

Palestinian Dispossession and Exodus

There was a war between the Palestinians, the Jews and the British. The events started in the 1920s, in Jerusalem, in Nabulus and Jaffa. We – the children – stayed in Jerusalem because my father was sentenced to death by the British. First he was imprisoned in Sarafand. He was working with Al Haj Amin Al Husseini and the Arab High Committee. They worked against the Jews and against the establishment of a Jewish State. They were imprisoned, arrested and deported several times [by the British]. Then they were not allowed to stay in Jerusalem or anywhere in Palestine anymore. My father and Al Haj Amin Al Husseini escaped arrest and went to Damascus in 1935. We remained in Jerusalem, my brother, my mother, my sister, my aunt and my grandmother. Then, in 1937, my father made the decision to stay in Damascus. He was in the Resistance. When he sent for us to come to Damascus we were very sad to leave Jerusalem. We packed and got big trucks to move our things to Damascus. My uncle's family was with us. They also packed and moved to Amman. I was 12 years old at the time.

Salma (2005), Damascus

The events that Salma refers to as starting in 1920 began with the British mandate over Palestine in that year and the large increase of Jewish immigration to the area. The future of this League of Nations mandatory state had been largely determined by the Sykes-Picot Agreement of 1916 and the Balfour Declaration of 1917 and included the former Ottoman provinces of Beirut, Jerusalem, and Hijaz. It had been Ottoman policy to refer to its provinces by key cities and their hinterland. Thus, for example, the province of Beirut extended from Jaffa north to Jericho and the Jordan River and included the districts of Acre, Beirut, and Nabulus. The borders of Palestine were never clearly demarcated, even during the late Ottoman period. The 'land of Palestine' was regarded by the Ottomans as a general

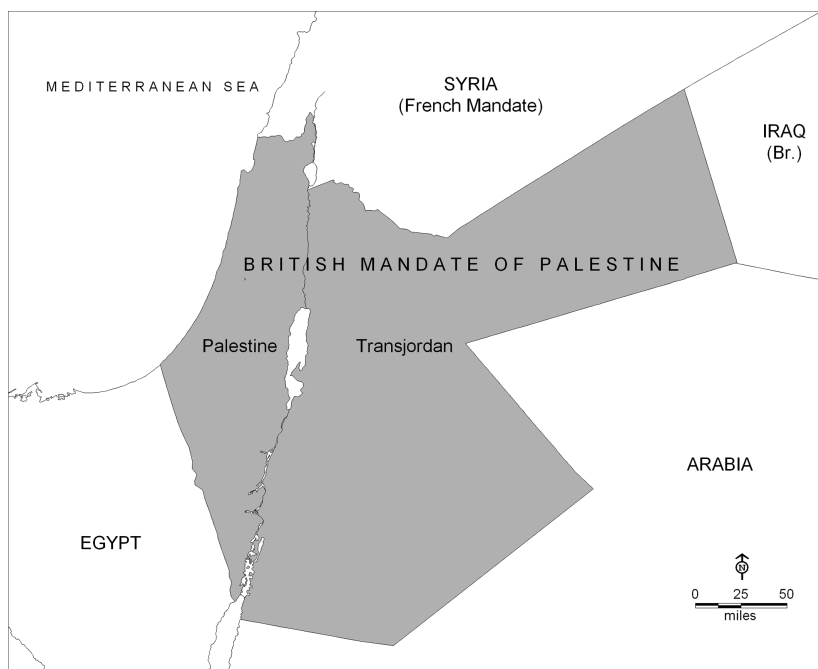
region and not a specific administrative unit with clearly defined borders. Among the educated elite of the time, *Filistin* (Palestine) was a common concept referring to the whole of Palestine or sometimes the district of Jerusalem in the general area of *Bilad al-Sham* (Greater Syria) which encompassed the modern states of Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, and Palestine/Israel.

The area awarded to Great Britain as its Mandate of Palestine was originally about 45,000 square miles (118,000 square kilometres). In 1921, Britain took the area east of the Jordan River – nearly 80 per cent of the original mandated territory – and created a ‘sub-mandate’ of Transjordan as a new protectorate. Two years later, in 1923, the British and French exchanged strips of land in the Jaulan Heights along the northern border of the British mandate to smooth out the line separating British and French mandates. After these various adjustments west of the river Jordan and extending south to the Negev, the ‘Palestine’ of the British mandate of Palestine was reduced to about 10,000 square miles (26,000 square kilometres). It was in this area that the British permitted Jewish settlement along the terms laid out in the Balfour Declaration. However, the British closed the rest of mandated Palestine, Transjordan, and the southern part of the Mandate – the desert of the Negev – to Jewish settlement.

When Palestine’s first High Commissioner Sir Herbert Samuel was asked to write an introduction to *The History of Palestine* (1922), he decided to describe this country as characterized by such a diversity of religion, or civilizations, or climate and physical characteristics that one could pick the century one preferred to visit. He pointed out that the traveller

... may find among the Beduin of Beersheba precisely the conditions that prevailed in the time of Abraham; at Bethlehem he may see the women’s costumes, and, in some respects the mode of living of the period of the Crusades; the Arab villages are, for the most part, still under mediaeval conditions; the towns present many of the problems of the early nineteenth century, while the new arrivals from Eastern and Central Europe, and from America, bring with them the activities of the twentieth century and sometimes, perhaps, the ideas of the twenty-first (Luke & Keith-Roach 1930).

The coeditor of this handbook, Edward Keith-Roach, was also a writer for *National Geographic* magazine and in 1934 he published a piece on ‘Changing Palestine’ in which he declares that ‘the last decades have shown greater changes in Palestine than have occurred since the beginning of the Christian Era’ (Keith-Roach 1934). Such a perception of Palestine was a commonly held view in Europe and the United States. The widely



MAP 7. British Mandate of Palestine

accepted opinion was that the 'Holy Lands' were backward, even primitive, and had hardly changed since the time of King David and Jesus Christ. This viewing lens was a carefully constructed vision to suit particular purposes. For many, it underpinned the argument that only active Western involvement would be able to modernize and bring progress to the Holy Land. For European Judaism, it offered an intellectual justification for Jewish settlement in Palestine. As van Oord makes clear, the lens through which the Holy Land was viewed in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries was not the result of objective description but rather was a carefully constructed narrative to suit the purposes of the narrators, be they politicians, travel writers, or religious scholars. They all set out to describe the land and people of Palestine in terms of historicized difference (van Oord 2008).

WHO ARE THE PEOPLE OF PALESTINE?

It is generally accepted that the indigenous people of Palestine are extremely heterogeneous in origin. They include the descendants of the Philistines, Canaanites, and Hebrews; Arabs from the conquests of the

seventh century; the European Crusaders of the eleventh and twelfth centuries; and offspring of Muslim and Christian pilgrims. As the Holy Land to the three Abrahamaic religions, it has long supported Muslim, Christian, and Jewish settlement of varying size. However, with the exception of a brief period in the eleventh and twelve centuries, when the European Crusaders ruled the region, the Arabs in Palestine have maintained an uninterrupted presence as the majority population until the mid-twentieth century.

It is generally held that the Ottoman conquest of Syria in the early sixteenth century brought security and stability to the region after several centuries of disorder during Mamluk rule. This first century of Ottoman control also opened Palestine up to interregional trade, stimulating economic and population growth (Hütteroth & Abdelfattah 1977; Lewis 1954:469–501). In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, however, some historians claim the region suffered a decline. One conventional interpretation of the cause of this decline and depopulation was the misrule and tyranny of the local Ottoman governor of Acre, Ahmad al-Jazzar. Cotton production, which had thrived in the eighteenth century, went down and Palestine's economy became depressed. This decline led some peasants to revert to a form of seminomadic pastoralism combined with agriculture, which allowed them to pay what protection money was required to the Bedouin pastoralists from the Syrian and Arabian steppe land or *Badia* while managing to avoid the Ottoman tax farmers (also see Lancaster & Lancaster 1995). Encouraged by the lack of Ottoman authority or presence in the area, these Bedouin tribes moved deeper into agricultural areas and demanded protection money [tribute or *khuwah*] from the settled farmers. Some farmers gave into these demands, but others packed up their own moveable property and left. During this period of population stagnation or decline, Jerusalem and Hebron were said to lie on the 'frontier of Arabia, where rebellious Bedouins disturb the peace' (Johns 1994:26). The traditional view of this decline was that a vacuum was created which the Bedouin nomadic pastoral tribes from the *Badia* were filling, thus putting an end to agriculture. However, Johns argues that the absence of permanent Ottoman authority in the region did not necessarily create a vacuum but rather permitted a succession of local urban notables and settled tribal (*hamula*) elites to gain the upper hand and operate in a manner resembling the pre-Crusader Syrian city-states (1994:28).

Doumani challenges this standard view of the destructive activities of the Bedouin pastoralists throughout the period of early nineteenth-century Ottoman Palestine. He writes that such a black-and-white view of the

classic opposition between the nomadic and the settled ignores the multitude of economic, political, and cultural connections that linked the Bedouin with the settled regions: ‘the Bani Sakhr and Huwaytat tribes, for example, have for generations sent thousands of camel loads annually to Nablus, supplying the city’s merchants and soap manufacturers with *qilli*, a raw material crucial to the city’s soap industry. They also provided raw wool, *samn* (clarified butter), horses, camels and other primary products in return for iron, textiles and other manufactures’ (Doumani 1992). This revisionist perspective, nevertheless, does not rule out the control the Bedouin held in these areas during various centuries and their demands for protection money or tribute as well as political and social networks and even kin ties between some Bedouin and local notables.¹

Palestinian peasants generally clung to their land and their villages in the central hills of Palestine. During periods of heightened security, whether organized by Bedouin or by Ottoman central authority, they tended to return to the low-lying plains to re-start agricultural activity or re-build their villages. Thus, population density in these open plains continuously fluctuated throughout the centuries. While the plains were accessible to the military authority of the Ottomans and vulnerable to the periodic efforts of the Bedouin to collect protection money or tribute, the central hills of Palestine provided natural barriers. This hill country allowed Palestinian farmers, town dwellers, and local notable ruling families a measure of political and economic autonomy not unlike that which occurred in Mount Lebanon and also the Alawite hills of northwest Syria (Farsoun & Zacharia 1997). Palestinians raised cotton in the western plains, but most of the terraced hills of central Palestine were planted with olive trees. Wheat, corn, barley, and sesame were grown in the valleys and nearby plains. Olive oil, soap, textiles, grain, and sesame seeds were important export commodities for the regional market.

Whether due to Bedouin tribal depredations, contestation among local notables and elites, or regional economic factors like the decline in the

¹ Farsoun and Zacharia maintain that for much of the Ottoman period the kinship-based *hamula* social organization of Palestinian peasantry protected the individual and kin from both external attack and internal feuds. Groups of villages were organized into sub-districts called *nahiyas*, each under the control of a shaykh who typically belonged to the strongest family of the most powerful hamula in the area. As often, these nahiya shaykhs were of recent Bedouin origin. Nonetheless, the staying power of these hamulas and the leading families within them is remarkable. For example, the leading families of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Nablus – the Jayyusi, Jarrar, Qasim Rayyan, Tuqan, ‘Abdul-Hadi, and Al-Masri – continue to dominate today (Farsoun & Zacharia 1997).

cotton economy, it is clear that the region suffered a general decline in agriculture over the centuries, which was not reversed until late in the eighteenth century. In the general area of Palestine, the southern Bilad al-Sham, this period saw a patrilineal, clan-based peasantry, particularly in the hill country, resistant to externally imposed authority and surviving by farming small plots of land. The peasantry was armed and the Ottoman authorities did not have a direct military presence in or control over the hill region. The Ottomans relied on local notables, who were often rural shaykhs, for control, administration, and taxation until the reform and centralization movement of the mid-nineteenth century. Until then, the rural political economy of the hilly regions of Palestine was intimately tied to the larger economic system of trade, exchange, or barter with the nearby city or commercial centre. The cities were centres of small-scale manufacture, crafts and artisan work, administrative offices, and religious and juridical activity. Thus in this part of Bilad al-Sham, Bedouin pastoralists, peasant farmers and urban craftsmen, intellectuals and religious scholars were interlinked in a complex political economy. The social organization and particular economic flourishing in towns and villages of Palestine both in the hills and along the coast during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries have become a topic of interest and concern among a school of contemporary historians (Doumani 1992; Issawi 1966a; Owen 1981a; Scholch 1982); their work has helped to undermine the predominantly European narrative of a Palestine as a backwater, in decline and barely out of the 'primitive' stage of civilization or the Biblical era.

By the mid-nineteenth century, European interest in Palestine was growing; the land was being discovered, but as Doumani suggests, it was a discovery of the physical space without the recognition that people were living there (Doumani 1992). In the minds of many Europeans, Palestine was 'empty' before the arrival of the first significant wave of European Jewish settlers in 1881–94. The 'emptiness' here meant the absence of 'civilized' people. It was a narrative and a positioning which suited European colonial mindsets. Thus the native population of indigenous Palestine was no more recognized than the American Indians were in the 'virgin' frontiers of the American West. The Zionist slogan 'a land without people for a people without land' could be viewed, therefore, as no more than the manifestation of European intellectual racism and imperial ambitions.

Both European and Israeli historians have studied this late period of the Ottoman Empire and seen what they wanted. For many European researchers, there was an unwillingness to address the question of the

native population other than to document an unchanging traditional society before its anticipated extinction due to contact with the West. For others, there was the recognition that a thriving Palestinian subsistence and commercial economy was gradually pushed into increasing commercialization which undermined its subsistence base and turned it into a region dependent upon European trade. Both Owen and Issawi stress the relative importance of the European over the regional trade sector, while Doumani disputes these conclusions and argues for greater acknowledgement of the indigenous regional dynamics of agricultural specialization in Palestine (Doumani 1992; Issawi 1966a; Owen 1981a). Whatever the interpretation, it is clear that by the middle of the nineteenth century the Ottoman state was interested in promoting settled agriculture, improving trade, and taxation of the Palestinian coast and the central hill districts of Galilee, Nabulus, Jerusalem, and Hebron. Across the River Jordan the Ottoman state worked to reestablish its own political authority over the local urban elite, and then turned to Europe for expertise to modernize and bring 'progress' to its southern provinces.

Until the middle of the nineteenth century, Ottoman authorities in Istanbul [Constantinople] regarded the southern Syrian provinces as very much a frontier zone; it extended from the Hauran to the Hijaz and was crossed once a year by the pilgrimage caravan from Damascus to Mecca. It was perceived as a region in which – as with Anatolia in general – the population was decreasing and tax income to the coffers of the Sultan was limited (Karpát 1974). Over the next few decades the Ottoman authority sought quick solutions to reverse the decline in tax income as well as to be able to invest substantially in its development (Rogan & Tell 1994). These solutions included: effective single-source tax collection to replace what was, in effect, efforts of double taxation by both the Bedouin as well as the official Ottoman government tax collectors. There was strong opposition to this effort both among the farmers and the Bedouin tribes.² Eventually

² In May 1867, much of the district just south of Ajlun was a fertile plain with only a single settlement. The absence of the state and tribal incursion had reduced permanent settlement to the single village of al-Salt. Its location provided its farmers with security to negotiate access to farmlands with the surrounding tribes. Security of cultivation was ensured by giving a share of the harvest, as tribute, to the tribes (*khuwah*). This protection payment was in a way a form of taxation. The Ottoman sent an armed unit of soldiers to overturn this relationship and force the Bedouin tribes to submit to Ottoman rule. At first, both the residents of al-Salt and the Bedouin resisted the Ottoman force. Eventually the villagers submitted to the Ottomans without a fight. The Bedouin were engaged in battle several months later, resulting ultimately with defeat and the arrest of the tribal leader and his incarceration in Nabulus in October 1867 (Rogan & Tell 1994).

the Ottomans established administrative and military units at a number of points: al-Salt, Karak, and finally at Ma'an. Once these security measures were in effect, the Ottoman government turned its attention to resettling the areas radiating out from these administrative and security posts. With effective resettlement, the Ottoman state could expect proceeds from tax collection of agricultural produce to render the district self-supporting and certainly go some way to covering the costs of mounting the annual pilgrimage to Mecca (see Barbir 1980:122–125).

The first wave of settlement, once Ottoman administration and security had been secured in these areas, was by local farmers encouraged to move out from older settlements to establish new villages.³ The next wave of settlement, which lasted for the last quarter of the nineteenth century (from about 1878 to 1906), was largely of Muslim refugees from the European Ottoman lands lost to Russia. These were Circassian, Chechnyan, and Turcoman refugees generally grateful to the Ottoman state for providing them with new lands upon which to rebuild their shattered lives. The third wave of settlement was largely by Bedouin fearful of losing all claims to their traditional grazing lands. Many of the tribal leaders encouraged their tribesmen to adopt a settled existence and sharecrop in plantation villages often actually worked by Palestinian and Egyptian peasants (Rogan & Tell 1994:47).

During this period, the Ottoman government sought advice from numerous international agricultural experts. These specialists encouraged the Ottoman state to find and train adequate manpower to cultivate land. As the demand for agricultural commodities began to increase, mostly from abroad, the government decided to set in train a raft of measures to increase rural production. Furthermore, as Karpát points out, the 1856 Treaty of Paris was an important psychological turning point in Ottoman relations vis-à-vis Europe. The Ottomans regarded this treaty as drawing the Ottoman Empire into the comity of European nations, recognizing it as an equal to the European states despite its different religion and its numerous wars in the past (Karpát 1974:59).⁴ The Ottoman Empire now looked to Europe to rejuvenate and modernize what it had come to regard as its agricultural backwater; some historians regarded this move as the death

³ Rogan identifies numerous Christian families from Salt who established themselves in this manner in new villages such as al-Rumaymim between 1870 and 1879 and al-Fuhays between 1869 and 1875 (Rogan & Tell 1994).

⁴ The recognition was informal. To the Ottoman leadership, the Treaty of Paris of 1856 marked a turning point in diplomacy, the courteous recognition that the nations of Europe accorded to the laws of the Ottoman state.

blow to a thriving largely Palestinian subsistent mode of existence into a market economy and finally, before its complete destruction, into dependent capitalist underdevelopment. No less significant for this destructive turn was the 'peaceful crusade' of religiously inspired European immigration, investment, and institutional development (Farsoun & Zacharia 1997).

THE END OF EMPIRES AT THE BEGINNING OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

Palestine was an integral part of the Ottoman Empire for more than four centuries. Its fortunes, like that of the empire itself, waxed and waned as central political power and economic strength also rose and fell, re-formed, and rose again over the centuries. The empire had survived periods of decline in the past and instituted successful reform. Only towards the end of the nineteenth century were these reforms doomed as Europe began to seriously consider the potential for trade and raw material, which the Arab provinces of the Ottoman Empire represented. As the empire began to crumble prior to the end of World War I, European powers started to vie for control of the Arab Ottoman provinces. In 1915, Great Britain was eager to secure Arab support in dividing up the Ottoman Empire and also in opening a southern front in its war against the Axis powers. Responding to British overtures, the Sharif of Mecca, al-Emir Hussein, issued a call to the Arab people to revolt against Ottoman rule and to fight on the side of France and Britain.⁵ Yet, however strong the Arab people's aspirations may have been for single state 'nationhood', France and England had other plans and were simultaneously engaged in secret negotiations with regard to the Arab Ottoman provinces.⁶

⁵ Eight months earlier, Great Britain had reported to be 'prepared to recognize and uphold the independence of the Arabs in all regions (with some noted modifications) lying in the frontiers proposed by the Sharif of Mecca' (Antonius 1938).

⁶ Zogby regards this move as a reflection of the need of Great Britain to maintain access to ever-increasing raw materials to fuel its industrial growth. It needed to protect these sources and markets from its rivals and hence Britain needed Palestine to protect the northeastern flank of this sea route to India and the East – the Suez Canal. Control of Palestine and the Fertile Crescent (Iraq/Mesopotamia) would make a land route to India possible. Thus, in his analysis, the Arabs were only temporary allies of Great Britain. A more permanent and safer client was the Zionist movement – a colonial movement in search of a patron. Herzl and his organization had actively engaged and sought out the Ottoman sultan in the late 1900s in efforts to persuade him of the benefits to the Ottoman Empire if he were to agree to their plan of establishing a Jewish state in Palestine. When Herzl and his group failed to persuade the sultan, he turned to Great Britain where he found sympathetic listeners. In fact as early

Between July 1915 and March 1916, Sir Henry McMahon began to correspond with the Sharif of Mecca (Antonius 1946). Their exchanges resulted in the McMahon/Hussein Treaty whereby Great Britain agreed to recognize and support the independence of the Arabs, should they revolt against the Ottomans. A few months later, Sir Mark Sykes (Secretary to the British War Cabinet) concluded a contradictory agreement with France and Russia to divide up the lands of the Arab Ottoman Empire so that France would take the territories that would emerge as Syria and Lebanon, Britain would take control of what would become Iraq and Transjordan, and Palestine would be placed under international administration with Russia agreeing to manage Jerusalem (Tannous 1988:62–63). After the Bolshevik Revolution in 1917, Russia withdrew from the agreement and also divulged the previously secret Sykes-Picot Agreement to the rest of the world, agreeing to a Franco-British division of the Arab provinces into zones of British (Palestine and Mesopotamia/Iraq) and French (Syria and Lebanon) control.

THE EMERGENCE OF EUROPEAN ZIONISM

Zionism emerged in the dying days of the nineteenth century as an irreddentist political movement. It was, in some ways, a response to the growing anti-Semitism and racism that European and Russian Jews were facing at the time. It was also a movement which categorically turned away from earlier Jewish efforts at assimilation in Europe and Russia. In Russia, this assimilation movement led by wealthy merchants and educated Jews had a respectable following.⁷ In 1897, the World Zionist Organization was established in Basel, Switzerland, as the brainchild of Theodor Herzl, who became its first head. In his book *Der Judenstaat* (1896), he proposed the establishment of a Jewish state in Palestine or Argentina, as a means of solving what was then known as the ‘Jewish question’; the lack of a state for Jewish people in an era of nation-states, and in the context of the

as 1876, Lord Shaftesbury was to say ‘Syria and Palestine will before long become very important ... The country wants capital and population. The Jews can give it both. Has not England a special interest in promoting such restoration? To England, then, naturally belongs the role of favouring the settlement of Jews in Palestine’ (Zogby 1974).

⁷ For example, in 1863, Jewish financier Baron Joseph Grunzberg, who had built the Russian railway system, established the Society for the Spread of Enlightenment among Jews in Russia. Its purpose was the assimilation of Jews into Russian culture. That same year, however, Czar Alexander, for a variety of political reasons, initiated a period of particular oppression of minorities, of which the Jews suffered most. At the time, the persecution of the Jews in Russia contrasted sharply with the tolerance and protection accorded them by the Ottoman government (Karpas 1972).

growing discrimination and persecution of Jews in Europe. After some internal debate Palestine, through its close association with the Old Testament, became the focus of this colonial or pioneering effort. It was Herzl's argument to Western powers that such a Jewish state would be like a 'rampart of Europe against Asia, an outpost of civilization as opposed to barbarism' (1896: chapter 2). The objective of this initiative was to settle Palestine with Jewish immigrants. But in order to ensure a majority (European) Jewish population in the predominantly Muslim and Christian Palestine, space would have to be made and some transfer, forced or otherwise, of the indigenous population would have to occur. Most of the nineteenth-century Jewish immigration to Palestine had been unsystematic and largely financed by wealthy Jewish bankers and merchants such as the French banker Baron Edmund de Rothschild.⁸ Between 1882 and 1899, nineteen Jewish agricultural colonies were founded of which at least nine were financially and morally supported by the Baron (Margalith 1957:144). A second better-organized phase of Jewish immigration emerged, however, when the financing of settlements was turned over to the Jewish Colonization Association (a spin-off of the World Zionist Organization) and when Lord Rothschild (Lionel Walter Rothschild, the second Baron Rothschild) persuaded James Balfour and the British political establishment to support the establishment of a home for the Jewish people in Palestine.

In 1917 – less than a year after the Sykes-Picot Agreement had been signed – setting out the Anglo-French post-World War I division of spoils – the Balfour Declaration was revealed. On 2 November 1917, British Foreign Secretary Lord James Balfour sent Lord Rothschild, a British leader of the Zionist movement in London, a letter pledging support for the establishment in Palestine of a 'national home for the Jewish people'.

Foreign office
November 2,
Dear Lord Rothschild,

I have much pleasure in conveying to you, on behalf of His Majesty's government, the following declaration of sympathy with Jewish Zionist aspirations which have been submitted to, and approved by, the Cabinet. "His Majesty's Government view with favour the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people, and will use their best endeavours to facilitate the achievement of this object, it being clearly

⁸ Margalith is a good source for details of the settlements in Palestine, which were funded by the Rothschild family in the nineteenth century (Margalith 1957).

understood that nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine, or the rights and political status enjoyed by Jews in any other country.” I should be grateful if you would bring this declaration to the knowledge of the Zionist Federation.

Yours sincerely,
Arthur James Balfour

With the close of World War I, the League of Nations was established and in its covenant signed in 1919, the Palestinian people were recognized as an independent nation placed ‘provisionally’ under British mandate. Other peoples in the former Arab Ottoman provinces were also placed under mandate(s), some British and others French. In 1922, the League of Nations issued the British mandate and incorporated the Balfour Declaration in its articles, perhaps not recognizing that a fundamental inconsistency now existed in its articles of incorporation. On the one hand, the British mandate required Great Britain to act as ‘custodian’ (in Article 22 of the Covenant) to the Palestinian people who were ‘not yet able to stand by themselves’ as an independent state. At the same time, the incorporation of the Balfour Declaration into the League of Nations mandate for Palestine (articles 2, 4, 6, and 7) clearly contradicted significant parts of the original covenant. These articles allowed Great Britain to consult with the Jewish Agency (a powerful, autonomous para-state structure representing the World Zionist Organization, with international reach, which the mandate specifically enjoined the British to establish and assist under terms set out by the League of Nations) on matters pertaining to land, Jewish immigration to Palestine, and settlement, without referring to or consulting with the indigenous Palestinian people.⁹ The outcome of World War I was then one of humiliation for the Arabs. Instead of attaining independence and being united as one Arab nation, the region was unnaturally divided into five sections (Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, Transjordan, and Palestine). The lines on the map were largely drawn by Sir Mark Sykes, a great supporter of both Zionism and Armenian nationalism. Ibn Saud and his Bedouin forces in Arabia were purposefully kept at bay by the extension of Iraq and Jordan into the Northern Syrian Badia, and the Hijaz of the Sharif of Mecca was given independence.

⁹ Another example of the British disregard for the rights of the indigenous Arabs in Palestine comes from a further statement Lord Balfour had written in 1919: ‘In Palestine we do not propose ever to go through the form of consulting the wishes of the present inhabitants ... Zionism is of far greater importance than the desires and prejudices of the 700,000 Arabs who now inhabit the land’ (Khalidi 1971).

The Arab response

By 1919 Arab nationalists feared the promises made by their ally, Great Britain, were about to give way to a carving-up of their lands; they were also concerned by the Balfour Declaration and the declared Zionist intent to take over part of their homeland. Thus in July of that year they convened the General Syrian Congress in Damascus, with delegates from the entire East representing Muslim, Christian, and Jewish communities of the area, and expressed their desire for unity and independent statehood. These delegates met to put forward the aspirations of the Arabic-speaking people of Syria and demanded ‘full and absolute political independence for Syria and a rejection of its dismemberment, a desire for a constitutional monarch, disapproval of any tutelage of a mandatory power and rejection of the claims of the Zionists for the establishment of a Jewish commonwealth in that part of southern Syria known as Palestine’. These demands were presented to the King–Crane Commission, which had begun its inquiry just the month before.

American President Woodrow Wilson had sent Henry Churchill King and Charles R. Crane on a mission to Syria. Originally this visit was intended to be an inter-Allied fact-finding mission to determine whether the region was ready for self-determination and what, if any, nation(s) the local peoples wished to see take on a mandatory role. However, France refused to take part and Great Britain withdrew its nominated representative. In the end it was an official American commission into the circumstances and conditions in the Arab provinces of the former Ottoman Empire. It quickly became clear to this commission that, perhaps as a reaction to the last decades of the Ottoman Empire and the impending French and British mandates over them, a new Arab nation had come into being, one which had widespread popular support and which was based on a common history, language, territory and culture. The desire of the people in this state for independence and unity was clear to the commission. It was also clear to King and Crane that the people of Palestine – that coastal region of southwestern Syria – clearly identified themselves as part of this Arab nation. They also saw that the majority of the people in this Arab state of ‘Syria’ were against the formation of a Jewish state. The only way to establish a viable Jewish state, they reported, would be with armed force.¹⁰ They advised that Syria be recognized as one state and that the

¹⁰ The commission estimated that a force of at least 50,000 would be needed initially in order to set up the proposed Jewish state (King & Crane 1922).

League of Nations mandate be over the entire Arab region (contemporary Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, Israel, the West Bank, and Gaza). They also recommended that Emir Faisal be appointed head of such a constitutional monarchy and that America be the mandatory power for a specified period of time.

Needless to say, the recommendations of the King–Crane Commission, filed in August 1919, were rejected. In April 1920 at San Remo, the Allies proclaimed the establishment of the French (Syria and Lebanon) and British (Iraq, Transjordan and Palestine) mandates. As British and French troops entered the mandated territories, they were met with riots, mass demonstrations, prolonged nationwide strikes, and armed insurrections.¹¹ Initially these demonstrations and struggles were of a pan-Arab character with support for Palestine as part of the Arab nation. Volunteers from throughout the Arab world entered into British-mandated Palestine to aid fellow Arabs in their fight for independence. Even though this struggle in Palestine was originally part of the general Arab struggle for national liberation, it wasn't long before the weight of the British occupation and the intensity of the Zionist land and settler project began to isolate Palestine from the rest of the Arab world. In some ways, after 1920 Palestinian Arabs found themselves – for the first time in history – a distinct unit shut off from their Arab brothers (Barbour 1969:94). Although hostility to the European Zionist settlement schemes in Palestine had been expressed before the announcement of the Balfour Declaration and its incorporation into the League of Nations, there was no organized Palestinian response to this perceived threat until 1919. Muslim and Christian Palestinian leaders who had attended the first two meetings of the General Syrian Congress in Damascus of 1919 agreed to hold a third meeting in Haifa once the British mandate had been imposed.

The Third Palestine Arab Congress of December 1920 was the first independent Palestinian political event.¹² As a result of this congress, the first Palestinian organization – the Arab Executive, which consisted of

¹¹ See Antonius for greater detail on this struggle (Antonius 1938).

¹² The 'debate' over when Palestinian identity emerged is in some ways an artifice of the Zionist ideology, which has presented a version to the West that there was no Palestinian national identity until after the creation of the State of Israel. In other words, the nationalist struggle to create the State of Israel did not have any Palestinian opposition until late in the British mandate period. However, as Rashid Khalidi demonstrates in his influential book, *Palestinian identity: The construction of modern national consciousness*, a Palestinian national consciousness had its origins near the beginning of the twentieth century at a time when the Arab populations of the late Ottoman period and early British Mandatory Palestine had 'overlapping identities,' with some or many expressing loyalties to villages,

twenty-four Muslim and Christian leaders – was formed: an alliance of sects as well as the major tribal and familial factions of Palestine. According to Zogby, this traditional, largely feudal, leadership was only able to move hesitantly in a nationalist direction. They were unable to entirely separate their interests from the British Mandated Authority; nor were they able to totally support a truly popular revolution (which would have undermined their land holdings). They separated out Zionism from British policy and were unable to see that the two were, in fact, inextricably tied to each other (Zogby 1974). Over the next ten years, the Palestinian Arab Congress issued renewed demands for the British to halt Jewish immigration and slow down or prohibit the transfer of property from Arabs to Jews as well as to establish a democratic government with proportional representation – the largest proportion naturally going to Arabs in accordance with their greater numbers (Waines 1971b:225–226). But beyond making such pronouncements, the Arab Congress seemed paralysed by the growing political and economic chaos in the country. Finally in August 1929, the Arab population rose up and attacked a number of Jewish settlements, killing many and burning their synagogues. Rather than take up this popular rebellion, the Arab Executive appealed to the masses to return to their homes and to assist in restoring order. The gap between this traditional leadership and the direction of protest among the masses of Palestinians was now increasingly clear.

Over the next three decades, the Jewish percentage of the population of mandated Palestine was to alter dramatically. In 1918, the Arab population of Palestine was estimated at 700,000 people, of whom 574,000 were Muslim, 70,000 Christian, and 56,000 Jews. Growing anti-Semitism in Europe in the 1930s pushed ever-increasing numbers of Jews to immigrate to Palestine. From 1932 to 1935, for example, the Jewish population of Palestine doubled.¹³ By 1944, the number of Jews in Palestine was as much as 400,000 out of a total population of 1,700,000. Between 1946 and 1948, this number increased to 700,000 – around a third of the total population of about 2,115,000 (Farsoun & Zacharia 1997:79; Hadawi 1979:4).

This tremendous and rapid influx of Jewish immigrants into Palestine caused considerable pressure on the Arab population as well as serious

regions, a projected Arab national project, a nation of Palestine, and an alternative of inclusion in a Greater Syria (Khalidi 1997).

¹³ In 1935, 72,000 Jews arrived in Palestine. With a total population of slightly more than one million, this was a very significant immigration. The total number of Jewish immigrants by this time is contested with Khalidi, R. (1997; Khalidi 1971) indicating a figure near 300,000, and Farsoun and Zacharia (1997) a figure nearer to 150,000.

local economic dislocation.¹⁴ The large sums of Jewish capital flowing into the country brought about inflation and at the same time higher pay scales for Jewish workers. In 1936, Jewish workers averaged 140 per cent higher wages than those of Arabs doing identical jobs. In some trades the salaries for Jewish workers were 400 per cent higher (Waines 1971a:225). These problems were made worse by the rising rural urban migration of peasants being forced off their lands. In the past, the feudal nature of landholding had been such that as absentee landlords sold off land to others, the peasants historically carried on working for the new owners. But with land sales to Zionist organizations, Palestinian peasants were forced off the land. By 1931, 20,000 peasant families had been uprooted in this way and by 1941, 30 per cent of all Arab families employed in agriculture were landless. Many of these landless peasants flocked to the cities to look for work (Kanafani 1972:51–52).

Much of the land purchase in Palestine during this period was not by individuals, but by political agencies of the Zionist movement, such as the Jewish National Fund and the Jewish Colonization Association, and took the form of land acquisition from mostly absentee Arab landowners. The land was inhabited mainly by Palestinian tenant farmers, however, and this constituted a problem for the Jewish Agency. Clearing the land for newly arriving Jewish settlers became an important goal of the agency. Josef Weitz, for example, the director of the Jewish National Fund's Land Department, wrote in his diary on 20 December 1937:

Among ourselves it must be clear there is no room for both peoples in this country And the only solution is the land of Israel, or at least the Western land of Israel (Palestine), without Arabs. There is no room for compromise on this point. (Weitz, quoted in Morris 1987:27)

A few years later, in 1940, Weitz was to add in his diary:

We shall not achieve our goal of being an independent people with the Arabs in this small country. The only solution is a Palestine ... without Arabs ... and there is no other way than to transfer the Arabs from here to the neighbouring countries, to transfer all of them: Not one village, not one tribe should be left ... Only after this

¹⁴ Jewish capital was seizing the economic initiative in the country and the Arab economic order was in ruins. The fledgling Arab bourgeoisie could not compete with the much better financed and more modern Zionist enterprises. In the years 1933–6, an average of 20 per cent of the total number of Jewish immigrants were listed as 'capitalists' – immigrants who brought with them enough capital to start a modest enterprise (at least £1,000 at that time). In addition, over £77 million had been set aside for the exclusive use of developing the Jewish economy in Palestine (Barbour 1969; Peel 1937).

transfer will the country be able to absorb millions of our brethren. There is no other way out. (Bober 1972:13; quoted in Zogby 1974:104)

The 1936–1939 Palestinian rebellion

The long-simmering Palestinian resistance marked by the 1929 uprising and the 1933 national strike finally erupted into a peasant-based national rebellion between 1936–9. One of the first acts of the British forces was to cut communication wires between Palestine and the other Arab regions (Kalkas 1971:244). By 1938 the British were so concerned with this pan-Arab support that ‘Jewish labourers were employed by the Government at the cost of 100,000 pounds Sterling to build a barbed-wire fence around the northern and north-eastern frontier of Palestine. This fence was intended to separate the Arabs of Palestine from the Arabs of Lebanon and Syria’ (Barbour 1969:192).

The rapid rate at which land was being purchased by the Jewish National Fund and other agencies along with the increasing rate of Jewish immigration and settlement, were two important factors in the rising alarm among Palestinians for their political future and their livelihood (Khalidi 1984:86). As important was the dawning realization among Palestinians that British military institutions were cooperating with paramilitary Jewish organizations such as the Haganah, the Irgun, and the Stern Gang by providing them with military training and arms. The main purpose of the Haganah (defence, in Hebrew) at that time had been to protect the Jewish colonies and enclaves sprouting up in Palestine. One British officer in particular, Orde Charles Wingate, was responsible for turning the Haganah into an efficient military organization. Wingate began his career in Sudan, where he was particularly successful in developing an ambush policy against slave traders. In 1936 he was assigned to Palestine, where ‘he quickly became enchanted by the Zionist dream. He decided actively to encourage the Jewish settlers and started teaching their troops more effective combat tactics and retaliation methods against the local population’ (Pappé 2006:16).

Under the tutelage of Wingate, the Haganah became a supremely efficient military arm for the Jewish Agency, the Zionist government body in Palestine. He succeeded in attaching the Haganah to the British forces during the Arab revolt so that they could better learn what a ‘punitive mission’ to an Arab village should entail. For example, in June 1938, a Haganah unit and a British company jointly attacked a village on the border between Palestine and Lebanon and held it for a number of hours

(Hagana Archives file 0014 1938; quoted in Pappé 2006:16). The Haganah militia had its first taste of what it meant to occupy a Palestinian village.

During this same period, Palestinian Arabs recognized they were being prevented from arming themselves or developing self-defence mechanisms against Jewish attacks. Palestinian resistance to what they regarded as a colonization of their land was being met with British Mandate Authority abolishment of civil law, whereby Palestinians but not Jews were subjected to emergency law and military courts and the discharge of arms or carrying of weapons was punishable by death (Tannous 1988:230). They also gradually came to feel that the British Mandate Authority was not providing them with any assistance in creating civil and political institutions for self-government.

At this time, Shaykh Izzedine al-Qassam had come to Palestine to organize the Palestinian fight for independence against the British. He had made overtures to the traditional leaders in the Arab Executive, but had been turned down. Nevertheless he proceeded to organize the people of the countryside into guerrilla bands. On 2 November 1935, in the first organized operation he led near Haifa – in response to what Palestinians regarded as efforts to dispossess them – he was killed. Shaykh Izzedine's death sparked a protracted Palestinian rebellion, which was to last three years. Qassamite armed bands began their offensive against British and Zionist colonists in April 1936. The Jews rose in anger and Tel Aviv was filled with violent anti-Arab demonstrators who demanded the formation of an all-Jewish army. This in turn outraged the Arab community and the violence spread to Jaffa. Arab national committees were set up in nearly every city and village and calls were made for a nationwide strike. In an effort to salvage their leadership, the Arab Executive merged with representatives of the local strike committees to form the Arab Higher Committee (AHC). This Committee met then in May 1936 and called on all Palestinian organizations to continue the national strike until the British allowed Palestinians to form a national government based on democratic representative governance.¹⁵

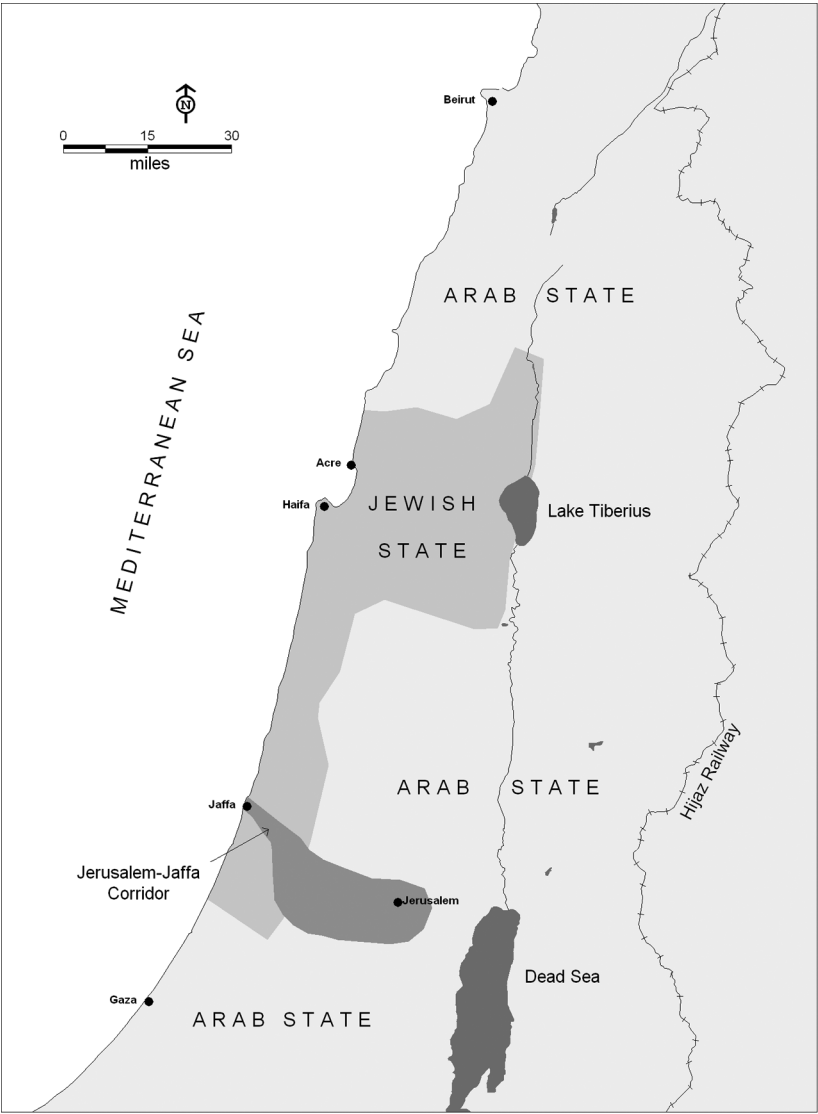
This resistance to what Palestinians saw as the colonization of their land was met with repression and the abolition of civil law by the British. The British Mandate Authority tried to intimidate the Arab population

¹⁵ Mayors of most Arab cities, the Arab national guard, the Arab police, 137 Arab senior officials in the mandate government, and 1,200 other Arab officials in government all publicly supported these demands and the strike (Zogby 1974).

into submission by using mass arrests, forced opening of businesses closed by the strike, collective fines, and confiscations against villages suspected of harbouring 'guerrillas' and widespread demolition. By June of 1936 they had arrested 2,600 strikers. Most of the old city in Jaffa had been levelled. The British army of occupation was also increased to 20,000 men. But the strike continued. Palestinians were subjected to emergency laws and military courts. The emergency laws declared all Palestinian political organizations 'illegal'. At the same time, the British continued to arm and train Zionist Jewish settlers and paramilitary organizations (Tannous 1988:238). In a desperate effort to end the strike as well as the violence and bloodshed, the son and grandson of the Sharif of Mecca – King Abdullah and King Ghazi, respectively – entered into the fray along with Ibn Saud and attempted to establish an atmosphere for negotiations. As part of the deal, Britain sent a commission to Palestine to study the Arab grievances, report on the causes of the revolt, and make recommendations that might solve the problems. This was the Palestine Royal Commission headed by Lord Peel (known popularly as the Peel Commission).

Lord Peel arrived in Palestine in November 1936. After two months, he returned to Britain and released his report in July 1937. The Arabs had hoped it would affirm their call for representative, democratic government, and a halt to Jewish immigration. Instead, the Peel Commission reaffirmed the League of Nations' British mandate and 'national home for Jews' policy. The commission suggested a solution to the violence would be the creation of a partitioned, racially divided state (see 1937). The north of Palestine would go to the Jewish state, with an international corridor around Jerusalem. The Arab state was to include the south mideastern Palestine. The report recommended that 'sooner or later there should be a transfer of land and as far as possible an exchange of populations' on the model of the Greek–Turkish exchange at the close of the Greco–Turkish War of 1922.

The Arabs regarded the report as a deep betrayal and the national strike and violence continued, particularly in Galilee. The British responded initially by outlawing the Arab High Council and the other national committees, arresting, sentencing to death, or sending into exile the Arab leadership. However, the rural revolt continued to grow. By mid- 1938, the rebels were in control of 80 per cent of the countryside as well as the older parts of Jerusalem, Nabulus, and Hebron (Kalkas 1971:247–248). Not prepared to allow the rebellion to succeed, the British unleashed a massive campaign of repression against the Palestinians. In addition to a



MAP 8. Peel Commission's Palestine

20,000-member occupation force, the British brought in squadrons of the Royal Air Force from Cyprus and Egypt to quell this serious uprising. Furthermore, hundreds of Jewish settlers were supplied with further arms and organized into ‘night squads’ to attack Arab villages – their training

having been completed in the years before by Orde Wingate.¹⁶ By 1939, the British were able to restore order along with 6,000 Jewish auxiliary police helping to suppress the last embers of the Arab revolt (Khalidi 2001:26).

Following the 1936–9 rebellion, the British called for a conference of Arabs and Jews to discuss how to proceed in Palestine. The St James Conference or Round Table Conference of 1939 brought together Arab representatives from Palestine, Egypt, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Transjordan, and Yemen. The Arab delegates, however, refused to meet directly with the Jewish representatives, as they did not recognize the legitimacy of the Jewish Agency. Whatever affront the Jewish Agency may have felt at this refusal to directly negotiate with them, the 1936–9 rebellion had clearly benefited the Zionists; they now had ‘demographic weight, control of strategic areas of land, and much of the weaponry and military organization that would be needed as a springboard for taking over the country within less than a decade’ (Khalidi 2001:27).

The McDonald White Paper of 1939, which emerged at the end of the St James Conference, set out key provisions that appeased the Arabs of Palestine but severely compromised the British commitment to the Balfour Declaration of 1917. The key provisions of the white paper of 1939 were:

1. It was not British policy that Palestine should become a Jewish State (contrary to the fundamental principle of the Balfour Declaration).
2. Neither was it British policy that Palestine should become an Arab State (contrary to the McMahon Correspondence of 1915).
3. The establishment of an independent Palestine state in which Arabs and Jews have a government within ten years.
4. Jewish immigration to be limited to 75,000 over the next five years, so that the number of Jews in the country would not exceed one-third of the total population.
5. Transfers of land from Arabs to Jews to be severely restricted.

The Arab High Commission rejected the white paper because it did not explicitly include a commitment to the independence of the Palestinian people. The Jews of Palestine and in the rest of the world were outraged at what was seen as British betrayal. With the outbreak of World War II, the report and the League of Nations became irrelevant. Though the basis of British policy until the end of the mandate, the white paper never was

¹⁶ See ‘Orde Wingate’ in Khalidi (1971).

effectively implemented and rescinding its decrees was the first action of the Israeli Provisional Council of State (formerly the Jewish Agency, headed by David Ben-Gurion), on 15 May 1948 when the State of Israel was declared.

In 1942, six hundred Jewish delegates met in New York to express their opposition to the white paper, demanding the establishment of a Jewish army, their own flag, and untrammelled immigration to Palestine. The white paper also prompted a change of policy within the Jewish Agency and the Haganah. Zionist armed attacks now focused on British targets as well as Arab ones. The most infamous of these included, in November 1944, the assassination of the British Minister of State in Cairo, Lord Moyne, by the Stern Gang led by Yitzhak Shamir as well as in 1946, the blowing up of the King David Hotel in Jerusalem by the Irgun, under the leadership of Menachim Begin. Before long, the British came to perceive the conflict in Palestine as an economic and political burden, and early in 1947, the government declared the mandate unworkable and announced the imminent withdrawal of its troops, handing the conflict back to the United Nations to find a solution.

The UN Partition Plan of 1947 the declaration of the State of Israel 1948

In 1947, the United Nations dispatched a Commission of Inquiry [UNSCOP] to Palestine. After the commission proposed the partition of Palestine, the United Nations General Assembly on 29 November 1947 passed Resolution 181, or what was also known as the UN Partition Plan. According to the plan, the Jewish state was to comprise 56.4 per cent of the territory while the area allocated to the Palestinian Arab state was 42.8 per cent. Jerusalem was to become an international zone. At the time the resolution was passed, Jews owned only 7 per cent of the total land area in Palestine; Palestinian Arabs owned the rest. Jews constituted nearly one-third of Palestine's population and Palestinians, two-thirds. Palestinians and other Arabs were outraged and rejected the United Nations resolution (Farsoun & Zacharia 1997:110–111).

The day following the rejection of the UN Partition Plan, armed conflict spread throughout Palestine. The Palestinians entered the fighting with a deeply divided and ineffective leadership, exceedingly limited finances, no centrally organized military forces or administrative organs, and no reliable allies. The Jewish population, on the other hand, though smaller relative to the Palestinians, was politically unified, had centralized

para-state institutions, and was exceedingly well led and well armed. The outcome of the 1947–8 war was a foregone conclusion. The Palestinians had larger numbers, but the Jews had more important advantages. As Khalidi succinctly summed up the situation, the Jews had a ‘larger and more diversified economy, better finances, greater firepower, superior organization, and considerable support from the United States and the Soviet Union’ (2001:30).

Zionist paramilitary organizations – especially the Haganah and the international volunteers who came to assist them – engaged in a system of what Ben-Gurion called aggressive defence; that is, every Arab attack would be met with decisive counteraction, destruction of the site, expulsion of its residents, and seizure of the location. In March 1948, Ben-Gurion put into effect Plan Dalet with the aim of capturing, evacuating, and ‘cleansing’ Arab villages, neighbourhoods, and towns.¹⁷ The following month, two events sent shockwaves throughout Palestine and the rest of the Arab world: the death of the charismatic Palestinian leader, Abd al-Qader al-Husseini, while defending the Arab village of al-Qastal; and the Irgun and Stern Gang massacre at Deir Yassin village. It led the Arab states, assembled in an Arab League, to consider intervention in Palestine with their regular armies (Farsoun & Zacharia 1997:114). The Arab League agreed to intervene, but only after the British mandate had officially ended. A volunteer force was quickly put together with Syrian, Iraqi, and Lebanese individual volunteers and small military units. Only the Jordanians had a professional army with a serious capacity to defend Palestinians.¹⁸ Once the largely small and irregular Arab armies decided

¹⁷ According to Pappé, when Plan Dalet went into effect in April 1948, a month before the end of the British mandate, the Haganah had more than 50,000 troops at its disposal, half of which had been trained by the British Army during World War II. The Plan D was to capture, cleanse, and destroy. ‘As Arab villages fell, they were surrounded, attacked, occupied, their people expelled and their homes and buildings demolished’. In some cases the expulsion was accompanied by massacres, the most notorious of which was Deir Yassin (Pappé 2006:43).

¹⁸ Many historians believe that King Abdullah of Jordan had agreed in secret talks with the Jewish Agency to limit the Jordanian Arab Legion to defending the West Bank for the Arabs. Recognizing that the only serious army they would have to face was Jordanian, the Jewish leadership fully expected the future State of Israel to stretch over 80 per cent of British-mandated Palestine: the 56 per cent promised to the Jews by the UN with an additional 24 per cent taken from the Arab state the UN had allocated to the Palestinians. The remaining 20 per cent would be picked up by Jordan as agreed in the secret Jordanian–Jewish Agency negotiations. One of the few triumphs in the Arab military history of 1948 was the Jordanians (with the help of an Iraqi contingent) successfully repelling repeated Jewish attempts to occupy parts of the West Bank throughout the second half of 1948 (Pappé 2006:92–97).

to intervene, most of the major cities and towns in Palestine had already fallen to the Haganah and other Jewish militias.¹⁹ The Jewish fighting force included 52,000 men in the Haganah, 14,000 in the Jewish Settlement Police (which had been trained and armed by the British), and 27,000 World War II veterans as well as numerous paramilitary groups. Benny Morris described the emergence of the Haganah:

In the course of that year [1948], it [Haganah] emerged and efficiently functioned as a large conventional force, beating first the Palestinian Arab militias and then the combined irregular and regular armies of the Arab states. By April–May 1948, it was conducting brigade-size offensives, by July, multi-brigade operations; and by October, divisional, multi-front offensive (Morris 1987:22).

The Haganah, soon to be renamed the Israeli Defence Force, and other Jewish militias were superior in training, armament, and numbers to the local Palestinian forces and the Arab armies combined. Most of these Arab states had only just snatched their independence from French or British mandate and were not prepared for international campaigns. Egypt was still in a semicolonial relationship with Great Britain. Only recently had France grudgingly granted Lebanon and Syria their independence, in 1946 and 1943, respectively. And Jordan's King Abdullah was alleged to have given orders to his British-commanded Arab legion to secure only the part of Palestine – the West Bank – allotted to him in secret talks with the Zionist leadership.

The Palestinians were defeated by the Jews in the struggle to keep their homeland and, on Friday 15 May 1948, Ben-Gurion declared the establishment of the State of Israel. Henceforth, 1948 marked two contrasting historical experiences. For the Zionists, it was the culmination of the dream of creating a Jewish state, as a means to put an end to European anti-Semitism. For Palestinians it was the time of expulsion, exodus, and destruction of their land and society.

¹⁹ The Zionist campaign to clear Palestine of Arabs had begun months earlier. After a pronounced campaign of intimidation and terror in Haifa in December 1947, for example, between 15,000 and 20,00 Palestinian elite left their residences in Lebanon and Egypt to await the return of calm to their city. They never came back. Safad reflected a more typical upheaval, if anything about war can be called typical. It was a town with a long-established and integrated Jewish community. It had 9,500 Arabs and 2,400 mostly ultra-Orthodox Jews who were not interested in Zionism or in fighting their Arab neighbours. It was attacked by a highly organized Haganah commando unit of 1,000 Palmach who confronted 400 Arab volunteers. As Ilan Pappé writes, Safad was 'one of many local imbalances that show the falsity of the myth of a Jewish David facing an Arab Goliath in 1948' (Pappé 2006).

Palestinian expulsion and the humanitarian emergency

Within a few short months in the spring of 1948, nearly three-quarters of a million people in Palestine were forced from their homes by armed Jewish militias and pushed to neighbouring states. It was an exercise in ethnic cleansing which had begun nearly a half-century earlier and which was now culminating in *al-Nakbah* (The Catastrophe), as Palestinians called this dramatic upheaval (Pappé 2006). This huge number of people took refuge in camps hastily set up by the Red Cross and other humanitarian agencies in the West Bank, Gaza, Lebanon, Syria, and Jordan. An estimated 5,000 Palestinian refugees followed the retreating Iraqi army back to Iraq.²⁰ Others fled to Egypt and carried on to wherever they could find shelter across North Africa.²¹

Unusually, instead of bringing this humanitarian emergency under the mandate of the existing International Refugee Organization (IRO), which held the dual protection and humanitarian relief mandate,²² the United Nations set up a special agency in December 1949 in Resolution 302, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA), to manage Palestinian refugee camps and provide health, education, and humanitarian aid. The year before, the UN had set up a special commission, the United Nations Conciliation Commission for Palestine (UNCCP). Created by the General Assembly in Resolution 194(III) in December 1948, the commission was assigned to oversee the legal and political protection of Palestinian refugees. The UNCCP was composed of representatives of the United States, France, and Turkey. Its goal was to provide protection and facilitate durable solutions for persons displaced as a result of the 1947–8 conflict and war in Palestine.

²⁰ These refugees were mainly from Haifa and Jaffa and had taken refuge behind the Iraqi army lines. Upon their retreat they decided to return with them to Iraq. Later waves of Palestinians came to Iraq after the June 1967 war. Their descendants make up the majority of the 30–40,000 Palestinians who fled Iraq after the 2003 Anglo-American invasion of the country (Amnesty International 2007).

²¹ The number of Palestinian refugees in Egypt is estimated at about 100,000 by Oroub Obeid. In the late 1990s and early 2000s she conducted the first large-scale study of this largely forgotten refugee community in Egypt (El-Abed 2003; El-Abed 2004; El-Abed 2009).

²² The International Refugee Organization (IRO) was established in 1946 as a temporary agency of the United Nations to assist refugees and displaced persons in many countries of Europe and Asia who either could not return to their countries of origin or were unwilling to return for political reasons. By 1952 it had resettled about one million persons. It was superseded by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

TABLE 4. *Palestinian refugees in UNRWA camps*

Field of Operations	Official Camps	Registered Families in Camps	Registered Refugees in Camps	Registered Refugees
Jordan	10	63,591	335,307	1,930,703
Lebanon	12	50,806	220,908	416,608
Syria	9	26,645	123,646	452,983
West Bank	19	39,895	161,408	754,263
Gaza Strip	8	93,074	492,299	1,059,584
Agency total	58	274,011	1,363,496	4,618,141

Figures derived from UNRWA as of 30 June 2008.

However, after four years of effort, the UNCCP proved it was incapable of providing Palestinian refugees with the basic international protection accorded all other refugees. The commission claimed it was unable to fulfil its mandate due to the lack of international political will to ensure the right of Palestinian refugees wishing to go back to their homes and villages. Today the commission has no budget and no staff. The secretary of the UNCCP is a staff member of the UN Department of Political Affairs.

The largest number of Palestinian refugees in the Middle East is found in Jordan, with more than 1.6 million registered with UNRWA today. Syria acknowledges 391,651 registered Palestinian refugees. In Lebanon, 382,973 Palestinian refugees are registered with UNRWA. Fifty-six per cent of them live in official refugee camps. In the West Bank, 37 per cent of the population – 607,770 Palestinians – comprises refugees and in Gaza, 852,626 Palestinian refugees, making up 75 per cent of the total population.

THE PALESTINIAN EXODUS: STATELESS REFUGEES
WITHOUT PROTECTION OR RIGHTS OF RETURN

I was born in Safad, Galilee in 1941. It was a town built on a hill. I remember that we lived near the Jewish quarter. My mother used to take us to the Jewish physicians because she trusted them ... One day there was a quarrel between an Arab and Jew about some clothes in a shop. The Jew was killed. Then instead of cooperation which used to distinguish the relations between the Jews and the Arabs in the town, everybody took care of themselves, they didn't mingle. Of course the war began outside Safad and in other villages. But when these villages were controlled [by the Jews] we were protected by Jordanian troops and some Syrian volunteers. Then, one day the Jordanian troops pulled out without telling any of the inhabitants they were leaving. The local defenders were very poorly armed and

realized they couldn't put off an attack. There was no defence ... So we left. My sisters who were older carried me and my younger brother. It was the month of May, but it was raining and I remember that groups of people were walking with us. We moved north, not to Syria. There was no cover, nothing. There were soldiers walking with us. Syrian soldiers. We just walked and walked maybe 300 kilometres until we reached Bint il-Jbeil [south Lebanon]. We didn't stay long, maybe one night. Then we were put on a train for Tripoli. We went from one end of the country to the other. We didn't stay long there either. Maybe one night and then they took us to Homs where we started our life in Syria ... We thought we were going to go back to Safad in one week's time. We were promised, just get out of town until the Arabs regain it. When we left the fighting in Safad we thought that after one week we could come back. I remember I left in short trousers. We took no papers, not even our birth certificates. Nothing! Because we were promised that we were going back home soon. (Ali 2005, Damascus)

The official Israeli historiography claims that the Palestinian refugees fled due to enticement and encouragement by Arab governments. This claim has been refuted by the new Israeli historians who have found no evidence to show that either the leaders of the Arab states or the Mufti (religious leader) ordered or encouraged the mass exodus of April 1948 (Gelvin 1998; Gelvin 2005). The dramatic and abrupt dispossession and displacement of Palestinians in 1948 attracted significant international attention. In June 1948, Josef Weitz, Director of the Jewish National Fund, met with Ben-Gurion and put forward a plan for preventing the return of refugees to their homes. This plan was formalized and adopted by the Israeli Cabinet on 16 June 1948. Arab governments, at the same time, refused to integrate Palestinian refugees in their host countries, maintaining that this would threaten their right of return to their homes in Palestine.

For similar reasons the Arab states were generally opposed to having the International Refugee Organization (IRO) – the existing UN agency set up for refugees and displaced people after World War II – take on the needs and interests of Palestinian refugees. The Arab states did not want Palestinian refugees resettled and assimilated in new countries, a policy which at the time was the IRO's preferred durable solution. Instead, the Arab states wanted Palestinians to be repatriated and allowed to return to their homes. Thus, they pressed for the formation of a separate specialized organization to meet the short- and long-term economic relief of Palestinian refugees in occupied territory and in countries bordering on the former mandatory Palestine.

Politically, the establishment of the State of Israel and the flight of the majority of the Christian and Muslim Palestinians radically changed the face of Palestinian politics. The common experience of loss of homeland

may have strengthened a Palestinian particularism, but the trauma of the loss seems to have muted any significant political activity. For the first decade in exile, Palestinians relied on the efforts of neighbouring states to keep their agenda public: the abolishment of the Zionist Jewish state; independence in a Palestinian state; and the right of Palestinian refugees to return to pre-1948 Palestine.

On 16 September 1948, Count Folke Bernadotte, the UN mediator in Palestine, submitted his recommendations to the UN General Assembly. His report reaffirmed Palestinians' right to return to their homes, to restitution, and to compensation. A day after this submission, he was assassinated by the Stern Gang. Nevertheless, the widely quoted UN resolution 194, based on his recommendations, was passed on 11 December 1948. This resolution established the UNCCP, whose early activities included intervention with Israeli authorities to permit the return of certain categories of refugees, reunification of separated families, recommendations to safeguard the rights and properties of refugees, intervention to abrogate discriminatory property laws, and facilitation of refugee access to blocked savings accounts and assets in banks inside Israel. The Economic Survey Mission, one of the sub-organs of the UNCCP, called for the establishment of short- and long-term economic relief for Palestinian refugees, which included the creation of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency. Six months later, in May 1950, the UNRWA took over humanitarian relief operations in the Jordanian-controlled West Bank, the Egyptian-controlled Gaza Strip, and in Jordan, Syria, and Lebanon. UNRWA's mandate was short: all relief and works operations were to be terminated by the middle of 1951 as it was expected that those refugees wishing to do so would soon be able to return to their homes in accordance with the General Assembly Resolution 194 (III). Those not willing to do so were entitled to resettlement assistance. In fact, because of the absence of durable solutions for these refugees, UNRWA's mandate has been extended on a regular basis year after year.²³

²³ The definition which UNRWA employs of a refugee is different from that set out by the UNHCR. For UNRWA, to qualify as a Palestinian refugee means proving that you resided in Palestine at least two years prior to the establishment of the State of Israel on 15 May, 1948, and 'who lost both his home and means of livelihood as a result of the 1948 War'. Many Palestinians could not fit this description. Some lost homes and not livelihoods, others livelihoods but not homes. Some could not supply the documentation to prove physical residence, while others were displaced in the new Israeli state. For deeper analysis of Palestinian refugee numbers and the various categories of Palestinians who are excluded see Zureik (2001).

Palestinian refugees are a creation of the League of Nations and its successor, the United Nations. That is, their plight, their statelessness, and their liminality are the direct result of the misinterpretation of the covenant of the League of Nations, the misadministration of the British mandate, and the UN's decision to partition the Palestinian homeland and create two states. Palestinians are also hostage to the political positioning of Israeli politicians and within Israel and the occupied territories. Furthermore, through on-going 'legal' evictions, house demolitions, and more recently the Separation Wall, the numbers of Palestinian refugees continue to grow. Unlike many other refugee situations, the Palestinian case is crowded with numerous UN resolutions and recommendations relating to them. The three most important such resolutions are 181, 194, and 242.²⁴

Although the Israeli state accepted UN Resolution 181 dividing Palestine into one Jewish and one Arab state, it refused to accept UN Resolution 194 'resolving that the refugees wishing to return to their homes and live at peace with their neighbours should be permitted to do so at the earliest practicable date, and that compensation should be paid for the property of those choosing not to return and for loss of or damage to property which, under principles of international law or in equity, should be made good by the Governments or authorities responsible.' In direct refutation to UN GA Resolution 194, the Israeli state moved quickly to consolidate legislation hindering Palestinians from returning and reclaiming their confiscated property. This included the Nationality Law of 1952, which placed many restrictions on non-Jews, namely Palestinian Arabs, for the purpose of excluding as many 1948 refugees as possible from eligibility for Israeli citizenship; and numerous laws regarding property rights such as the Absentees Property Law, which allowed the transfer of property of displaced Palestinians to Jewish citizens. This law also applied to Palestinians who were internally displaced and had fled their homes and villages temporarily during the armed conflicts. Others were forcibly evicted. These Palestinians in the State of Israel became the

²⁴ UN General Assembly Resolution 181 proposed the partition of mandated Palestine into a Jewish state side by side with a Palestinian state. UN General Assembly Resolution 194 resolved that Palestinian refugees wishing to return to their homes and live in peace with their neighbours should be permitted to do so. Furthermore it was resolved that a commission (the UNCCP) be set up to facilitate repatriation, resettlement, and economic and social rehabilitation of the Palestinian refugees and the payment of compensation. UN Security Council Resolution 242 called for the withdrawal of Israeli armed forces from territories occupied in 1967 (the West Bank and the Gaza Strip) and the termination of all claims or states of belligerency.

'Present Absentees'. Those who managed to remain in the Palestinian territories that became Israel in 1948 numbered approximately 150,000 and 25 per cent of them became internally displaced persons.

After their initial expulsion during and consequent to the 1947–8 war, Palestinians were subjected to further displacement. During the Arab–Israeli War in 1967, Israel occupied the remaining 22 per cent of mandated Palestine, namely the West Bank and Gaza, as well as other Arab territory. As a result, approximately 350,000 Palestinians were uprooted from the West Bank and Gaza – more than half of them for the second time. Most of these refugees and displaced persons found shelter in Jordan. The Israeli invasion into Lebanon in 1982 resulted in the death and displacement of thousands of Palestinians in refugee camps, which were targeted by Israeli forces for attack both by air and later by proxy land forces. The Gulf War of 1990–1, when Saddam Hussein of Iraq attacked and occupied Kuwait, caused another mass forced migration of Palestinians. An estimated 350,000 largely middle-class Palestinians who had been residents in Kuwait, sometimes for decades, were thrown out of the country with no opportunity to return. Most of them went to Jordan to join close relatives or other more distant kin. With the end of the Gulf War in 1991, none of these Palestinians were allowed to return to Kuwait, as both the PLO and, surprisingly, King Hussein had taken sides with Iraq in the early stages of the conflict.

In the middle of the 1990s, Libya evicted its Palestinian community of some 30,000; many of them straddled the Libyan–Egyptian border for months and some remained for more than a year, unable to return to Palestine or find a country that would allow them entry. With no legal protection – that having been assigned to the UNCCP, which had ceased to function effectively after 1952 – these people were at the mercy of the humanitarian impulse of the world. Then, and also now, the main refugee agency of the United Nations – the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR), with a clear protection role for refugees – stepped in to help these stateless people who had been specifically excluded from its mandate in the region. Then, in the aftermath of the Anglo-American invasion of Iraq, the 50,000 Palestinian refugees in that country began to flee, seeking protection mainly in Syria and Jordan. Most of them were trapped in hastily erected UNHCR temporary camps, some on the 'no-man's land' between states, unable to go forward and afraid to go back. After lengthy negotiations between the UNHCR and neighbouring states, a few selected categories of Palestinians have been allowed entry into Jordan and Syria; most are awaiting third country settlement.

PALESTINIANS IN DIASPORA

After their expulsion, Palestinian refugees sought shelter in neighbouring countries, primarily in the West Bank and Gaza (which had fallen under the control of Jordan and Egypt, respectively) Lebanon, and Syria. Others managed to find refuge in North Africa, in the Arabian Gulf (particularly Kuwait), Europe, and North America. Those who remained in the new Israeli state often found themselves ‘permanently’ internally displaced and declared ‘Absent Present’.²⁵ The majority of Palestinians believed their expulsion would end in a matter of days – at most, a few weeks. Most had not carried their belongings with them and many had left their doors open, while others took their keys and house deeds. To this day, many hold on to the keys to their homes as a symbol of hope and resistance to exile, while others dream of returning to their villages and towns of origin. In some cases – particularly in Lebanon and Jordan – Palestinian refugees can see the lights of their villages at night from their current places of residence in refugee camps, middle-class urban neighbourhoods, and poor squatter settlements on the edges of Arab cities. Most Palestinian refugees settled unwillingly into particular sites in the adjacent countries in the 1950s along with fellow refugees from the same villages, towns, and cities in Palestine. Many remain in these places today.

By the late 1950s Palestinians in exile began to see themselves as capable of accomplishing some of the goals of their Palestinian national movement. In 1959 Yasser Arafat and others established the ‘Palestinian Liberation Movement’ (*Fateh*) (Gelvin 2005). This was followed closely by the establishment of a number of other ‘guerrilla’ organizations whose ‘Fedayeen’ fighters increasingly engaged in small-scale attacks and skirmishes on Israel. These included the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP), and many others. In 1964, following an earlier decision of the Arab League, 422 Palestinian national figures met in Jerusalem and founded the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) with the goal of liberating Palestine through armed

²⁵ Palestinians in the immediate region of the Arab Middle East, the five UNRWA field sites, are the focus of this study. However, those who went further afield make up the other half of the estimated nine million Palestinians in diaspora. The significance of their contribution to Palestinian national identity cannot be overestimated. Ties to Palestinians in the Arab Gulf have been significant in maintaining systems of remittances; Palestinians in the USA holding American passports have been instrumental in manipulating important legal channels for Palestinian family reunification in the face of increasing Israeli obstruction and hostility (Ashkar 2006).

struggle. After the humiliating defeat of the Arab states by Israel in 1967 (which brought the West Bank and the Gaza Strip and East Jerusalem under Israeli rule), Fateh and numerous other liberation organizations saw a huge increase in membership. Many of these organizations also gained support from Egypt and Syria as a means of maintaining indirect warfare against Israel. By the 1970s the PLO was effectively an umbrella group of eight organizations (many with political as well as military wings) with headquarters in Damascus and Beirut, having the common aim of armed resistance to Zionism, or Israeli occupation. After 1970, and after Black September in Jordan, the PLO established itself in Lebanon in accordance with the Cairo Agreement of 1969.²⁶ After 1982, the PLO was defeated in the Israeli invasion of Lebanon and its leadership was permitted safe passage to move to Tunis. During this decade the PLO suffered a period of disarray, and splinter groups (the Rejection Front) emerged. A major shift occurred after the first Intifada in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip (1987–93), and it was the Palestinian refugees of the occupied territories who came to the forefront of the nationalist struggle. The concerns of these populations were somewhat different from those Palestinians in Jordan, Syria, and Lebanon, in that they were primarily interested in independence rather than in refugee return (Sayigh 1997).

The historical timeline, social and political conditions, civil rights, and proportion of Palestinians to the population differ from country to country in UNRWA field sites. Palestinians form a politically, socially, and economically disadvantaged group within the region and within the countries they live in; many of them live in poverty and in their populations, the young predominate numerically. With the exception of those living in Jordan, none of them had citizenship rights until 1995, when Palestinians living in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank had the right to Palestinian passports issued by the Palestinian Authority. Given that each location has experienced a unique set of historical and demographic realities, it is useful to briefly contextualize each country or territory.²⁷ For

²⁶ After the defeat of the Arab states in the 1967 war, many Palestinian guerrilla movements increased their activities in Lebanon with the backing of a number of Arab states. In November 1969, a Lebanese delegation headed by army commander Emile al Bustani met with Yasser Arafat, chairman of the PLO, and agreed an effective endorsement of PLO freedom of action in Lebanon to recruit, arm, train, and employ fighters against Israel. The Lebanese Army was to protect their bases and supply lines. In effect, the Cairo Agreement permitted the PLO to bear arms and use Lebanon as a launching pad for its 'war' on Israel.

²⁷ Detailed socioeconomic survey results are regularly available through various studies of the Institute of Palestine Studies (www.palestine-studies.org); since 1993 with the first

Palestinian refugees in Syria, for example, their presence and political experience in the country is perhaps the most stable and least affected by the continuous crises and armed conflicts in the region. In Lebanon, on the other hand, continuous armed conflict since the 1960s has intimately shaped the unending displacement and forced migration imposed on Palestinian refugees in that country and reinforced their marginalization. Governance in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip has changed dramatically over the past sixty years. The West Bank was governed by Jordan between 1948 and 1967, by Israel between 1967 and 1994, and by the Palestinian National Authority after 1994. The Gaza Strip moved from Egyptian to Israeli control and finally after 1994 to the Palestinian National Authority. The changes in central authority dramatically affected the lives of the Palestinians and Palestinian refugees in the occupied territories of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip.

Historical timeline, socio-political conditions and civil rights

Lebanon

Approximately 100,000 Palestinians fled to Lebanon in 1948 during the Nakbah from the Galilee region and northern Palestine (including Acre, Beisan, Safad, Tiberias, and Haifa) when the State of Israel was established. During 1948 and 1949, the International Red Cross offered Palestinian refugees relief services, especially food rations. In 1950, UNRWA took over from the Red Cross providing only shelter, food rations, education, and health care. Fifteen areas were set aside in Lebanon and designated to temporarily settle Palestinians. These sites eventually became officially recognized UNRWA camps. During these early years, Palestinians were considered temporary guests in Lebanon awaiting the international community's settlement of their problem. They received great support and sympathy from the public and about 30,000 Christian Palestinian refugees were granted Lebanese citizenship. However, once it became evident that there would be no early return, the Lebanese authorities imposed strict measures on the refugees, especially those resident in refugee camps. Between 1965 and 1982, the relations of Palestinians in Lebanon entered a second phase,

survey of living conditions presented to the Oslo Refugee Working Group, FAFO (Institute of Applied International Studies, www.fafo.org) has conducted living condition surveys among Palestinian refugees in Lebanon, Syria Jordan, the West Bank and the Gaza Strip; and in 2006, UNRWA contracted the University of Geneva and the Catholic University of Louvain to conduct a comprehensive socioeconomic survey of all UNRWA-registered Palestinian refugees (www.UNRWA.org).

which Hudson calls the ascendancy of the PLO.²⁸ This period precedes and encompasses the early years of the Lebanese civil war in 1975. Even before the civil war broke out, the relationship between Palestinian refugees and the Lebanese authorities was highly coloured with tension. By 1976, the PLO and Palestinian militias were seen by some as important actors in Lebanon's instability. In June of that year, Syrian troops crossed the border to defend the Christian Lebanese Maronite community from what was generally feared would be a Palestinian coalition victory. Then, in 1982, Israel invaded the country, determined to rid Lebanon of its Palestinian fighters. This was the third phase of Palestinian history in Lebanon, the decline of the PLO (1982–1991). The entry of Israel was supported by some Christian groups who were ready to see the Palestinian Muslim refugees cleaned out of the country.

Since 1991, Palestinian history in Lebanon has entered into its fourth phase, the 'era of the peace processes'. But the relationship between the Lebanese government and its Palestinian refugees has never recovered from the civil war years (Halabi 2004).²⁹ Lebanon has the worst human rights record of all the UNRWA countries with regard to its treatment of Palestinians (Weighill 1997).³⁰ The highest ratio of Palestinians in refugee camps is in Lebanon at 56 percent, which gives evidence of the state's resistance to integrating these refugees into the fabric of the country (whereas in Jordan, Syria, and the West Bank, the ratio of Palestinians in refugee camps is 17.6 per cent, 28 per cent, and 27 per cent, respectively; Gaza is a different matter, with refugees an overwhelming majority of the total population). The Lebanese government severely limits camp expansion and reconstructions. Most camps in the country have suffered massive destruction during one of the many conflicts of the past half-century and the government has prohibited their reconstruction or replacement.³¹

²⁸ Hudson succeeds in elegantly describing the tortured barriers which have impacted on so many Palestinian families spread out between Jerusalem, Haifa, Beirut, and Amman (Hudson 1997).

²⁹ Simon Haddad examines the root causes of Lebanon's poor treatment of Palestinian refugees (Haddad 2004). Souheil Al-Natour addresses the Lebanese laws and implementing structures that have impacted on the status, lives, and freedom of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon (Al-Natour 1997).

³⁰ Weighill and Shehadi edited a special issue of the *Journal of Refugee Studies* in 1997 which included the work of Anthony Parsons on the diplomatic history of the United Nations and Palestinian Refugees and Abbas Shibliak on Palestinians and the PLO in Lebanon (Weighill & Shehadi 1997).

³¹ The exception here may well be the Lebanese government-backed UNRWA programme to rebuild the severely damaged Nahr al-Bared Palestinian refugee camp in the north of the country. After intense fighting in the summer of 2007 between the Islamic militant group Fatah al-Islam and the Lebanese Army, the camp was nearly flattened. The political

Palestinians in Lebanon have few rights; they may not own property, and are severely restricted in the occupations they may pursue.³²

Syria

The majority of Palestinians who came to Syria were poor, illiterate peasants who fled their villages and towns in the northern part of Palestine. Due to the geography of the region, they entered into the southern parts of Lebanon where the International Red Cross received them and set them up in temporary camps. Within a very short time, they were moved on into Syria and were redistributed around all the major Syrian urban centres. The refugees were first given shelter in mosques, schools, and tents; later the Syrian government offered them parcels of land, constituting the beginning of the establishment of the UNRWA Palestinian camps in Syria (Brand 1988a; UNRWA 1992).

Unlike their counterparts in Lebanon, Palestinian refugees in Syria enjoy civil rights similar to that of a Syrian citizen, including equal access to employment in the public and private sector, and health and education services. In July 1956, the government issued Law number 260 to integrate Palestinian refugees into Syrian civil life. Palestinians residing in Syria have the same rights as Syrians in all things covered by the law and connected with the right to employment, commerce, and national service while preserving their original nationality (Brand 1988a; UNRWA 1992). However, despite this 'Law of Integration', most Palestinians are not permitted to vote in Syrian elections, and they are not eligible for Syrian citizenship 'passports'. The argument generally made for this position is so as not to undermine their Palestinian nationality and their 'Right to

deadlock in Lebanon with regards to the civil and political status of the largely Sunni Muslim Palestinian refugees was a major hurdle to the camp's reconstruction. However, the continuing media focus on the personal tragedies in the camp battles has impacted on the successful drive by UNRWA to rebuild the camp.

³² In June 2005, the Ministry of Labour (MOL) partially repealed restrictions prohibiting Palestinian refugees from working in seventy types of jobs. The edict covered about two-thirds of the occupations previously restricted, generally the low- to medium-skilled ones. However, the edict did not change a 1964 law that also imposed a reciprocity condition on membership in professional syndicates – a precondition for employment in professions such as law, medicine, engineering, and journalism.

Numerous books detail the lived experience of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon. The classic 'people's history' built up from interviews with Palestinians living in refugee camps is Rosemary Sayigh's *Palestinians: From peasants to revolutionaries* (1979). A more recent anthropological study of Palestinians in Lebanon is Julie Peteet's *Landscape of hope and despair: Palestinian refugee camps* (2005). There is also the book chapter, *Palestinian Refugee Children and Caregivers in Lebanon* by Bassem Serhan (2005) and the oral history project, *Nakbah Archives*, founded by Diana Allan.

Return'. They have a legal status, however (as intended in the Casablanca Protocol), which provides them with a modicum of civil and legal rights and is referred to by some in international law as equivalent to 'temporary protection'.³³

Beginning in the 1960s, many Palestinians, especially refugees, actively participated in Palestinian resistance movements. Thousand of Palestinians were killed in the *Fedaayeen* (freedom fighters) activities against Israel, in the Black September campaigns in Jordan in the 1970s, and in the Lebanese civil war during the 1980s. These activities did result in some further flight of Palestinians from Jordan and Lebanon to Syria, but by and large, the Palestinian refugee population was not uprooted during this period. Today the Palestinian refugee community in Syria is a young population.³⁴ UNRWA statistics show that nearly half of the refugee population (46 per cent) consists of children under age 15. Recent UNRWA reports show that 68 per cent of the Palestinian refugees in Syria were originally from Galilee and 22 per cent from Haifa and other coastal areas in British-mandated Palestine. Currently Palestinian refugees in Syria live in ten UNRWA refugee camps and three residential areas. The largest Palestinian settlement, known as Yarmouk camp, is located near Damascus and hosts one of the largest numbers of Palestinian refugees but is not recognized as an official UNRWA camp.

Jordan

Close to one million Palestinians found themselves abruptly acquiring refugee status following al-Nakbah in 1948. Two years later in 1950, Transjordan annexed the West Bank and renamed itself the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan. Following this annexation, Jordan extended full citizenship rights to the majority of Palestinian refugees living on the east and west banks of the Jordan River. This included the refugees who had been uprooted

³³ The Protocol for the Treatment of Palestinians in Arab States (Casablanca Protocol) was agreed in September 1965 and was designed to give Palestinians legal and civil rights, a form of temporary protection, in the Arab states which had largely not signed up to the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees (1951 Refugee Convention).

³⁴ Compared to the other UNRWA sites in the Middle East, Syria has been little studied. UNRWA is an important source of basic socioeconomic information on this population as are the FAFO reports; a number of unpublished reports from various diplomatic missions are also important such as the Canadian Mission Report of 1999. There are some general references to Palestinians in Syria but very little focusing on the lived experience of Palestinian refugees (Brand 1988b; Cattan 1988). Adnan Abdul-Rahim's chapter, 'Palestinian Refugee Children and Caregivers in Syria' is a recent qualitative study which addresses this gap for Palestinian youth (2005).

during the 1947–8 war. Today Palestinians with Jordanian passports represent the majority of the Jordanian population. This fact is a politically sensitive issue to the extent that statistics revealing the number of Jordanian citizens with Palestinian origins are unavailable to the public; government officials rationalise the inaccessibility of such data on the basis that such a revelation might incite ethnic conflict (Zureik 1996). Palestinian identity and Jordanian citizenship sit uncomfortably on many Palestinian shoulders; citizenship was granted to some Palestinian refugees but not others.

Three major armed conflicts led to the waves of refugees entering Jordan. The first, the 1947–8 war, resulted in approximately 100,000 people fleeing Palestine for Transjordan. In the 6 June 1967 war, an estimated 400,000 people flooded into Jordan from the West Bank and Gaza Strip. The third exodus occurred during the 1990–1 Gulf War, when approximately 400,000 Palestinian expatriates were expelled from Kuwait. The latter were Palestinians carrying Jordanian passports and classified as ‘Returnees’ even though most of them had never lived in Jordan, having been born and having spent most of their lives in Gulf countries. Each wave was assigned a different category and status. For example, those whose refugee status originated in the 1947–8 war were regarded as refugees and largely acquired Jordanian citizenship. Those uprooted in 1967 were largely regarded as displaced and were not granted citizenship, nor were those who fled from the Gaza Strip. In addition to the three major wars, other conflicts also resulted in forced migration and internal displacement, such as the 1968 al-Karameh battle and the armed clashes around Black September in 1970–1, which led to the ousting of the Palestine Resistance Movement by the Jordanian government, mainly to Lebanon.³⁵ All these different relocations, categories, and differentiated political statuses as well as variable access to UNRWA services has meant that in Jordan the sense of identity and belonging is more fractured and influenced by personal exodus history.³⁶ The displaced Palestinians from 1967 are not eligible for all UNRWA services – in fact, their descendents do

³⁵ Al-Karameh was the site of the first organized Palestinian resistance moment clash with the Israeli army. Although the Palestinians were defeated, their ability to fight and inflict losses on the enemy boosted morale among Palestinians and in the Arab world especially since it followed closely the Arab defeat in 1967.

³⁶ A number of researchers have treated the theme of identity in their work; none more so than Randa Farah whose work, based on her dissertation from the University of Toronto in 1999, focuses on the themes of popular memory and identity reconstruction (1999). Other research looking at elements of the lived experience include the project led by Riccardo Bocco analyzing UNRWA in popular memory in Jordan, the West Bank, and Gaza Strip (1999). Jason Hart has also written on Palestinian identity and youth in Jordan

not even appear in the agency's statistical records. Those displaced from the Gaza Strip in 1967 – many of them also 1948 refugees – are not eligible for Jordanian citizenship. Although the sense of belonging to Jordan varies by factors such as class, generation, and legal status, Palestinians have maintained a sense of 'people-hood' and separate national identity. However, Jordanian policies, mainly those that provide for preferential recruitment of Transjordanians in the public sector, aggravate the schism between the two communities. Around 18 per cent of Palestinian refugees live in ten UNRWA camps. If the percentages of refugees living in the immediate vicinity of designated legal boundaries of camps were included, the figure would rise to 65 per cent.

West Bank

The war to establish the State of Israel in 1948 resulted in the dispossession of two-thirds of the Palestinian people, some of whom ended up in emergency humanitarian aid camps in the West Bank. The Israeli army prevented the return of any of these 'internally' displaced Palestinians to their homes for security reasons (Morris 1987). When Jordan annexed the West Bank, it granted Jordanian citizenship to refugees and residents alike. Following the June 1967 war, the Israeli military occupied the West Bank and the Gaza Strip and another massive wave of Palestinians fled. About 500,000 refugees comprising 37 per cent of the West Bank's total inhabitants remained and became subjects of the occupying Israeli power between 1967 and 1994. After 1994, with the Oslo Accords, their governance was transferred to the Palestinian National Authority.

The West Bank covers an area of 5,500 square kilometres. Its refugee camps are overcrowded, but many of the original UNRWA concrete shelters have been replaced by multi-floor private homes. The refugees who live outside the camps form 74 per cent of the total refugees of the territory. Following the Oslo Definition of Accords, refugee camps are located in areas A (under Palestinian control), B, C (under Israeli control – 75 per cent of the West Bank) as well as in occupied east Jerusalem. This means that while some refugee camps are located in areas fully controlled by the Palestinian Authority, other camps are still directly exposed to Israeli military rule and yet others are placed under Israeli Civil Administration (Area C) with all civil and security affairs governed by the Israeli state. Israeli soldiers guard the adjacent roads, patrol the camps,

(2004) while Joseph Massad (2001) has addressed the issue of Palestinian identity in the context of Jordanian national identity.

and continue to chase after stone-throwing children (Rosenfeld 2004b; Zaroo 2005). Refugees in the West Bank are deeply affected by the waves of forced migration and prolonged conflict of the past half-century. They are devastated by the Separation Barrier which is resulting in further dispossession, loss of livelihood, and displacement on a slow but steady and incremental scale. The consequences of these events are ever present and include the expropriation of lands, loss of water resources, home demolitions, on-going construction of illegal Israeli settlements and bypass roads, violence, imprisonment, emigration, deportation, and imposed closures.³⁷ One consequence of these measures is the growth and transformation of a highly politicized society; political parties and organizations that dominated the scenes in the 1980s and 1990s are giving way to community-oriented institutions focused on the development of social services and cultural activities (Thabet 2005; Thabet et al. 2002; Thabet & Vostanis 2000). Those Palestinians active in this shift are the public figures, mainly veteran activists and former leaders in the camps. Their search for new directions coincides with an ever growing population frustrated by the lack of real improvement in their economic and political conditions and the inability of the Palestinian National Authority to protect them (Rosenfeld 2004b).

The Gaza Strip

Prior to 1948 the Gaza Strip was part of the southern district of British-mandated Palestine. Within a very short time after the creation of the State of Israel, 250,000 Palestinian refugees fled their homes and took refuge in the Gaza Strip. Its population tripled almost overnight, and the internal dynamics of the territory were transformed forever. Between 1948 and 1967, the Egyptian government administered Gaza, which it set aside as an administrative territory and people from Gaza did not have Egyptian citizenship; on the contrary, they kept their nationality as Palestinians (Tamari 1992). After June 1967, Israel occupied the Gaza Strip. During

³⁷ The experience of imprisonment, interrogation, and torture of young Palestinian activists in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip in an attempt to break them down and turn them into informers for the Israeli military/civil occupation is well documented by numerous NGOs such as *Al-Haq* (International Commission of Jurists and Law in the Service of Man), *B'tselem*, and the Palestinian Human Rights Information Centre (PHRIC). The first detailed report regarding the physical and mental torture of youth in Israeli detention was produced in 1984 by *Al-Haq*. These experiences impacted heavily on the community as a whole and turned an entire cohort from its public activism into an edgy and wary socially responsible generation.

the years of the Israeli occupation, the Palestinian economy was very dependent on that of Israel. Twenty years later in December 1987, four residents of Gaza were killed in a traffic accident involving an Israeli military vehicle. Civilian protests over the deaths quickly escalated onto the streets. Within a week, the protests had spread throughout the Gaza Strip and the West Bank and were being referred to as the *Intifada* (Uprising). The Intifada lasted for seven years and ended with the signing of the Oslo Accords, a partial withdrawal of the Israeli military occupation forces from the West Bank and Gaza, and the handing over of government administration to the Palestinian National Authority in 1994. With the election of Hamas to office in the Gaza Strip, a serious rift has emerged in the governing of the Palestinian National Authority with Gaza increasingly isolated and squeezed economically, socially, and politically by the Israeli government as well as the PLO-backed government of the West Bank. The inhabitants of Gaza – en masse – face enormous mental and physical hardships not unlike that suffered by the Palestinian nationalists and revolutionaries incarcerated in the Sarafand detention centre (now Tsrifin) set up by the British during their mandate over Palestine (Thabet 2005; Thabet et al. 2002; Thabet & Vostanis 2000).

According to the UNRWA (2009) there are now more than one million registered refugees in the Gaza Strip out of a total population of nearly 1.5 million people,³⁸ and about half the refugee population (478,272) live in overcrowded refugee camps. The economy has always been totally dependent upon Israel and each closure or shutdown by Israel profoundly affects the mental and physical health and well-being of the Palestinian refugees. For nearly the last sixty years, Palestinians living in the Gaza Strip were exposed to a variety of harmful and stressful situations, including repeated displacement, imprisonment, beatings, collective punishment, house demolitions, land confiscation and clearing for military purposes, targeted assassinations, and constant social and economic pressure.

DISCUSSION

Given the protracted nature of the Palestinian dispossession, the unique historical timelines in the places of exile, and the frequent dispersal of close family and kin across zones of armed conflict, one must wonder what

³⁸ In the Gaza Strip, there were 1,016,964 registered refugees as of 31 December 2006 (UNRWA 2009). Estimates of the Gaza Strip population for mid-2006 and mid-2007 were 1,443,814 and 1,499,369, respectively (UNRWA 2009).

mechanisms operate to keep a sense of 'people-hood' alive among Palestinians. The narrative histories that follow are abridged from interviews conducted by my research teams in the early 2000s in Damascus. I have selected them to give a sense of the range of experiences of dispossession, disappointment, and crushing humiliation as modulated by wealth as well as extreme poverty.

Josephine's story

Josephine was born in al-Ramleh in Palestine in 1926. She was married when she was 14 years old to a Palestinian with business interest in Syria who was chosen by her stepfather. She had nine children; four were born in Palestine and five in Syria. In al-Ramleh, her husband owned two big houses, one was rented and the other was used as a family house. When the Nakbah of 1948 occurred, her husband was in Damascus while she was resident in the family home in al-Ramleh. Her husband was supposed to be returning within a short time, but the war started and she was alone in the house without news of him. She heard that soldiers had attacked the Allad Mosque. She was very frightened at this time because she did not have anybody to protect her family. The Jewish militia who took over the town announced that all men and women should gather in the town's square. She was confused because her husband was away and her children were young, so she decided to hide with her children at home. One morning in early June, she heard somebody knocking at her door. Her children started to cry. She looked out of the window and saw more than 20 soldiers carrying guns, she did not know if the soldiers were British or Jewish militia. She opened the door and their leader approached her aggressively asking her what she was doing in the house. The other soldiers pulled her from the shoulders and forced her out of the house. She started to scream and her children ran and stood besides her crying while the soldiers stood laughing. She was very upset, lonely and confused. She didn't know what to do, where to go and who to turn to. The soldiers told her that they would return the next day.

She had a sleepless night. She hid the little money that her husband had left for house expenses. At about five o'clock the next morning the soldiers returned with a lorry full of Palestinian women and children all crying and praying to God and to Jesus Christ to help them. She saw the Star of Zion on the doors and the sides of the vehicle. The soldiers pushed her and her children violently into the vehicle. They drove them away; she did not know where they going. After a few hours of horror driving, they were dropped off in the mountains. She spent the night in the mountain and the next morning they walked till they reached an area called al-Bira, where they stayed for a month trying to find a way to leave Palestine. She later learned that her husband had been arrested. She could not cross the border because her husband had their passports. After a month, they left al-Bira and fled to Amman with many other Palestinian refugees. In Amman, they were given shelter in a church where they remained for some time. One of her sons died after a fall there when they failed to get him emergency medical treatment.

She crossed the Jordanian/Syrian border illegally and went to find her relatives in al-Midan district of Damascus. She stayed there for a while and then rented a house in the old city. Her life outside Palestine was difficult and stressful; she could not answer her children questions about their father's whereabouts. She prayed day and night for God to bring her husband back safe and sound. After two years her husband came back to Damascus and the family was at last reunited.

Once her husband was settled they moved into a much larger house in al-Joura quarter in old Damascus. Although the family was happy in this new house, still they considered that their stay in Syria was temporary and that they would soon be returning to Palestine. Some of her children did not attend the Syrian schools, because the family assumed that children could waste their time as they would very shortly be returning to Palestine and studying the Palestinian curricula. Recently, her husband died and now most of her children are married and live near her. A year ago, one of her sons died leaving her to look after his family. Although Josephine is well off, she still dreams of going back to Palestine.

Josephine, abridged narrative history, narrated and recorded in Damascus, 2000. (Josephine, quoted in Chatty & Lewando Hundt 2005:65)

Josephine's story throws up the difficult question of identity and the way in which it is inhabited. Josephine was born in Palestine and was unquestionably Palestinian. Her husband was a Palestinian Arab living in Damascus but upon marriage chose to live in Palestine and bring up his family there. Even in exile, both Josephine and her husband held their children back from school for two years awaiting the opportunity to return to Palestine. Convinced that their exile was temporary, they did not see the value of their children studying a Syrian curriculum. As time passed, pragmatism resulted in their registering their children in schools in Damascus, but the desire to return remained.

Sa'ada's story

Sa'ada was born in Palestine in 1914; she was brought up and lived in Al Qabba'a, near Safad. She was married at the age of 14 years, and she gave birth to three children. She divorced her husband when he was jailed; her brother-in-law then took the custody of the children. Then she worked as an agricultural labourer and sold green thyme. A year later she married Khalil who was already married with five children and a sick [paralyzed] wife. She lived with her new husband's family and gave birth to two children.

In 1948 the Zionist forces attacked her village (al-Dallatah), many people were killed and injured and hundreds of men were arrested. Sa'ada fled the fighting in her village. She left behind everything she owned and sought refuge in the Hauran in Syria. In 1952 her husband died leaving her with two young children. She found work again as an agricultural labourer. In time she left the Hauran and went to Damascus to search for people from her village. She managed to get work in the agricultural gardens of the Ghouta on the edge of the city before it turns into desert.

She had then only a one-room shelter at the very top of Mount Kassoun. After the end of her working day on the farm, she would gather some discarded onion, radish and marrow in a bag and sell them in the market in order to have money to buy some cheese and bread and candles to feed her children and to light their room.

Her children were provided with schooling by UNRWA. The school gave her children free education but she had to provide them with clothing and stationery. She could not afford the clothing and had to rely on some wealthy Damascene residents to provide her with second-hand shoes and clothes. In time, she saved some money and bought a room and made it habitable. Her children had to work during the school summer holiday in order to support their studies. One of her sons finished school while the other became involved in the Palestinian resistance movement.

Her eldest son has died and left behind a wife and six children. Her second son is married with six children. He works as a casual labourer in a restaurant. He also rents a small shop to sell Falafel. Sa'ada shares her one-room house with her children and grandchildren. Today, they have electricity and water and the house is not so remote and isolated as it was in the past. Now, when her grandchildren make their way to school in the morning, they buy bread and sell it on in the neighbourhoods they pass to earn money to support the family.

Although she has lived in Syria for many years and her children are grown up, she still feels alienated and she hopes to die and be buried in Palestine.

Sa'ada, abridged narrative history, narrated and recorded in Damascus, 2001 (Sa'ada, quoted in Chatty & Lewando Hundt 2005:65–66)

Every refugee and forced migrant has a unique story to tell; some, like Josephine, are cushioned by wealth while others, like Sa'ada, are engulfed in poverty so extreme that there is no escape. And other stories, like Ali's, reflect the significance of family, education, and the Palestinian national movement in shaping their lives. Of course, poverty and forced migration do not need to remain insurmountable conditions. Many Palestinian refugees have managed to use the education provided them by UNRWA to break out of the cycle of despair and loss. But the sense of having been wronged, of wishing to return to their homes and villages, of taking up the livelihoods left behind under dire circumstances does not necessarily pass away.

Walid's story

I am Palestinian from Safad which is about 90 kilometres from Damascus. I was born in 1931. My family, the al-Asadi family, was one of the largest in Safad. I had 11 brothers and 2 sisters. My father was wealthy and we had a big house. All the al-Asadis lived like a community in one street. Strangers had to get permission to enter our streets or else they had to be accompanied by a member of the family. Safad had a population of 12,000 Muslims, 4,000 Jews and about 2,000 Christians.

I grew up with the Palestinian Revolution [of 1936–39]. But I was always quarrelling with the Jews. My father, my uncle, the police chief and the head of

Safad Municipality decided they had to keep me away from Safad. There was a complaint about me every day. So, they sent me to the Ibrahimi College in Jerusalem when I was 12 years old [1943]. I spent 5 years in Jerusalem. But in 1948 I came back. There were battles between the Arabs and the Jews. I wanted to mount an operation against the Jewish quarter in Safad. Already one Jew had been killed by an Arab over a quarrel about laundry ... We had many battles. But we were mainly irregular forces with different kinds of arms, British, Belgian, German, Italian and Greek. The Jordanians said they would send us ammunition according to the types of arms we had. But they distributed ammunition to the wrong fighters. So our weapons ceased to function. Then the Jews asked the fighters to surrender using loudspeakers. The Safad population feared that the Jews would revenge the massacres against them from 1927, so most of them began fleeing. I was able to get cars to transport the family and take us directly to Damascus. Because of my fighter status I was able to get an introduction to Al Shishakli [Syrian commander of the voluntary Arab Army at one point and later elected president of the Syrian Arab Republic]. Then, when Safad fell, my parents came to Damascus as well. We rented an apartment at first. We were given 22 mattresses and blankets as well as kitchen utensils from the Red Crescent to start our new life. We were 11 brothers and we all went out and got jobs. I got a job distributing gas to Palestinians for cooking. Then I got a second job as a physical education teacher in a school and also a third job with a magazine called 'al-Waad'. I had three jobs. Eventually my father bought many pieces of land in Mezza where he settled with many of my brothers ... I married my cousin in 1953 and had four sons and four daughters. They are doctors. One is in now Paris, one in Kuwait, another in Jordan. We are spread out. But it is not possible for a human being to forget his homeland. We were told when we fled that we could go back in 10 days. We never thought the Jews would be so strong. When the United Nations decided to divide Palestine between Arabs and Jews, establish two states for two nations, we Arabs refused. But the Jews accepted, knowing that they would take Palestine and more. (Walid 2005, Damascus)

Walid and many like him never lived in a refugee camp, although he eventually registered as a refugee with UNRWA and also worked for it over a number of years. He and his family exemplified the resilience of Palestinian society as well as the longevity of the desire to return to his home and homeland in Safad, a town less than 60 miles away from where he has lived ever since fleeing his hometown at the age of 17. Like many middle-class Palestinians, he lives in a neighbourhood largely made up of other Palestinians. His successes in life are closely linked to his family ties and his children's education as well as to UNRWA provisions in the early years of exile. But his 'refugeeness' remains the main quality of his identity tied up as it is with the fall of Safad and the almost mythical status of those battles between poorly armed Arab irregular militia, and the well trained and armed Jewish militias. That the political status of Palestinian refugees and their 'Right of Return' is still the subject of international debate and power politics after the passage of nearly sixty years contributes to

his life-long struggle with closure related to his dispossession from his homeland and his personal conflict regarding his lack of rootedness common to many Palestinian refugees.

Ali's story

My father and mother were very young when they married. They were 16 and 14, but my father had a very intelligent older sister who never married and she used to look after the household. She had to take care of her brother, my father. She was, even at that time, the decision-maker, and she stayed the decision-maker in the house even after we left Palestine.

We were two boys, and one girl. There was me and my younger brother, because my older brother had moved to be with our uncle a few days before we fled Safad. So we were just two brothers and one sister. My older sister stayed in Tyre because she was a nurse and she decided to work in a hospital in Tyre. My other two sisters with us too, but the oldest of these two was married and went to Jordan with her husband. So we were six; three children, my mother, my aunt and my father.

Our first home was a barracks [in Homs]. Yes, it was small about the space of this room [six by nine square metres]. And it had no real privacy because it was divided up into living areas for other families by blankets. But we didn't stay for long here; soon we moved to a small Christian village nearby. It was called Mishirfe. I remember it was a Christian village because I often used to go to the church there. The priest found me intelligent and used to treat me with respect. So I used to go there often; my family thought I was turning into a Christian, but I wasn't turning into anything. Then after a year, there were the UNRWA people who were also generous. Everything was very hard; living, coping with new circumstances instead of living in your own house, moving from one place to another.

After two years we moved to Damascus. My older brother found a job in a cement factory in Damascus. He wrote to us and said, 'Come to Dumar just outside of Damascus, I have enough resources to take care of you.' So he brought us to Damascus and he took care of us. And we managed to bring our oldest sister from Tyre to join us in Damascus. It was shameful that she should be all alone in a foreign country. And so she came and she worked as a nurse in UNRWA. So, both of them worked in order to give us a living. Now we were eight. In Dumar, conditions were most interesting. This is where I grew up and became what I am. It was a small village, nice small village, not spoiled by urbanization, with forest, with trees, with everything. It was very nice. I joined the UNRWA school there to level 6; then I had to come to Damascus to carry on my education at the Port Said School in Afif in Muhajiriin. It took about 20–25 minutes every day each way and then I had to take a tram each way. There was a tram line from Victoria Station to Afif. It was a hellish journey, but I liked it, because I liked my friends in the Port Said school. They were mainly Syrians, not Palestinians. I enjoyed being there. So I stayed in Damascus all day and went back home at 6 o'clock. I stayed there until level 10 and then I moved to the famous Lycée, Ibn Khaldun.

My father was not working during this time because he had no skills. He was illiterate. He was from a notable family but he had no skill and he couldn't manage to find any work. That was why my mother was always angry with him. He was illiterate and he never worked. In Safad he was a land owner. He was from a rich family.

After the Lycée Ibn Khaldun I went to University; at the same time I was employed as an UNRWA teacher. The quicker you passed examinations the more money you earned. So in four years I passed a lot of exams and became a teacher (which I hated). But I had to do it to earn a living for my family. So this is the kind of life we had. It was comfortable but it was also poor with modest contribution by my brother and sister. So we enjoyed our life in the village of Dumar. It was simple. Eventually, I wanted to move to Damascus. My sister bought a flat in Qusour (Damascus). As usual, my sister was very independent. She left us. And then we took a three room flat in Baramki. By then my older brother got married so there were then just six of us. But my brother used to still offer us financial assistance.

Then my father died. He died very young, well not so young, but young. He was 65. I was in Beirut at the time. I was working with the LAHAM Centre. I worked there for six months. I had taken a leave of absence from UNRWA and worked in Beirut. This is when my mother died as well. No, first my aunt died, and then two years later, my father died. We were all still there in Baramki. Our conditions continued to improve because I was working too. We led a normal life in Baramki. Then I finished my Master's Degree and I waited for ten years before I got the chance to travel and go to Budapest. I got a scholarship from the PLO representative to study in Hungary. There you had to know two languages besides your own mother tongue to do a PhD. So I got a certificate to state I knew French with English. So I was able to do my degree in three years in English. I wanted to know about Hungary and the people. I learned conversational Hungarian. I took my degree in Social Reality and Educational Goals of the Palestinian People All the time there was this pulling of me back to my family, to Palestine, to my friends. But it was a point of great conflict. I wanted to stay in Hungary, but I had to see my family. After one year I developed high blood pressure [so I went back]. I still had high blood pressure back in Damascus. In order to get rid of it [the high blood pressure], I used to go back to Hungary every summer for one month or two. I used to be able to do this because I was on the PLO Delegation. They used to send me outside the Middle East and I always found a way of travelling via Budapest coming or going. So if there was a conference in Casablanca, I would come back via Budapest ...

For ten years I was in the Fateh moment and then I moved to Budapest. When I finished my PhD, I was picked to go to Paris as the representative of the PLO. I refused to go for political reasons. When I came back to Damascus from Budapest I noticed that politically things were boiling here. There was a split in the PLO. There were many factions. I joined one of the factions, but not for long just for three years. But I didn't stop being active in the main unit. I didn't go to the Popular Front, the Democratic Front or the A'idoon group. I was always in the main part of the PLO. But eventually I stopped believing in any value of being affiliated to any one of them. The problem was that the things we felt at the beginning of our exile, they do not exist any more. Even now, our children, they don't feel it anymore. I don't think they suffer in the same way that we did. They don't have the same obstacles that we had.

I tried hard to organize my life, but it wasn't always under my control; it was not always in my hands. Not my decisions about my future; but I always held on to the thought that I must keep on studying because at that time most Palestinians thought that through education they could improve their situation; through education they could regain Palestine. They believed that education created miracles. It didn't happen of course, but this was the aim. You know, education was the only way to improve your life. I was convinced that education was the only way. Of course I would have preferred to be a citizen of a country somewhere in the world. And since I was born in Palestine I would have preferred to be a citizen of Palestine. But since I succeeded in making a life for myself here, I don't have a lot of things to complain about and I don't blame anybody, especially not the Syrians. They did not stop me from improving my life. I am satisfied now. I mean, I got what I was struggling for within the realm of what was possible. Even if I came back as a child in Palestine, I don't think I could have done more with my life.

Ali's story of arriving in Syria and the journey of his family from abject destitution to a comfortable but modest lifestyle clearly demonstrates the importance of family and the way in which siblings and kin worked together to rebuild their shattered lives. It also throws into sharp relief the significance of education, and of UNRWA services and employment in creating opportunities in the struggle for survival and, in some cases, modest economic success. Ali's story brings to the fore the Palestinian nationalist movement. Though described obliquely, it is clear that for him as well as for many other men of his generation, the PLO was a source of identity, support, and succour.

Although the political and social situation of Palestinian refugees varies broadly from one host state to another, there remain certain fundamental features in the development of individual and social identity that mark the Palestinians as unique. They are a people with a distinctive unassimilated Arab culture, dispersed over a wide region, variously discriminated against, yet on individual and family levels often well integrated into their host society.

CONCLUSION: PALESTINIAN NOTIONS OF IDENTITY, OF PLACE AND SPACE

My name is Ra'isa. I was born in Gaza in 1909. But I come from Safad. My father was an accountant for the Hijaz railway. He started his job in 1914. At that time, Bilad al-Sham [the Syrian provinces of the Ottoman Empire] was one country. My father moved us back to Safad when I was very young. Then, he developed a high fever and died. We were surrounded by family, the Khadra family. I studied at Safad until I finished elementary school and then I went to the Scottish College in Safad directed by Miss Mackintosh. In 1948 we were forced to leave Safad. As you know Safad is a mountainous city. We climbed down the valley and up the mountains

until we got to Al Safsaf village, where we had some relatives. We arrived at nine in the evening. They offered us some yoghurt. We stayed for the night and early in the morning, we took a truck that was used to move sheep and headed to the Lebanese border – to Bint il-Jbeil and then to Alma village where we stayed for a few days. Then we continued on until we got to Homs. We arrived at 2:00 a.m. We found a house to rent and stayed there for 10 years. I was with my brother. He was a Law School graduate and found work with UNRWA as an official in charge of a district. In 1958 he was transferred to Damascus. The whole family moved to Damascus and we rented this house. I got a job as a headmistress of an UNRWA school in the Jewish Quarter. Then I retired in 1972. I was always comfortable. As a director of a school for Palestinians, I was well known and was committed to serving those whom I considered to be like my own daughters. I never felt as an immigrant. I always felt I was among my own people of Bilad al-Sham. It is, and has always been, one and the same country ... At my age, and with all the Khadra family members around me, I would not go back to live in Palestine. I would say, no I wouldn't [Sister-in-law interjects: 'Auntie, what the hell are you saying? If they allowed us to go back, we would; even if we have to live in a tent, it is our home country']. Not me. Not at this age. My house is no more there, and the neighbourhood is not the one I knew. I would only get back to bad and bitter memories. I would never forget the experience of the exodus – how we walked down the mountain and all the way to the Tawaheen valley, and then up to the border village and finally the ride in a sheep truck. (Ra'isa 2006, Damascus)

Identity, status, and kinship ties are the themes that emerge from these narratives. The land is also important, perhaps even primordial to Palestinian refugees, as they have all been abruptly severed from their roots. But between the generation which had to flee and the following generations born in exile, a difference is emerging: one that distinguishes between space and place accepting notions of identity that are more fluid and constructed around immediate social and cultural ties. For many of the oldest generation who fled their homes in Palestine to reach safety away from the armed conflict, the physical space is no longer the place where their identity is grounded and nurtured. As Ra'isa states, her house is no longer there, the neighbourhood is not the one she knew. Going back would only bring back sad and bitter memories. For her and many of the oldest survivors, identity and well-being are created and maintained by immediate family and friends, by Palestinian social networks and cultural ties in places of exile. The first generation remembers the physical spaces where their homes and communities were located. Some also have vivid memories of early challenges to those spaces by Jewish settlers during the British mandate period in Palestine. The second and third generation do not have original memories. Nor do they have experiences of contestation regarding their beings as Palestinians in the mandated territory. But they

do have the recollected histories and stories of their caregivers. As one Palestinian youth in Jordan said:

My grandmother tells me about Palestine, she is like a dictionary; she has many stories to tell about Palestine. She always tells us about Palestine ... I wish I could visit Palestine. There is no one in the camps who does not wish to visit Palestine, my grandmother tells me we are from 48, and there is also 64 [he makes a mistake, meaning 1967] she says those from the 67 territories are going to return but the people from 48 are not. My grandmother is from Marj Ibn Amer from Haifa, my grandmother always tells me about Marj Ibn Amer, and Haifa ... (Yaser, Generation 2 quoted in Chatty & Lewando Hundt 2005:101).

The older Palestinians, I suggest, draw on their memories of belonging to an Arab nation or to Bilad al-Sham in which Palestine was an integral part, while the young hold on to the images and recollections of their original villages and homes as described by their caregivers. These narratives and descriptions are not that hard to construct into 'remembered memories', as the described landscape is often similar to that which surrounds the Palestinian refugee camps or the neighbourhoods some Palestinian refugees live in. The physical separation is often tens of miles rather than hundreds of miles. In some cases, refugees can see their original villages; at night, the lights in the distant darkness are assumed to be emanating from their villages of origin.

For the second generation – that group of Palestinians generally born in the first few years after al-Nakbah – identity, I suggest, is more problematic. Exposure to significant hardships while the camps were largely still of cloth tents, exposed variably to pity and discrimination, the second generation is most adamant that the return to the homeland is fundamental to developing a sense of worth and dignity by ending the exile into which they were born.

I never visited Palestine; I yearn to return to my Homeland, because a human being far from his Homeland feels like a stranger. The stranger without his Homeland feels disgraced and people ostracise him from society. To live in dignity we must work on our land and build our country. (Latifa, Generation 2 quoted in Chatty 2007:101).

This generation was the first to become active and be part of the struggle to return to the homeland. Many men and women joined the Palestinian national movement. Though not strictly divided by gender, men became active in Palestinian political organizations, working in PLO offices in the Middle East and sometimes reaching positions of representation in Europe; women were also active in the PLO as well as in the numerous unions, charities, and local NGOs that came under its umbrella and which provided non-formal education, and services in the camps and Palestinian neighbourhoods.

The third and fourth generations shared more than age or youthfulness. Many of them linked their status as refugees to a sense of marginality and exclusion from their original homelands and also, at times, from full legal, social, and civil participation in the communities that host them. They have learned to speak of 'their human rights' and through the active use of websites, blogs, social networking sites, and twitters, they keep themselves up-to-date, informed, and involved. For many of these youth, the composite collective memory of their parents' and grandparents' forced migration merged in internal contradictions with their own narratives. The past was as their parents had told them, but the present and their place in it was contested and showed clear elements of multivocal social memory.

I feel I belong to Yarmouk camp [in Damascus], even if I am asked in the future to choose between staying in Yarmouk or any other place [in Palestine], I would say that I prefer to stay here. (Omar, Generation 3, quoted in Chatty & Lewando Hundt 2005:76).

They belonged to the past, but they also belonged to the country that hosted them. Yet their identity as Palestinians remained fundamental. For many of these youth, education was the key to the future, the weapon with which they could fight for their 'Right to Return'.

I know that our enemy is highly educated and well skilled. Therefore, we must use the same technique and knowledge while fighting them. I am convinced that we can win the war because we have the right on our side. I miss Palestine and I can visualise my return to it. I can achieve this dream by studying and working hard to serve the cause of Palestine. (Mohammed, Generation 3 quoted in Chatty & Lewando Hundt 2005:78)

We are used to being called poor and not good enough. However, many refugees are successful students, many managed to continue their higher education. Some became doctors, engineers and teachers in spite of their families' experiences of poverty, homelessness, violence and wars. (Manar, Generation 3, quoted in Chatty & Lewando Hundt 2005:77)

Education for me was not easy, I had some difficulties in my schooling. I had a fight with the school director. The headmistress and some students laughed at me when I said that I am a Palestinian, and originally from Gjem village in Palestine. I asked them why they are laughing and what is so amusing about being Palestinian. Many of my schoolmates told me that being a Palestinian means being a refugee and being a refugee indicated poverty, homelessness, being stupid and not good enough to study. But I know I had to stay in school and prove to them that I am not stupid and they were wrong. (Samia, Generation 3, quoted in Chatty & Lewando Hundt 2005:77)

Whether rich or poor, whether living in refugee camps or in the middle-class neighbourhoods of the major cities of the Arab world, Palestinian refugees have found a medium to express their cultural coherence and their

social reality. That medium is education, formal state-sponsored and often UNRWA-delivered. Formal education for Palestinian youth has long been promoted as the weapon of the future generation. At the same time, the recognition that UNRWA schools must follow the curriculum of the country in which it operates has meant that Palestinian refugee youth learn of their history not in school but after school.³⁹ Non-formal education is very much in the hands of the Palestinian national movement and is executed in after-school clubs, youth camps, and other cultural activities organized by the PLO and associated NGOs and Palestinian charities; and informal education is absorbed in individual Palestinian households in which common language and dialect, common history, and common culture both as Palestinians and as Arabs is reaffirmed. As Fasheh stresses in his work, ending the occupation of Palestinian lands means also ending the occupation of Palestinian minds through the schoolroom, through conversations, dialogue, social activities, and cultural expression. It means ‘... feeling happy and proud of being Arabs, disregarding the racist and poisonous messages that the Western TV, journalists, academics and experts try to spread around the world against Arabs and Muslims. It also means defining ourselves as Palestinians, as Arabs, and not as underdeveloped or as developing’ (Fasheh 1995:68–69).

Wherever Palestinian refugees are found and whatever generation they represent, there are Palestinian cultural clubs and charities, Palestinian women’s unions, Palestinian writers’ unions, and other professional bodies. For children and youth, there are Palestinian kindergartens and nurseries as well as after-school clubs teaching Palestinian history, music, and dance [*dabkah*]. The camps and the neighbourhoods are generally physically organized and named so as to remind their occupants of the villages and urban quarters left behind. Surrounded by kin and neighbours who fled together, making daily social contact with others like them, there is a physical reinforcement of ‘Palestinianness’ in the places they occupy today. And although identity has become multi-layered particularly for youth, the engagements in education and in supporting the family remain important features of Palestinian refugee society.

³⁹ Under agreements made with the host authorities, UNRWA has to use the curricula and textbooks of the countries/territories where it operates. However, the agency also creates educational enrichment materials to supplement the local curriculum. www.un/unrwa/programmes/education/basic.html).