

al majdal



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

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40/60

Call to Action

40 years of occupation of the OPT, **60** years of Nakba



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

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

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40/60 Call to Action

The latest events in the 1967 occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip have led many to consider a possible end of the Palestinian political system shaped by the Oslo Accords, and they have caused despair at the West's approach to human rights and democratic principles in the Middle East (see: "The End of National Unity of the Palestinian Elites..."). Events in the Nahr el-Bared refugee camp in Lebanon have also demonstrated, once again, the vulnerability of Palestinian refugees and the complexity of the political scene in Lebanon (see: "The Ongoing Nakba: Sickness and Health Among Palestinian Refugees in Lebanon", "Lebanon: A Proxy War in Nahr el-Bared Refugee Camp?" and "Commemorating Palestine in Lebanon"). At the same time, the persecution suffered by Palestinian refugees and the Iraqi population in Iraq is reaching unprecedented levels and requires immediate protection; a protection that is, unfortunately, not forthcoming (see: "Palestinian Refugees in Iraq: The Lost Protection").

Amidst 40 years of Israeli occupation and colonization of the West Bank and Gaza Strip and the worsening political, humanitarian and human rights situation in the region, Palestinians, however, remain steadfast. In May, Palestinians commemorated the 59th anniversary of the Palestinian Nakba of 1948 while becoming victims of "a new Nakba", i.e. Palestinian inter-factional armed conflict in the occupied Gaza Strip and West Bank. The Nakba of almost 60 years ago has become a powerful symbol of what continues to happen to Palestinians until today. It symbolizes the Palestinian quest for justice, redress, and the right of return (see: "The Power of Memory").

In this year's 59th commemoration of the Nakba, Badil organized the the first Al-Awda Award. Popular marches, rallies and conferences were held in Israel, the occupied Palestinian territories, Europe and North America in memory of past displacement and with the demand for future return. The 40/60 Call to Action is an appeal from displaced Palestinians to global civil society to address the root causes of 60 years of conflict between Israel and the Palestinian people and join the quest for new principled vision and struggle (see: "BADIL's 40/60 Call to Action"). The civil society Campaign for Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) against Israel, which is being joined by an increasing number of persons, unions and organizations, is also part of this strategic effort to pressure Israel and states to respect the rights of Palestinians under international law (see: BDS Update).

Next year, in 2008, the Palestinian Nakba will turn 60. Individuals and organizations who wish to make this anniversary a meaningful event, and thereby support the Palestinian people's quest for justice and freedom, are welcome to contact Badil for further information (info@badil.org).

The End of National Unity of the Palestinian Elites, but what about the People?

By Ingrid Jaradat

Since 2001, the reality created “on the ground” in the 1967 occupied Palestinian territory (OPT) by the Oslo Accords has been erased *de facto* as a result of Israel’s re-invasion of the semi-autonomous Palestinian areas (“areas A and B”), destruction of Palestinian Authority infrastructure and the subsequent imposition of an ever tightening military regime employed for more colonization and annexation of Palestinian land. Now, six years later, this “post-Oslo reality” appears to devour also the political system that has shaped the Palestinian struggle for decades. Shattered by the breakdown of the Hamas-Fatah led National Unity Government in June, the Fatah-dominated Palestinian Authority (PA) and PLO are discredited, dis-functional and dis-empowered, and the political system of the Palestinian leadership elite appears beyond repair.

no alternative political force is currently available to carry the people’s national project of liberation and peace based on justice, freedom and self-determination for all.



In front of the Khanyounis Municipality: “No, to the killing. Yes, to civilized national dialogue!” Gaza, June 2007. ©WAFA

Parallel and relentless US intervention by President Bush and his military advisers, Generals Dayton and Welsh, triggered a situation where the previously reluctant P.A. President and PLO Chair Mahmoud Abbas gave the green line to those forces in Fatah which promoted military confrontation with Hamas.

From the perspective of the Palestinian people in Palestine and in exile the recent turn of events in the Gaza Strip is tragic, not because it exposed the full scope of corruption and incapacity among the traditional leadership structures, but because no alternative political force is currently available to carry the people's national project of liberation and peace based on justice, freedom and self-determination for all.

Why did the National Unity Government fail?

Although strongly welcomed by the Palestinian and Arab people as a means to end the deeply disturbing inter-factional violence in the OPT, there was consensus already in February: the Mecca Agreement was a fragile pact designed to protect mainly the diverse interests and needs of the political elites in the region.

Hamas and the Muslim Brotherhood,⁽¹⁾ a religious political movement active world-wide based on Sunni-Islam, had a strong interest in the Agreement's success. This, because their project of gradually building political power, although victorious in the 2006 elections in the OPT, had run into a dead-end as a result of persistent isolation by the United States and Europe. A Palestinian national unity government with Fatah therefore appeared to be the only means for moving ahead. The above were joined by so-called moderate Arab states, among them Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Jordan and the United Arab Emirates ("Arab Quartet"), whose quest political influence derives from their elites' need for economic and political stability which has been threatened by the persistently divisive US policies, US-Israeli warmongering, and the subsequent rise in popularity and influence of Iran's and Hizbullah's Shi'a-based ideology⁽³⁾ in the region.

The secular Palestinian political elite, however, was divided in its support of national unity with Hamas. The majority of small political groups supported (PFLP) or joined (DFLP, Palestinian National Initiative/*Mubadara*, The Third Way, former Communist Party/*Hizb al-Sha'b*) Haniyeh's new unity government in order to protect stability and continuity of the Palestinian political system and avoid armed conflict. However, a significant and influential section of Fatah maintained that military defeat of Hamas with the help of the United States was a preferable and feasible option for reinstating Fatah's dominance over the Palestinian Authority and evading substantial PLO reform, i.e. integration of Hamas into PLO institutions.

The dices, however, were cast by others. The decision by the Quartet (US, EU, Russia and UN) to uphold its "conditions" for ending economic and diplomatic sanctions also vis-à-vis the new PA National Unity Government triggered not only disappointment among wide sectors of the international community and the resignation of UNSCO chief Alvaro De Soto (*see box below*), but removed Palestinian hopes and the glue, which had held together the fragile unity agreement. Parallel and relentless US intervention by President Bush and his military advisers, Generals Dayton and Welsh, triggered a situation where the previously reluctant P.A. President and PLO Chair Mahmoud Abbas gave the green line to those forces in Fatah which promoted military confrontation with Hamas.

Leaked De Soto End of Mission Report Condemns US Policy in the Middle East and Calls for a Shift in UN Involvement in the Peace Process

Alvaro de Soto, Under-Secretary-General United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process and Personal Representative of the Secretary-General to the Palestine Liberation Organization and the Palestinian Authority Envoy to the Quartet resigned in May 2007. He resigned because the Quartet did not lift the sanctions against the Palestinian Authority (PA) after the formation of the unity government. Or, in his words "I could live with the arrangements until the point came when the Quartet started taking positions which are not likely to gather a majority in UN bodies, and which in any case are at odds with UN Security-Council resolutions and/or international law..."(para.69).

Upon his departure, he wrote a confidential "end of mission report", in which he addressed a number of issues, including events affecting the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the role of the Quartet, the PA and US diplomatic efforts.

Regarding the aim of Zionism to create a Jewish majority over the land of Eretz Israel, De Soto assesses that Sharon had realized that "... the Zionist *aliyah* project – the return of the Jews to make their home in Israel – did not succeed to anything like the extent Sharon had originally envisaged when he masterminded the settlement policy decades ago." (para.15). In De Soto's view, this realization was one of the main reasons for the redeployment from the Gaza Strip in 2005. Yet, Sharon managed to "... gain vital concessions from the US – including the Bush letter of assurances on retention of settlement blocs and non-return of Palestinian refugees to Israel – while proceeding with the construction of the [Wall] and the implementation of more settlers in the West Bank" (para.16).

As for the 2006 legislative election and the election of Hamas, De Soto believes that "the people has spoken in free and fair elections whose holdings had been encouraged by the international community, and their wishes should be respected" (para.46). He tried to convince the UN and the Quartet in general, to work with the Hamas-led government, but he failed and the Quartet was transformed "...from a negotiation-promoting foursome guided by a common document (The Road Map) into a body that was all-but imposing sanctions on a freely elected government of a people under occupation as well as setting unattainable preconditions for dialogue" (para. 50). Moreover, the policy of the Quartet had for effect to relieve Israel from all pressure (para. 54).

According to De Soto, "...the Quartet is pretty much a group of friends of the US – and the US doesn't feel the need to consult closely with the Quartet except when it suits it" (para. 63). It is a "shield" for what the US and EU do (para. 79). De Soto blames the US, the EU and Israel for the sanctions against the PA and wrote that they "must take responsibility for these actions" (para. 78).

De Soto also clearly describes the US policy after the victory of Hamas: "at the time [after the election], and indeed until the Mecca Agreement a year later, the US clearly pushed for a confrontation between Fateh and Hamas – so much so that, a week before Mecca, the US envoy declared twice in an envoys meeting in Washington how much 'I like this violence', referring to the near civil war that was erupting in Gaza..." (para.56). Further describing the context since the beginning of 2007, he specifically referred to "...the effort underway by the US, apparently with Arab partners, to beef up capabilities of the security bodies under Abu Mazen's lead, using like-minded Palestinians close to the President..." (para.123).

De Soto also criticizes the UN Secretary-General, who he says has strayed from the parameters - i.e. international law and UN resolutions – within which he should operate in exercise of his dual mandate of coordination of assistance and promotion of the Middle East Peace Process (para.87). He believes that the UN should downgrade its representation and role in the Quartet and work with all parties, because this is the only way to bring about a peaceful solution (paras.90-91). Looking into the UN's role, he concludes that the UN could not honestly argue that it "was guided by the best interest of the people the UN was there to assist" (para.95).

On the peace process, De Soto writes that despite current initiatives "...we shouldn't fall for our own propaganda" and adds, "we should be aware that [these initiatives] are not likely to [lead anywhere], because they don't rest on the sturdy foundations of proper situation analysis and even-handedness" (para. 119). And he warns against the "...tendency toward self-censorship – treating Israel with exquisite consideration, almost tenderness – [which] exists at the UN, partly for our own reasons - the legacy of the Zionism = racism resolution and the resulting political and budgetary cost for the UN, and Israel's demonstrated capacity to undermine US-UN relations" (para. 134).

Considering the context at the time of writing his report, at the beginning of May, De Soto concludes that "given the stress that is already apparent on and within the National Unity Government, its unraveling in the coming months can't be ruled out" (para.97).

De Soto concludes that "should the PA pass into irrelevance or non-existence, and the settlements keep expanding, the one State solution will come out of the shadows and begin to enter the mainstream" (para. 128).

The full report can be downloaded from: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/israel/Story/0,,2102257.00.html>
<http://image.guardian.co.uk/sys-files/Guardian/documents/2007/06/12/DeSotoReport.pdf>

In the absence of a constitutional solution based on popular democracy, also early elections – currently pursued by the president and the Fatah-led caretaker government and rubber-stamped the PLO – lack legitimacy and are divisive and unlikely to restore national unity.

The Events in Gaza: What was the Plan?

In hindsight numerous analysts, among them Egyptian observers and Hani al-Hassan, senior Fatah leader and former chief adviser to the P.A. President, indicate that Hamas might not have planned the June takeover of Gaza as it evolved. Hamas may have gone too far: it had an interest in raising its stakes in the coinciding Egypt-led negotiations over reform of the P.A. security system, and it had the ability to cause a local defeat to the Fatah forces affiliated with Muhammad Dahlan, which in alliance with US General Dayton's team, obstructed Hamas' achievements in these negotiations.⁽²⁾ The shameful flight with Israel's help of Dayton's Fatah allies from the Gaza Strip, and the rapid demise of the well armed and US-trained but unmotivated PA/Fatah fighting units in the Gaza Strip, may have resulted in an unplanned and complete military victory whose fruits are sour. The collapse of the National Unity Government now threatens to deprive Hamas of a role in shaping the Palestinian Authority, which was to be the tool for a gradual enhancement of the Movement's major achievement, i.e. the legitimacy and power it had gained in democratic elections.



Gaza City, May 2007. ©Photo by Abed Katib

The Result: Breakdown of the Palestinian Leadership System

Hamas considers its June armed overthrow of PA/Fatah security installations and the presidential compound in the Gaza Strip as a “war against the circle of betrayers in Fatah”, while the latter hold it was “mutiny” or a “coup d’État.” Each party blames the other for the shipwreck of the “national project”, and none of the two is willing to return to the *status-quo-ante*. On the one hand, Hamas continues to call for a solution of the crisis through renewed national dialogue and unity on the basis of the Mecca Agreement and aims to hold out, until the humanitarian crisis in the Gaza Strip will force Israel Western and Arab states to cooperate and thereby grant recognition of its role as a political player. On the other hand, most Fatah elites, including P.A.

President and PLO Chair Mahmoud Abbas, are actively engaged in lobbying foreign governments and donors to abstain from cooperation with Hamas, have set all cards on their alliance with the United States and Israel, and propose early elections in the OPT as the solution.

Both parties continue to claim legitimacy under the PA's Basic Law. Hamas' claim is based on the results of the 2006 elections, while Fatah argues that this Law empowers President Abbas to appoint emergency and caretaker governments even if the parliament (PLC) is not convened for approval. This although independent observers and legal experts, including lead-lawyers in drafting the PA's Basic Law, agree that the former Fatah-led emergency government – and now caretaker government – under Prime Minister Salam Fayyad, as well as new presidential decrees, are illegal and violate the provisions of that Law (*see box below*).

Opinion of Lawyer who drafted the PA Basic Law

In an interview with Reuters, Anis al-Qasem, the Palestinian lawyer who led the drafting of the Palestinian interim constitution (Basic Law), disputed President Mahmoud Abbas' legal authority to install a government that removed Hamas from power without parliamentary approval:

"It is worth remembering that the whole Basic Law has been amended to reduce, rather than increase, the powers of the president as a result of the power struggle between Mr. Abbas and the late President Arafat. [] The president has the power to dismiss the prime minister (Article 45) and to start the process of the formation of a new government. The basic ingredients of this process that give legitimacy to the new government are a vote of confidence by the Legislative Council and the oath of office. Until the formation of the new government in accordance with the procedure laid down in Chapter 5 of the Basic Law, the dismissed government continues to act as a caretaker government. The Basic Law contains no special provisions for what is sometimes called 'emergency government'. As to the powers of the president in a state of emergency, the only power specifically given to him is the manner provided in Article 110. He cannot issue decrees suspending any provisions of the Basic Law."

Source: Sunday, 8 July 2007, RTRS [nL0880166] [EN]

More importantly, however, legal experts like Al-Qasem also explain, that there is no constitutional solution to the current crisis of the Palestinian Authority's political system, because "the 'democracies' of the world [responded] with an unprecedented crippling siege as a punishment for the exercise of the Palestinian people of their democratic right to change the government. ... No constitutional draftsman would anticipate such a situation when his aim is to provide a basic law anchored in democratic principles and the rule of law." The same applies to another unprecedented measure: the paralysis of the PA parliament through detention by Israel of the majority of the elected legislators affiliated with Hamas, thereby preventing its functioning. In the absence of a constitutional solution based on popular democracy, also early elections – currently pursued by the president and the Fatah-led caretaker government and rubber-stamped the PLO - lack legitimacy and are divisive and unlikely to restore national unity.

The Losers and the Winners

Israel emerges as the winner also in this round. Encouraged by the unwavering support of the US administration, including President Bush's speech on 16 June, Israel remains unwilling to soften its military siege in the West Bank and to provide a "political horizon" for peace negotiations which could meet a minimum of rights and needs of the Palestinian people. The main loser in this scenario is Fatah, with the political system it has led for decades discredited

The overwhelming majority of the Palestinian people continue to call for national unity and dialogue among their leaders, but lack a mechanism for effective intervention.

and – together with its major shaping factor, the Oslo Accords - seemingly beyond repair.

However, as the overwhelming “post-Oslo reality” of Israel’s colonial apartheid-like regime, as well as likely future US-Israeli military interventions in the region, sweep away the foundations of corrupt and outdated Palestinian leadership structures, the Palestinian people are again paying the major price. For long excluded from meaningful participation in political decision making, the overwhelming majority of the Palestinian people continue to call for national unity and dialogue among their leaders, but lack a mechanism for effective intervention. As Palestinians are losing their much criticized but familiar system of leadership, no new leadership mechanism for political participation and protection of Palestinian individual and collective rights is yet available. A Palestinian people without leadership would certainly go well with the current Israeli and U.S. strategy of divide and rule, violence and military containment of the people in the region. A broad movement of solidarity among global civil society, which highlights Israel’s role at the core of the conflict, provides principled support and builds the global campaign of boycotts, divestment and sanctions (BDS) against Israel, however, will give Palestinians the courage and strength to build new leadership and strategies for their principled struggle for freedom and justice 60 years after the Nakba of 1948.

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Endnotes

1. Muslim Brotherhood: a world-wide Sunni Islamist movement and the world’s largest, most influential Islamist group. The MB operates large political opposition organization in many Arab countries, particularly Egypt. Founded by the sufi schoolteacher Hassan al-Banna in 1928, the MB seeks to instill the Qur’an and Sunnah as the sole reference for ordering the life of the Muslim individual, family, community and state, and ultimately to re-establish a Caliphate or unified Muslim state. Hamas shares the MB’s ideology, but its exact relationship with the MB is unclear, as the organizational structure of the MB has remained largely secret. Today, MB affiliated organizations operate in parliaments, including in Israel, and as extra-parliamentary actors in order to achieve political power (political Islam), mainly but not exclusively through gradual, non-violent means. See also: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Muslim_Brotherhood
2. Shi’a: a Muslim minority that split from the majority (Sunni) over the question of Prophet Muhammad’s successor. Currently, Shi’a represent the majority only in Iran, where they hold power and have enacted a constitution based on Islamic law, including personal status law (Shari’a). Shi’a minorities exist in several countries of the Arab/Islamic world. Hizbullah is a Lebanese Shi’a-based organization.
3. See for example, “No boundaries”, interview with Hani al-Hassan, Al-Jazeera, 2 July 2007 (in Arabic), at: <http://www.aljazeera.net/NR/exeres/C1CB4B9B-02B0-4A86-91C9-B844A188A075.htm>.

BADIL's 40/60 Call to Action

A Call for New Vision and Strategies

By BADIL staff



In the period of 2007 – 2008, Palestinians commemorate 60 years of the Nakba (Catastrophe) of 1948, when 78 per cent of Palestine was ethnically cleansed of its indigenous Arab population in order to make room for the “Jewish state”, and 40 years of Israel’s occupation and colonization of the remaining 22 per cent of Palestine (West Bank and Gaza Strip). A series of additional landmark anniversaries also fall into this period: 90 years since the Balfour Declaration of British support for a “Jewish home” in Palestine; 25 years since the massacre of Sabra and Shatila committed by Israel’s Lebanese allies, which symbolizes the impunity for crimes against the vulnerable, stateless Palestinian refugees; 20 years since the first Palestinian intifada, the revival of popular resistance in the 1967 occupied Palestinian territory (OPT); and, 5 years of construction of Israel’s Apartheid Wall, which is putting an end to the project of Palestinian statehood in the OPT.

Although Palestinian memory was silenced and has remained largely excluded from official historiography dominated by the powerful Zionist narrative of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the experience of the Nakba, in particular, has remained alive in popular memory and culture. Collective memory thus preserved and passed on from generation to generation - through oral history, songs and poems - affirms identity, manages trauma, and raises political and moral claims. Thus, the Nakba and annual Nakba commemorations represent a dissident history and an “unsettling counter-memory: a constant reminder of failings and injustice. It is a challenge to the morality of the Zionist project; a reminder of the failures of Arab leadership and peoples; and a persistent question to the world about its vision of a moral and just human order.” (See, *The Power of Memory*, Lila Abu Lughod in this issue.)

Palestinian refugee rights matter because they are claimed

Israel’s founding fathers had predicted that Palestinian refugees would “die or turn into human dust” (Ben Gurion); the architects of the Oslo peace process in the 1990s, including some



Al-Awda Award Festival. Cultural Palace, Ramallah, 1 May 2007. ©BADIL

The annual Al-Awda Award was launched by BADIL, in order to encourage cultural expression on the Nakba and Palestinian refugees’ right of return. 292 Palestinian artists, writers and researchers participated in the competition for the 2007 Award. The 16 winners were honored in the public Al-Awda Award Festival on 1 May.

Forty of 120 posters competing for the 2007 Al-Awda Award were exhibited to the public during the Award Festival at the Ramallah Cultural Palace. The Festival on 1 May marked the launch of the 59th commemoration of the Palestinian Nakba in the OPT. (For more detail on the Al-Awda Award, see the back-cover of this magazine.)



Al-Awda Award, Poster Exhibition. Cultural Palace, Ramallah, 1 May 2007. ©BADIL

Palestinian negotiators, had hoped that the issue of Palestinian refugees could be diluted before the final round of the Oslo peace negotiations. Palestinian refugees, however, have refused to live up to these expectations. They are engaged in documentation of the history of their displaced families and communities,(1) and in building their associations and networks as a tool for participation in Palestinian political decision making.(2) They continue to rally, campaign and lobby for acknowledgment of the injustice symbolized by the Palestinian Nakba (Catastrophe) of 1948 and the right to return to their homes and properties.

The 59th anniversary of the Nakba in 2007 was commemorated with the largest ever popular rallies for Palestinian refugees right of return. In Ramallah, Palestinian youth dominated the scene, as thousands marched through the city on 15 May in the central West Bank-wide memorial rally.



59th Anniversary of the Nakba. West Bank rally "al-Nakba - al-Awda", Ramallah, 15 May 2007. ©BADIL

Popular commemorations of the 59th anniversary of the Palestinian Nakba in 2007 were coordinated by a National Committee composed of refugee and non-refugee networks of Palestinian civil society in the OPT, Israel and the exile, in addition to the major Palestinian political forces and remnants of the PLO Department for Refugee Affairs. Positions and demands raised by the National Committee reflect Palestinian language and consensus about the priorities in the post-Oslo era:

[...] As we commemorate the ethnic cleansing of our people from its land, we are aware of the scope of the dangers which confront our most important cause, the cause of the Palestinian refugees in the homeland and in the exile.

We therefore affirm:

- i) Our absolute rejection of, and our determination to combat, all “initiatives”, whether Palestinian, Arab or international, which do not clearly guarantee the right of Palestinian refugees to return to their homes and their right to restitution of their property in accordance with UN Resolution 194;
- ii) The need to break the humiliating sanctions imposed on the Palestinian people, first of all by re-instating the commitment of Arab states to their obligations towards the Palestinian people and to abstain from engagement in initiatives and deals promoted by the United States;
- iii) Our demand to UNRWA to reaffirm the commitment to its obligation to provide services which guarantee an adequate standard of living for Palestinian refugees;
- iv) The need to reactivate the PLO Department for Refugee Affairs, and to develop its capacity to play an effective role in the protection of our people in the homeland and the exile; [...] ⁽³⁾

While official Israel continues to displace Palestinians and deny the Palestinian Nakba and refugees’ right of return – in 2007 Israel’s Jerusalem municipality launched official celebrations of the 40th anniversary of the “liberation and unification of Jerusalem” on 15 May, Nakba Day - a courageous minority of Jews in Israel has taken a different route. For several years now, Israel’s traditional Zionist “peace camp” is being challenged by a dissident voice that reminds Israelis that, in many respects, the Nakba is also the story of Jews who live in Israel, and that acknowledgment of the Palestinian right of return will not only be a first step towards correcting the historical injustice committed against the Palestinian people, but can also usher in a new beginning for Jews in the country.⁽⁴⁾



Internally Displaced Palestinians march for return on Israel's independence day. 24 April 2007. ©ADRID

The annual “March of Return” is organized by the Association for the Defense of the Rights of the Internally Displaced (ADRID) in Israel. Also here, the number of participants peaked in 2007, with some 10,000 Palestinian citizens and groups of Jewish Israelis making their way to the closing rally in the 1948 depopulated Palestinian village of Lajoun.

60 Years of Nakba require new vision and strategies

Those who hold power don’t have to bother with contradictions or try to square circles. Official Israel claims it can be both Jewish and democratic, irrespective of the fact that its legal and political system discriminates against some one million Palestinian citizens and millions of refugees and IDP. The diplomatic community, the Quartet and other “peace-brokers”, hold that that there is “no serious question about the broad outline of the final settlement”,⁽⁵⁾ although the facts on the ground defy their blueprint of a two-state solution.



"Generations of Return": BADIL Youth Summer Camp, 25-29 June 2007. ©BADIL

60 years into the Palestinian Nakba, however, time has come for a reality check. Israeli governments have operated a regime of military occupation in the OPT for 40 years now, i.e. double the time of Israel's existence without such occupation (1948 – 1967). Military personnel, norms and interests dominate Israel's political system, while institutions, norms and routines of its colonial enterprise have long been integrated into Israel's regime and form an inherent component thereof. It is, therefore, time to ask: "Is peace without the Palestinian refugees a realistic option?" Can Israel's occupation be ended, if the Nakba and Palestinian refugees' right to return remain denied? Or, in other words: Aren't military occupation and the unresolved "refugee question" two sides of the same racist political and legal regime which has obstructed just peace for generations? And, finally, "what is the vision for the struggle ahead?"

Although Palestinian refugees will not see justice on the 60th anniversary of the Nakba in 2008, this anniversary can become a meaningful event, if used to galvanize vision and energies for the struggle ahead. The 40/60 Call is a call for a new, "post-Oslo" public discourse about the unresolved "question of Palestine", which includes and addresses the rights of the entire Palestinian people – those in Israel, in the OPT, and refugees in exile – as well as the rights of Jewish Israelis under international law. Respect and implementation of the right of return of Palestinian refugees is the key to just peace in the Middle East. It requires the ending of Israel's colonial apartheid regime.



"Generations of Return": BADIL Youth Summer Camp, 25-29 June 2007. ©BADIL

"Generations of Return" is the annual youth summer camp organized by the participants in BADIL's project for Youth Education and Activation. 12 community centers of Palestinian refugees in the West Bank and Palestinians in Nazareth and Haifa participate with 379 boys and girls in the 2007 project, which aims to build a new generation of community organizers and activists. In June, most of them (270, including 90 girls) were able to join the common summer camp in Beit Jala, which was an intensive experience of study, field visits and artistic expression about the Palestinian refugee experience, rights and the struggle for return.

Endnotes

1. See, for example: www.palestineremembered.com
2. See, for example, the CIVITAS project conducted at Oxford University with the support of the European Commission: www.civitas-online.org
3. Statement on the Occasion of the 59th Anniversary of the Nakba: National Committee for the Commemoration of the Nakba, 15 May 2007 (global Palestine Right-of-Return Coalition, Council of National and Islamic Forces, Palestinian NGO Network/PNGO, Union of Arab Community-based Organizations/Ittijah, Anti-Apartheid Wall Campaign, National Coalition for the Defense of Palestinian Rights in Jerusalem, PLO Department for Refugee Affairs/DORA).
4. See for example: www.NakbaInHebrew.org
5. 'Secretary-General Tells Security Council Middle East in Profound Crisis, Calls for "New and Urgent Push for Peace"', UN Doc. SG/SM/10796, SC/8897, Dec. 12, 2006.

40 to 67

Photo Exhibition of Activestills

By Activestills

On Thursday morning, 10 May 2007, the inhabitants of Haifa, Jerusalem and Tel Aviv, woke up to find some walls of their cities covered with photographs of the kind they are not used to seeing. Over night, some 1600 pictures representing 40 copies of the photo exhibition “40 to 67” had been hastily put on more than 200 walls in the streets by dozens of volunteers.



Ben Gurion Avenue, Tel Aviv, May 2007. © Active Stills.

Since then the photos have been exhibited on many other occasions and events, on Israel's Wall in Anata and in Aida refugee camp, as well as during demonstrations and events against the occupation in Israel and in various countries of the world.

Activestills' photo exhibition 40 to 67 concentrates on four cities (Gaza, Bethlehem, Jerusalem and Hebron) occupied by Israel since the war of 67, which is still perceived as one of the great “victories” of Israel. The exhibition confronts the general perception of the Israeli public with the reality of 40 years of occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip, and raises the question as to whether it truly was a victory.

Who are those who still pay the price? As victory celebrations are held in Israel, the only narrative is that of the greatness and heroism of the state, while in fact settlements continue to expand



Hebron – Absentees. The comparison between the photo from the 1990's (right) and 2007 (left) expresses the true nature of the Zionist settlement movement as a destructive force which aims to erase all which stands in its path. ©Active Stills

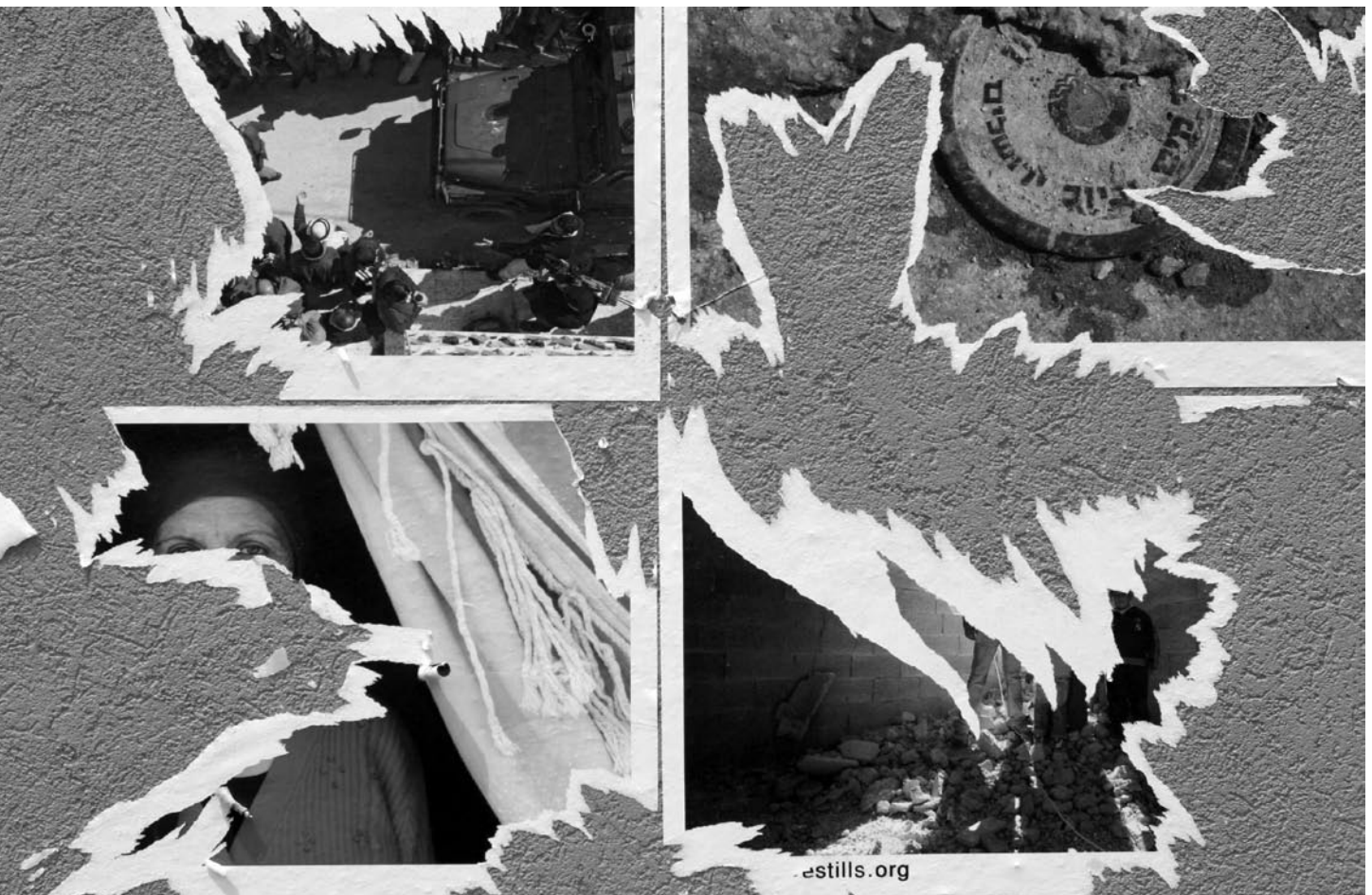
on Palestinian lands whose owners have been expelled. Millions of people live in a reality of imprisonment, oppression, dispossession, humiliation and denial of basic human rights. That reality is a mirror to Israeli society, an image it refuses to see. Those are the achievements of the war.

Reactions by the Israeli public have varied, between apathy and efforts to rip off the exhibition. However, some people stopped, watched and scribbled messages and remarks.



Gaza Strip - Hostages. Those who hold Gaza hostage are many. It does not start with the absence of law, and it does not end with the sealing of borders. Everything in Gaza depends on waiting and waiting, and time has no meaning. © Active Stills.

The exhibition was organized by Activestills collective which was established in 2005 by a few documentary stills photographers, out of the strong conviction of photography's power to create change through awareness. The collective's members view themselves as a part of the struggle against any form of oppression, racism, and violation of the basic right to freedom. The Activestills collective operates in Israel and occupied Palestine and focuses on social and political documentation: project production, publications, and street exhibitions, all dealing with issues that the public is usually not exposed to in its daily informative routine as dictated by the established media. The use of public spaces as a platform aims at reaching, in a direct way, the wider number of people in the streets where the power to make real social changes exists. In addition, the group is working continually with peace and human rights organizations and movements in Israel and occupied Palestine, as a part of the joint struggle against the occupation. Their photographic projects and daily journalistic works are published on internet news sites and in printed media around the world. The exhibit, which was assembled from the works of Israeli, Palestinian and International photographers is being displayed in cities in Israel and occupied Palestine as well as in Europe and the United States. The photographer are: Anne Paq, Keren Manor, Mohammed Abed, Nir Landau, Nayef Hashlamoun, Oren Ziv, Tess Scheftan, Wissam Nassar, Yotam Ronen. Activestills.org The principle is to make the exhibit widely available through direct downloading from internet. If you are interested to present it to your community please send an email to activestills@gmail.com.



Hahasmal park, Tel Aviv. © Active Stills.

40 years of occupation and annexation of Palestinian East Jerusalem: Israel celebrates as international community continues to turn a blind eye

Israel is currently celebrating 40 years of what it calls the 'unification' of Jerusalem – otherwise known as the occupation and annexation of the eastern half of the city. Forty years ago in June 1967, Israel occupied what had remained of the Palestinian city of Jerusalem, the other half having been occupied and ethnically cleansed of Palestinians two decades before.

Israel has done its best to separate the status of occupied Jerusalem from the rest of the territories occupied in 1967, and repeatedly refused to even table the issue for discussion or negotiation.

The international community officially refuses to recognize Jerusalem as Israel's capital, keeping embassies in Tel Aviv rather than in Jerusalem and avoiding large official celebrations of Israeli dominance over the city. However, a few symbolic gestures notwithstanding, international policy perpetuates the Israeli occupation. In his letter to Ariel Sharon in 2004,

US President Bush even recognized the expanded municipal borders of Israeli occupied and annexed East Jerusalem, carving deep into the West Bank and including large Jewish colonies, as facts on the ground to be accepted not negotiated.

According to current international law the Palestinian Authority should be able to conduct its affairs in East Jerusalem, yet institutions in the capital are routinely closed, and PA officials repeatedly arrested. Palestinian small businesses, schools, hospitals and ordinary life has been devastated by the building of the Wall – a wall dividing not merely Jew from Arab, but Palestinian neighbours from each other.

After the occupation of '67, Israel's first act was to bulldoze the homes of 135 Palestinian families in the Mughrabi quarter – along with mosques - in order to create an open plaza in front of the Wailing Wall. Israel's UN ambassador explained that this was 'urban improvement'. The vast majority were homes of 1948 refugees from Jerusalem's western villages. In the name of Hajja Rasmia Tabaki, an elderly woman killed as her home fell on top of her, and the 18,000 families who have lost West Bank homes since the beginning of occupation, the Israeli Committee Against Housing Demolition (ICAHD) joined families of the Mughrabi quarter to commemorate their loss. ICAHD then moved on to a nearby Palestinian village to assist in rebuilding a recently demolished home.

Palestinians await the day when the US, the UK and the rest of the international community will become as keen to implement international law as the activists of ICAHD. With the arrival of US ally and joint architect of the occupation of Iraq, former British Prime Minister Tony Blair, as the Quartet's new envoy, it is unlikely to be a day in the near future.



Israeli construction at the Mughrabi Gate, Old City of Jerusalem, 2007. ©al-Ayyam

“We will replant these trees again”

Resisting the ongoing Nakba: the story of Artas

By Anne Paq

Visitors of Artas are amazed by the beauty of this small village located South-East of Bethlehem. Artas is renowned for its water sources and fertile lands that run throughout the valley covered by greenhouses and trees. It has around 4,000 inhabitants and hosts an annual Lettuce Festival.

Artas, however, is also located close to the ever-expanding Gush Etzion settlement bloc and the route of the Wall. Last year, construction started on the hills surrounding Artas. In May this year, inhabitants discovered with concerns that the bulldozers were moving increasingly down, in the direction of the valley. The first land threatened with confiscation and destruction was a plot covered with beautiful apricot trees belonging to the Abu Sway family.

Unofficial information was disclosed to the family according to which the land would be confiscated and all the trees uprooted in order to build a sewage facility for the nearby settlements. It has also become increasingly obvious that the Wall would be built in this location. Construction of the illegal Wall and its associated regime, combined with the expansion of the settlements at the mouth of the valley and surrounding hills, will be a disaster for the whole village of Artas. It will not only entail more confiscation and pollution of agricultural lands, but also the destruction of a beautiful landscape and important natural heritage.



Israeli Bulldozer uprooting trees of the village of Artas, Bethlehem, May 2007. ©Anne Paq.

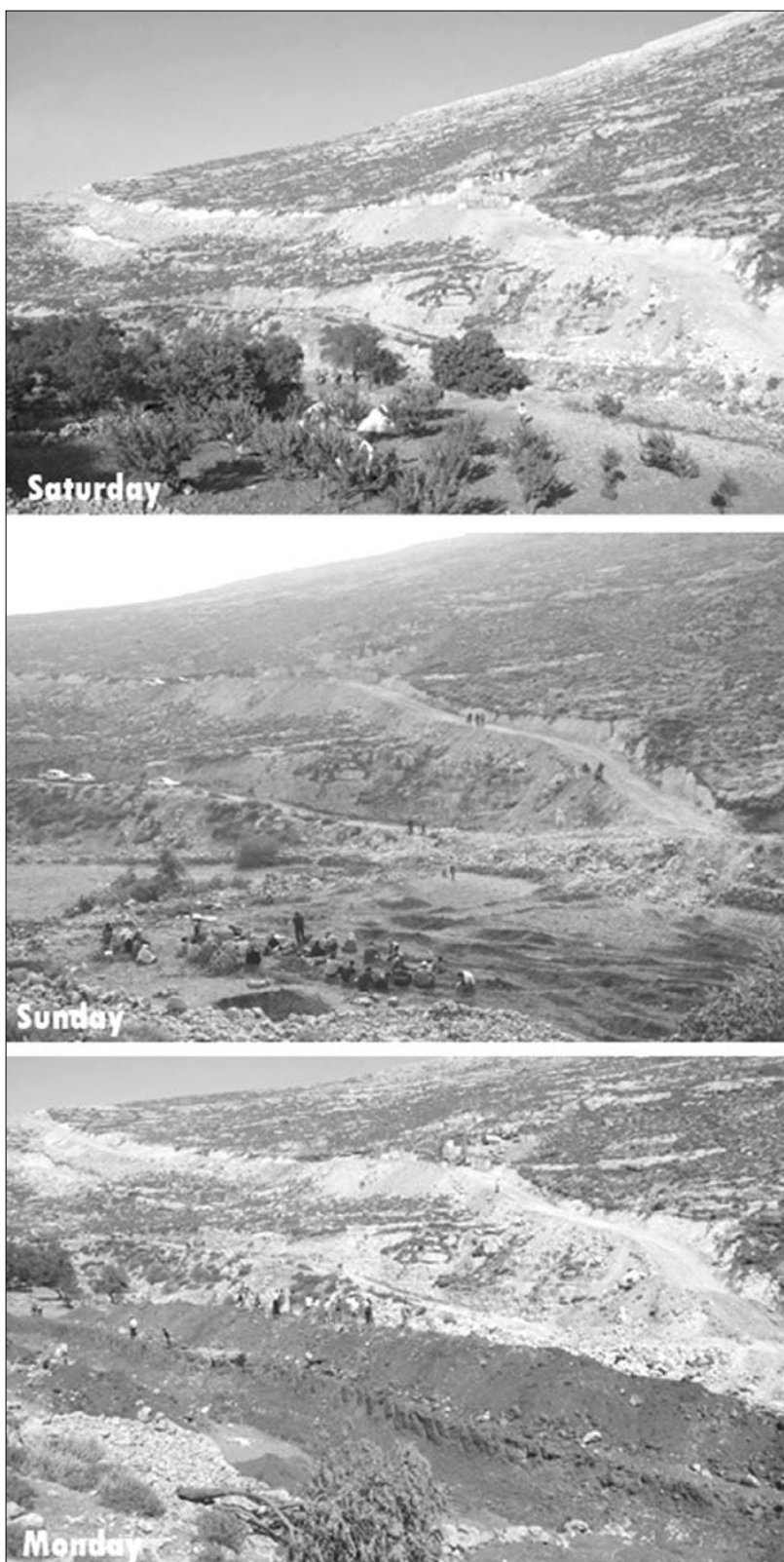
In May 2007, Awwad Abu Sway, together with other inhabitants from the village, launched an urgent appeal to Palestinians and internationals in order to try to prevent the confiscation of the lands. On May 18, the Israelis put an electric generator next to the Abu Sway family land in order to better control the site with big spot lights. Meanwhile, tents were organised, and for nights international activists together with Palestinians and Israelis slept under the threatened trees, despite repeated visits and harassment by Israeli soldiers.

On May 20, at 5.30 am, around 40 Israeli soldiers arrived at the site, removed the tents, violently pushed away the people and even threw them over a wall into an adjacent field. Then the bulldozer came to uproot all the trees, while the people continued to protest against this blatant injustice. As the trees were being uprooted, Awwad kept repeating to the soldiers: "I promise you, we will replant these trees."

Four Israelis were apprehended. In two hours, the field became a desolate landscape with holes instead of trees.

The Palestinian villagers sat down in silence under the burning sun in the destroyed field as a sign of protest and defiance. And indeed, the story of Artas was far from over. The very same afternoon, the inhabitants tried to replant some trees but were beaten by the soldiers. The next day a march of protest was organised. The private guards on the site reacted violently and started to shoot at the journalists. As the demonstrators were peacefully going back to the village, Israeli soldiers chased them, and brutally arrested three Palestinians, including Awwad. They were released five days after.

Since then, the demonstrations, as well as legal proceedings, continue in Artas. The soldiers have repeatedly prevented the people of Artas from reaching their lands in the close vicinity of the new installations. While international media attention is focused on the internal Palestinian



The targeted site in the village of Artas, Bethlehem, May 2007. ©Anne Paq.



Landowners facing the soldiers, Artas, Bethlehem, May 2007. ©Anne Paq.

conflict, the Israeli authorities continue to create facts on the ground in the occupied Palestinian territories through construction of the Wall and the expansion of colonies on Palestinian lands; there is no international protest. Construction of the Wall is going fast. Currently a big structure with concrete and steel has been erected on the field of the Abu Sway family, and the bulldozers are continuously working in the valley and the surrounding hills.



Landowners facing the soldiers, Artas, Bethlehem, May 2007. ©Anne Paq.



International and Israeli activists joining the protest against land confiscation, Artas, Bethlehem, May 2007. ©Anne Paq.

Together with the demonstrations in Um Salomona against the construction of the Wall and confiscation of Palestinian lands, Artas has become another symbol of non-violent resistance against the Israeli policies of colonization. Although the trees have been uprooted, the spirit of resistance has not.

Anne Paq is a photographer and the coordinator of a photo and video project at al-Rowwad in Aida camp.

UN Register of Damages on the Wall

The United Nations Register of Damage Caused by the Construction of the Wall in the Occupied Palestinian Territory (UNROD) is officially established, and, as requested by the General Assembly, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon has produced the first UNROD progress report on 14 June 2007.

The Secretary-General reports that he appointed on 10 May 2007 three international experts to the Board of the Register: Harumi Hori of Japan, Matti Paavo Pellonpää of Finland and Michael F. Raboin of the United States of America.

The Board first convened between 14 and 16 May at the Office of the Register of Damage in Vienna. The Board was briefed by UN staff and initiated work on drafting internal guiding documents. The Board discussed "the potential procedures that could be employed for the distribution and collection of damage claim forms in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and the technical procedures that would be involved in the recording, storage and organization of those damage claims in the Office of the Register of Damage."

Another meeting of the Board between 9 and 13 July in Vienna will reportedly address Board responsibilities:

- (a) To establish the rules and regulations governing the work of the Office of the Register of Damage;
- (b) To determine the eligibility criteria for the inclusion in the Register of Damage of losses and damages that have an established causal link to the construction of the wall;
- (c) To apply such criteria to the determination of the categories of losses and damages that may be included in the Register of Damage;
- (d) To develop the format for the design of claim forms;
- (e) To agree on modalities of a public-awareness programme to inform the Palestinian public of the requirements for and logistics involved in the filing of a damage claim for registration.

Three years after the 2004 ICJ Advisory Opinion on Israel's Wall, however, UNROD is not operational in the OPT and Palestinian victims of damages remain unable to register their claims.

Source: Illegal Israeli actions in Occupied East Jerusalem and the rest of the Occupied Palestinian Territory, UN General Assembly, A/ES-1022 ,389/ June 2007.

The Power of Memory

By Ahmad H. Sa'di and Lila Abu-Lughod

Memory is one of the few weapons available to those against whom the tide of history has turned.

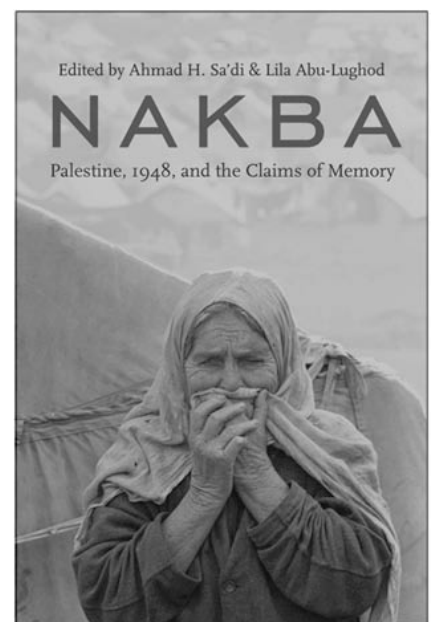
Our new book, *Nakba: Palestine, 1948, and the Claims of Memory* is about what 1948 has meant for Palestinians, as refracted through their memories, individual and collective, rendered public through being elicited by researchers and grandchildren, volunteered creatively, or presented in conventionalized memorial practices. The essays by a group of established and emerging scholars, all of whom are doing research on Palestinian memory, contribute important material to the ongoing historical reconstruction of the events of 1947 and 1948 and supplement the careful oral historical work that is being done by Palestinian research centers.

But that is not the main purpose of this book. We are less concerned about what these memories tell us about what happened in the past than what work memories do, and can do, in the present. Among the important work that memory does is to affirm identity, manage trauma, and make political and moral claims. We look especially at how memories are produced, when people are silent, when collective memory proliferates, and what forms Palestinian memories of the cataclysmic events of 1948 take, recognizing that no memory is pure or spontaneous.

Many people argue that the narratives, documents, and archives of history's victors, as well as the realities they have imposed on the ground, are what, in the final analysis, count as historical truth. Yet the powerful cannot fully impose their will in defining historical events or in determining the readings of reality. Memory is one of the few weapons available to those against whom the tide of history has turned.

It can slip in to rattle the wall of History. Palestinian memory is, by dint of its preservation and social production under the conditions of its silencing by the thundering story of Zionism, dissident history. Palestinians' memories of the Nakba can be said to criticize the present in the name of a trauma forgotten by the world.

This book, with essays on such varied topics as the gender of nakba memory, the cumulative and repetitive quality of the narratives in the ongoing disposessions, the deep meaning of places like Jaffa and destroyed villages like Qula or Deir Abban memorialized in books written by their former inhabitants, and the mourning work of films like those of Nizar Hassan, is not just a collection of individual testimonials or personal reflections. Instead, it is sustained examination of the nature, shapes, and determinants of Palestinian collective, social, or cultural memory. We analyze the forms and the politics of Palestinian discourses of the Nakba. And it is from the memories of ordinary Palestinians made public in a variety of contexts that we draw our conclusions about the larger significance of the Nakba. What ultimately emerges from the essays in this book about



Palestinian memory is, by dint of its preservation and social production under the conditions of its silencing by the thundering story of Zionism, dissident history.

how Palestinians remember the Nakba is a strong sense of the claims that social memory makes about what happened in the past and what ought, morally, to be done in the present.

The Nakba was many things at once: the uprooting of people from their homeland, the destruction of the social fabric that bound them for so long, and the frustration of national aspirations. The Nakba is also an unsettling counter-memory: a constant reminder of failings and of injustice. It is a challenge to the morality of the Zionist project; a reminder of the failures of Arab leadership and peoples; and a persistent question to the world about its vision of a moral and just human order.

For Palestinians, the Nakba was mostly about fear, helplessness, violent uprooting, and humiliation. It stands for the unexpected and unstoppable destruction that left them in disarray, politically, economically, and psychologically. The Nakba meant the destruction in a single blow of all the worlds in which Palestinians had lived. For many, theirs was a dynamic, prosperous and future-oriented society. The Nakba marked a new era dominated by estrangement, and often poverty. Nothing in their history or that of neighboring countries had prepared Palestinians to imagine such a catastrophe. The fact that the Nakba took place within a short period—a matter of months – made it hard to comprehend; there was little time to reflect.

Yet this shattering experience has not, until recently, been the subject of much scholarship by Palestinians. Nor has it found wide sympathy or acknowledgment. How many people in the United States know why Palestinians feel such different emotions from Israelis on their “Independence Day” on May 15? Why they continue to struggle, sometimes violently? Even why they are there, in Israeli cities and on Israel’s moving borders, still provoking talk of “transfer.” The Palestinian presence is the odd note in an otherwise harmonious Israeli picture of themselves as a suffering Jewish people redeemed by their new homeland, or celebrating a normal national independence.

Some might fault the Palestinians for somehow having remained silent, for not having told enough of their story. Many of those people who experienced it have not been heard from. As part of the research for this book, one of the authors interviewed an elderly Palestinian woman in the Galilee whose Nakba story he had heard before. She had been in her early twenties when the Nakba took place. On one occasion, she recalled, “We [she and her mother] were crossing the Saffuriyya – Shafa `Amr road. We were spotted by an armored vehicle that opened fire on us. We ran into the fields; it was harvest season. I jumped into a haystack; the bullets flew very close to my head and face. I was very frightened so I covered myself completely with the hay.” She then lost her mother, and couldn’t find her or the rest of her family for twenty days. Then she talked about another disturbing experience of running across a group of murdered men, two of whom had once been neighbors. Each had a single bullet hole in the forehead. When asked why she had never told her Nakba stories in public, particularly since so little was known to the world about what happened in that period, she looked astonished and retorted, “How can those without lips whistle?”

What does it mean to say that Palestinians do not have lips with which to whistle? What prevented them from telling their stories? Scholars of collective memory and historians are well aware that people who undergo traumatic events produce belated memories; it can take victims a decade or more to be able to assimilate their experience and give it meaning and form. Others suggest that you need distance to be able to remember. Yet there is no distance for Palestinians. They are still

The Nakba is also an unsettling counter-memory: a constant reminder of failings and of injustice. It is a challenge to the morality of the Zionist project; a reminder of the failures of Arab leadership and peoples; and a persistent question to the world about its vision of a moral and just human order.

The Palestinian narratives of the Nakba still struggle in the shadow of a much more powerful international narrative—the Zionist one.

Palestinian memories of 1948 offer a way to begin—a beginning that might lead, through acknowledgment of what happened, to a better future, one that is not based on hardened identities, silencing of Palestinians, and continuing violence.

living their dispossession; the trauma is ongoing. Fifty-nine years later, the Nakba is not over. A state of normality has not been achieved by either Palestinians or Israelis. Yet the main reason the story has not been told is that it has been silenced. The Palestinian narratives of the Nakba still struggle in the shadow of a much more powerful international narrative—the Zionist one.

Although our emphasis in the book is on the ways Palestinian memories are narrated and represented, the cumulative effect of the memories we have collected and analyzed in this book is to affirm that something terrible happened to the Palestinians as a direct result of the military and political will to create the state of Israel. If only a fraction of what people in these pages tell us is true, their stories must slip through the holes in the wall of the dominant story of 1948 and open it up to questioning, both factual and moral. Like the wall that, though declared illegal by the International Court, is now being erected to keep Palestinians out of Israel, in the process confiscating more of their land and making their lives on the ground even less viable, the Israeli narrative needs to be dismantled. Palestinian memories of 1948 offer a way to begin—a beginning that might lead, through acknowledgment of what happened, to a better future, one that is not based on hardened identities, silencing of Palestinians, and continuing violence.

Nakba: Palestine, 1948, and the Claims of Memory was published in April 2007 by Columbia University Press, USA. The contributors are Lila Abu Lughod, Diana Keown Allan, Haim Bresheeth; Rochelle Davis; Samera Esmeir; Isabelle Humphries; Lena Jayyusi; Laleh Khalili; Omar Al-Qattan; Ahmad H. Sa'di; Rosemary Sayigh, Lebanon; and Susan Slyomovics.

Ahdaf Soueif says of the book: “Nakba provides crucial insights into the Palestinian-Israeli situation yesterday, today, and, perhaps, tomorrow. This is a voice which needs to be heard by everyone interested in resolving this conflict.” W. J. T. Mitchell, Professor at the University of Chicago says, “The catastrophic expulsion of the Palestinian people from their homeland in 1948 is a historic injustice that demands the attention of the entire world. Americans, Israelis, and Jews in every nation must especially give heed to this astonishing collection of masterful essays. Far from being a melancholy assemblage of anger and self-pity, this book is a major political and scholarly achievement, reflecting deeply on the traumatic roots of national identity, the role of memory and amnesia, history and mythical narrative, legal doctrine and eyewitness testimony, women’s experience, men’s business, and lost places found again in song, story, and film. This is essential reading for anyone who longs for a just settlement to ‘the question of Palestine,’ the question of the Middle East, or, indeed, the establishment of a world order of peace and justice.”

Ahmad H. Sa'di is a senior lecturer in the Department of Politics and Government at Ben-Gurion University of the Negev. He has published widely on political, social, and economic aspects of the lives of Palestinians in Israel.

Lila Abu-Lughod is professor of anthropology and gender studies at Columbia University. Her books include “Veiled Sentiments: Honor and Poetry in a Bedouin Society”, “Writing Women’s Worlds: Bedouin Stories”, and “Dramas of Nationhood: The Politics of Television in Egypt”.

The article published here is based on the introduction to the new book “Nakba: Palestine, 1948, and the Claims of Memory” edited by the above. For more about this book, see:
<http://www.columbia.edu/cu/cup/catalog/data/978023113/9780231135788.HTM>

A Tale of Two Generations

By Najwa Sheikh Ahmad

I am a Palestinian refugee, born in one of the refugee camps in the south of the Gaza strip. Khan Younis was my home - from there I have my memories. As a child, I did not think or even care about knowing my origin, although I had heard my parents and my grandparents mentioning the word “Al-Majdal”. But to me, Al-Majdal meant nothing, an illusionary place with special memories for my parents.



I still remember very clearly arriving in Al-Majdal; my heart was beating so quickly; I was so happy and my body was shaking.

Sign-posting by Zochrot in the depopulated Palestinian town of al-Majdal, today Ashkelon. 2005. ©Nathalie Bardue/BADIL

One day this changed: Our teacher at school asked us, his students, to write an essay about our origin place of birth. At home, I told my father about my homework, and he was very anxious and excited – finally he had been given the chance to tell me about his own treasure. He asked me to prepare myself to write his story.

With words full of passion, grief, sorrow, and a sensation of loss, my 70 years old father spoke about our home town Al-Majdal. With his strong voice, full of pride, my father sounded like a man talking about his beloved ones. Unable to follow his words, I stopped writing, but continued listening to the flow of words about his dear country - his own Paradise where people were happy and lived a simple life.

The next day, my teacher asked me to read my essay for the class. I took my courage in both hands, and slowly started to tell my father's story. While doing so, I realized a new feeling inside myself – a craving feeling of pride and passion about my origin.

Later, in 1998, I got the chance to visit my home town. One day, when I was traveling back to Gaza from Tel Aviv where I had collected a visa at the American Embassy in order to visit my

I wished at that time that the walls of these buildings could speak, and could tell me who was the real owner of this land.

The residents of the Hadidiya Bedouin village in the Jordan Valley are being forcibly evicted and displaced

Between 80-100 people live in Hadidiya, a small village of Bedouin in the Jordan Valley surrounded by a Jewish colony and closed military zones. The vast majority are children (approximately 60). In order to access school, children have to go through gates in Khirbet A'touf and Khirbet Humsa that open twice a day (morning 8:30am and 2:30-3:30pm). The village is located in Area C under the Oslo Accords. Families have not received any permits for their homes and infrastructure.

The families first received eviction orders in 1997 and were told to leave as the area was considered a closed military area. After a court case, in 2001 the community was allowed to stay. Soon after, however, the village was transferred to the land department in Beit El (Israeli 'Civil Administration') and the residents received new eviction orders. The community once again brought the case to court, but the settlers of the nearby colony of Ro'i also petitioned the court to have the community removed because they allegedly pose a threat to their security. On 1 November 2006, the Israeli High Court of Justice issued a ruling to evict the entire community by 10 February 2007. The residents submitted an appeal and received a temporary stay of eviction valid until 10 April 2007. Meanwhile, 'alternative relocation' were being examined. The temporary stay has now expired. Seventy persons were forcibly expelled by the army, left walking with what they could carry, and settled 2 kilometers away from the village, while 30 people still remain in the village. Those remaining face imminent home demolition, eviction and displacement. During the forced displacement, 22 goats died, further impoverishing the community.

In April 2007, Amnesty International launched an urgent appeal stating that "there has been relentless pressure from the Israeli army in the West Bank on Palestinians from Bedouin groups to leave the areas where they have been accustomed to live and graze their flocks for decades. The reasons given by the Israeli courts - e.g. lack of planning permission, land reserved for agricultural use or land in a military zone - are use against Palestinians, while Israeli settlements continue to expand on Palestinian agricultural land." Amnesty concluded that "home demolition has been widely used as a means to force the Palestinian population to leave the Jordan Valley; then, living elsewhere, the army will not allow such Palestinians to return."

Sources: OCHA Central field office, OCHA Humanitarian Monitor, No.10, February 2007. Amnesty International, House demolition/forced eviction: Israel/Occupied Territories, More than 100 residents of Hadidiya village, Urgent Appeal 99/07, 27 April 2007.

brothers in the U.S. (at that time it was possible to travel to Tel Aviv), I saw Al-Majdal for the first time. I still remember very clearly arriving in Al-Majdal; my heart was beating so quickly; I was so happy and my body was shaking. I tried to remember my parents' words about their lost home; the fig tree under which they could find peace, the mosque in the center of the city, and the sweetest fruits of the fig tree which they will never forget. I was concentrating to remember all what I saw so I later could describe it to both my parents. When I first entered the city, there was a mosque, with several arches, where the Israelis turned it into a coffee shop, blacksmith, and bar. Another house, with its old architecture was on the left side, I wished at that time that the walls

of these buildings could speak, and could tell me who was the real owner of this land.

At home, my parents were anxiously waiting for me. They did not care about my trip, or my interview at the embassy, but only about Al-Majdal: "what did you see? Is everything still the same? Is the mosque still there?" asked my father breathlessly. "Yes "I said, I felt the loss, grieve and desperation in their tones. I told them that the mosque is still there, and its arches were turned into shops, father was very sad to hear that. I wished that I could take them there, but unfortunately, this was impossible. Father continued, is the minaret of the mosque still as it was? Yes I answered. Father added that the voice of the Muezzin reaches the sky.

Years later, while working with UNRWA, my father asked me whether my supervisor, who was an international living in Ashkelon (Al-Majdal), could take some photos of Al-Majdal. My father was eager, like a child begging for a toy, to know whether his home was still there. I then realized that my parents are both wondering what it would be like to return or at least to visit their home town; they fear that they will die before having returned to their lost homes, as happened to my grandfathers.

I called father days ago to recall these memories, he says to me that the only thing that he wants to see, is his old house, with the palm tree where they used to distribute its palm every year to their relatives and friends.

Al-Nakba is about fleeing our homes and all the subsequent pain and suffering; but more importantly, Al-Nakba is also about passing this tragic memory from one generation to another - from grandfather and grandmother, to mother and father, to daughter and son - without any hope of peace and return. But will my children share my feelings about Al-Majdal. Will they share the same memories? Or will Al-Majdal only be words for them detached from any importance, any feelings?

42,000 HOMES ON THE DEMOLITION LIST: Update on home demolition in the Naqab

By Isabelle Humphries



Home demolition in the village of Attir – Naqab. June 2007 (source: akhbarna.com)

The committee has announced to the media that it is planning to establish a refugee camp in front of the Knesset as a symbol of protest for the 42,000 Bedouin homes threatened with demolition by Israeli plans.

Last edition *al-Majdal* (issue No.32) reported on demolition of Bedouin Arab homes in the Naqab and since publication there has been no let up in this government policy of displacement. On May 8, the entire village of Twail Abu-Jarwal, 30 tents and huts, homes to over 100 people were destroyed on Israeli government orders. The Regional Council for the Unrecognized Villages in the Negev (RCUV) reported that at 9.30am two bulldozers, dozens of armed police, alongside demolition workers, entered the village at a time they knew men would be out at work.

Nothing was left standing. A broken down van which was used as shelter from the sun by the elderly was pulled down. Those who refused to move were physically dragged from their homes. When the son of one elderly man picked up fabric and a tent pole off the ground to create a new shelter for his father, he was arrested by police claiming he was about to attack them.

The residents of Twail Abu-Jarwal, an unrecognized village close to the government created township of Laqiya, have been struggling with Israeli authorities for residency rights for years. Approximately 70,000 Bedouin in the Negev are living in villages which Israel fails to recognize, thus preventing successful applications for building permits, and denying residents access to official state services which, as Israeli citizens, they should be entitled to receive. Laqiya is one of several settlements built by Israel in the attempt to sedentarize Bedouin, cramming them into tiny overcrowded areas, denying a traditional agricultural lifestyle and failing to provide adequate alternative sources of income.



Volvo bulldozer at work in Attir – Naqab. June 2007 (source: akhbarna.com)

“This is the eighth time in the last two years they have come to demolish,” reported one villager, “It is the fourth time that they have flattened it out completely”. Displacement of villagers of Twail Abu Jarwal, like other Bedouin villages in the Negev, is not a new phenomenon, but dates from the forced transfer of Arab populations in the 1950s under the military government of the new Israeli state.

Village Council head Aqil al-Talaqa has sat many times with various branches of the Israeli authorities, the Ministry of Interior, the Authority for the “Advancement” of the Bedouins, and the Israeli Lands Authority (ILA). It was suggested to him that the villagers move to another ‘temporary’ location while the government ‘contemplates’ what to do with the people, but al-Talaqa refuses, despairing of temporary solutions. As the RCUV points out, Bedouin were told that the original displacement of 1952 would be temporary and they have been pushed around for over half a century ever since.

Reporting the demolition, the Israeli daily *Ha’aretz* sought a response from the ILA to be told that the Authority had merely ‘evacuated’ Bedouin ‘invasions’. “These invasions have take place for the seventh time this year, to the same place,” said an ILA spokesperson, “the invaders have homes in Laqiya”. According to the RCUV however, despite sheltering in the vicinity of Laqiya, the Bedouin families have not received building permits since originally being allocated plots back in 1978.

Two weeks later, 21 May, the Israeli government gave the go ahead for the destruction of four properties in the village of Attir, north of the township of Hura, in an area currently scheduled for another Jewish only Negev settlement. Forty children and their parents made homeless as hundreds of police arrived with bulldozers and even helicopter cover. Members of the Abu Alqian family were trapped by checkpoints and forced to witness the destruction of their homes, powerless to do anything about it.

Earlier this year, Adalah, the Legal Center for Arab Minority Rights, called upon PM Ehud Olmert and his deputy Shimon Peres to abandon 'Negev 2015: The National Strategic Plan for the Development of the Negev (Naqab)', accusing the government of discriminating against Arab Bedouin citizens and basing its plans for the region on illegal governmental policy. The government plan claims to promote development and growth in population, employment and education for citizens of the Negev – a budget of \$80 million (US) has been set aside for 2007. However reality shows that marginalized Bedouin are to be further sidelined by development. Almost all the 75,000 housing units planned are designated for Jewish towns and communities.

The RCUV knows that they have a long struggle ahead of them. The committee has announced to the media that it is planning to establish a refugee camp in front of the Knesset as a symbol of protest for the 42,000 Bedouin homes threatened with demolition by Israeli plans. Hasan Rafay'ah, head of the committee called on all residents and civil society institutions to join the activity.

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Postscript: The RCUV and Habitat International Coalition (HIC) launched an urgent action appeal as a result of ongoing home demolition and forced eviction of Palestinian Bedouin in the Naqab. On Monday, 25 June 2007, the Israeli authorities demolished 28 structures, including 25 houses, in the Unrecognized Village of Attir-Umm al-Hiran and left over 150 internally displaced persons homeless in the heat of the Naqab Desert. The residents of Attir- Umm al-Hiran had already been forcibly displaced from their ancestral land by Israeli authorities in 1956. More than fifty years later, the Government of Israel intends to forcibly relocate the community so that the Jewish National Fund and the Jewish Agency can build a Jewish town in its place. On the night before (24 June), "Israeli authorities were at one of the resident's home, partaking in true Bedouin hospitality, with the understandign that next morning the Bedouin would sign a compensation agreement and voluntarily move. Instead of an agreement and instead of compensation, bulldozers were brought in to demolish their homes. The governement offered neither compensation nor alternative shelter."

The forced evictions and displacement of the residents of Attir-Umm al-Hiran was carried out to ensure the future resettlement of Jews on the stolen land and as compensation to settlers redeployed in 2005 from colonies in the occupied Gaza Strip. "These actions not only violate the general principles of international human rights and humanitarian law, but also illustrate the depth of racial discrimination against the indigenous Palestinians within the political structures of the State of Israel and its parastatal institutions."

Source: For more and to support Palestinian in the Naqab, see the "Naqab (Negev), Palestine: Israel continues its 'secret' policies of house demolitions and violations against the indigenous Arabs of the unrecognized villages," Urgent Action Appeal (Case ISR-FEDM 040707). See also: www.hlrn.org or www.hic-mena.org

An injustice to the injustice: Palestinian refugees & the media

By Sharif Nashashibi

In the seven years that I have been monitoring British media coverage of Arab issues, I can confidently say that Palestinian refugees constitute the most maligned, misunderstood and under-reported aspect of the Arab-Israeli conflict. This is not only unfortunate but baffling, given its centrality to a just and lasting solution.

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59th Nakba commemoration. Bethlehem, May 2007. ©BADIL

The refugee issue is maligned because certain proprietors, editors and journalists embrace Israel's viewpoint; it is misunderstood because it is viciously targeted by a pro-Israel lobby that does not face a similarly strong pro-Palestinian, and particularly pro-refugee lobby (sadly, the two are not synonymous); and it is under-reported because, as a problem that will be 60 (yes, 60) years old next year, it has long ceased to be 'newsworthy'.

This has resulted in outstanding ignorance about Palestinian refugees among the British public. For example, surveys undertaken a few years ago by Professor Greg Philo of the Glasgow University Media Group revealed that just 8% of people knew that the refugees were displaced from their homes and land when Israel was established in 1948.

Similarly, very few people knew that Israel's territorial expansion in 1967 resulted in another wave of Palestinian refugees. Some even thought they came from Afghanistan!

According to Philo, this lack of understanding is due to media coverage, which "scores high on images of fighting, violence and drama but is low on explanation." His opinion should be taken seriously - his groundbreaking book *Bad News from Israel* focused on TV coverage of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, which was cited by 82% of those surveyed as their main source of news on the issue.

The media had a perfect opportunity recently to properly cover, analyse and shed light on the refugee issue. The Arab summit of March 2007 re-launched the momentous Arab peace initiative, which promises Israel full peace in return for withdrawing from occupied land and agreeing to a just solution to the refugee problem. Once again, the media failed in this respect.

There were no editorials, commentaries or analyses of the refugee issue in the five daily British tabloids: the Sun, Daily Mail, Daily Mirror, Daily Express and Daily Star.

As well as the fact that they are far more politicised than many people realise, their monthly circulation figures, totaling some 8.5 million, are more than triple those of the five daily broadsheets (the Daily Telegraph, Times, Financial Times, Guardian and Independent), which total some 2.7 million.

Between the five broadsheets, there were only around a dozen editorials, commentaries or analyses mentioning Palestinian refugees during March and the first half of April. None specifically focused on the issue.

At no point was it made clear that Palestinians became refugees because of systematic ethnic cleansing. In around 60% of cases, readers would have no idea that Israel, or the Jewish forces that fought for its creation, had anything to do with it. In others, it seems as if Palestinians left of their own volition, or that this was just a consequence of war.

The closest we get to an adequate explanation is Guardian regular columnist Jonathan Freedland talking of "Palestinian refugees displaced by Israel's creation in 1948."

Despite the fact that he fails to mention the wave of refugees from 1967 (this was mentioned just once, by James Hider in the Times), even this implies an innocent, if unfortunate, consequence of Israel's creation, rather than a deliberate policy to create a country with as much land and as few Arabs as possible.

One strange, if well-meaning statement, came from Chris Patten, former European Commissioner for foreign relations, in the FT: "To continue a blockade of Palestine while Hamas is sharing in government, with US banking sanctions that bite," runs the "serious" risk that "Palestine would become no more than two walled refugee camps."

Is Patten not aware that the West Bank is already dotted with refugee camps, and the vast majority of Palestinians in the Gaza Strip are refugees?

Another serious deficiency in media coverage was the total absence of international and human rights law, which firmly back the rights of refugees, including the Palestinians.

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Photo exhibition, 59th Nakba commemoration. Bethlehem Peace Center, May 2007. ©BADIL

In fact, the right of return was mentioned just twice in the six-week monitoring period (by an FT editorial and Independent Jerusalem correspondent Donald Macintyre), both times in quote marks, as if it is subjective and dubious. Freedland used the word “demand,” and the Times twice just used “return” in its editorials.

What we got a lot of, in contrast, was Israel’s justification for denying the rights of Palestinian refugees. “Israel says this ‘right of return’ would swamp its Jewish state,” said an FT editorial.

“Israel insists that any such right would be impossible to implement, spelling the demographic end of the country as a Jewish national home: Palestinians should instead return to the proposed Palestinian state on the West Bank and Gaza,” said Freedland.

How, I ask him, can Palestinians “return” to territories from where they did not come? This is akin to evicting him from his London home and saying he can “return” to Manchester.

Freedland continues: “If the language on refugees and borders [in the Arab peace initiative] were loosened, thereby denying Olmert a reason to say no, all the better.” So the onus is not on Israel to accept just terms, but on the Arabs to water down their offer until Israel finds its acceptable.

“Mr Olmert said Israel could not accept the entire package, especially the section dealing with a return of Palestinian refugees,” said a Times editorial. The refugee issue is “arguably the most neuralgic of all for most Israelis,” and “could yet be a reason for Mr Olmert’s rejection of the initiative,” according to Macintyre.

In fact, only Macintyre and the FT offered counter-arguments to Israel's rejection, though even these were flawed.

"The Saudi argument - and that of Mr Abbas - is that this formulation still allows broad room for manoeuvre in actual negotiations but that it should not be changed ahead of them," said Macintyre. "[T]he Arab formula points towards compensation rather than repatriation," said the FT.

So the right of return only exists to be negotiated away, rather than worked towards, and compensation should be offered instead of return, rather than a legitimate right in itself along with repatriation.

Furthermore, there was only one mention during the monitoring period - by Tom Porteous of Human Rights Watch in the Independent - of the plight of Palestinians in Iraq, who are effectively refugees twice over: at the hands of Israel, and the chaos that has ensued since the US-led 2003 invasion and occupation.

The deficiencies in reporting Palestinian refugees that were highlighted during this monitoring period are typical of media coverage of the issue in general, not just in Britain but beyond. If Britons are ignorant of the problem because their media is lacking, just think of how much worse the situation is in the US, for example.

In an excellent article on Israel's Arab citizens in the Daily Telegraph, a newspaper not known for publishing views sympathetic towards the Palestinians, Mike Smith wrote: "For decades, the world's attention has dwelt on their Arab brothers and sisters who call themselves Palestinian and who live in the occupied territories or the refugee diaspora around the Middle East."

If only this was the case. But it is never too late to start trying to get people to dwell on the refugee issue, and the best way to reach the masses is the media. By informing, engaging, correcting and educating the media, you simultaneously enlighten the public.

If the refugee issue has not received appropriate levels of support, it is because people do not know the facts. It would take a stone-cold heart to turn a blind eye to the injustice once the truth is revealed to them. Let us all ensure that the 60th anniversary of the Nakba does not go unnoticed. Is it not the least we can do for those who know nothing but dispossession?

Sharif Hikmat Nashashibi, is chairman and co-founder of Arab Media Watch, an independent, non-profit watchdog set up in 2000 to strive for objective coverage of Arab issues in the British media. Sharif has an MA in International Journalism, and has worked and trained at several major news organizations and international institutions, such as the UN in Palestine. Originally from Jerusalem, his father became a refugee in 1948.

If the refugee issue has not received appropriate levels of support, it is because people do not know the facts.

Lebanon

A Proxy war in Nahr el-Bared refugee camp?

By Karine Mac Allister

What is clear though, is that Palestinian refugees, although they do not support Fatah al-Islam, are suffering once again from US interference and the results of its fundamentally flawed policies in the Middle East.



Fleeing the Nahr el-Bared refugee camp. May 2007. ©AFP/al-Ayyam

Palestinian refugees in Lebanon do not support Fatah al-Islam nor are they involved in the fighting raging in Nahr el-Bared camp since 20 May 2007. They have, however, bore the brunt of the conflict. Since fighting began in Nahr el-Bared camp, between 45 to 120 civilians have been killed and 6,265 Palestinian refugee families (over 31,000 persons) were internally displaced as of 4 July 2007. Most of the displaced refugees found shelter in the Beddawi refugee camp, which has an impoverished population of around 16,000 and now hosts an additional 25,000 persons (5,045 families) from Nahr el-Bared. By the end of June, up to a thousand persons were still stuck in the camp although no exact number was available. The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) has been unable to deliver any food, water or medicine in the camp since 22 June.⁽¹⁾ The camp has sustained extensive damages; thousands of refugee shelters have been demolished and water and sewage networks have been destroyed. Aid agencies are planning the return of the refugees, but return will take time because of unexploded ordnances; at least one month will be needed after the end of the hostilities, depending on the progress of the deminers.

Over 25 per cent of the people in Nahr el-Bared (8,627 persons out of 31,023) are registered as special hardship cases by the UN Relief and Work Agency (UNRWA), making it one of the poorest Palestinian refugee camps.⁽²⁾ Lebanon's government and the opposition have promised to help rebuild the camp, while Saudi Arabia has handed cheques worth US\$1,330 to nearly 10,000 families.⁽³⁾ UNRWA has launched a flash appeal of US \$12.7 million to address the urgent

needs of thousands of internally displaced Palestine refugees. Palestinian refugees are afraid to leave the Beddawi camp or other places of refuge as reports from local and international organizations have documented the arbitrary detention and torture of Palestinian refugee men by the Lebanese army.⁽⁴⁾

The events in Nahr al-Bared may have come as a surprise, but to some this was bound to happen. According to US journalist Seymour Hersh,⁽⁵⁾ the *redirection*, a new strategy of the White House, is an American-Saudi plan employed to weaken Iran and Hezbollah, or what has been called the “Shiite crescent”, and has widened sectarian conflict between Shiite and Sunni. Hersh defines four components to this grand plan: 1) assure the security of Israel, in particular against Iran; 2) support by Saudi Arabia of Hamas and Fatah talks and an end to attacks on Israel; 3) counteract Shiite ascendancy in the region with the help of the Sunni nations; 4) provide funding, from the Saudi government and with US approval, to weaken the government of Bashar al-Assad in Syria.⁽⁶⁾

In Lebanon, Hersh says that this has translated into financial support, mainly by Saudi Arabia and backed by the Lebanese Siniora government, of Sunni Salafi groups (i.e. Sunni groups who see Shiites as apostates) with the goal of destabilizing Hezbollah. Hersh reported that “American, European and Arab officials ...told me that the Siniora government and its allies has allowed some aid to end up in the hands of emerging Sunni radical groups in northern Lebanon, the Bekaa Valley, and around Palestinian refugee camps in the south. These groups, though small, are seen as a buffer to Hezbollah; at the same time; their ideological ties are with al Qaeda.” Fatah al-Islam and Asbat al-Ansar in the Ein el-Hilweh refugee camp are some of the alleged funded and supported groups. These groups, most of which emerged in 2006, are composed mainly of foreign fighters. Some Fatah al-Islam members have also allegedly said that they wanted to “liberate al Aqsa mosque in Jerusalem and protect Sunnis.”⁽⁷⁾

Other journalists, such as Franklin Lamb (*Who's Behind the Fighting in North Lebanon*), Bill Noxide (*Proxy Wars*) and Alberto Cruz (*The Secret War Against Hizbollah*) have reported similar plans.⁽⁸⁾ Lamb wrote that “the plan was that actions of these cells, of which Fatah al-Islam is one, could be blamed on al Qaeda or Syria or anyone but the Club [the ‘Welch Club’ being based on David Welch, assistant to Secretary of State, Rice and other Lebanese groups such as Hariri’s Future Movement party].”⁽⁹⁾ According to Lamb, “these cells are throughout Lebanon and are organizing broadly and not just in the Palestinian Camps, where they are resisted by Hamas, Fatah Arafat, and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, as in Shatilla and Burj al Baraneh Camps.”⁽¹⁰⁾

Alberto Cruz and Franklin Lamb have also reported that NATO has plans to build a military base in Qleiat, close to Tripoli, and on the border with Syria, which could explain why the US now wants funding of these forcefully anti-American Sunni groups to end.⁽¹¹⁾ The proposed US/NATO base, “The Lebanese Army and Security training centre”, would “serve as the headquarters of a NATO rapid deployment force, helicopter squadrons, and Special Forces units” and would “provide training for the Lebanese army and security forces fighting Salafi, Islamist fundamentalists and other needs.”⁽¹²⁾ The base would likely be available to Israel. Lamb also reported that the actions of Fatah al-Islam may have intended to stop the establishment of a US/NATO military base next to Tripoli, which could explain why they had based themselves in the city.⁽¹³⁾



Nahr el-Bared refugee camp. July 2007. ©AFP/al-Ayyam

For its part, the Lebanese government considers Fatah al-Islam a Syrian-bred group; some members of Fatah al-Islam have also been indicted for ‘acts of terrorism’ in the past few weeks.⁽¹⁴⁾ The Lebanese government has accused Fatah al-Islam to be linked to the Syrian intelligence services whose purpose they believe is to destabilize Lebanon.⁽¹⁵⁾ Fatah al-Islam is also described as “...an offshoot of the Syrian-based group Fatah al-Intifada, [] headed by Shaker Adssi, who was born in Jericho in 1955 and is said to be linked to the former leader of Al-Qaeda in Iraq, Abu Musab al-Zarqawi.”⁽¹⁶⁾ Syrian authorities have denied any link to Fatah al-Islam.

Events surrounding the beginning of fighting in Nahr el-Bared are still unclear, but according to some sources, the conflict started on 20 May 2007 because the fighters of Fatah al-Islam, who had not received their salary (i.e. the Welch Club and/or the US and Saudis having decided to stop funding the group), attacked the bank which usually issues their cheques. Another report adds that the bank robbery took place on 19 May and that the fighting broke out the next morning after security forces raided a suspected Fatah al-Islam safehouse in Tripoli.⁽¹⁷⁾ Others say that the trigger was an attack by the group on a Lebanese army post.

After the initial clashes, many of Fatah al-Islam fighters retreated to Nahr el-Bared camp and took control of army posts at the entrance of the camp. The Lebanese army received the mandate from the Lebanese government to ‘remove’ Fatah al-Islam from the camp as the group vowed to fight until death. The army has since shelled and bombarded the camp and called on the group to surrender. By the beginning of July, most members of Fatah al-Islam had been killed or arrested and fighting had nearly ended. A final assault was launched by the Lebanese army as of 11 July. As of writing, fighting is ongoing.

Meanwhile, to show support for the Siniora government and protect its ‘allies’ in the Middle East, the US has sent planes full of military supplies to Lebanon and has increased its military aid to Lebanon sevenfold since 2006.⁽¹⁸⁾

While most in Lebanon have supported the Lebanese army vis-à-vis Fatah al-Islam, it was also suggested that a political solution could have been found to the problem and that the Lebanese army was “fighting al Qaeda on America’s behalf.”⁽¹⁹⁾ What is clear though, is that Palestinian refugees, although they do not support Fatah al-Islam, are suffering once again from US interference and the results of its fundamentally flawed policies in the Middle East.

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The Ongoing Nakba: Sickness and Health Among Palestinian Refugees in Lebanon

By Rosemary Sayigh

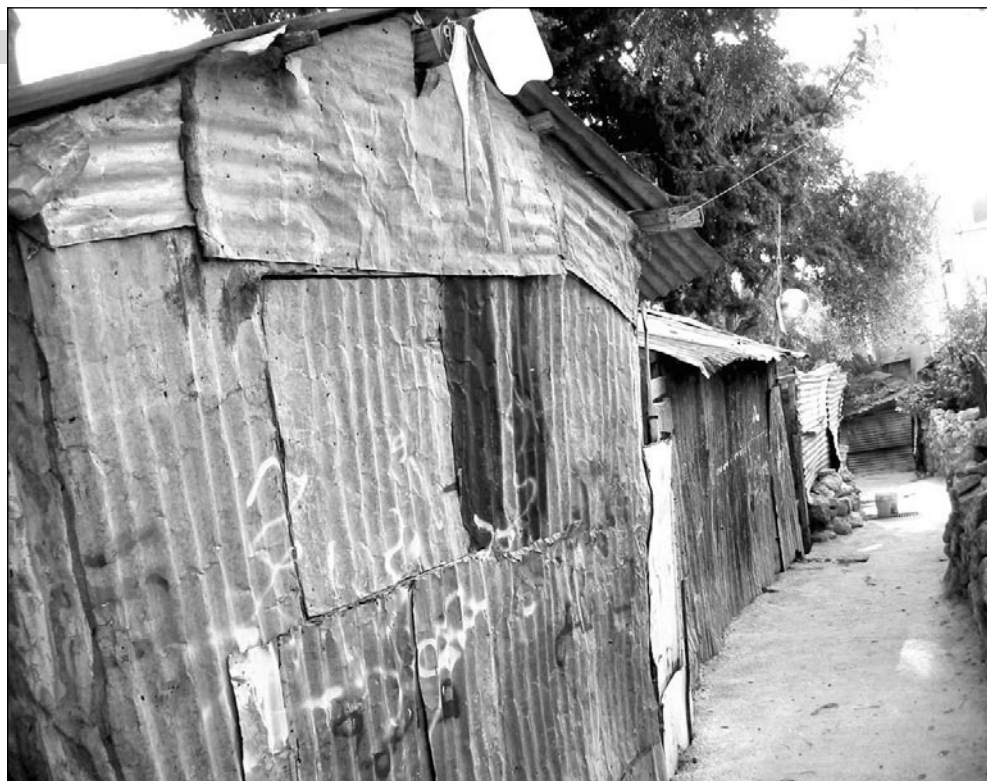
A regime of insecurity and poverty

The two main factors that structure the situation of Palestinians in Lebanon – the majority who hold refugee IDs, and live in the camps – are insecurity and poverty.

Public health expert Michael Marmot underlines the relation between health and two fundamental human needs: autonomy and full social participation, adding that “deprived of a clean safe neighborhood, meaningful work, freedom from police harassment and arrest, and freedoms from violence and aggression, it is harder to have control over one’s life or be a full social participant.”⁽¹⁾ The values Marmot describes are ones that camp refugees in Lebanon – like Palestinians in many other places – do not have. That such conditions should be allowed to continue by the international community is in clear contravention of the first principle of the 1992 Rio Declaration: “Human beings are at the centre of concerns for sustainable development. They are entitled to a healthy and productive life in harmony with nature.”

Before looking at health, we must therefore look at politics. The two main factors that structure the situation of Palestinians in Lebanon – the majority who hold refugee IDs, and live in the camps – are insecurity and poverty. Local, regional and international forces combine to create a situation characterized by absence of autonomy, participation and hope. There has been no improvement on any aspect of wellbeing since 1982.

Burj el-Shemali is a Palestinian refugee camp located in Southern Lebanon on the outskirts of the city of Tyre. Upwards of 20,000 refugees reside in Burj el-Shemali, which is one of Lebanon’s most impoverished camps. Burj el-Shemali like other camps in the south, such as Rashidieh Camp, is home to cases of extreme poverty. Thousands of camp residents are essentially homeless, residing in make-shift shelters with zinc roofing, without basic plumbing, water supply and little income. Pictured in this photo is a street within the camp of zinc housing, built by residents who had their homes destroyed during the Lebanese civil war. 2007. ©Stefan Christoff



To keep refugee numbers to a minimum, the Lebanese state employs direct and indirect methods somewhat similar to the 'silent transfer' system that Israel uses against Palestinian Jerusalemites, starting with insecurity of residence rights. Lebanon does not guarantee Palestinians this right until a solution to their problem as do most other Arab host countries; and the Ta'ef Accords of 1989 explicitly exclude them from permanent settlement. Long-term projects exist to demolish the camps.⁽²⁾ In the South, Lebanese Army checkpoints prevent materials for house construction or repair from entering the camps. The threat of demolition is always imminent, awaiting only an appropriate political moment.

The threat of demolition is always imminent, awaiting only an appropriate political moment.

Palestinians from Lebanon working abroad have been struck off the register of those entitled to residence. Palestinians who marry Lebanese women do not gain naturalization routinely as do other foreigners. Another point to note is the way any crisis in Lebanon rebounds negatively on Palestinians, politically and economically. Soon after the beginning of the Hizbollah demonstration in December 2006, the Lebanese Forces issued a statement against *towteen* (a disguised way of attacking Palestinians). The economic impact of the crisis on camp households is becoming increasingly severe.⁽³⁾

Insecurity of Palestinians is also achieved through their exclusion from civic rights, the most basic being the right to work.⁽⁴⁾ From the beginning the 'free professions' have been closed to them (except by default within camp limits), as well as employment in public bodies. Most medium and even low-skilled jobs (for example guarding buildings) have been added to those prohibited to them.⁽⁵⁾ When the state recently sought workers for the 'public' garbage-collecting company Sukleen, after the Israeli war of July/August 2006, Palestinian applicants were turned away. For all salaried employment, work permits are obligatory, and since 1982 few of these have been issued to Palestinian refugees. Denial of normal work rights is, of course, a major cause of refugee poverty.

Though the FAFO survey of 1999 reported only 17% of the Palestinian labour force as 'unemployed' critics maintained that this figure was obtained through using inappropriate ILO measurements.⁽⁶⁾ Taking into account the exclusion of most Palestinians from regular salaried employment the critics said that a more realistic estimate of unemployment is 80%. Some FAFO findings are clearly indicative of Lebanon field particularities: i) significant levels of 'under-employment'; ii) highest unemployment among young adults; iii) the tendency of men from age 45 to drop out of the labour force, either because of disablement (33%), or having lost hope of work (17%).

In the area of income, FAFO researchers also found a huge difference between the refugees and the national population, with only 6% of Lebanese making less than LL3,600,000 (\$2,400) per year compared with 44% of Palestinians in camps and gatherings. A majority of 70% of refugees fall into the bottom two income brackets compared with 20% of Lebanese. Only 2.5% of Palestinian households reach the higher levels (more than LL19,200,000 pa, \$12,800) as against 25% of Lebanese.⁽⁷⁾ Another indicative finding was that 35% of all camp households fall below the 'poverty line' (LL 350,000 pa, \$233.3), while 15% fall into the 'ultra-poor' category (LL170,000 pa, \$113.3).⁽⁸⁾

Woman-headed households are also most likely to be among the 15% of camp households classified as 'ultra-poor'. Such households depend entirely on social aid, forming an extremely poor start for children, especially in terms of education and health.

Poverty has a direct impact on health, since it affects nutrition and all other aspects of the quality of life. But we should also consider the effects on health of the camps as habitat. The state excludes Palestinian camps from infrastructural services such as clean water, electricity, sewage disposal, garbage collection, street surfacing and lighting. The FAFO survey found that 14% of households had no sewage connection, and that 7% lived in milieus where sewage lies in open ditches. Though UNRWA provides a basic minimum of hygienic services, the fact that the government has not allowed camp sewage and drainage networks to be linked to those serving municipalities causes constant back-up problems.

Space deprivation is another environmental hazard with clear consequences for health. In Lebanon camp space is restricted by the state's prohibition of expansion, collective poverty, and the law against private ownership which prevents even the better-off from moving outside. Diminishing space-to-people ratios mean narrow streets, lack of light and ventilation. UNRWA schools are mainly rented buildings outside camps, and have minimal play space for children. The FAFO survey reported interviewees complaining of dust, humidity, noise, pollution from cars and industry. Rats and cockroaches are visible in camp alleys.



Wavel refugee camp, Lebanon. 2007. ©Stefan Christoff

Housing quality is another environmental factor with implications for health. The 1999 FAFO study reports that housing conditions in the Lebanon field are the worst in the region. Most dwellings (96%) are built of concrete and light-weight materials, poor in insulation. 58.8% lack safe and stable drinking water; 13.9% lack sanitation, 45.7% lack electricity or a stable connection, 67.2% have a poor indoor environment. Most interviewees said their homes are cold in winter, hot in summer, and lack light and ventilation. A quarter of households use charcoal or wood for cooking and heating. There are obvious implications here for health -- especially the health of those who spend most time at home, ie women and children. Women are likely to develop arthritic pain at relatively young ages, and children to suffer from respiratory problems. The continued use of charcoal fires and primuses for cooking also carries health threats.

Lebanon must be set in the regional and international framework that produced and maintains the expulsion of the Palestinians when considering the specific conditions of Palestinians in this host country. US policy in Lebanon aims at reinforcing its hegemony over the region and guaranteeing Israel's security, supporting the sector of the population that points to the camps as 'islands of insecurity'.⁽⁹⁾ What the Israelis and the Lebanese Forces failed to achieve in 1982, ie. the elimination of the Palestinians as an oppositional force, the US continues to work for through other means, such as pressure for the disarmament of Hizbollah.

The international framework has other kinds of negative impact. Since 1982 international donors have reduced their support for refugee communities outside the Occupied Territories. This reduction is most serious for camps in Lebanon because of their dependence on international aid. Another example of aid-reduction is that East European countries no longer offer low cost university training to Palestinian students. Emigration no longer offers an escape, since countries that once accepted Palestinian asylum-seekers have closed their doors.

On the regional level, the closing off of work migration to the oil-producing countries has impacted more severely on Palestinians from Lebanon than elsewhere because of their relative exclusion from the Lebanese labour market. Travel for Palestinians from Lebanon to any other part of the Arab 'menfah' is impeded through prohibitions and the high cost of entry and transit visas. Aid from public Palestinian sources has also declined since Oslo.

International, regional and local forces thus combine to create a situation where autonomy and participation are distant dreams. The refugees are trapped between a host country that rejects them and an outside world that refuses them entry. The health implications of such a situation clearly go beyond available statistics concerning health service provision, demographics and morbidity.

Health services

Camp refugees depend on UNRWA as main health service provider. From the perspective of its users the problem with UNRWA is its fluctuating health budget, and the fact that it cannot cover hospital treatment or the more expensive medical procedures. For hard cases such as cancer, people have to knock on the doors of NGOs, charities, and patrons. The Red Crescent Society provides hospital care in some camps, but a low budget limits its scope and

Lebanon must be set in the regional and international framework that produced and maintains the expulsion of the Palestinians when considering the specific conditions of Palestinians in this host country.

International, regional and local forces thus combine to create a situation where autonomy and participation are distant dreams.

professionalism. NGOs offer a gamut of medical services, such as remedial therapy, help to drug-takers, and mobile clinics, but though such plurality increases service availability, it remains uncoordinated and under-funded, so that there is little development of services to fill gaps or meet new needs. In spite of accumulated war-stress, there is still no psychological counseling such as exists in the West Bank.

Because of its cost, no comprehensive survey of refugee morbidity has been carried out. A number of partial studies exist including the FAFO survey of 1999, based on 4,000 households, and using self-assessment. This and other smaller studies are valuable in conveying refugee perceptions of health, sickness and health providers, but are limited as to kinds and incidence of ill-health.⁽¹⁰⁾

Yet grassroots health campaigns are a positive sign of growing community self-care. In late March 2007 the Women's Humanitarian Organization (based in Bourj al-Barajneh camp) animated three days of activities centered on breast-feeding and health foods resurrected from the traditional Palestinian rural diet.

Major health problems

The FAFO survey reports that the refugee health situation in Lebanon is characterized by a higher incidence of health failure and more mental distress than in Jordan.⁽¹¹⁾ Sixteen per cent of interviewees in Lebanon assessed their health as 'bad' or 'very bad' in Lebanon compared to 5% in Jordan. The relationship between war and bad health comes out clearly here, with 19% of Lebanon interviewees reporting prolonged or chronic illness due to war, and 9% reporting war-caused disability. Low quality dwelling was found to correlate strongly with distress, especially for women. Women reported more stress symptoms than men. Another significant finding was that 11% of interviewees had suffered an acute illness in the two weeks before the interview, while 53% of children under five included in the survey were reported as having been acutely ill in the same 2-week period. Members of poor households were three times likelier to report poor health.

Camp dwellers and medical personnel interviewed by El Dardiry (2005) perceived a rise in the incidence of serious, non-contagious diseases, especially heart and kidney problems, diabetes, cancer, and hypertension.

Asked to assess their own health on a scale of five, 16% of the FAFO interviewees said 'bad' or 'very bad'. Between 17 and 61% of the population stated that they had suffered from at least one symptom of psychological distress in the week preceding the survey, and roughly a quarter said that they had experienced feelings of "hopelessness about the future". In addition 27% had said that they were bothered "quite a bit" or "very much" by between five and seven symptoms of distress.

El Dardiry points to the elderly as suffering from loneliness and depression. She quotes from an elderly speaker in Wavell camp:

It is very cold in winter and this is very hard for the elderly. It is hard to go to the bathroom and wash because of how cold it is. Most elderly just stay in their beds and cover themselves with blankets the whole winter. It is also dangerous because it rains and snows and we have to be careful not to slip on our way to the bathroom.



Rubble of buildings lines many of the narrow ally ways of Wavel refugee camp. Under Lebanese law Palestinian refugee are barred from bringing materials into the refugee camps for construction or reconstruction purposes. This law was put into place shortly after the civil war which saw large segments of the camps destroyed. 2007. ©Stefan Christoff

Another unusual finding of the El Dardiry report is that depression is given as a cause of death: “Depression – people thinking they have no home, because this land is not theirs”. An interviewee in Wavell camp told her, “The political situation is killing us. There is no hope. Life is shorter because there is no reason to live”.

Even with the limited data we have, it is evident that the health of certain categories in the camps in Lebanon are especially at risk, particularly children, the elderly, and adolescents. Children’s health status needs special research attention, first because of decline in income and nutrition standards, then because of the strain put on family relations by harsh conditions. Very young children in camps have been found sniffing glue, supplied by barrows that sell cheap toys and cassettes. Adolescents and young adults are especially likely to suffer depression caused by hopelessness about the future. Drugs and self-mutilation are a problem with this age group.

What can be done to improve health conditions? Asked this question by El Dardiry, camp people’s responses in order of frequency were:

- make medication free;
- provide funds for costly treatment;
- improve UNRWA services;
- create jobs.

Better coordination between the different service-providers in Lebanon, as well as in Palestine,

would be an inexpensive first step. More research is clearly needed, and could be directed first towards social categories particularly at risk. Public education campaigns targeted at the Lebanese on the refugees' equal rights to health might ease the isolation of camp communities. Yet of course the real solution is political, i.e. an end to Palestinian insecurity and poverty through repatriation.

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**Now accessible on Internet:
"Voices: Palestinian Women Narrate Displacement"**

by Rosemary Sayigh

The voices of women in different regions of historic Palestine – Gaza, the West Bank, Jerusalem and Israel/1948 Palestine – telling their stories of loss of home, whether through displacement, refugeedom, demolition, deportation, imprisonment, or total transformation of environment. They are not known leaders, but 'ordinary' Palestinians of varying ages and social backgrounds – urban, rural, Bedouin; citizens and refugees.

This is a multimedia project, a digital book in which you can hear the speakers' voices, see portraits of their faces and surroundings, and read texts that describe individual speakers and give historical background.

The book, produced with the support of the Diana Tamari Sabbagh Foundation, is available at:
<http://almashriq.hiof.no/voices/>

Endnotes

1. Michael Marmot, "Status Syndrome: A Challenge to Medicine" JAMA vol 295(11), March 15, 2006.
2. Camps near Beirut and in the South are the ones specially targeted. In the case of Bourj Barajneh camp, an autostrada has been built along the northern edge of the camp, causing the demolition of around 40 homes and destruction of playing space for children. There are longstanding plans to expand facilities for the Sports City on land currently occupied by Shatila camp.
3. See FOFOGNET April 23, 2007, IRIN report.
4. See Petter Aasheim "The Palestinian refugees and the right to work in Lebanon", University of Lund, 2000; and Souheil Natour "The Legal Status of Palestinians in Lebanon" Journal of Refugee Studies vol 10 (3) 1997. A recent Lebanese law (2002) forbids Palestinians from buying any kind of property.
5. In late 2006, a resigning Minister of Labour lifted the ban from some jobs. But the necessity for work permits remains, and of paying social security from which Palestinians cannot benefit.
6. FAFO survey results are reported in Ole Ugland ed., *Difficult Past, Uncertain Future: Living Conditions Among Palestinian Refugees in camps and Gatherings in Lebanon*. Oslo: FAFO, 2003.
7. Ugland p. 159-160.
8. Incomes within camps were found to be highly skewed, with the upper tenth earning 32% of total income, and the poorest tenth earning just 1% of total income. Two in every ten households relied on transfers and social aid as the main source of income (Ugland p. 158).
9. This phrase is not intended to mean that the camps are insecure for their residents but that they threaten the citizens and political stability of Lebanon.
10. See Giulia El Dardiry "Between Personal Experience and Communal History: Health Perceptions and Attitudes Towards Health Services in Two Palestinian Refugee Camps in Lebanon", Institute for Community and Public Health, Birzeit University, 2005, for a comprehensive list of health studies.
11. Age A. Tiltne "Health and Health Services" in Ugland op cit, p.75.

Book Review**Commemorating Palestine in Lebanon**

Laleh Khalili, *Heroes and Martyrs of Palestine: The Politics of National Commemoration* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), Hardback.

By Isabelle Humphries



Burj el-Barajneh refugee camp is a Palestinian refugee camp located on the outskirts of Beirut. Home to approximately 40,000 refugees, Burj el-Barajneh has a rich history of struggle and resistance. This photo is of a building near the center of the camp destroyed during the Lebanese civil war. 2007. ©Stefan Christoff

In recent months thousands of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon have found themselves forced to flee yet again as instability and conflict engulfs Nahr al-Bared camp. While Palestinians share a common displacement and longing for their land – including those remaining in the 1948 historic homeland – numerous factors such as country of exile, class, gender and educational

far from remaining stable, national commemoration is a dynamic and changing process.

opportunities, have contributed to vastly different experiences for Palestinian refugees. Campaigners for the right of return, both Palestinians and their international supporters, work for the common goal of recognition of the right of return for all Palestinians, regardless of current status or location. However this does not mean that it is not valuable to increase understanding in the activist community of the specific and changing circumstances which Palestinian refugees face, and the dynamic nature of their national struggle in different locations.

Based on doctoral research in Burj al-Barajna refugee camp in Beirut, Laleh Khalili's new book is an insightful study into the dynamics of change in Palestinian nationalist commemoration in the camps of Lebanon. Although an academic work, the clarity of the writing enables the interested reader who would not normally approach an anthropology/social science text to engage with large sections of the book. For the campaigner for the Palestinian right of return I would argue that this book has two essential aspects to offer. Firstly, through listening to oral testimonies of camp residents rather than political elites, the book presents detailed analysis of the dramatic shifts in Palestinian national strategies in Lebanon from 1948 to the present day. Secondly, the book critically interrogates the active role of local and international NGOs and external funders in the shaping of Palestinian national discourse and narrative – a power dynamic that activists ignore at their peril.

As a recent issue of al-Majdal (see issue No.32) explored, oral history is an increasingly used methodology in recording, constructing and enriching an alternative Palestinian history, a history that has been marginalized by a Zionist narrative. Heroes and Martyrs of Palestine is yet another challenge to those who argue that oral sources and ethnographic research methods cannot offer the political authority and insight of the analysis of written sources.

Working in the Palestinian community in Lebanese camps (with an end chapter addressing the same issues in the OPT) Khalili demonstrates that, far from remaining stable, national commemoration is a dynamic and changing process. In the bloody arena of Lebanon, the fallen



Children of Nahr el-Bared waiting for food supply at al-Baddawi refugee camp. July 2007. ©AFP/al-Ayyam

who might in former times have been commemorated as heroes of the battlefield, at a later period become immortalized as martyrs and represented as innocent victims of massacre.

Between 1969 and 1982 – a period known as the Thawra (revolution) – refugee camp affairs in Lebanon were controlled by political factions through their representatives on popular camp committees. Until the 1982 expulsion of the PLO from Lebanon, trained Palestinian military took responsibility for protection of the camps, alongside their active military struggle against Israel and the hope of return to Palestine which it engendered.

In the 1970s, the Palestinian national struggle incorporated in its own narrative available contemporary secular transnational liberation discourse – the spirit of Che Guevara and Frantz Fanon and the anti-colonial struggle from Algeria to Vietnam. Khalili's interviews and reading of contemporary factional publications describe a time when to join a national political organization and to take up arms for Palestine were seen to "bestow maturity and wisdom on the shabab (the youth), and becoming a protector was a sign of manly courage." In the Palestinian thawra to die in the national cause was to die a 'hero', to fall in armed conflict to die in 'battle.'

Fast forward to Arafat and Rabin's fateful handshake on the White House lawn, and we see a Palestinian refugee community in Lebanon (minus fighters exiled to Tunis) exhausted from a decade of siege against Lebanese Shi'a militia. Post 1993 a very different commemorative climate exists in the Lebanese camps. The dominant narrative is of massacres and martyrs, of those slaughtered in years of bombardment of Shatila, of innocent victims butchered as they tried to survive in the poverty of exile. While international Islamist groups commemorate their hero-martyrs, the secular transnational discourse (and the one providing significant funding) is a language of human rights violations, highlighting the innocent victims of brutal dictators, warlords and militants. From the 1990s, the institutions in the camps of Lebanon channelling, shaping and representing Palestinian lives are not the armed political national factions of the 1970s, but the internationally funded, post Oslo shaped non-governmental organizations; the NGOs.

Although only available so far in hardback, this book is well worth the investment – or encouraging your institutional library to purchase. As media and academia persist in endlessly discussing the role of 'militants' in the contemporary Middle East, Khalili points to the active role of NGOs in the shaping of Palestinian national discourse and narrative. Further critical research into the politics of NGOs amongst vulnerable and oppressed groups - and significantly, the foundations that fund them – becomes all the more pressing in today's world. Khalili's work charts the way in which NGOs penetrate the lives of Palestinians in Lebanon, just as did the political factions of the thawra before them, deploying resources 'to act as conduits' – in the case of the NGOs - of tragic narratives. The author not only documents the post 1993 representation of the dead as victims and martyrs, and killing as 'massacre', but critically interrogates the role in which the programmes of the NGOs have played in this change in national narrative. In a George Bush controlled world significant funding is available for programs purporting to spread 'democracy' – a 'democracy' which in reality is a construction used to curb any real radical challenge or genuine empowerment of peoples of the Middle East and Palestine to shape their own states and societies. As activists in today's world, the critically reflection and questioning of the role of funding and NGO program design which this book stimulates has never been more important.

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The Jewish National Fund (JNF): A Parastatal Institution Chartered to Dispossess and Discriminate

By BADIL staff

UN Rejects JNF Application for Consultative Status

On 18 May 2007, the United Nations' Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) rejected the application of the JNF for consultative status with the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) by a vote of 8 to 7 with three abstentions. Consultative status enables NGOs to circulate statements and participate in relevant international conferences convened by the UN and in the meetings of their preparatory bodies. The Committee on NGOs, which is comprised of 19 Member States, decides upon whether or not to grant NGO-applicants consultative status. Over 2,700 NGOs from all over the world have been afforded consultative status.



Construction of the Wall at al-khader village, Bethlehem, June 2007. (source: tadamon.resist.ca)

The eight countries voting against the granting of status to the JNF were Burundi, China, Cuba, Egypt, Guinea, Russian Federation, Qatar, and Sudan; the seven countries voting in favour were Colombia, Israel, Peru, Romania, Turkey, United Kingdom, and the United States; and the three countries abstaining were Angola, India, and Pakistan.

The application was submitted by the JNF branch registered in the United States, which lobbied hard to gain ECOSOC status and provided letters of support from powerful members of the US Congress, such as Senator Hillary Clinton. However, country representatives and the Palestine Observer Mission to the UN expressed concern about the affiliation between the organization registered in the US as “Jewish National Fund (Keren Kayemeth Le Israel) Inc” (JNF-KKL) and the “Keren Kayemeth Le Israel” (KKL) registered in Israel, which

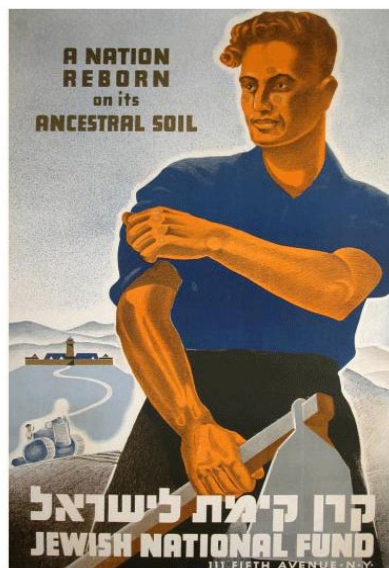
The Jewish National Fund promotes environmental projects in Israel.



Lena: But the Jewish National Fund succeeded in this miracle. Would you like to know, how?

Ilan: Yes, you're right. It is called Negev. This sandy and stony desert covers more than half of the area of Israel and it looks like a lunar landscape.- But in the Israeli northern mountains, there is also much snow in winter and we can enjoy sledging and skiing.

(Source: www.botschafter-der-umwelt.de)



Jewish National Fund poster from the 1930s, encouraging support for the Jewish community in the Land of Israel.

(source: www.smith.edu)

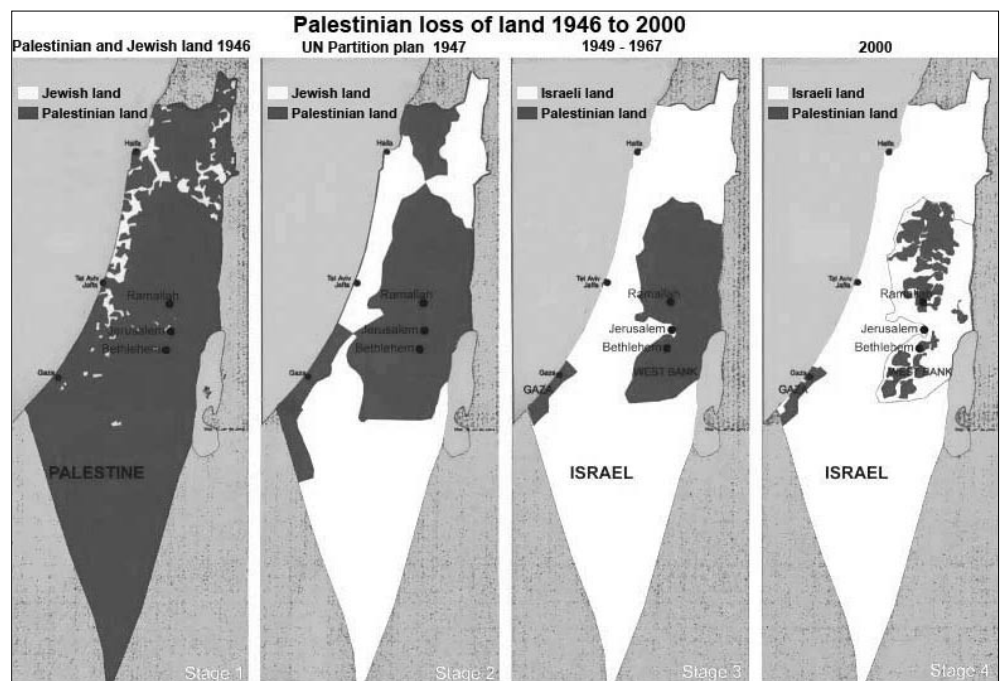
carries out land development and settlement (colonization) activities in the Occupied Palestinian Territory (OPT). While the US-registered JNF-KKL told the Committee that it was independent and involved in water, environmental and development projects in the Middle East, country representatives stated that they were unable to distinguish between its activities and those of the KKL of Israel. Another main reason cited for why the application should be rejected was that the JNF's work violated the principles of the UN Charter, which emphasizes respect for human rights and equality.

JNF's legal fiction: a public state body in Israel and a non-profit NGO in 50 countries

JNF-KKL was created in 1901 as a subsidiary of the World Zionist Organization (WZO). Its "primary objective" was to "acquire lands in Palestine and Syria" for the benefit of "persons of Jewish race, religion or origin," and it required its members to include holders of Founders' Shares in the Jewish Colonial Trust. The JNF began acquiring lands already in 1905 (by purchase), but the organization was first registered in England in 1907.⁽¹⁾

In 1953, Israel's "Keren Keyemeth Le Israel Law" (1953) recognized the JNF for its "public utility" and formally linked it to the new State of Israel, providing for its continuity under article 6 of the Status Law (also linking the WZO/Jewish Agency to the State). The JNF then moved its base to Jerusalem and transferred there the assets of the English company. The JNF is authorized to exchange and lease, but not sell, land. It may lease only to Jewish legal persons, according to its own Charter and under Israel's Basic Law: Israel Lands. Under the same law, it may lease to the government-controlled Israel Lands Administration (ILA) and to the Lands Development Administration, which maintains a JNF-majority governing board.

“The JNF is not the trustee of the general public in Israel. Its loyalty is given to the Jewish people in the Diaspora and in the state of Israel”



Source: www.stopthewall.org

The 1954-legislated “Covenant between the Government of Israel [GoI] and the Zionist Executive” clarifies further the WZO/JA relationship to GoI. It includes recognition of the JNF and United Israel Appeal as “institutions of the Zionist Organization,” authorizes activities in Israel to be carried out “by means of public funds,” and indicates, in its first paragraph, that the Zionist Executive “and its institutions” are to be treated as part of GoI. Officers of the WZO/JA and JNF also assume other parallel appointments within the State apparatus, and Israeli law guarantees WZO/JA and JNF exemptions and waivers on a range of fees and taxes that are imposed on all others.⁽²⁾

Irrespective of its status as part of the GoI, the JNF is currently registered in over 50 countries as a “charity.” Since 1926, the JNF has been registered in the United States “Jewish National Fund (Keren Keyemeth le Israel) Inc.” and maintains a claim there to be a domestic nonprofit organization. In its annual reports, the organization describes itself as a partner, or joint venturer, with the JNF registered in Israel (KKL) and as “the largest contributor to JNF-KKL in the world.” US law provides that corporation are liable for their partners’ actions, and for actions of their subsidiaries, if they own a controlling stake. Therefore, the U.S. registered JNF-KKL is likely to be legally accountable for actions of its Israeli partner, which violate international law and the Charter of the United Nations.

JNF: in Violation of the UN Charter

The JNF, in cooperation with the WZO/JA, funded the Zionist military effort in the 1947–48 War of Conquest.⁽³⁾ By 1954, Israel transferred 35% of the state-controlled lands, mostly belonging to Palestinian refugees and IDPs, to the JNF in exchange for huge sums collected from JNF tax-exempt collections abroad. As of 1967, the JNF is an organic part of the Occupying Power in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. At present, the JNF controls 13% of

the land in Israel exclusively for the benefit of the Jewish population. In their Concluding Observations, UN treaty bodies serially have registered their concerns over the discriminatory nature and governmental functions of JNF and Israel's other "national institutions" as incompatible with human rights treaty obligations.⁽⁴⁾

In the JNF's own words:

"The JNF is not the trustee of the general public in Israel. Its loyalty is given to the Jewish people in the Diaspora and in the state of Israel... The JNF, in relation to being an owner of land, is not a public body that works for the benefit of all citizens of the state. The loyalty of the JNF is given to the Jewish people and only to them is the JNF obligated. The JNF, as the owner of the JNF land, does not have a duty to practice equality towards all citizens of the state."

(Response of the JNF, dated December 2004, to a petition filed by Adalah to the Supreme Court of Israel – HC 9205/04).

This BADIL report is based on a news update, "UN Rejects Jewish National Fund's Application for Consultative Status", published by Adalah on 22 May 2007, and on a fact sheet, "Jewish National Fund, a Parastatal Institution Chartered to Dispossess and Discriminate", prepared by the Habitat International Coalition.

UN Secretary-General, Ban Ki-moon, criticizes UN Human Rights Council

In its fifth session (11-18 June), the UN Human Rights Council voted in favor of making Israel's actions a permanent item on the council's agenda. The Council also decided to uphold the mandate of the special rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the occupied Palestinian territories. Of the Council's 47 member states, Canada was the sole opponent to the decision to make Israel a permanent agenda item.

Secretary General Ban Ki-moon indirectly criticized the UN Human Rights Council for having put Israel on the Council's permanent agenda in a statement affirming that "the Secretary-General is disappointed at the council's decision to single out only one specific regional item given the range and scope of allegations of human rights violations throughout the world."

Endnotes

1. In its Memorandum of Association, the JNF objectives are: Article 3(a): "To purchase, acquire on lease, or in exchange, or receive on lease or otherwise, lands, forests, rights of possession, easements and any similar rights, as well as immovable properties of any class...for the purpose of settling Jews on such lands and properties." Article 3(c): to "benefit, whether directly or indirectly, to those of Jewish race or descendency" Article 3(g): "...promote the interests of Jews in the prescribed region." Article 6: "upon dissolution...any properties whatsoever...shall be transferred to the Government of Israel." Article 7 and Article of the Association of Keren Kayemeth leIsrael 2, 3, & 4: "The members of the General Council of the World Zionist Organization [or its replacement] shall be deemed members of the Association."
2. Walter Lehn, with Uri Davis, Jewish National Fund (London: Kegan Paul, 1988), 96–99.
3. "Report of the Anglo-American Committee of Inquiry," cited in Mallison and. Mallison, op cit., p. 39.
4. E/C.12/1/Add.27, 4 December 1998, paras. 11, 35; E/C.12/1/Add.90, 23 May 2003, para. 27; CERD/C/ISR/CO/13, 14 June 2007, para. 19.

"The loyalty of the JNF is given to the Jewish people and only to them is the JNF obligated. The JNF, as the owner of the JNF land, does not have a duty to practice equality towards all citizens of the state."

Towards Freeing the Right of Return of the Constraints of Slogans

By Hisham Naffa'a

A pleasant surprise awaited us at the 1948 depopulated Lajoun village this year. Approximately ten thousand people from all generations and political loyalties, five times the number of people that were present last year at the Carmel village of Um Al Zeinat, attended the demonstration that intentionally and challengingly coincided with the Hebrew date of "Israel's independence" to express the living memory and power of legitimacy.

Slogans that are not based on solid agenda and definitions can be easily dismantled and altered into non-binding and hollow rhetoric.



March of Return to the depopulated Palestinian village of Lajoun on Israel's independence day, the day of the Palestinian Nakba. 24 April 2007. ©ADRID

A long line of cars and buses stretched from the Megiddo junction to the outskirts of the village. Those who walked gathered at a meeting point in a narrow valley where an old and picturesque windmill stands just below the sad cemetery of the village.

On the way, I spotted an Israeli television crew whose cameraman later said that they attended the demonstration as part of a documentary television series about Palestinians in Israel. Among all the questions they asked, one was most frequent: "Do you want the Palestinian refugees to return to live next to existing Jewish towns or do you want to replace and evacuate them?"

As this question, a question that mixes politics and emotions and demonstrates the intentional misinformation that serves the interests of the official Israeli establishment and not the TV

station itself, shows, the issue of the rights of Palestinian refugees has not freed itself from the constraints of slogans and counter slogans.

I believe that a stopping at all the slogans that promote the rights of refugees is due. A serious consideration of the slogans might be realized through evoking the words of the revered Marxist Syrian intellectual Sadeq Jalal Al 'Adhem who, over three-and-a-half decades ago and in his book "Leftist Studies of the Palestinian Question" (Dar Al Talia'h, 1970), questioned the use of the slogan "Liberating Palestine" by the Arab regimes.

"...this slogan remained, over the past twenty years an obscure, sacred and mysterious idea that was not to be seriously queried, examined, critiqued or detailed and explained at the practical, actual and futuristic levels... And by that, I mean that liberation invoked the image of the conquering Arab armies conquering Israel as Palestinians present old deeds to their homes or lands and the victor will reinstate the rights of all as if nothing had happened".

In other words, the idea of liberation remained sacred, obscure and naive until the defeat of 1967... The silence of the Arab leaders regarding the concept of liberation and its definition, coupled with self-distancing of political parties and faction from the clarity of the concept, its contents and historical background, had had a significant impact in emboldening and bolstering the illusion in peoples' minds, hearts and emotions through the continuous use of slogans without discussing or explaining such slogans. This indeed is demagoguery manifest."

The contradictions generated by the absence of clear definitions and the agendas that underline slogans, coupled with the implications of their generality, made it possible for leaders to manipulate slogans to serve their interests and further distance themselves from their fundamental concepts. Slogans that are not based on solid agenda and definitions can be easily dismantled and altered into non-binding and hollow rhetoric.

Today, across the Arab world and beyond, the stated premises of the Right of Return (a right that is essential to any Political settlement of the Palestinian question and without which an environment of escalation and complication of the situation will prevail) continue to be manipulated to serve many objectives and purposes.

To us, to Palestinians who were expelled, to those who remained and to many in various Arab nations, the Right of Return epitomizes the revolutionary hope of restoring our just rights and faith in the legitimacy of the cause. However, when manipulated by the official Arab authorities, who never attempted to avert our Catastrophe, the Right of Return is transformed into a set of popular subjugation and sedation tools. The Right of return is espoused by Arab leaders who, at the same time, absolve themselves of any responsibility to act.

For proof of this duplicity, we need only look to the United States of America, a country that represents the most ardent denier of the Catastrophe that befell the Palestinian people. Its denial is manifested in the categorical rejection of the rights of Palestinian refugees.

Despite this policy of the US, the majority of Arab states and regimes submit, unreservedly, to the whims of Washington.



Return rally in Lajoun, 59th Nakba commemoration. 24 April 2007. ©ADRID

Despite this policy of the US, the majority of Arab states and regimes submit, unreservedly, to the whims of Washington. Arab leaders and officials hardly criticize US policies and when they do, their criticism is hollow and incredible.

How is it possible, then, to implement the Right of Return while expressing blind loyalty to the most ardent denier of that right, a power that continues to commit crimes against the Palestinian population?

In Israel, the politics of deception have reached treacherous proportions and its deceit, unfortunately, continues to be believed. Over the years, the Israeli state has persisted in making a fallacy of the meaning of the Right of Return as the Palestinian “codeword for their aspirations to destroy Israel and expel the Jews”. Playing on the basic human instinct of fear and the so-called “demographic threat,” the state of Israel has managed to remove the right of return from the immediate agenda.

Deceitful politics claiming that any recognition of the Right of Return of Palestinian refugees poses an immediate threat to the existence of Jewish people, have led the Israeli Jewish population to encircle itself with walls of fear and loathing, allowing the upper echelons of the Israeli state to further complicate an already complex situation. Such maneuvering has succeeded in suppressing the just and legitimate claims of Palestinian refugees and for this reason, it is particularly important that the concept of the Right of Return is bolstered and supported by real action.

Supporting the Right of Return necessitates an explanation of the practicality and realization of such a right in order to allow for open political confrontation. It is unrealistic and illogical to keep it a broad and general concept that is vulnerable to a political trickery that is designed to maintain the bloody status quo.

In the contextual analysis of the impetus and implications of the colonial process, honesty and integrity must be espoused to prevent deceit. Political trickery must be barred from tampering with the feeling and emotions of the Palestinian refugees and people.

Several questions that need careful examination and answering present themselves: 1) is it possible for refugees to return to homes that no longer exist, or to the villages that were destroyed and a new Israeli town erected over their ruins; 2) when the refugee issue is discussed, do we mean the resurrection of old houses and the destruction of Israeli towns and the evacuation of Israeli residents; or 3) by return do we mean the start of a new life in parts of the destroyed villages or in existing towns and villages in accordance with the principles of just and logical redistribution of lands that are vast enough to absorb everyone?

A few years ago, together with the Israeli progressive activist and Tel Aviv University lecturer Prof. Gadi Alghazi, I co-authored an article that stated:

“It is important that Israel recognizes the injustice, compensation and taking into consideration the victims of such injustice and, rectifying it without creating further injustices. It is clearly evident that a robust peace between the Israelis and the Palestinians is impossible without the adoption of justice and rectification of the injustices committed – especially the resolution of the refugee issues. Although the Right of Return is reserved, recognition alone is not enough since as a slogan it explicates nothing.

Therefore, in our opinion, focus should be directed at the restoration of the rights of refugees as opposed to “historical justice”; their rights to return to their homeland; to become citizens enjoying full citizenship rights in the country in which they live or will return to, or; their rights to live in dignity under logical and indiscriminate treatment, and satisfactory social and economic conditions, with special treatment in certain areas.

The main focus here is on respecting their free-will whether to return their areas in Israel, Palestine, future confederated areas, to settle in their host countries or to immigrant to another country using a passport”

Under the current political state, the right of return remains vulnerable to the various personal interests of leaders and politicians. It is of the utmost importance to present this urgent Palestinian question in a fashion that prevents the re-occurrence of “resolution” experiments that left many issues undefined and that opened the path for a trickery and procrastination that rendered the situation explosive, yet again. It is important to prepare a systematic Palestinian plan that translates the hope of return into a practical and attainable objective.

One of the ways to counter the Israeli circles of deceit is represented in depicting the just issues of the Palestinians in a clear political manner, a manner that is founded on a broad vision that is removed from mystery, romance and fantasy.

Those who claim that refugee rights are “fantastic romances” tend to deny their reality, applicability and practicality. Generations of refugees do not aspire to be romantic subjects to be sung about. This issue must now be formulated in a methodical and detailed political

approach that allows for the participation of refugees and their representatives in paving the way for a realm in which they can practice their rights, present just and alternative solutions for implementation and in which they can respond to the systematic and official expansionist policies of Israeli institutions.

Should we insist on running the empty circles of slogans within the parameters of pleas, the reserving and upholding this Palestinian right that is assured morally, nationally and internationally is jeopardized.

It is time to formulate it as a bold, clear and applicable political plan that is able to break free from the countless realms of trickery and conspiracy.

Hisham Naffa 'a is a journalist, author and Palestinian political activist living in Haifa.

Haifa Declaration

The Haifa Declaration, under preparation since 2002 under the auspices of Mada al-Carmel (Arab Center for Applied Social Research) was published on 15 May 2007. The Declaration, a vision document of Palestinian citizens of Israel, focuses on four issues: internal social issues; the relationship between the Palestinian citizens of Israel and the State of Israel; the relationship with the Palestinian people and other Arab nation; national identity.

Excerpts from the Haifa Declaration:

Although we were made citizens of the State of Israel, the state nevertheless continued to pursue its uprooting and evacuation operations after its establishment, with the result that many of us were displaced from our towns and villages, becoming refugees in our homeland.

Our citizenship and our relationship to the State of Israel are defined, to a great extent, by a formative event, the Nakba, which befell the Arab Palestinian people in 1948 as a result of the creation of the State of Israel. This was the event through which we – who remained from among the original inhabitants of our homeland – were made citizens without the genuine constituents of citizenship, especially equality. As we are a homeland minority whose people was driven out of their homeland, and who has suffered historical injustice, the principle of equality – the bedrock of democratic citizenship – must be based on justice and the righting of wrongs, and on the recognition of our narrative and our history in this homeland. This democratic citizenship that we seek is the only arrangement that guarantees individual and collective equality for the Palestinians in Israel.

We look towards a future in which we can reach historic reconciliation between the Jewish Israeli people and the Arab Palestinian people. This reconciliation requires the State of Israel to recognize the historical injustice that it committed against the Palestinian people through its establishment, to accept responsibility for the Nakba, which befell all parts of the Palestinian people, and also for the war crimes and crimes of occupation that it has committed in the Occupied Territories. Reconciliation also requires recognizing the Right of Return and acting to implement it in accordance with United Nations Resolution 194, ending the Occupation and removing the settlements from all Arab territory occupied since 1967, recognizing the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination and to an independent and sovereign state, and recognizing the rights of Palestinian citizens in Israel, which derive from being a homeland minority.

Furthermore, such an historical reconciliation between the two peoples must be part of a comprehensive change in Israeli policy, whereby Israel abandons its destructive role towards the peoples of the region, especially in the context of a hegemonic U.S. policy which supports certain Arab regimes in oppressing their citizens, stripping them of their resources, obstructing their development, and impeding the democratic process in the Arab world. This historic reconciliation also requires us, Palestinians and Arabs, to recognize the right of the Israeli Jewish people to self-determination and to life in peace, dignity, and security with the Palestinian and the other peoples of the region.

Our vision for the future relations between Palestinian Arabs and Israeli Jews in this country is to create a democratic state founded on equality between the two national groups. This solution would guarantee the rights of the two groups in a just and equitable manner. This would require a change in the constitutional structure and a change in the definition of the State of Israel from a Jewish state to a democratic state established on national and civil equality between the two national groups, and enshrining the principles of banning discrimination and of equality between all of its citizens and residents.

Available at: <http://www.mada-research.org/> or <http://www.mada-research.org/archive/haifaenglish.pdf>

‘Aidoun Group Workshop in Damascus

Palestinian Refugees in Iraq: The Lost Protection

Damascus – ‘Aidoun Group. Since the 2003 US-led invasion and occupation of Iraq, sectarian militias, Iraqi and U.S. military forces have launched several campaigns systemically targeting the Palestinian population living in Iraq, campaigns that, according to international organizations, have used methods that include expulsion, imprisonment, torture, and extrajudicial killing. As a result, many Palestinian refugees have fled to neighboring countries and refugee camps on the Iraqi borders.

It is estimated that of the 35,000 Palestinians living in Iraq in 2003, approximately 15,000 remained there after the war. Hundreds of Palestinian refugees sought shelter in temporary refugee camps including Al Walid, Al Ruwayshed, Al Hol, and Al Tanaf, in neighboring countries or on the Iraqi borders with Syria and Jordan.

On 5 March 2007, the ‘Aidoun Group (Syria and Lebanon) organized a workshop, entitled “Palestinian Refugees in Iraq: The Lost Protection”, to address the conditions of and seek ways to provide protection for Palestinian refugees in Iraq. The workshop was held at the Ridha Said Conference Hall, at Damascus University, and was attended by 120 participants from Syria, Lebanon, Palestine, Jordan and Iraq.

The participants represented international organizations, the United Nations High Commission on Refugees (UNHCR), the United Nations Relief and Work Agency (UNRWA), Refugee Affairs Committee of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), the General Committee of



al-Tanaf Palestinian refugee camp on the Iraqi-Syrian border, 2007. (source: www.group194.net)



al-Tanaf Palestinian refugee camp on the Iraqi-Syrian border, 2007. (source: www.group194.net)

Arab Palestinian Refugees in Syria, the Iraqi Network for Human Rights and Development, Badil and the Norwegian Popular Assistance Committee, in addition to several activists and civil society institutions from Palestine, Syria and Lebanon.

Several documents, papers and discussions were presented throughout the three-session workshop, each addressing the responsibility towards the Palestinian refugees in Iraq and the role of all the involved parties in resolving this issue. Moreover, live testimonies of survivors who fled to Syrian to escape the atrocities committed against them in Iraq were presented.

Current Conditions Compared to Conditions in the Past

Until 2003, the Palestinian refugees in Iraq enjoyed satisfactory standards of economic, social and educational rights. Previous Iraqi governments provided them with housing, employment opportunities, education, and medical care, while restricting their real estate acquisition rights. The conditions of Palestinian refugees in pre 2003 Iraq were similar to those in Syria, although Iraqi governments did not rely on the intervention of UNRWA in caring for the Palestinian refugees and undertook to provide the needed care themselves.

However, since the US-led invasion of Iraq and the fall of the previous regime, the living conditions of Palestinian refugees has drastically deteriorated, with many of their rights

being revoked. In this context, the Coalition Provisional Authority and the transitional governments undertook the following discriminatory measures against Palestinian refugees in Iraq:

- 1- The transfer of responsibility over the Palestinian refugees in Iraq from the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor to the Ministry of Immigration and Migrants.
- 2- Imposing strict and unduly rules and regulation on issuing new travel documents.
- 3- Halting the issuing of new Identity Cards, and refusing to replace and/or renew old, damaged or lost cards.
- 4- Imposing restriction on the movement and transportation of Palestinian refugees and preventing them from leaving Iraq.
- 5- The Palestinian refugees in Iraq are exposed to terrorism, arrest, imprisonment without trial at the hands of militia men, members of the National Guard and US occupation forces.

Desired Protection: Definition and Boundaries

The participants in the workshop concurred to define, describe and diagnose the living conditions of Palestinian refugees in Iraq. They also agreed on a set of general recommendations to correspond with the realities and conditions under which these refugees live.

However, their views and opinions varied and differed regarding the definition of the desired temporary protection, its limits, its scope and the implications of solutions presented. Among these opinions the following were most significant:

- To reject any resolution based on the repatriation of Palestinian refugees in neighboring Arab countries such as Syria, Jordan, Saudi Arabia or the Palestinian territories of the West Bank and Gaza Strip;
- To reject the transfer of Palestinian refugees to Kurdistan, Iraq to provide a temporary safe haven for them - a solution that was proposed and discussed between the official Palestinian delegates who visited Iraq for talks with Iraqi President, Mr. Jalal Talabani. This rejection stems from the fear that this will be the first step towards resettling the refugees in Northern Iraq;
- To call upon the neighboring countries, especially Syria (famed for the generous and hospitable treatment of Palestinian refugees there) to temporarily host the refugees from Iraq until a solution to the problem is found. The main concern here is the urgency of the immediate threat to their lives, a concern that cannot wait until the right of return is realized.

In the same context, the participants called upon the Palestinian Authority and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) to issue Palestinian passports to the refugees.

They demanded that serious and efficient action be taken to absorb these refugees in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. Furthermore, they called for the implementation of steps that would help to overcome the obstacles that hinder such actions.

General Recommendations and Suggestions

The participants in the workshop held the government of Iraq, its affiliate militia, and the government of the United States responsible for the suffering of both Iraqi civilians and Palestinian refugees living in Iraq. Under the terms of the Geneva Convention of 1949 and its Annexed Protocols of 1977 regarding the protection of victims of military conflicts, it is the responsibility of the government and the occupying power to protect civilians in times of war. The participants emphasized the following issues:

First, the urgent necessity for action on the part of the Palestinian Authority, PLO, political factions and civil society groups in Palestine and the world at large to resolve this issue.

The PLO is especially responsible and must utilize its relations with the international community to find practical and serious solutions to respond to the urgency of the matter at hand. The PLO must act to protect the personal, social and economic rights of Palestinian refugees, while keeping unchanged their legal status and upholding their right of return.

Therefore, this issue should not be considered as the responsibility of the Refugee Affairs Committee of the PLO alone.

Second, the PLO should consider the victims of the attacks on Palestinian refugees in Iraq as martyrs of the Palestinian cause and the relevant Palestinian institutions should adopt their children.

Third, members of the Palestinian Legislative Council should be urged to mobilize, quickly and efficiently, to pressure Arab parliamentarians, especially the Arab Parliamentary Human Rights Committee, to list the issue of Palestinian refugees in Iraq among world Parliamentarians as a human rights issue.

Fourth, the urgent need to activate the role of Palestinian civil society groups and organizations to form a relief committee/fund to coordinate with other Palestinian and Syrian relief groups and commissions to provide relief aid and support initiatives and efforts aiming to assist Palestinian refugees in the border camps.

Fifth, increasing the utilization of mass media to enlist the support of Palestinian and other Arab communities in the Arab World, Europe and North America to muster the support of western public opinion to defend the rights of Palestinian refugees in Iraq and uphold the provisions of International Humanitarian Law, especially the provisions of the 1949 Geneva Convention.

Sixth, to work towards the founding of a Palestinian-Iraqi committee, with members from Palestinian and Iraqi civil society groups and organizations, to coordinate, especially with the Iraqi Network for Human Rights and Development, to assume responsibility for following up the Palestinian refugees' issue. The proposed group would collect data, document cases and liaise with International Rights Committees to present the issue in the international arena and file law suits against the US Occupation Forces, along with certain officials within the Iraqi government and its affiliate militia, for war crimes and crimes against humanity.

Seventh, to submit a memorandum to the Arab League regarding the dire living conditions of the Palestinian refugees in Iraq and urge it to attend to its responsibility to pressure host countries to abide by their commitments as per the provisions of the 1965 Casablanca Protocols and all other related accords.

Eighth, to call upon the United Nations High Commission on Refugees (UNHCR) and the United Nations Relief and Work Agency (UNRWA) to coordinate their efforts to facilitate the registration of Palestinian refugees in Iraq, and to protect them until the Iraqi problem is resolved or they are repatriated to their homes as per the provisions of UN Resolution 194.

Ninth, to work towards the design, planning and launch of an Arab civil campaign to protect Palestinian refugees in Iraq and to muster the support and participation of Arab civil networks in the campaign. Furthermore, to create an internet site that would serve as a medium for dialogue and cooperation among the various members of the campaign.

Palestinian Refugee Camps in/on the border with Iraq

Al Hol Camp: Located near Al Hasaka Province in northern Syria, the camp was established in May 2006 following the permission of the Syrian government to allow some 260-300 Palestinian Refugees to enter Syria from Iraq. Syria provided the refugees with temporary housing and humanitarian aid. While the camp is operated by the UNHCR, UNRWA provides services to the camp. Refugees have not been issued personal documents by the Syrian authorities.

Al Tanaf Camp: Located near the crossing point between Syria and Iraq (No Man's Land), the camp, according to the UNHCR, accommodates approximately 356 Palestinian refugees in tents. The refugees there live under harsh conditions as they are not allowed to enter Syrian territory. The camp is managed by UNRWA and UNHCR, who provide basic humanitarian aid to the refugees. At the beginning of 2007, UNRWA opened a tented school for the 90 children of the camp. Additionally, the Syrian government and Syrian and Palestinian civil society groups provide aid to the refugees. Although UNRWA issued temporary registration cards (valid for one year) to the refugees at Al Tanaf Camp, they were not registered and included among the refugees registered with the General Committee for Arab Palestinian Refugees in Syria (GAPAR).

Al Walid Camp: Located on the Iraqi side of the border with Syria, Al Walid Camp accommodates approximately 520 Palestinian Refugees who have fled Iraq since the end of 2006 (the current population of Al Walid is probably larger as a result of new arrivals). However, UNRWA is unable to reach them thus leaving the responsibility to care for them with UNHCR and the International Committee of the Red Cross/Crescent, in addition to assistance provided by the heads of the tribes in the region.

Al Ruwayshed Camp: Set up near the Jordanian border with Iraq in 2003, Al Ruwayshed Camp was intended to temporarily accommodate the population that fled the military operations of the US-led invasion of Iraq. Of the 2000 Palestinian and other Arab refugees that originally fled there, 119 refugees, 97 of whom are Palestinians, remain living there as the rest were relocated to Canada, New Zealand and Australia. The Jordanian government has temporarily extended the mandate of UNHCR to operate there, in order to find a solution for the remaining refugees. In June 2007, UNHCR announced that the 97 remaining Palestinian refugees would soon be relocated to Brazil.

BDS Update

Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions against Israel

April to mid-July 2007



Group of British doctors call for a boycott of the Israel Medical Association

April 28, 2007 - A group of British doctors has called for a boycott of the Israeli Medical Association (IMA) and its expulsion from the World Medical Association (WMA). The petition, signed by 130 doctors, argues that by refusing to criticise Israeli policies in the Palestinian territories occupied by Israel, the IMA is failing to uphold international medical ethical standards.

“We, the undersigned, Palestinian Medical and Health institutions in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, call on world medical and health institutions to: 1. Immediately end cooperation with, and refrain from participation in, any form of collaboration or joint activities with the IMA. 2. Advocate for the condemnation of the IMA. 3. Support Palestinian medical and health institutions directly without requiring them to partner with Israeli counterparts as a condition for such support.”

Jews for Boycotting Israel

April 2, 2007 - In order to challenge the stronghold Israel has on Palestine and its fledgling economy, a group of Jewish and Israeli residents in Britain was set up as a subsection of the campaign undertaken by Boycott Israeli Goods BIG (www.bigcampaign.org.uk). The new group, J-BIG, is an outcome of the deep frustration Jewish peace activists feel towards the inaction displayed by the Jewish community and its liberal wing with regard to Israel's repressive occupation of Palestinian land.

UK Journalist Union: Support boycott of Israeli goods

April 24, 2007 - The National Union of Journalists (NUJ) issued this statement on 17 April 2007 following a vote at the 2007 Annual Delegate Meeting in Birmingham, UK.

“The NUJ’s Centenary Annual Conference debated more than 200 motions. [...] Among the motions passed in the international debate was one calling among other things for the NUJ to support a “boycott of Israeli goods... led by trade unions and the TUC” in response to the situation in Palestine and last year’s conflict in Lebanon. The decision made by elected representatives at our conference was a decision of NUJ members...to try to help put pressure on the Israeli government to reverse its block of these payments, its refusal to recognise Palestinian journalists carrying the international press card and the general damage being done by the continued occupation.”

Norwegian Socialist Left Party renews support for BDS

April 2007 - The Socialist Left Party (SV), one of three parties in the Norwegian Government, has renewed its support for sanctions against Israel. The Party’s Congress adopted 25th of March unanimously a resolution named “Sanctions against the Occupier - not the occupied.”

Cosatu calls for boycott of Israel

May 25, 2007 - Congress of South African Trade Unions (Cosatu) president Willy Madisha called for the government to cease all diplomatic relations with Israel after its attacks on the Palestinian leadership. Madisha said the best way to have Israel comply with United Nations resolutions on Palestine was to step up pressure by a global diplomatic boycott such as the one imposed on apartheid SA.

UK architects petition against Israel

May 26, 2007 - A petition by the Architects and Planners for Justice in Palestine (APJP) denounced the Israeli architects for their complicity in “unjust action” such as illegal settlements, which “couldn’t have been realized without their help.”

UCU boycott resolutions

May 2007 - On May 30th 2007 the UK University and College Union (UCU) meeting at its first Annual Congress in Bournemouth passed Resolution 30 - Boycott of Israeli academic institutions notes that Israel’s 40-year occupation has seriously damaged the fabric of Palestinian society through annexation, illegal settlement, collective punishment and restriction of movement. The motion condemned Israel for its “denial of educational rights” for the Palestinian people. British academics were urged to back calls for a boycott of Israeli universities and were asked to consider the “moral implications” of links with Israeli universities. According to the BBC, delegates backed the motion in a card vote by 158 votes to 99, with 17 abstentions. This launches the union into a year-long debate into backing “a comprehensive and consistent boycott” of all Israeli academic institutions, to be voted upon at next year’s conference.

UK trade union backs total boycott of Israel

June 20, 2007 - The UK’s largest trade union, UNISON, advocated on Wednesday a total boycott of Israel over its continued occupation of Palestinian territories. A statement issued by delegates meeting in Brighton read: “The conference believes that ending the occupation demands concerted and sustained pressure upon Israel including an economic, cultural, academic and sporting

boycott". In addition, delegates called on the British government to press for an arms embargo against Israel.

Methodist divestment task force issues divestment recommendations

June 21, 2007 - The Divestment Task Force of the New England Conference of The United Methodist Church has issued a report including recommendations for divestment from twenty companies identified as supporting the Israeli occupation in Palestine. The Divestment Task Force was created to implement Resolution 204, which was passed during the 2005 New England Annual Conference session (RS-204: Resolution on Divesting from Companies that are Supporting in a Significant Way the Israeli Occupation of Palestinian Territories). For more, visit: www.neumc.org/divest

Northern Ireland Public Service Alliance passes boycott and divestment motions

June 27, 2007 - Northern Ireland's biggest trade union, the Northern Ireland Public Service Alliance, unanimously passed all five motions on Palestinian solidarity discussed at the 2007 annual delegate conference. These motions contained # Severe condemnation of Israel, # A commitment to boycott and divestment and # Support for Trade Union Friends of Palestine and the Enough campaign against Israeli Occupation.

Transport and General Workers' Union joins moves to boycott Israel

July 8, 2007 - Britain's Transport and General Workers' Union has called upon its 800,000 members to boycott Israeli-made products based on what they term Israel's "criminal policies in Palestinian territories."

Dutch government warns company to stop work on Wall

July 9, 2007 - The Dutch foreign minister, Maxime Verhagen, recently warned a construction company from the Rotterdam area to terminate its involvement in work on the separation fence in the West Bank. "I expect Riwal to stop providing cranes for the wall. I hope this will be the last we hear of it," Verhagen said in a media statement late last month, adding that "the government will keep a close watch" on the company's actions. The Dutch foreign ministry called the company's work on the barrier "undesirable," citing the 2004 ruling by the Hague-based International Court of Justice that the Wall was illegal.

Irish Congress of Trade Unions Calls for Boycott and Divestment

July 9, 2007 - The Irish Congress of Trade Unions - representing trade unions and trades councils from the whole island of Ireland - have today passed two motions on Palestine that are critical of the actions of the Israeli government in its oppression of the Palestinian people. The two motions condemn Israel for its human rights abuses, its policy of ethnic cleansing and its war crimes

This updated was compiled for the Acting Steering Committee, Palestinian BDS Campaign: www.bds-palestine.net For regular updates about global BDS initiatives, see, for example: www.pacbi.org



1 May 2007: Al-Awda Award Festival – Celebration of Creative Resistance

“Today we have crossed walls and borders. Your presence, energy and works prove that the quest for justice and the right of return inspires generations,” said Palestinian novelist Salman Natour, moderator of the 2007 Al-Awda Award Festival, to the full theater hall of the Cultural Palace in Ramallah.

The 16 winners of the Al-Awda Award were honored by Palestinian artists, scholars, politicians and professionals, members of the jury and award committees, a special performance of the Palestinian dance troupe al-Funoun al-Sha'biyya, and an audience of over 750 who had arrived from Haifa, Nazareth, and the refugee camps and towns of the occupied West Bank. Best short films and posters were exhibited during the event.

BADIL's Al-Awda Award encourages cultural expression on the Nakba and Palestinian refugees' right of return.

The winners of the 2007 Award are:

Posters:

1. Qutaiba Aboud, Aseera al-Shemaliyya, Nablus
2. Muhammad Abdel-Ghanni Saba'na, Qabatya, Jenin
3. Rana Bshara, Nazareth

Children's Stories:

1. Maliha Maslamani, Jerusalem
2. Ahlam Bisharat, Jenin
3. Majdi Shomali, Beit Sahour

Research Papers:

1. Maliha Maslamani, Jerusalem
2. Jabra'il Shomali, Beit Sahour
3. Sabreen Zaban, Jerusalem

Oral History Documents:

1. Rasha Abu Zaytoun, Deir al-Ghassoun, Tulkarem
2. Rashad al-Madani, Gaza
3. Maliha Sa'id To'ama, Tulkarem

Short Films – Drama:

1. Shadi Srou, Nazareth (“Ya Ana, Ya Haifa”)

Short Films – Documentary:

1. Tha'er Abdelrahman al-Azza, Dheisha camp (“Erth Mukhayyem”)
2. Du'a' Anati, Hebron (“Risha Min Wahi al-Zakira”)
3. Raneen Jiries, Haifa (“Nisa' Filastiniyat”)

Back - cover photo: the al-Awda Award winning poster of Qutaiba Aboud, Nablus, poster of the 59th Nakba commemoration in 2007.

2007 Al-Awda Award

ذكرى النكبة 59

The NAKBA at



We
Will
Return

بِقَامِل

لجنة إحياء ذكرى النكبة - فلسطين، بالتعاون مع الائتلاف الفلسطيني لحق العودة
National Committee for the Commemoration of the Anniversary of
the Nakba and the Palestinian Right of Return Coalition