from the Occupied Palestinian Territory during the 1967 war – roughly 400,000 people – this lack of research attention is remarkable. Furthermore, the enormity of the repercussions that this period ushered into Palestinian politics – from the weakening of the PLO, to the eventual signing of the Oslo Accords in 1993 – makes this experience crucial to the understanding of contemporary Palestinian politics. This article is an attempt to fill in some of these gaps and explore some of the bitter hidden wounds marking this story.

### **History of Palestinians in Kuwait**

Palestinians began moving to Kuwait in three main stages. The first began in the late 1940s after Palestinian

dispersion from their homeland during the Nakba coincided with the formal announcement of the discovery of Kuwaiti oil (1946). At the time, Kuwait was a British protectorate that had been carved out from the province of Basra in the waning days of the Ottoman Empire. Some historians argue that the severing of Kuwait from Iraq by the British was meant to deprive the larger neighboring state of Iraq from a deep water port, essentially keeping it land-locked and hence easier to control.<sup>1</sup>

The fledgling state of Kuwait at the time was little more than a backwater, walled old city with a fishing port along established trading routes. It had no parliament, no newspaper, no budget, and was run by the Al Sabah monarchy ever since the British forced the Iraqi Prime Minister to recognize the state in 1932, virtually at gunpoint.

The United Kingdom had big plans for Kuwait. Despite the UK's retreats in the wake of the Second World War, Kuwait was sitting on what would be affirmed to be 10 percent of the world's oil resources, including what was then the largest oil field in the world (the Burgan field). Furthermore, extraction of Kuwaiti oil was almost effortless (costing less than under \$US1 a barrel), in stark contrast with the North Sea resources that Great Britain needed to rely upon for its oil and heating needs. Maintaining influence in the strategic Gulf region was a means for the UK to maintain influence on a world stage, including vis-à-vis its imperial competitors. Where its direct colonial reach was ending, its neo-colonial reach was just beginning to extend.

Palestinians, together with other laborers from Egypt, Lebanon, Iran, India, and Pakistan came to play a formative role in the development of Kuwait. That two thirds of all Palestinians had become refugees meant that this work force was particularly itinerant and economically dependent. Great opportunities existed for educated Palestinians to play key roles as engineers, doctors, teachers and civil servants in the state's fledgling bureaucracy after the state officially received independence from Great Britain in 1961.

By 1965, Palestinians composed almost 17 percent of the population of Kuwait (78,000 of about 468,000).<sup>2</sup> The Palestinian population was also primarily male at this stage (four to one, male to female) with most Palestinian income remitted to families residing in Jordan (including the West Bank) Lebanon, and Gaza.<sup>3</sup>

It is also worth noting here that the residential living quarters of young Palestinian workers in Kuwait was often segregated along national lines. The use of segregated housing for laborers had initially been employed by U.S. mining companies in the southwest states, as a technique to avert black-white worker alliances, and



*Palestinian refugees at the Kuwaiti border waiting to be deported, 1991. (isabel Ellsen, Corbis)*

their potential for strikes.<sup>4</sup> The tactic was later adopted by the U.S. oil giant Aramco in Saudi Arabia during its own internal disputes with labor, and quickly spread across the Arabian Gulf region. The significance of mentioning this here lies in establishing the fact that the close living quarters amongst Palestinians and the underdeveloped nature of Kuwait in the mid-1950s made it fertile ground for the regrouping and rebirth of a modern Palestinian national movement after the Nakba. Palestinians were socialized together in Kuwait in an environment where they were newly created refugees, proletarianized, and exploited by their Kuwaiti masters, yet were nonetheless able to lead a stable and sometimes prosperous existence. Moreover they were witness to the tumultuous Arab world of the 1950s and 1960s, and its ongoing struggles with political ideologies – from Arab nationalism in its Nasserite and Baathist variations, to Arab communism and Islamism.

The question of Palestine lay at the heart of many of these struggles, making the early experience of Palestinians in Kuwait the crucible period where the post-Nakba, modern Palestinian national movement, led by Fateh, would come about. The only other equivalent expression of Palestinian nationalism came from Palestinian refugees in Lebanon and Syria who would form the nucleus of the Palestinian left in coming years. As for Kuwait, the list of Palestinian engineers, teachers and functionaries who made their way through the state would include a "who's who" of the founders of the post-1967 PLO – including Yasser Arafat, Khalil Al Wazir (Abu Jihad), Hani El Hassan and Salah Khalaf (Abu Eyad).

After 1967, a second and third wave of Palestinians made their way to Kuwait, swelling the community to 148,000 in 1970, and 204,000 by 1975.<sup>5</sup> This time Palestinians brought their families, partly out of the fear of leaving them behind in the unstable conditions created by Israel's occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip, or the precarious situation of Palestinians in Jordan after the 1970 crackdown on the PLO.

The growth of the Palestinian community in Kuwait throughout the late 1960s and 1970s, brought with it increasing contradictions. On the one hand, the community became increasingly prosperous and influential both in the state itself, as well as beyond it. By this time the PLO had been catapulted to the top of the world stage, particularly in Arab societies where it was admired for its willingness to resist Israel in the wake of the humiliating 1967 defeat. Kuwait acted as the PLO's main financial backer by providing direct government funding, and allowing the PLO to levy a five percent tax on Palestinian income that the government allowed it to collect. Palestinian presence in Kuwait further contributed to the state's cultural and artistic influence in the Arab world, with Palestinians playing leading roles in Kuwaiti newspapers, literary journals, and its vibrant cultural sector.

On the other hand, the PLO was feared by Arab governments as a potentially destabilizing force. The PLO's political agenda was so immersed in contemporary questions to do with the Arab world's liberation from Western imperialism and its local surrogates that it was only natural that the ruling families of authoritarian Arab states viewed the PLO's presence suspiciously. Many an Arab country had indeed been created and/or maintained by Western powers, Kuwait included (Despite Kuwait's official independence in 1961, the United Kingdom retained a military base there for "training purposes" up until the Iraqi invasion in 1990). Furthermore, Palestinian left factions had at different stages called for overthrowing "the reactionary Arab regimes," and allied themselves with local leftist groupings against their repressive governments. Breakaway factions of the Palestinian left had even attacked or threatened Gulf oil interests adding suspicions to the mix.

In this context, the Kuwaiti government attempted to keep a tight grip on PLO activities, which also mirrored its own repressive activities against democratic life in Kuwait. In 1976, Kuwait's rulers shut down the independent Palestinian school system that had been allowed to operate since 1968. In the same year, they shut down the Kuwaiti parliament for six years, and began to increasingly censor the press and the activities of Kuwaiti student movements.

But the main way in which Kuwait kept a grip on Palestinian activity was to ensure that the most conservative elements of the PLO were empowered at the expense of the "radicals." Fateh was the natural benefactor of this arrangement. Ever since Fateh's 1968 take-over of the PLO from its former role as surrogate of Egyptian president Nasser, the movement repeatedly emphasized its "non interventionist" approach in internal Arab affairs, and was decidedly against giving the movement any ideological colorations. In this respect, Fateh worked closely with the Kuwaiti government to keep tabs on and undermine influence of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine in the 1970s, as well as Palestinian Islamists in the 1980s.<sup>6</sup>

The late 1970s and 1980s witnessed a decisive shift to the right in Arab politics. The Lebanese civil war had erupted in 1975, and the Palestinian-Lebanese Left alliance was decisively and ruthlessly crushed in the siege of Beirut's Tal Al-Za'tar refugee camp. Egyptian president Anwar Sadat abandoned his predecessor's pan-Arabist agenda, entering peace talks with Israel in 1979, steering his state toward becoming a Western vassal. This entailed both cutting a deal with Israel to gain back the Sinai Peninsula, and transforming the Egyptian economy into a neo-liberal *avant-garde* in the region.

Other developments added to Gulf Arab consternation about the stability of their regimes. 1979 witnessed the successful Iranian revolution, which quickly turned into the victory of the Islamist wing within it. Not long after, the Iran-Iraq war would break out, with the Arab Gulf countries encouraging Iraqi president Saddam Hussein to take advantage of Iran's post revolution disarray to make territorial gains, and push back Iranian revolutionary ideological influence. By 1982 the PLO would also be dislodged from Lebanon, and its leadership structures displaced to Tunisia, gravely impacting its ability to leverage any military challenge to Israel, and emptying out its slogan that "armed struggle" would liberate Palestine.

In this context, Kuwait took increasing steps at the "Kuwaitization" of its economy attempting to reduce the control and influence on non-Kuwaitis in professional and civil services.<sup>7</sup> While these measures created lush benefits and privileges for Kuwaitis in terms of employment, salary and retirement benefits, they conversely worsened matters for many Palestinians. With it, the community's sense of what Kuwait had come to represent as a bastion of security and support quickly eroded.

One final factor to consider is the rising population of Palestinians in respect to that of the Kuwaiti population. By 1989, the Palestinian population was estimated at upwards of 400,000 people (perhaps 450,000), while that of Kuwaitis stood at roughly 550,000 - a trend that elements of the Kuwaiti establishment were keen to reverse.<sup>8</sup>



Palestinian refugees at the Kuwaiti border waiting to be deported by bus, 1991. (Isabel Ellsen, Corbis)

In sum, on the eve of the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, a combination of ideological, political, demographic and class factors contributed to a perceived conflict of interest between the Palestinians in Kuwait, and the Kuwaiti regime. Relatively speaking, the status and prosperity of Palestinians in Kuwait was stable. But beneath the surface, subtle yet important rifts existed, and shifts in perception were also taking place – developments, which, with the onset of coming conflict, would be exposed with devastating consequences.

## The Iraqi Invasion

The oft-cited historical narrative to emerge regarding the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait is that the Palestinian community there, together with the PLO, sided with the Iraqi invaders.<sup>9</sup> This historical miscalculation resulted in Palestinians being perceived as collaborators with the Iraqi occupiers, leading to their eventual dislodgment from Kuwait after its liberation. But this narrow reading of history is inaccurate, deceptive and hypocritical. Moreover it is largely a narrative that blames one of the main victims of the war, while obfuscating what the war was about in real terms.

The Palestinian community in Kuwait was not a monolith, nor was its response to the Iraqi invasion monolithic. On the one hand, many Palestinians did have a pre-existent sympathy towards Iraq irrespective of the question of its conflict with Kuwait. Iraq is remembered in Palestinian popular consciousness as one of the Arab states to have fought against Zionist armies in 1948 and 1967, doing so valiantly, unlike other states such as Jordan which made secret arrangements with Zionist forces before 1948 to divide Palestine between itself and the future Israel. Iraq was also the only warring Arab state that did not sign an armistice agreement in the wake of the Nakba, leaving it in a state of open war with Israel. Iraq was also the state sanctuary and sponsor of an assortment of Palestinian political groups and refugee communities, and who were treated relatively well in comparison to other Arab host regimes. Moreover the reigning Baathist ideology of the state, in power since the late 1960s, placed Palestine – at least nominally – on the forefront of its agenda. This had particular signification for Palestinians at the time who had witnessed the gradual retreat of Arab solidarity with their cause, especially after the Egyptian-Israeli Camp David accords were signed in 1979. Indeed, Palestinians perceived the lack of a strong, united Arab front behind the activities and great sacrifices of the first Intifada as a cause of the inability to translate the popular uprising into real political gains. In this context Saddam Hussein's backing of the first Intifada, and his declared willingness to confront Israel militarily in the run up to the August 1990 invasion of Kuwait raised his political capital at a moment when Palestinians were feeling particularly vulnerable.

On the other hand, the Palestinian community in Kuwait was just as surprised by unfolding events as everyone else. It witnessed a lightning fast transformation of affairs, with Iraq successfully taking over Kuwait within a day and with little apparent resistance. There was wide-scale looting of property, and Iraq quickly annexed Kuwait as its "nineteenth province." Iraq also quickly imposed a repressive regime with residents expected to comply with an array of newly imposed Iraqi regulations to consolidate its rule, including showing up for work and replacing Kuwaiti license plates with Iraqi ones. Consequences for noncompliance included heavy fines, lost pensions, jail or worse.

In this light, the Palestinian community was in disarray. Most sensed early on that the occupation was going to be a disaster, but they lacked the organization to translate this sentiment into a clear political position. Furthermore, it is important to recall that there were also internal differences within the Palestinian community, based upon a series of factors including the length of time spent there, class and political affinities. The Palestinian community in Kuwait at the time was the largest of its kind outside of Jordan. While it was the richest diaspora community, with 'the most to lose' in this sense, there was also an underclass of Palestinians who were poorer, who had been in Kuwait for shorter periods of time, and who were closer to the political ideas prevalent in the OPT, which were decidedly more pro-Iraqi than the older Palestinian communities in Kuwait.

Furthermore, the PLO did not espouse a clear political position. Fateh had been running the institution in an undemocratic fashion for so long, that a serious and representative debate on what stance to take on the invasion was not possible. Fateh's non-ideological approach had consistently led it in opportunistic tactical directions, its response to the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait demonstrating the peak of this shortsightedness.

Within two days of the 2 August 1990 invasion, Arafat was pictured with Saddam Hussein in Baghdad "discussing developments." By the 10 August 1990 Arab League Summit, the PLO would vote with the pro-Iraq camp (together with Libya and Iraq) against a resolution calling for Arab troops to head to the Gulf to push back the Iraqi invasion, and the endorsement of Saudi King Fahd's invitation of Western forces to deploy throughout his Kingdom. While some PLO leaders such as Khalid and Hani al-Hasan and Jawid al-Ghusayn condemned the foreign intervention others like Faruq Qaddumi, Yasir Abed Rabbo and Abul Abbas, appeared on Iraqi television expressing solidarity with Iraq.

Arafat's support for the "Iraqi position" (which in truth was a position for non-military interventionism) was not about the PLO sponsoring Saddam in so far as it was an attempt to create leverage out of the crisis towards ending the Israeli occupation. Indeed, the lightening condemnation of the Iraqi occupation and immediate military campaign to dislodge Iraq from Kuwait, at a time when the Israeli occupation of the OPT had been ongoing for twenty-four years, and when not one of the litany of UN sponsored resolutions on Palestinian rights was being observed or implemented, was nothing short of hypocritical.

But Arafat's tactical maneuvers failed miserably. Western powers were not interested in any "linkage" or ending any Israeli occupation. They were interested in oil, and Palestinians had none. The U.S. hence preferred to "solve" the crisis on its own assembling an international coalition that included many an Arab state, totally crushing a united Arab stance. Iraq was to be bombed back to the stone age to teach a lesson to current and future allies, and sanctions were to be placed on the 'rebellious' regime which eventually would kill and displace millions of Iraqis. As for the Palestinians, they could now be made to pay part of the bill, because as the imperial logic to the region goes, Palestinians must continually be subjugated to keep Arab morale low, Arab resistance disorganized, and Israel a regional powerhouse at the Arabs' expense.

The failure of the Palestinian leadership, and the deeper geo-strategic dynamics at play (remember the Soviet Union was collapsing as well) left Palestinians in Kuwait rudderless, with suspicious enemies all around (both Iraqi and Kuwaiti). As such, Palestinians could be found both openly collaborating with the Iraqi army, and engaging in direct resistance against this occupying army, while the great majority attempted to steer well clear of either pole.<sup>10</sup>

The history of Palestinian resistance to the Iraqi invasion is one that has been largely repressed. For example Fateh and PLO offices in the Kuwaiti district of Hawali organized a demonstration on 5 August to protest the invasion, and four underground leaflets were issued criticizing the Iraqi occupation throughout the fall, before the larger war broke out. There are also cases of Palestinians who engaged in the underground armed resistance, participating in military cells, and ferrying Kuwaitis and supplies around to a network of safe houses. There is even the case of Rafiq Qiblawi, a central Fateh leader in Kuwait, who was assassinated by the Iraqi military for his encouragement of Palestinians not to engage in the "popular army" that the occupation was establishing.<sup>11</sup>

On the other hand, because of local Palestinian dissension to Iraqi attempts to puppeteer their cause, the Iraqi administration sent a small group of 400 members of the Arab Liberation Front – an Iraqi government sponsored Palestinian faction – to put a Palestinian face to the Iraqi occupation and intimidate local Palestinians.<sup>12</sup> To many Kuwaitis, this indeed looked like treason.

Another issue that fostered distrust between Palestinians and Kuwaitis during the occupation related to the issue of work boycotts. The Kuwaiti government in exile had called for a boycott in most nonessential government jobs. While such a boycott might have seemed reasonable, the reality was that it affected different communities differently. Kuwaitis were wealthier to begin with and had access to funds from the government

in exile. Of the Palestinians who remained in Kuwait, it is estimated that 70 percent observed the boycott, including all those involved in the private sector.<sup>13</sup> But the financial straits of poorer Palestinians made it difficult to observe the boycott in the long run. The occupation dragged on for more than five months, and the Iraqi occupation authorities threatened jail and fines to those who observed it. Fear of losing savings and pensions, and the need to compensate for lost income of family members employed in the private sector meant many poorer Palestinians were not in a position to observe the boycott like their wealthier compatriots, or Kuwaitis. Furthermore, Palestinians were also subject to deportation by the Iraqi occupation, or alternatively, had no option to leave the country because they required return visas to return to their host countries if they were refugees from Lebanon or Egypt (about a quarter of the Palestinian population in Kuwait).<sup>14</sup>

By the time Iraqi forces were eventually pushed out of Kuwait in late February 1991, those with the interests – both Kuwaiti and international – to dislodge Palestinians from Kuwait and strike a blow against this ‘camp’ within the Arab world, had what they needed. Palestinians became the scapegoat for a war they were caught in the middle of, and paid a brutal price only secondary to the price paid by the Iraqi people who tried to survive beneath U.S. bombs.

The months of March to June 1991 were witness to a sustained Kuwaiti campaign to expel the Palestinian population using methods that combined bureaucratic means and terror. The discourse of "cleansing" was even employed by the Kuwaiti monarch to justify the forced displacement. The great majority of Palestinian civil servants were simply fired or not rehired; Palestinian children were expelled from public schools; educational subsidies were terminated; and heavy financial burdens were placed on Palestinians who wished to remain (such as new health fees and demands by Kuwaiti landlords to pay back rent for the war period).<sup>15</sup> For those who didn't get the message, there was always the threat of arbitrary arrest, torture, rape, and murder, all of which were regularly practiced in Kuwaiti police stations and impromptu interrogation centers.<sup>16</sup> It later came to be known that part of this campaign of terror was actually instigated by particular internal elements within the Kuwait ruling family who were displeased with their post-war marginalization, and sought to use the scapegoating of the Palestinians, to whip up their nationalist credentials.<sup>17</sup>



*Iraqi soldiers invading Kuwait in 1990 (© AP)*

Of 400,000 – 450,000 Palestinians who had lived in Kuwait before the invasion, about 360,000 Palestinians ended up in Jordan of which 300,000 remained. 2,200 went to the U.S., while 21,000 immigrated to Canada, Australia, and other Western states. Most of the rest returned to the Occupied Palestinian Territory.<sup>18</sup> Estimates for the number of Palestinians killed during the expulsion are lacking, however a veteran Palestinian medical doctor employed in Mubarak Hospital in Kuwait City for sixteen years, would later write an account of the expulsion. He estimated that about 4,000 people were killed and 16,000 tortured in Kuwaiti detention and interrogation centers.<sup>19</sup> Most of these were Palestinians, Iraqis, Yemenis, and Sudanese.

## Conclusion

Iraq's invasion of Kuwait and the subsequent "war of liberation" is often depicted in Western narratives as *the* war to which all subsequent wars should be judged in terms of efficiency, organization, morality and overall success. The Western coalition suffered almost no casualties (around 190 combat related deaths, and 379 deaths from friendly fire or accidents).<sup>20</sup> Between 20,000 and 35,000 Iraqis were killed, both civilian and military<sup>21</sup> – and this before the subsequent sanctions regime was placed on Iraq, continuing the war by other means. The war was financed primarily by Saudi Arabia and Kuwait, not Western tax payers. The US was able to reap huge economic and geostrategic boons from the way the war ended; rarely has the age-old adage "to the victor go the spoils" been so apt. The US used the war to greatly expand its presence and sphere of influence within the Arabian Gulf, essentially transforming it into a US channel, which happened to be the very same channel where 19 percent of world oil and gas resources must travel. US strategic positioning would later serve as the basis for future attacks and later invasions of Iraq, and may indeed serve as a similar base of positioning for wars further afield. US corporations also reaped enormous profits from Kuwaiti reconstruction, while Kuwait was essentially transformed into a fully subservient state with practically no sovereignty over its own strategic affairs. Moreover the rule of the monarchy was reinstated, as an affront to the Kuwaiti resistance and democracy movement and, in so doing, affirming one US Congressman's description of Kuwait as "a family owned oil company with a seat in the UN."<sup>22</sup>

The Palestinian score card from the war was equally miserable. Palestinians lost their most prosperous and stable host state since the 1948 Nakba. Hundreds of thousands of Palestinians were displaced for the first, second, third or fourth time. Assets, property, jobs, and incomes were lost overnight, as were school years, medical records, birth certificates and personal possessions, as well as the all-important remittance payments to Palestinian families in Palestine and the bordering host states. PLO finances and accompanying services quickly dried up, exposing a bloated inefficient bureaucracy prone to corruption. The PLO leadership became *persona non grata* in many countries (including many previously welcoming Arab countries), squandering the good will built throughout the first Intifada and earlier years of struggle. It began to desperately search for a lifeline as regional and international allies shunned it. Eventually Israel and the US threw it a bone called Oslo, which it was only too anxious to devour. When pieces of the bone got stuck in its throat, there was hardly anyone to come to its aid.

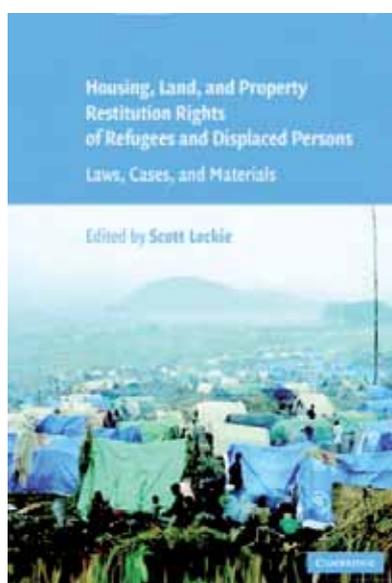
This is the story in a nutshell of Palestinian dispersion from Kuwait. There is still so much more to explore of this experience if only there is the courage to shine light upon these shadows – shadows which still lurk in the hearts of its refugees, and which mark our present, and will mark our future. While there can be no denying the mistakes both on the level of leadership and individuals, the price Palestinians were forced to pay had little to do with their alleged crime. The real crime was that they were a stateless people, trying to make ends meet at a time when US imperialism made a well calculated gambit to definitively penetrate the region in its effort to consolidate a new unipolar world beneath its control. In this gambit, the US 'won' – tricking Iraq into invading Kuwait (after having its ambassador tell the Iraqi regime it held no position to internal Arab conflicts only a week before).<sup>23</sup> Once Iraq invaded Kuwait on that fateful August day, everything was scripted with no substantial force able to raise a finger in protest. US hegemony throughout the region has remained high ever since, with Palestinians paying a devastating as the superpower continues its support for further Israeli colonization of Palestinian land, and the dispossession of Palestinians from their homeland. If anything, the entire experience shows how the Palestinian cause remains unacceptable on the road to continued US domination throughout region. Acknowledgement of this factor – and what is needed to resist this in terms of organization, politics and allies – remains outstanding and necessary for any Palestinian liberation movement's ability to make real gains in the future.

**Toufic Haddad** is a Palestinian American writer and activist born and raised in Kuwait.  
Endnotes: See online version at: <http://www.badil.org/al-majdal>

## A Comprehensive Reference Work on Restitution Law

Reviewed by Gail Boling

**Book Review:** *Housing, Land, and Property Restitution Rights of Refugees and Displaced Persons: Laws, Cases, and Materials*. Edited by Scott Leckie. Cambridge, New York, Melbourne, Madrid, Cape Town, Singapore, S o Paulo: Cambridge University Press, 2007. xxii + 570 pp. \$163.99. ISBN: 13: 9780521858755 hardback.



This book offers a ground-breaking and comprehensive survey of restitution-related legal materials never offered before in a single collection. The editor, Scott Leckie, an expert in restitution law, has gathered together 240 laws, cases and materials on restitution from around the world and organized them into a logically organized compendium. The goal of the book is to serve as a reference work on the law of restitution including international and national resources. The reader is taken on a world-wide survey of property-restoration schemes from locales as diverse as Rwanda, Afghanistan, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Georgia, Kosovo and South Africa, to name just a few. The international law sources include texts from international humanitarian law, international human rights law, international criminal law and the law of state responsibility and is a monumental endeavor to marshal evidence from around the world to demonstrate that restitution of property has become an accepted standard of international and national law, and a necessary component of stable and durable peace agreements.

The book is long, at 592 pages. It is divided into four broad sections covering housing and property restitution standards in four categories -- international, regional, national and case-law -- and a fifth section on useful resources. The editor only includes the original texts of the legal instruments themselves and the book contains no commentary of any kind. In this sense the editor assumes a certain level of knowledge about the national and international legal regimes from which the texts are pulled, meaning that the book is not a light read. Legal texts presented in isolation do require the reader him/herself to provide background to put them into context and given the broad range of texts presented here, the reader is required to do a lot of background supplementation.

But perhaps the editor can be forgiven for this lack of narrative. The collection is, after all, a *selection* from

original sources too numerous to be compiled into any one book. The book perhaps might never have come into existence if the editor had attempted to provide analysis in addition to the texts. In addition, Leckie has edited another collection of essays on restitution titled *Returning Home: Housing and Property Restitution Rights of Refugees and Internally Displaced Persons* (Ardsley, NY: Transnational Publishers, 2003) which contains more narrative and context, while maintaining a focus on the legal aspects of restitution. For this reason the books can usefully be read together.

The law of restitution is to be found in numerous components of the international legal regime. Through careful reading of Leckie's collection, the reader gets a grasp of the law as it has evolved and how the sources for restitution standards, found in five specific bodies of international law, namely: international humanitarian law, international human rights law, international criminal law, international refugee law, and the international law of state responsibility, overlap. Some of the most recent developments are the clearest and strongest articulations of the right to restitution, such as the Pinheiro Principles and the Basic Principles and Guidelines to the Right to a Remedy and Reparation for Victims of Violations of International Human Rights and Humanitarian Law, both of which were adopted in 2005.

Sources from international humanitarian law include the Hague Convention and the Geneva Conventions and related Protocols. These sources are particularly useful to the Palestinian case because they date back to 1907 and 1949 respectively (1977 for the Protocols), both preceding and roughly contemporaneous to the expulsion of the Palestinian refugees, refusal to readmit and the subsequent confiscation/destruction of their property by the Israeli legal regime. Under the Hague Convention, the following is prohibited in Article 23(g): "To destroy or seize the enemy's property, unless such destruction or seizure be imperatively demanded by the necessities of war." Under the Geneva Conventions, the following is designated a "grave breach" in Article 147: "extensive destruction and appropriation of property, not justified by military necessity and carried out unlawfully and wantonly."

While the *violation* of international law is spelled out clearly in these instruments, the *remedy* of restitution is not stated explicitly. We need to shift gears to the Permanent International Court of Justice, to the notable decision in 1928 known as The Factory at Chórzow (Indemnity) Case, to find an early and clear enunciation of restitution as a remedy for a violation of international law. The case contains this famous language:

*The essential principle contained in the actual notion of an illegal act – a principal which seems to be established by international practice and in particular by the decisions of arbitral tribunals – is that reparation must, as far as possible, wipe-out all consequences of the illegal act and re-establish the situation which would, in all probability, have existed if that act had not been committed. Restitution in kind, or, if this is not possible, payment of a sum corresponding to the value which a restitution in kind would bear; the award, if need be, for damages for loss sustained which would not be covered by restitution in kind or payment in place of it – such are the principles which should serve to determine the amount of compensation due for an act contrary to international law. (emphasis added)*

The court clearly prioritizes restitution in kind as the primary remedy for an illegal act, and lists compensation only as a secondary remedy, when restitution in kind is not possible or when restitution would not fully remedy the illegal act.

The right of restitution is also apparent in international human rights law regarding property and housing rights. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted by the UN General Assembly on 10 December 1948, clearly states in Article 17: "(1) Everyone has the right to own property alone as well as in association with others. (2) No one shall be arbitrarily deprived of his property."

The International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, adopted on 21 December 1965 and entered into force on 4 January 1969 (ratified by Israel on 3 January 1979), states in Article 5: "States Parties undertake to prohibit and eliminate racial discrimination in all of its forms and to guarantee the right of everyone, without distinction as to race, color, or national or ethnic origin, to equality before the law, notably in the enjoyment of the following rights: ... (e) in particular... (iii) the right to housing." The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights ("ICESCR"), adopted on 16 December 1966 and entered into force on 23 March 1976 (ratified by Israel on 3 October 1991), states in Article 2(2):

*The States Parties to the present Covenant undertake to guarantee that the rights enunciated in the present Covenant will be exercised without discrimination of any kind as to race, color, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status.*

**Article 11(1) contains the famous right to housing:**

*The States Parties to the present Covenant recognize the right of everyone to an adequate standard of living for himself and his family, including adequate food, clothing and housing, and to the continuous improvement of living conditions. The States Parties will take appropriate steps to ensure the realization of this right....*

The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, adopted on 16 December 1966 and entered into force on 23 March 1976 (ratified by Israel on 3 October 1991), contains a non-discrimination clause similar to the ICESCR in Article 2(1):

*Each State Party to the present Covenant undertakes to respect and to ensure to all individuals within its territory and subject to its jurisdiction the rights recognized in the present Covenant, without distinction of any kind, such as race, color, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status.*

Article 17(1) contains a non-interference clause: "No one shall be subjected to arbitrary or unlawful interference with his privacy, family, home or correspondence, nor to unlawful attacks on his honor and reputation." The Convention on the Rights of the Child, adopted on 20 November 1989 and entered into force on 2 September 1990 (ratified by Israel on 3 October 1991), and Convention (No. 169) Concerning Indigenous and Tribal Peoples in Independent Countries, adopted on 27 June 1989 and entered into force on 5 September 1991, are also listed as sources for standards on restitution.

Leckie includes extensive excerpts from the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, adopted on 17 July 1998 and entered into force on 1 July 2002 (signed by Israel on 31 December 2000 but not ratified), as relevant to the law of restitution. Article 8 of the Rome Statute defines War Crimes, of which there are many, most of which were previously designated as "grave breaches" by the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949. Article 8(xiii) lists the following war crime: "Destroying or seizing the enemy's property unless such destruction or seizure be imperatively demanded by the necessities of war." Article 75(1), titled Reparations to Victims, specifically mentions restitution as one of the remedies the International Criminal Court should administer: "The Court shall establish principles relating to reparations to, or in respect of, victims, including restitution, compensation and rehabilitation. On this basis, in its decision the Court may, either upon request or on its own motion in exceptional circumstances, determine the scope and extent of any damage, loss and injury to, or in respect of, victims and will state the principles on which it is acting."

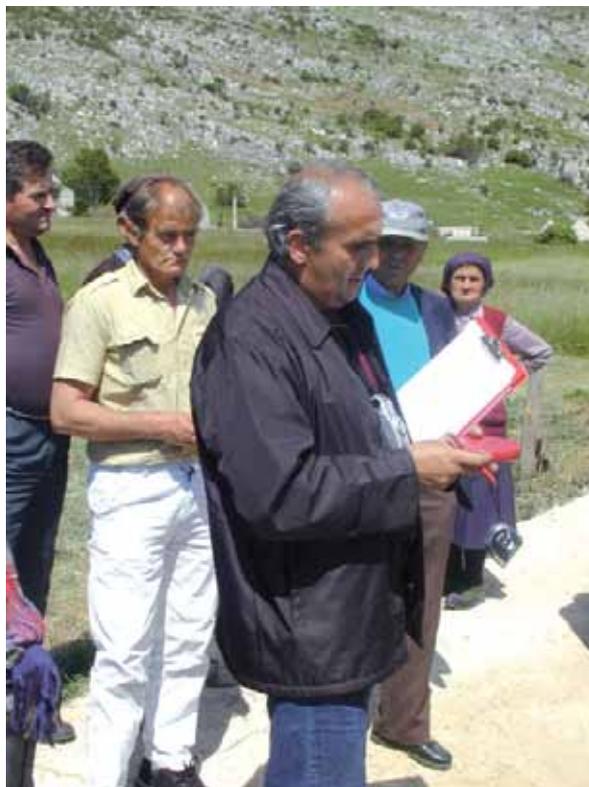
The international refugee law sources for restitution are rather weak. Leckie includes excerpts from the Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees (1951) and the Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees (1967) but the connection of these excerpts to the development of standards on restitution seems a bit tenuous.

The international law on state responsibility, on the other hand, contains a very clear articulation of the right of restitution in international law. Specifically Article 35 of the International Law Commission's Draft Articles on Responsibility of States for Internationally Wrongful Acts (2001), titled Restitution:

*A State responsible for an internationally wrongful act is under an obligation to make restitution, that is, to re-establish the situation which existed before the wrongful act was committed, provided and to the extent that restitution: (a) Is not materially impossible; (b) Does not involve a burden out of all proportion to the benefit deriving from restitution instead of compensation.*

In 2005, the UN Sub-Commission on Protection and Promotion of Human Rights adopted the 'Pinheiro' Principles on Housing and Property Restitution for Refugees and Displaced Persons. These principles are presented in their entirety in Leckie's collection, and they represent the most advanced and articulate presentation of the rights of refugees and displaced persons to restitution to be found in international law sources. Article 2, titled The Right to Housing and Property Restitution, states the right clearly and succinctly:

- 2.1 *All refugees and displaced persons have the right to have restored to them any housing, land and/or property of which they were arbitrarily or unlawfully deprived, or to be compensated for any housing, land and/or property that is factually impossible to restore as determined by an independent impartial tribunal.*
- 2.2 *States shall demonstrably prioritize the right to restitution as the preferred remedy to displacement and as a key element of restorative justice. The right to restitution exists as a distinct right, and is prejudiced neither by the actual return nor non-return of refugees and displaced persons entitled to housing, land and property restitution.*



*Participants taking part on BADIL's comparative study visit to Bosnia, 2002. The visit was aimed at giving participants an insight into the practical implemented of restitution. (© BADIL)*

**Article 10 of the Pinheiro Principles, entitled The Right to Voluntary Return in Safety and Dignity, contains a further articulation of the right to return – a right closely related to the right to restitution yet distinct from it:**

- 10.1 All refugees and displaced persons have the right to voluntarily return to their former homes, lands or places of habitual residence, in safety and dignity. Voluntary return in safety and dignity must be based on a free, informed, individual choice. Refugees and displaced persons should be provided with complete, objective, up to date, and accurate information, including on physical, material and legal safety issues in countries or places of origin.*
- 10.2 States shall allow refugees and displaced persons who wish to return voluntarily to their former homes, lands or places of habitual residence to do so. This right cannot be abridged under conditions of state succession, nor can it be subject to arbitrary or unlawful time limitations.*
- 10.3 Refugees and displaced persons shall not be forced, or otherwise coerced, either directly or indirectly, to return to their former homes, land or places of habitual residence. Refugees and displaced persons should be able to effectively pursue durable solutions to displacement other than return, if they so wish, without prejudicing their right to the restitution of their housing, land and property.*

Accordingly to the Pinheiro Principles, the right to restitution exists independently of the right of return. Even if refugees voluntarily choose not to return, they still have the right to have restituted to them ownership and possession of property and land of which they were unlawfully deprived. This has enormous implications for the Palestinian refugees, since so much property and land was unlawfully confiscated from them following Israel's refusal to readmit them since 1948.

The Basic Principles and Guidelines on the Right to a Remedy and Reparation for Victims of Violations were adopted by the UN General Assembly on 16 December 2005. They contain a very clear articulation of the right of restitution. Article 19 states that:

*Restitution should, whenever possible, restore the victim to the original situation before the gross violations of international human rights law or serious violations of international humanitarian law occurred. Restitution includes, as appropriate: restoration of liberty, enjoyment of human rights, identity, family life and citizenship, return to one's place of residence, restoration of employment and return of property.*

Leckie's book continues the section on international law sources for housing and property restitution standards by listing international peace agreements, voluntary repatriation agreements and materials emanating from the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, the UN Security Council, the UN General Assembly, the UN Sub-Commission on the Protection and Promotion of Human Rights, UN human rights treaty bodies, and additional standards.

The second section of the book covers regional housing and property restitution standards. Four geographic regions are covered: Africa, the Americas, Europe and the Middle East. Three documents are presented in the Middle East section: the Cairo Declaration on Human Rights in Islam (1990), the Declaration on the Protection of Refugees and Displaced Persons in the Arab World (1992), and the Arab Charter on Human Rights (1994).

The third section of the book contains national housing and property restitution standards. The countries covered include: Afghanistan, Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Columbia, Estonia, Georgia, Germany, Iraq, Kosovo, Romania, Rwanda, South Africa and Tajikistan. The subsection on Bosnia-Herzegovina is by far the largest, with 15 laws and regulations presented.

The fourth section of the book covers case law concerning housing and property restitution. The tribunals covered include: the Permanent International Court of Justice, the International Court of Justice, the Human Rights Committee and the European Court of Human Rights. Twenty-four cases are presented from the European Court of Human Rights. Excerpts from the ICJ's Advisory Opinion on the Legal Consequences of the Construction of a Wall in the Occupied Palestinian Territory (2004) are included, as restitution of Palestinian property and land is explicitly spelled out by the court as a required remedy to Israel's illegal confiscation.

The fifth section is titled Useful Resources on Housing and Property Restitution. The resources include: general resources, country/regional resources, and useful web sites.

While all of the information is useful and interesting, two of the geographic regions stand out as being particularly important precedents for the Palestinian case, namely the cases of Bosnia-Herzegovina and Cyprus. Bosnia-Herzegovina was the most successful property restitution scheme ever undertaken. The UN High Commissioner for Refugees estimated that by May 2004, approximately one million refugees and displaced persons had returned to their original pre-war homes. The policy goal of return garnered the support of the international community, which became involved in implementing it on the ground. Without such support, the policy would not have succeeded.

The Cyprus case is important because the European Court of Human Rights found that Turkey's continuing violation of the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (1950) gave the court subject matter jurisdiction over the matter complained of even though the events giving rise to the complaint predated Turkey's ratification of the Convention. The court applied this doctrine in the case of *Loizidou v. Turkey* (1996) and subsequent cases involving Turkey. The continuing violation doctrine is an important jurisdictional tool that the European Court of Human Rights has employed in other contexts as well.

Mention should be made of what is not included in the book. The book does not include materials on national laws blocking restitution, of which a notable example would include Israel's Absentees' Property Law and other laws used to confiscate Palestinian property. Leckie notes in his Introduction that a book collecting such laws from around the world would be a useful contribution to the field. The book also does not include national case law, consequently, we do not learn much about South Africa's restitution program, despite that fact that the first post-apartheid parliament enacted the Restitution of Land Rights Act in 1994. South Africa, with its long period of displacement and dispossession and its apartheid history, bears strong resemblances to the Palestinian case.

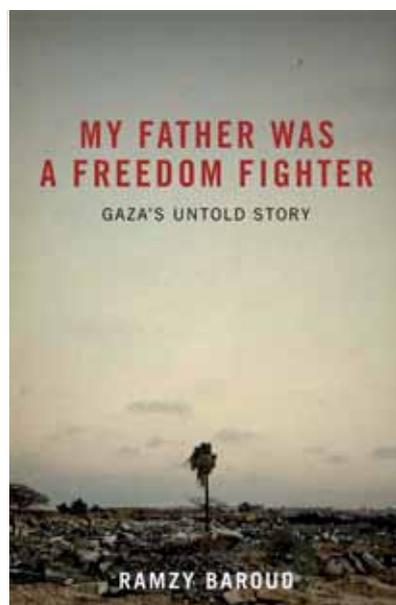
Not everybody will be able to afford this book. However, it is a good one to ask libraries and NGOs to order as it is an extremely useful contribution to the field of restitution law and one that will set the standard for comprehensiveness for years to come.

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## Another Palestinian Life

*Reviewed by Hatim Kanaaneh*



**Book review:** of Ramzy Baroud, *My Father Was a Freedom Fighter, Gaza's Untold Story*, London & New York: Pluto Press, 2010

**M**y deeply imprinted spatial awareness of Palestine has always included rural Galilee, centered on my home village, Arrabeh, with such added urban images as the marketplace of Nazareth, Acre or Jerusalem. Beit Daras and Nuseirat refugee camp are now part of my Palestine, thanks to Ramzy Baroud's account of the life, mostly in exile, of one of Beit Daras's sons, Mohammad Baroud. Mohammad is just another human being with his share of joyful and sad moments. But he is also a Palestinian refugee with the run-of-the-mill Palestinian refugee's experience of struggle, hope, sacrifice, loss, misery, disappointment and unfulfilled dreams of return. Except that the image Ramzy draws of his autodidact intellectual and inventive but contrary father is so intimate and so realistically human, with all that the term implies of excesses, shortcomings, and humor, that it is almost touchable on the pages of the book. By the time I finished reading his life story, the typical Palestinian saga, shaped and constantly impinged by violence initiated, maintained and reinforced at every turn of the road by events beyond his control, he is close enough to me for tears to stream down my face and for me to return to the portrait on the first page of the book to plant a kiss on his forehead.

"From afar, Gaza's reality, like that of all of Palestine, is often presented without cohesion, without proper context; accounts of real life in Gaza are marred with tired assumptions and misrepresentations that deprive the depicted humans of their names, identities and very dignity. But it is not only humans who are casually reduced and misrepresented, but events as well," Ramzy states in protest on p172 of his book *My Father Was a Freedom Fighter*. Readers of this book, and those already exposed to the "Palestine Chronicle," the alternative media organ founded and edited by Ramzy, are privy to his solid, persistent and singular attempt to counter this reality. As Salman Abu Sitta says in his foreword, no one who has been exposed in this manner "has the luxury, or the excuse, to hide behind the saying 'I did not know.'"

Mohammed was nine years old when he, his four siblings and his parents were expelled from Beit Daras under enemy fire. He served as a 'professional' child beggar then as a salesman of knickknacks carried on a tray hanging with a string from his neck, (an image previously reserved in my mind for another legendary Palestinian, the poet Taha Muhammad Ali of Saffuriyya, as a child refugee in Lebanon), as a run-away Qur'an teacher with Bedouin tribe in the Sinai, as an enlisted fighter, as a 'snake oil' salesman in Mecca, as a failed falafel-stand entrepreneur, as a special-deal hunter and itinerant trader running goods, often of doubtful quality, between Israel and Gaza, as a door-to-door rug-salesman in Ramallah, and last and possibly most suitable, as a stair-top intellectual, observer and commentator on the life and fate of fellow refugees in the Gaza Strip. To sum that all under the rubric of "freedom fighter," as Ramzy does, is to understate the man's real worth; the man was a self-taught and original political activist and an inspiring original thinker.

The account covers three generations of a refugee family: The self-made and adventuresome grandfather, the somewhat eccentric father who, with his beloved wife, Zarefah, is at the center of the story, and Ramzy, the one 'escaped prisoner' in the family writing from memory in a foreign land of the tortured life of his family. His four brothers and one sister hover in the background shadow-like, each, I am sure, leading another heroic and struggle-fraught life worthy of its own narration. The book, in relating the story of Mohammed's trials and tribulations as a refugee and a 'freedom fighter' and that of the loving wife and dedicated mother, Zarefah, delves as well into their modest family roots in Beit Daras. At the other end we gain a glimpse of the life of the third generation in the continuum of struggle and sacrifice through the brief mention Ramzy makes of his own independent nuclear family and of his siblings. He recounts many intimate family moments and touches on many embarrassing private incidents with grace and near ascetic detachment. In addition to an acute sense of humor that, somehow, doesn't detract from his always present sense of filial piety, Ramzy regularly spices his narrative with casual comments that set the context for the humanitarian calamity that was and continues to be the daily life experience of Palestinian refugees in the Gaza Strip. To wit:

*"Zarefah was a vibrant and lovely girl on the threshold of womanhood. But in Gaza at the time, such age classifications were of little relevance. Children didn't enjoy a "childhood" with all its leisure and bliss, nor did teenagers take pleasure in the period of pleasure and interaction that accompanies coming of age. A parent's mission in life was to protect their children from the imminent indignities and humiliations of life in the refugee camps, and a child's mission in life was to grow up as quickly as possible." (p 60)*

Or:

*"Gaza's, and Mohammed's isolation was complete: Mohammad's sons could no longer send him money, as the boycott extended to reach all financial institutions as well. Desperate, he sold his house, the last tangible connection he had to his beloved Zarefah. That beautiful and battered place that had stood the test of time and bullets was sold for scarce medicine, smuggled through Gaza's tunnels, on which Mohammad depended to breath. Mohammad couldn't have imagined the day that he would have to bring Zarefah's photo from its rusty nail on the living-room wall. ... As the Hamas government battled to maintain control and order, the US insisted on Israel's right to defend itself; as the Arabs stayed silent, as the world watched, as Gazans fell in droves, Mohammad filled few boxes with his remaining possessions and left." (p187)*

Surprisingly, Ramzy is able to deal sanguinely with such painful and intimate topics as his father's many demeaning and painful moments, whether as a child beggar, as a helpless old asthmatic lacking oxygen and medications, or as a debilitated lonely old man dying away from his children. And he manages to interpret and impart a convincing sense of the simple and distant life of peasants living blissfully on their land before the 1948 Nakba, occasionally reverting to creative imagination as in guessing at how his grandfather must have felt at specific moments.

This three-generational genealogy could stand on its own as a shocking tale of woe and wonder to any Gazan, Palestinian or Arab reader, perhaps even to some Israelis. But to the average Western reader, unfamiliar with and disinterested in the historical account of recent events in Palestine beyond the glossy Zionist spin of Israeli heroism, a blow-by-blow retelling of such history as witnessed and lived by Gazans, and especially by Mohammad and his family, is a must. Ramzy provides the needed "untold story" of Gaza with abundant documentation, ample referencing and frequent quotations. The magic account wrought by Ramzy interweaves the intimate details of the touching family saga with the general historical and political developments of which the saga is an integral part.

His ability to merge seamlessly the personal family narrative with the political historiography of Gaza seems to fall short only once: In November 1977 we leave our antagonist in the lap of abject poverty, "loosing every fiber of patience that allowed him to survive through the most difficult of years" (p. 117), and so angry and frustrated with Anwar Sadat's politics and the Camp David Agreement that he turns abusive of his own wife who leaves him and returns to her mother. Some eight years later (p. 125) we meet him again having accumulated some wealth and with his six children all studious students, the oldest studying medicine in Aleppo. The gap is immediately smoothed over in the subsequent text. Still, the first impression of incredulity was hard to erase from this reader's mind. And, if shortcomings are to be listed, as a member of the once-maligned community of Palestinian citizens of Israel, with particular sensitivity to being forgotten, I find the writer occasionally slipping into the recently accepted international paradigm of post-Oslo discourse that equates Palestinians with residents of the Occupied Palestinian Territory. Page 158 contains such a slip.

My abundant tears of sadness at the end did not blunt a certain celebratory sense of accomplishment and even victory, not only because Ramzy has written such a wondrous account of his father's life but also because Mohammad and Zarefah had begotten and inspired such a capable narrator of 'Gaza's untold story' together with five other siblings, each a living testimony to our viability despite all the injustices of the world.



Rafah, Gaza, December 2009 (© AP)

*Dr. Hatim Kanaaneh completed his medical and public health degrees at Harvard in 1969. He then returned to Galilee where, in 1973, he became the Public Health Doctor of the sub-district of Acre. He is the founder of two non-governmental organizations, the Galilee Society (The Arab National Society for Health Research and Services) and Ittijah (The Union of Arab Community-based Organizations).*

## Challenging History: Why the Oppressed Must Tell Their Own Stories

by Ramzy Baroud

When American historian Howard Zinn passed away recently, he left behind a legacy that redefined our relationship to history altogether. Professor Zinn dared to challenge the way history was told and written. In fact he went as far as to defy the conventional construction of historical discourse through the pen of victor or of elites who earned the right of narration through their might, power and affluence.

This kind of history might be considered accurate insofar as it reflects a self-seeking and self-righteous interpretation of the world by a very small number of people. But it is also highly inaccurate when taking into account the vast majority of peoples everywhere.

The oppressor is the one who often articulates his relationship to the oppressed, the colonizer to the colonized, and the slave-master to the slave. The readings of such relationships are fairly predictable.

Even valiant histories that most of us embrace and welcome, such as those celebrating the legacy of human rights, equality and freedom left behind by Martin Luther King, Malcolm X and Nelson Mandela still tend to be selective at times. Martin Luther King's vision might have prevailed, but some tend to limit their admiration to his 'I have a dream' speech. The civil rights hero was an ardent anti-war champion as well, but that is often relegated as non-essential history. Malcolm X is often dismissed altogether, despite the fact that his self-assertive words have reached the hearts and minds of millions of black people throughout the United States, and many more millions around the world. His speech was in fact so radical that it could not be 'sanitized' or reinterpreted in any controllable way. Mandela, the freedom fighter, is celebrated with endless accolades by the very foes that branded him a terrorist. Of course, his insistence on his people's rights to armed struggle is not to be discussed. It is too flammable a subject to even mention at a time when anyone who dares wield a gun against the self-designated champions of 'democracy' is automatically classified a terrorist.

Therefore, Zinn's peoples' histories of the United States and of the world have represented milestones in historical narration.

As a Palestinian writer who is fond of such luminaries, I too felt the need to provide an alternative reading of history, in this case, Palestinian history. I envisioned, with much hesitation, a book that serves as a people's history of Palestine. I felt that I have earned the right to present such a possible version of history, being the son of Palestinian refugees, who lost everything and were exiled to live dismal lives in a refugee camp in the Gaza Strip. I am the descendant of *Fellahin*, peasants whose odyssey of pain, struggle, and heroic resistance is constantly misrepresented, distorted, and at times overlooked altogether.

It was the death of my father (while under siege in Gaza) that finally compelled me to translate my yearning into a book. *My Father was a Freedom Fighter, Gaza's Untold Story* offered a version of Palestinian history not told by an Israeli narrator – sympathetic or otherwise – nor an elitist account, as often presented by Palestinian writers. The idea was to give a human face to all the statistics, maps and figures.

History cannot be classified by good vs. bad, heroes vs. villains, moderates vs. extremists. No matter how wicked, bloody or despicable, history also tends to follow rational patterns, predictable courses. By understanding the rationale behind historical dialectics, one can achieve more than a simple understanding of what took place in the past; it also becomes possible to chart fairly reasonable understanding of what lies ahead.

Perhaps one of the worse aspects of today's detached and alienating media is its method of reproducing history - and thus characterizing the present - as based on simple terminology. This gives the illusion of being informative, but actually manages to contribute very little to our understanding of the world at large. Such oversimplifications are dangerous because they produce an erroneous understanding of the world, which in turn compels misguided actions.

For these reasons, it is incumbent upon us to try to discover alternative meanings and readings of history. To start, we could try offering historical perspectives which attempt to show the world from the viewpoint of the oppressed – the refugees, the fellahin denied, amongst many rights, the right to tell their own story.

This view is not a sentimental one. Far from it. An elitist historical narrative is maybe the dominant one, but it is not always the elites who influence the course of history. History is also shaped by collective movements, actions and popular struggles. By denying this fact, one denies the ability of the collective to effect change. In the case of Palestinians, they are often presented as hapless multitudes, passive victims without a will of their own. This is of course a mistaken perception; the Palestinians' conflict with Zionism has lasted this long only because of their unwillingness to accept injustice, and their refusal to submit to oppression. Israel's lethal weapons might have changed the landscape of Gaza and Palestine, but the will of the Palestinians is what has shaped the landscape of Palestine's history.

Touring with *My Father was a Freedom Fighter* in South Africa, on a recent visit, was a most intense experience. It was in this country that freedom fighters once rose to fight oppression, challenging and eventually defeating Apartheid. My father, the refugee has suddenly been accepted

unconditionally by a people of a land thousands of miles away. The notion of 'people's history' can be powerful because it extends beyond boundaries, and expands beyond ideologies and prejudices. In such a narrative, Palestinians, South Africans, Native Americans and many others find themselves the sons and daughters of one collective history, one oppressive legacy, but also part of an active community of numerous freedom fighters, who dared and continue to dare to challenge and sometimes even to change the face of history.

South Africa has; Palestine will.

**Ramzy Baroud** ([www.ramzybaroud.net](http://www.ramzybaroud.net)) is an internationally-syndicated columnist and the editor of *PalestineChronicle.com*. His latest book is *My Father Was a Freedom Fighter: Gaza's Untold Story* (London: Pluto Press).

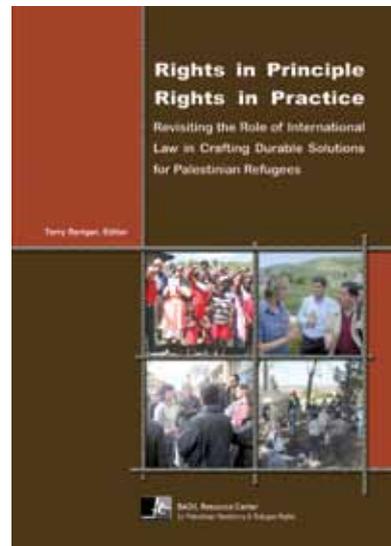


*Palestinian refugee telling his story of disposition to his grandson, Fawwar refugee camp, Hebron 2010 (photo participated in the 2010 Al Awda Award © No man Abu Rabe e, 15 years old)*

## BADIL's Statement on the Occasion of World Refugee Day and Release of: "Rights in Principle – Rights in Practice"

"Rights in Principle Rights in Practice, Revisiting the Role of International Law in Crafting Durable Solutions for Palestinian Refugees"  
Terry Rempel, editor, xiv 482 pages  
(English)  
BADIL, December 2009  
Copyright: BADIL; ISBN 978-9950-339-23-1

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<http://www.badil.org/publications>



20 June 2010 – In 1947 as members of the newly-created United Nations engaged in vigorous debate about the future of Palestine, Arab diplomats who played an instrumental role in the development of Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Convention relating to the Status of Refugees reminded their colleagues that the problem of Palestine was not a matter of 'what to do with Palestine', but rather, 'a lack of regard for certain principles of international relations and human life, including the principle of self-determination, the principle of the right to live peacefully in one's own home, and the principle of self-government in a democratic way'. Given the divergence of opinion about the best way forward in what would be the international organization's first attempt to resolve a major issue of international peace and security, they suggested that the UN General Assembly obtain legal counsel from the International Court of Justice. A majority of members nevertheless rejected the efficacy of this approach.<sup>1</sup>

63 years later and on this year's World Refugee Day, Palestinian refugees and internally displaced persons still constitute the world's largest and longest-standing case of forced displacement, and the ongoing perils of ignoring the rights and obligations codified in international law in resolving the long-standing conflict in the Middle East are plain for all to see. Indeed, the unresolved conflict in Palestine/Israel has become, in the words of the South African international law expert and former UN Special Rapporteur for Human Rights in the 1967 OPT, a test for the rule of law, generally, and the international system developed over decades to ensure respect, protection and promotion of the basic rights and fundamental freedoms codified in international law:

"For years the occupation of Palestine and apartheid in South Africa vied for attention from the international community. In 1994, apartheid came to an end and Palestine became the only developing country in the world under the subjugation of a Western-affiliated regime. Herein lies its significance to the future of human rights. There are other regimes, particularly in the developing world, that suppress human rights, but there is no other case of a Western-affiliated regime that denies self-determination and human rights to a developing people and that has done so for so long. ... If the West, which has hitherto led the promotion of human rights throughout the world, cannot demonstrate a real commitment to the human rights of the Palestinian people, the international human rights movement, which can claim to

be the greatest achievement of the international community of the past 60 years, will be endangered and placed in jeopardy." <sup>2</sup>

BADIL's "Rights in Principle – Rights in Practice" is a reader structured around the BADIL Expert Forum in 2003 – 2004. The Expert Forum brought together academics, practitioners, policy makers and civil society actors for a series of four expert seminars in the cities of Ghent, Geneva, Cairo and Haifa to explore a rights-based approach to crafting durable solutions for Palestinian refugees. The effort was supported by the Al-Ahram Center for Strategic and Political Studies (Cairo), the NGO Network APRODEV (Europe), the Association for the Defense of the Rights of the Internally Displaced, the Emil Touma Institute for Palestinian and Israeli Studies (Haifa), the Flemish Palestine Solidarity Committee, the University of Ghent Department of Third World Studies, ICCO (Netherlands), the Institute of Graduate Development Studies (Geneva), Oxfam Solidarity (Belgium), Stichting Vluchteling (Netherlands), the Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (PD IV) and the Swiss Human Rights Forum Israel/Palestine. Publication of this book, which summarizes years of research and debate, was made possible through the support of the Spanish Development Cooperation (AECID).

The book contains a collection of papers presented to the four expert seminars, in order to explore:

1. The role of international law in peacemaking and crafting durable solutions for Palestinian refugees, including the role of prosecution, popular sovereignty and participation (Lynn Welchman, Alejandra Vicente, Karma Nabulsi);
2. The right to housing and property restitution in Israel, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and South Africa (Usama Halabi and Hussein Abu Hussein, Paul Prettitore, Monty Roodt);
3. Strategies for (re)linking protection and durable solutions for Palestinian refugees by utilizing existing Arab and international (UNRWA, UNHCR) protection mechanisms (Muhammad Khalid al-Az'ar, Harish Parvathaneni, Susan Akram and Terry Rempel);
4. Ways forward towards rights-based durable solutions, including examination of Zionist Israel's approach to the Nakba, the role of transitional justice models and public participation, and the question whether and how the rights of Israelis conflict with the right of return of Palestinian refugees (Eitan Bronstein, Jessica Nevo, Celia McKeon, Michael Kagan).

The book also contains a series of photo stories from study ("go and see") visits to Palestinian refugee villages of origin now located in Israel, and to Bosnia and Herzegovina, South Africa and Cyprus. These visits, organized for Palestinian refugees by BADIL parallel to the Expert Forum, provided opportunities for Palestinian refugee activists from camps and communities of exile to explore rights-based approaches in a variety of contexts.

The reader concludes with a summary of findings from the working papers and the debates of the Expert Forum. It reviews relevant principles, examines how they are put into practice, identifies major gaps in putting principles into practice in the Palestinian case, and offers some recommendations on ways forward. A complete list of working papers and Expert Forum participants are included as annexes.

On this year's World Refugee Day, BADIL calls for a change of paradigm in Israeli-Palestinian peacemaking. We reiterate the words of renowned legal scholar Prof. John Quigley, who noted in his preface to the book:

"This collection demonstrates the importance of a law-based approach to resolving the situation of the Arabs displaced from Palestine in 1948. The collection is the more important in light of the paucity of serious analysis of this issue from the standpoint of relevant international law principles. In any peace process, the legitimate expectations of the parties and other stakeholders should be at the forefront of consideration. If such expectations are ignored, a resulting peace may turn out to be ephemeral, because it may not be accepted by those whose

<sup>1</sup> See, for example, *Iraq* (UN Doc. A/AC.14/21), *Syria* (UN Doc. A/AC.14/25), *Egypt* (UN Doc. A/AC.14/14).

<sup>2</sup> UN Doc. A/HRC/4/17 (2007), para. 63.

## BADIL's 2010 Europe Speaking Tour Comes to a Close: Over 45 Meetings and Events Held in Eight Countries over Three Months

With the logistical support of European partners, Badil's Communications Officer went on a three month speaking tour in several European countries. The tour involved participation in over 45 meetings and public events in 31 locations in 8 countries (see below). The total number of participants in the meetings and public events was well over 2,000 people.

The events organized as part of the speaking tour were quite diverse, including: lectures at universities and other public venues; meetings with civil society organizations; meetings with Palestinian refugee community activists; participation in conferences and seminars; as well as interviews with broadcast and print media. Notable interviews included those with Netherlands Radio Worldwide (both Arabic and English); a feature interview in Swiss newspaper Solidarite; and a feature interview in the French Language on-line magazine voltairenet. The tour also included various meetings with Palestine solidarity groups working to develop their campaigns for boycotts, divestment and sanctions (BDS) against Israel until it complies with international law.

Some of the tour highlights included: delivering the keynote address at the Nakba-62 commemoration event held in Amsterdam's Resistance Museum; the "Rights in Exile" conference organized at the International Institute of Social Studies (ISS) for World Refugee Day (The Hague); the keynote address at the annual Sjovik Seminar for Palestine (Sweden); Keynote address at the annual Appelscha activist weekend (Netherlands); and presentation to the Palestine Israel Ecumenical Forum at the World Council of Churches in Geneva to open the 2010 World Week for Peace.

Topics covered in the various meetings and lectures included a history of ongoing forced displacement of Palestinians, Palestinian refugee rights, and the international civil society campaign for boycotts divestment and sanctions against Israel until it complies with international law.

Audiences overwhelmingly saw Badil's analysis of history of Palestinian struggle through the framework of the ongoing Nakba and ongoing displacement on both sides of the 'green line' as a new and effective way to advance their individual and collective understanding of the issue. Badil's framing of the struggle within a referenced historical narrative, informed by an anti-racist/anti-apartheid framework left little to no space for Zionist interference with the audiences' experience. Badil's presentations situated international complicity and direct support for the state of Israel as a root cause of the ongoing forced displacement and oppression of Palestinians, which enabled audiences to see clearly the implications on their own lives and possibilities for action a local, national and regional levels.

Badil wishes to thank all the volunteers and activists who made this tour possible.

### Locations of Meetings and Events

**UK** (Edinburgh, Glasgow, Bradford, Nottingham, and London); **Switzerland** (Basel, Zurich, Geneva, Lausanne, Bern, and Neuchatel); **Germany**(Bonn); **Sweden** (Stockholm, Sjovik Annual Seminar on Palestine); **Norway** (Oslo, Bergen, and Stavenger); **Iberian Peninsula** (Malaga, Jaen, Seville, Barcelona, and Donostia/San Sebastian); **Belgium** (Brussels); and **the Netherlands** (Amsterdam, Utrecht, Nijmegen, Tilburg, Leiden, Vlaardingen, Groningen, Appelscha, Rotterdam, and the Hague).

## Peace Talks in the Shadow of Demolitions

BADIL, August 2010. While President Barack Obama pressures Palestinians to re-engage in direct peace talks, and Prime Minister Bibi Netanyahu loftily counsels President Mahmoud Abbas not to miss the opportunity, recent demolitions within the Occupied Palestinian Territory and Israel continue unabated and unaddressed.

According to OCHA, July and August have marked the highest number of demolitions this year. As of the end of July, OCHA reports Israeli forces have destroyed over 230 structures effectively displacing and/or affecting over 1100 Palestinians, including 400 children since the beginning of 2010. Over 50% of said destruction has taken place in July alone. OCHA further comments that the Israeli Civil Administration will be stepping up demolitions in the West Bank per orders by the Israeli Ministry of Defense.

In the Jordan Valley, Israeli forces have demolished the village of al Farisyia twice within the span of 10 days; first on July 19th and again on August 5th. These have resulted in the destruction of 116 structures and the displacement of 129 people, 63 of whom are children. In the second round of demolitions, 10 structures not previously harmed were demolished along with 27 structures and materials provided by the International Committee of the Red Cross. Israel has flagrantly disavowed its peace rhetoric by issuing additional demolition orders to be meted out on August 15th & 16th.

Moreover, Israeli authorities are proving complicit in vigilante activity among Jewish settlers in the Muslim Quarter of the Old City in Jerusalem. In the early morning hours of July 29th Jewish settlers stormed the Kirrech house, home to 9 Palestinian families, without sanction. Of these families, only one has been allowed restitution to their home by court order. The other eight families continue to be displaced while waiting for their case to be tried in court.

While UN bodies have condemned these demolitions, absent actionable measures, the condemnations alone fall short of the United Nations' obligations to maintain peace and security and to ensure respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. Under international law the State is obliged to prevent, investigate, and provide remedy, and when it fails to do so the international community becomes responsible for providing victims with effective protection. Violence by non-state actors (settlers) should not be seen merely as provocative actions; but as part of an overarching policy backed by State authority. By stopping at rhetoric, the United Nations, States, and international organizations fail to adequately respond to Israel's human rights abuses that both fuel the humanitarian crisis and undermine the peace process.

In fact, even if Netanyahu's recent statements were to be considered sincere, Israel's actions are a flagrant rejection of the peace process and its underlying documents including the Oslo Accords which reserve settlements as a final status issue and the Road Map which outright prohibits settlement expansion.

Under the cover of its calls for the resumption for peace talks, Israel is also infringing on the rights of its own Palestinian citizens. Israeli forces have demolished Al Araqib, a Bedouin village in the Negev, 4 times from July 27th to August 17th, displacing 300 Palestinian citizens of Israel at the beginning of the Muslim holy month of Ramadan forcing them to endure a recent heat wave living in the open air atop their cemetery. According to MK Talab al-Sana, "This is a test for democracy in Israel; and democracy is failing. Al Araqib is a test of how much Israelis can live in peace with their own Palestinian citizens; so, how can [Israel] live in peace with Palestinians [within Palestine]."

Demolitions and the denial of basic human rights, such as shelter, are features of Israel's apartheid regime and are indicative of the root causes of the ongoing humanitarian crises in the OPT. At best, Israel's recent demolitions can be considered attempts at colonization, at worst they can be interpreted as ethnic cleansing.

Taking these actions into account, one cannot help but be confused by the good faith underpinning the most recent calls for peace talks. We call upon States, UN bodies, international organizations, and the international community at large to reconcile peace talks with humanitarian and human rights law in an effort to create an environment where peace may actually be sought instead of paying lip service to peace in the shadow of demolitions and displacement.

## BDS Campaign Update (October 2009 – June 2010)



Utrecht , Holland  
18 May 2010 (©  
BADIL)

### Palestinian University Students and Youth Groups Commit to Sweeping Boycotts

28 April 2010 – In the lead-up to the Nakba-62 commemorations, Palestinian student and youth groups in Palestine and in exile issued a statement in which they committed to enforce a broad boycott of Israeli products and programs. "Economic, political, cultural and institutional normalization legitimize Israel's oppression of the Palestinian people by giving the appearance of normalcy to the relationship between oppressor and oppressed. This relationship is hardly one between equals as Israel continues to violate our inalienable rights, steal our land, and prevent refugees from our right of return in contravention of international law and numerous UN resolutions." The students also asserted their "right to resist Israel's oppression of the Palestinian people through all forms of resistance and in accordance to international law, including forms of civil resistance such as demonstrations, sits-ins and, boycotts of Israel."

### Boston Activists Disrupt Israeli Propaganda Event at Science Museum

3 May 2010 – BDS activists in Boston protested the "Israeli Innovation Weekend" (IIW) at the Museum of Science in Boston through multiple and diverse actions. IIW's sponsors, including the Consulate General of Israel to New England, were largely unable to prevent their successful, multi-pronged disruption of the event. Watch the video at: <http://bdsmovement.net/?q=node/697>

### Largest NGO Platform in Malta Calls for BDS

5 May 2010 - The development NGO platform Skop has called for a boycott of Israeli companies in the wake of the shooting of Bianca Zammit, a Maltese activist who was injured by a live bullet shot by the Israeli forces in Gaza. Bianca Zammit was injured in an unwarranted attack by IDF personnel while accompanying Palestinian farmers in Gaza to their fields in the so called 'buffer zone', a no-go area unilaterally declared by Israel. There is no legal basis for the no-go area. In its statement, Skop urged the EU institutions to reconsider EU-Israel privileged relations. Skop, the national platform of Maltese NGOs, is Malta's broadest network of voluntary and non-governmental organizations working in international development and humanitarian aid.

### Episcopal Peace Fellowship Joins BDS Campaign

9 May 2010 - The National Executive Council of the Episcopal Peace Fellowship ([www.epfnational.org](http://www.epfnational.org)) endorsed a statement calling for BDS with a vote of 8 yes, 2 no and 1 abstention. The statement "endorses the application of divestment and an economic and commercial boycott of products linked to oppression of Palestinian people and occupation of their land... The National Executive Council asks the Episcopal Peace Fellowship's Israel/Palestine Action Group to offer resources to our membership and the wider church on effective strategies for boycott, divestment, and sanctions."

### Dublin City Council Refuses to Renew Contract with Veolia

10 May 2010 – The Dublin City Council passed a resolution calling on the City Manager not to sign or renew any contracts with French multinational Veolia – the operators of the LUAS who have also tendered for the Metro North project. Veolia operate Israeli rail, bus and waste services in the illegally occupied West Bank, making them complicit in Israel's contravention of the Fourth Geneva Convention. The resolution, tabled by Cllr. Joan Collins (People Before Profit), was passed by unanimously at the sitting of Dublin City Council, and is an important statement of solidarity with Palestine by the elected representatives of a European capital city. Details of Veolia's illegal operations in occupied Palestine can be viewed on the website of the Irish Palestine Solidarity Campaign: <http://www.ipsc.ie/veoliaNotes>

### Renowned Canadian Film-Maker Calls on Elton John to Cancel Israel Performance

May 2010 – Activist film-maker John Greyson prepared a brilliant video giving six reasons why Elton John should join the campaign for boycott, divestment and sanctions against Israel until it complies with international law. Watch the video at: <http://bdsmovement.net/?q=node/698>

### Elvis Costello Cancels Two Israel Performances in Protest of Israeli Violations

18 May 2010 – Costello, one of the most gifted British songwriters of his generation, was due to play on 30 June and 1 July but says his "conscience" dictated that he pull out of the performances. His decision came soon after similar cancellations by a list of performers who have decided not to play in Israel, including Gil Scott-Heron and Santana. Costello published a statement outlining his reasons for the cancellation, stating that "there are occasions when merely having your name added to a concert schedule may be interpreted as a political act that resonates more than anything that might be sung and it may be assumed that one has no mind for the suffering of the innocent... it is a matter of instinct and conscience."

### Important Quebec Labor Council Vote to Support BDS Campaign

17-21 May 2010 – The 297 delegates to the annual convention of the Conseil central du Montréal métropolitain of the Confédération des syndicats nationaux (CCMM-CSN) voted, nearly unanimously, in favor of a resolution

in support of the global campaign of Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS) against Israeli apartheid. The CCMM (CSN) is a labour council that represents over 80,000 members in 12 federations and more than 600 unions from various sectors and CSN federations, including construction, education, health, and communications. The CCSM (CSN) resolution follows similar resolutions adopted by other Quebec labor unions, including the June 2009 decision by the Centrale des syndicats du Québec (CSQ), one of Quebec's largest union federations, to "support the boycott, disinvestments and sanctions campaign against Israel until Israel complies with international law and the universal principles of human rights."

### **Two of Italy's Largest Supermarket Chains Suspend Sale of Israeli Settlement Products**

22 May 2010 – Following a campaign by the Italian Coalition Against Carmel-Agrexco, two major Italian supermarket chains, COOP and Nordiconad, announced the suspension of sales of products from Agrexco, the principal exporter of produce from Israel and the illegal Israeli settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territories. The Italian supermarket lobbying campaign was launched in January this year after a national meeting of the Stop Agrexco coalition in Savona, where Agrexco ships dock for distribution in Italy. Efforts are being coordinated with similar movements in Europe, including the Coalition Contre Agrexco in France, which unites more than 90 groups with the common goal of opposing plans to base the Israeli company at the port of Sete (Languedoc-Roussillon).

### **Québec Women's Union Declares Support for BDS**

29-30 May 2010 – At its membership convention in Québec City, the members of Fédération des Femmes du Québec (FFQ) (Québec Federation of Women), voted unanimously in favor of a historic resolution in support of the global campaign of Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS) against Israeli apartheid. The FFQ represents more than 644 individual members and 184 women's organizations in Québec.

### **British Academics Union Passes Important BDS Resolution**

31 May 2010 – The University and College Union (UCU), representing approximately 120,000 teaching and related staff in colleges and universities in the UK, has passed new policies supporting boycott, divestment and sanctions (BDS) against Israel. The debate took place on Sunday 30 May at the union's Congress in Manchester. The relevant motions passed at the congress included:

- a commitment to work more closely with Palestinian academics' union (PFUUPE), and to working with bodies including Scottish Trade Unions Council, Amnesty International and the Palestine Solidarity Campaign to support the English Trade Union's Council's 2009 Congress decisions to end arms sales to Israel, seek an EU ban on settlement goods and support suspension of the the EU-Israel Association Agreement which provides preferential trade facilities to Israel.
- to establish an annual international conference on BDS, and "to sever all relations with Histadrut, and to urge other trade unions and bodies to do likewise" as well as campaigning actively against the EU-Israel Association Agreement.
- commencing the investigatory process associated with the imposition of a boycott of Ariel College. This is an institution in an Israeli settlement in the occupied West Bank, also known as the "College of Judea and Samaria"

### **San Francisco Green Party Calls for BDS**

1 June 2010 – The San Francisco Green Party issued a statement of its position that: "Because all other nonviolent and diplomatic means of resolving the crisis in Palestine/Israel have consistently failed for over four decades, the San Francisco Green Party sees a worldwide boycott and divestment of Israel as the only

remaining viable option to bringing an end to the crisis... the San Francisco Green Party is now actively engaging in a full boycott of all purchases of products and services, the financial gains of which will accrue to any individual or entity within Israel, until Israel is in compliance with all United Nations-recognized international laws; all resolutions of the United Nations General Assembly and Security Council; and, all decisions and directions by all United Nations-recognized international courts, regardless of Israel's participation in or ratification of such courts." In the statement, the party called upon all of its members, all San Francisco residents, businesses, nonprofits, educational institutions, political parties, and the San Francisco municipal government, as well as the US government to join in the worldwide boycott and divestment of Israel.

### **Australian Services Union NSW and ACT Branch Joins BDS Campaign**

1 June 2010 - The Australian Services Union (ASU) Executive condemned the attack by the Israeli navy on the Gaza peace flotilla and called for the immediate lifting of the Israeli siege on Gaza, and resolved to join the International union and civil society campaign of Boycotts, Divestments and Sanctions to pressure Israel to abide by international law in their treatment of the Palestinian people. In the resolution, the executive stated that "As we believe that international law should be upheld, we resolve to support consumer boycotts of products made in the illegal settlements, as well as consumer boycotts of companies who assist in, or profit from, the occupation of Palestinian territories. In addition, we resolve to review our investments and divest from such companies."

### **Norwegian Survey Reveals Widespread Support for BDS**

2 June 2010 – In a survey conducted by the *InFact Institute* two days after Israel's assault on the Freedom Flotilla, 9.5% of respondents stated that they were already boycotting Israeli products, while 33.5% would like to. Only 29.4% of the 1,028 people polled said they were opposed to such a boycott, while 27.6% said they had no opinion on the issue. Kristin Halvorsen, Norway's health minister and head of the Socialist Left party, called for the international community to boycott arms trade with Israel, in line with Norway's existing policy. Three Norwegians were among the 682 people from 42 countries aboard the six ships attacked by the Israeli navy that left nine pro-Palestinian activists dead.

### **Britain's Largest Trade Union (UNITE) Unanimously Calls for BDS**

4 June 2010 – UNITE, Britain's largest union, unanimously passed a motion to boycott Israeli companies at its first policy conference in Manchester. The motion called on the union "to vigorously promote a policy of divestment from Israeli companies", while a boycott of Israeli goods and services will be "similar to the boycott of South African goods during the era of apartheid".

### **Norway Cancels Military Seminar with Israel**

4 June 2010 - Norway's military stated that it had canceled a special operations seminar because the Defense Ministry objected to the inclusion of an Israeli army officer in the program. Military spokeswoman Major Heidi Langvik-Hansen stated that the Defense Ministry was unhappy that the Israel's Colonel Toledano would be delivering a talk in Oslo only weeks after Israel's deadly commando raid on the Gaza freedom flotilla.

### **Klaxons and Gorillaz Sound System Cancel Israel Shows Due to Assault on Freedom Flotilla**

4 June 2010 - The two renowned bands the Klaxons and the Gorillaz Sound System both canceled their performances in Israel in the wake of Israel's deadly raid on the Gaza-bound flotilla. Both groups were supposed to arrive in Israel on Friday to headline the Pic.Nic. Festival to be held at the Expo Grounds in Tel Aviv. The groups, however, did not provide an official reason for canceling their trips.

### **South African Municipal Workers Launch Israeli Apartheid Free Zone Campaign**

4 June 2010 – At its Central Executive Committee (CEC) meeting, the South African Municipal Workers Union (SAMWU, a member union of COSATU) unanimously endorsed a motion to immediately work towards every municipality in South Africa to become an Apartheid Israel free zone. As part of the global Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions Campaign (BDS) SAMWU has agreed to engage every single municipality to ensure that there are no commercial, academic, cultural, sporting or other linkages whatsoever with the Israeli regime. Every SAMWU branch will immediately approach municipal and water authorities to become part of the BDS campaign, and to publicly declare their solidarity with the Palestinian people.

### **The Pixies Cancel Israel Performance**

6 June 2010 – Influential US rock group the Pixies have canceled their first performance in Israel, blaming "events beyond our control". The band, whose albums include *Surfer Rosa* and *Doolittle*, were due to be headliners at the Pic.Nic festival. The Pixies had been sent letters by human rights activists before Israel's naval attack on the Gaza Freedom Flotilla, urging them to cancel their appearance because of Israel's policies towards the Palestinians.

### **Palestinian Workers Movement Calls on Dockworkers Internationally to Block Israeli Ships**

7 June 2010 - The Palestinian trade union movement, as a key constituent member of the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions National Committee (BNC) called on dockworkers' unions worldwide to block Israeli maritime trade in response to Israel's massacre of humanitarian relief workers and activists aboard the Freedom Flotilla, until Israel complies with international law and ends its illegal blockade of Gaza. Read the full statement at: <http://bdsmovement.net/?q=node/712>

### **Irish Supermarket Chain Boycotts Israeli Potatoes**

9 June 2010 – LIDL, one of Ireland's largest chain stores, have stopped selling two lines of baby potatoes that are sourced from Israel. In 2009, Ireland imported goods worth \$100million from Israel and exported over \$240million to Israel. Irish activists have worked tirelessly to cut Ireland's trade relations with Israel, and are currently engaged in a campaign targeting CRH, an Irish corporation that specializes in cement products and which is involved in building Israel's Wall.

### **WFTU Calls for Three-Day Strike targetting Israeli Vessels**

9 June 2010 - The World Federation of Trade Unions (WFTU) issued a call for a three day strike at all ports of the world against commercial vessels to or from Israel, for all naval workers, dock workers and all workers and all unions in the ports to refuse to load or unload ships coming or heading for Israel. The TUI Transport of the WFTU is at the forefront of this strike. The action was meant as a practical demonstration of the militant solidarity with the Palestinian People and against the Israeli blockade of the Gaza Strip.

### **British Firm RedRat Cuts Ties with Israeli Company**

11 June 2010 - British company RedRat announced to Israeli company Disk-In Pro that despite years of cooperation, it would no longer work with the Israeli company because of Israel's policy in the Gaza Strip. Responding to Israeli journalists, the British company confirmed they worked with Disk-In Pro for a number of years and that they do not think this is the time to do business with Israeli companies in light of recent events. They added that in this they are acting as many other businesses, academics and artists are acting, and expressed their best wishes for Disk-In Pro's success. They also said that they currently have no other Israeli business partners, but that if they had, they would cease working with them too.

### Oslo Borough Votes to Boycott Israel

14 June 2010 – The old Grorud borough district of Oslo, Norway's capital, voted to boycott Israel. The motion passed by eight votes to four, led by the Red Party's Turid Thomassen. The old Norway district also moved to encourage the district administration to prevent Israeli goods from entering Norway. According to Norwegian media sources, more municipalities, counties and districts in Norway are submitting proposals to boycott Israel.

### Folk Musician Devendra Banhart Cancels Tel Aviv Shows

15 June 2010 – Folk music artist Devendra Banhart cancelled two shows he had been set to play in Tel Aviv on June 16 and 17, saying left-wing Israeli groups had urged him not to perform.

### United Methodists Vote to Divest from Companies that Benefit from the Occupation of Palestine

15 June 2010 – At its annual conference, the Northern Illinois Conference of the United Methodist Church (UMC) voted to divest all holdings in three international corporations that profit from the occupation of Palestine. This action is in response to a plea by Palestinian Christians for action, not just words. By selling its investments in Caterpillar (CAT), General Electric (GE) and Terex (TEX), the NIC expresses its commitment to do no harm with its investments and affirms the call of the UMC Book of Discipline to "avoid investments that appear likely, directly or indirectly, to support violation of human rights" (Paragraph 716). These three companies are among 20 targeted by UMC conferences across the country because they (1) have a presence on occupied land, (2) are involved with the physical settlements, checkpoints and the separation wall, or (3) support activities of the Israeli military in the occupied territories.

For the list of targeted corporations compiled by the New England Conference (UMC) Divestment Task Force, see: <http://www.neumc.org/pages/detail/375>

### BDS Activists in Oakland, California Prevent Israeli Ship from Off-loading

21 June 2010 - In an unprecedented action for the US, over 800 labor and community activists blocked the gates of the Oakland docks (the sixth largest dock in the US) in the early morning hours, prompting longshore workers to refuse to cross the picket-lines where they were scheduled to unload an Israeli ship. From 5:30 am to 9:30 am, a militant and spirited protest was held in front of four gates of the Stevedore Services of America, with people chanting non-stop, "Free, Free Palestine, Don't Cross the Picket Line," and "An injury to one is an injury to all, bring down the apartheid wall." In the week leading up to the action, the San Francisco Labor Council and Alameda Labor Council passed resounding resolutions denouncing Israel's blockade of Gaza. Both councils sent out public notices of the dock action. The ILWU has a proud history of extending its solidarity to struggling peoples the world over. In 1984, as the Black masses of South Africa were engaged in an intense struggle against South African apartheid, the ILWU refused for a record-setting 10 days to unload cargo from the South African "Ned Lloyd" ship. Despite million-dollar fines imposed on the union, the longshore workers held strong, providing a tremendous boost to the anti-apartheid movement. See the video of the action at: <http://bdsmovement.net/?q=node/714>

### Swedish Dockworkers Union Blockade of Israeli Goods Begins - Ten Containers Held

23 June 2010 – The Swedish Dock-workers union began a week-long blockade of goods to and from Israel. The ongoing nation-wide blockade in Swedish harbors, that is based on the request of the Palestinian workers' union-movement, is The Swedish Dockworkers Union's attempt to contribute to pressure Israel into: 1. Lifting the blockade on the Gaza Strip, 2. Allowing an independent, international investigation of

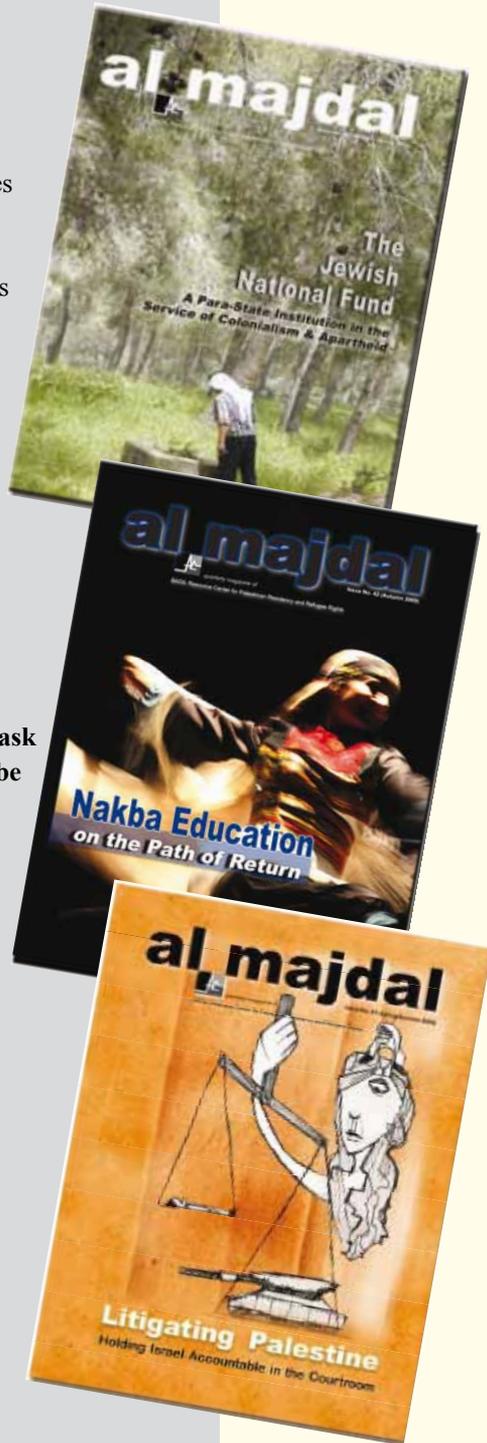
what happened at the Israeli boarding of the Freedom Flotilla when nine people were shot to death. In the harbor of Gothenburg the blockade were initiated without any complications. About ten containers, both Israeli imports and exports were immediately identified in the container terminal, all of which have been separated and will stand untouched in the harbor of Gothenburg until the end of the blockade at 24:00 on the 29th of June.

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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.

[www.badil.org/al-majdal](http://www.badil.org/al-majdal)

**Only if the rights to return, restitution and compensation are implemented, can we be sure that stateless Palestinian refugees will find the protection they are entitled to, as victims of colonialism, apartheid and ethnic cleansing, as stateless refugees, and as human beings.**

