

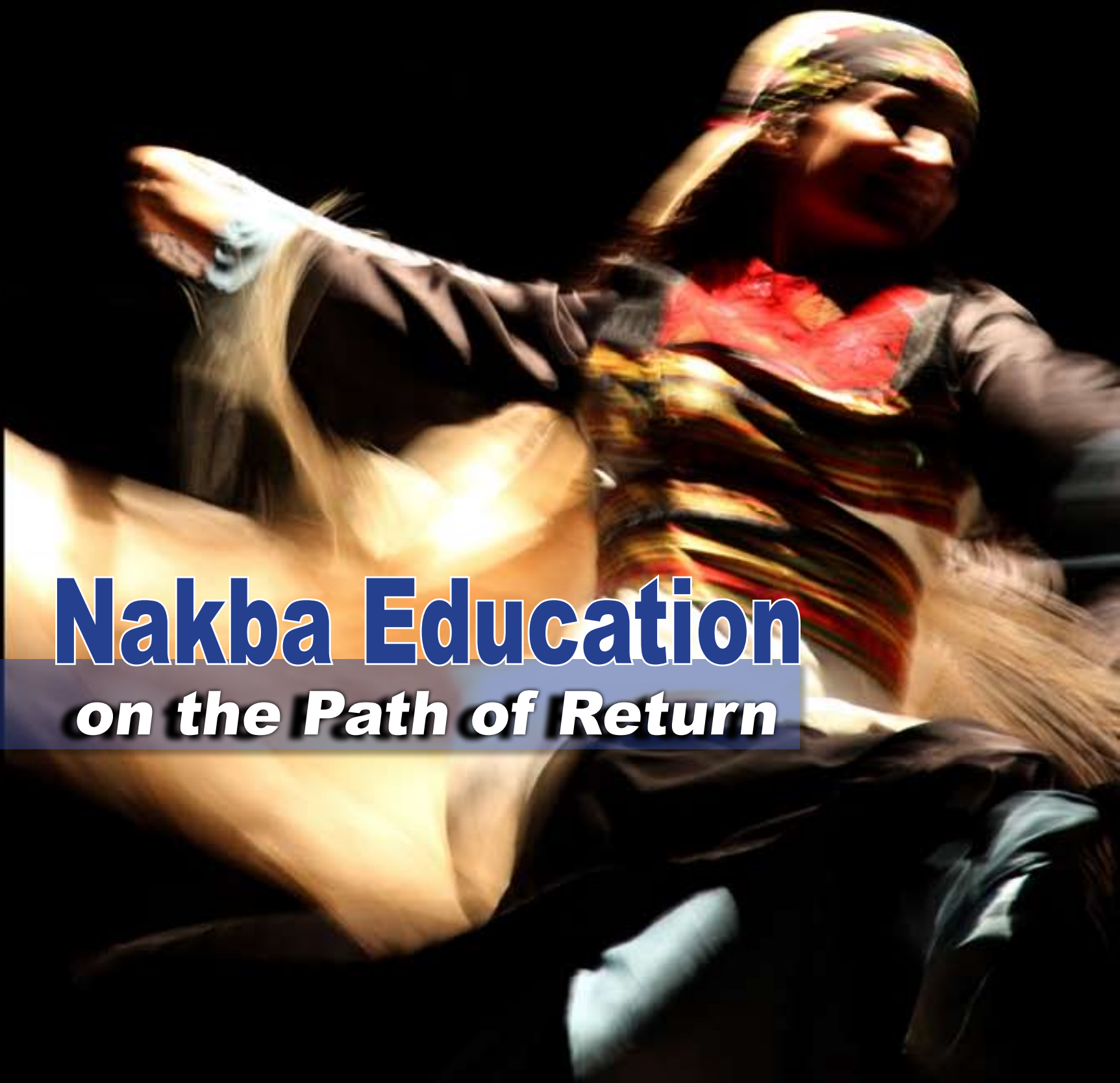
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BADIL Resource Center for Palestinian Residency and Refugee Rights



Nakba Education ***on the Path of Return***

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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They Can Take Everything but Our Minds

Children in Aida refugee camp
researching and preparing an
exhibit on refugee rights.
Photo: Rich Wiles



In the last issue of *al-Majdal*, we explored legal avenues for holding accountable Israeli perpetrators and those complicit in violations of international law. All the pending cases discussed in that issue have since been dismissed, whether through legislative intervention (as with the Daraj case in Spain), or findings that the cases were not justiciable or the plaintiff did not have standing (as with the al-Haq case in the U.K. and the Bil'in case in Canada). Once again, Palestinian victims were denied effective remedies because challenging Israeli impunity was judged to be too politically sensitive for the courtrooms of the richest and most powerful countries in the world.

In the same period, however, Israeli impunity was challenged by another judge who delivered his team's assessment of war crimes and crimes against humanity committed by Israel and Hamas during Israel's military offensive against the occupied Gaza Strip between 27 December 2008 and 18 January 2009. At the end of September, the U.N. "Fact Finding Mission on the Gaza Conflict" headed by Judge Richard Goldstone submitted the Mission's meticulously researched report to the U.N. Human Rights Council, including a set of practical recommendations aimed to ensure that Israeli perpetrators will be held to account for the first time. The "Goldstone Report" is assessed in Reem Mazzawi's commentary for this issue of *al-Majdal*.

While the Goldstone Report and its recommendations were ultimately adopted by the Human Rights Council, it is important to note that the Council had initially decided to defer the vote on it to its next session in the spring of 2010. Such a course of action would have stripped the report of much of its value in securing redress for the Palestinian victims. The news that came out of the U.N. Human Rights Council in Geneva was that the official Palestinian delegation played a major role in initiating the scandalous deferral. It was at this point that Palestinian civil society came alive; phone calls to officials, press releases, articles in various Palestinian and international media outlets, and demonstrations erupted in protest, and ultimately played the central role in pushing the Palestinian Authority and the PLO to give the Report their full backing. As a result, the Human Rights Council resumed debate of the Report in its 12th Special Session and ultimately endorsed the report and its recommendations on 16 October 2009.

By passing this test, Palestinian civil society proved its mettle in defending the fundamental rights of the Palestinian people. The individuals running the organizations and networks that make up this civil society are largely a generation of Palestinian activists raised in the 1980s and the first Intifada, which was a period marked by intensive popular political education among Palestinian society. This education has enabled them to continue the struggle for the rights of the Palestinian people until today, despite the severe constraints posed by Israel's occupation, apartheid and colonization and the fragmentation of the Palestinian people.

One of the questions often raised is whether future generations of Palestinians will be able to continue and develop the struggle for justice and freedom – a question that forces us to examine the current state of Palestinian education. Specifically, we need to look at how children and youth learn about the history, geography, society, politics, and culture of Palestine, and about Zionism and Israel’s colonialism, occupation and apartheid, which constitute the root cause of the *ongoing* Nakba of the Palestinian people. The importance of understanding the Nakba – the ethnic cleansing and destruction of Palestine – stems from the need to challenge and reverse it. This issue of *al-Majdal* examines current educational efforts which some authors in this issue have called Palestinian “National Education,” “Teaching Palestine,” or what we call “Nakba education.”

Nakba education is not new to the work of Badil. Our *Youth Education & Activation Project* is currently in its fourth year, supplementing the education of over 300 Palestinian refugee children aged 14-17, throughout historic Palestine as well as in Syria, each year. Through the program, children learn and discuss the contemporary history of Palestine, the living conditions of displaced Palestinians in other parts of the world, and the rights of Palestinian refugees. Youth participants visit their places of origin, contribute to annual Nakba commemorations, and develop ideas on how to defend their rights.

Nakba education is not limited to Palestinians. The growth of international solidarity with Palestinians has shown time and again that the most successful form of solidarity starts with self-education and the education of others. The tools and methods for such education and awareness raising have varied, but there is still much work to be done to share the experiences and lessons learned on how best to sensitize activists and the broader public to the Palestinian Nakba – a topic that has been neglected far too long.

For Palestinian citizens of Israel, Nakba Education means more than challenging a “sensitivity” or breaking a taboo. Nakba education is anathema to the Israeli system itself. A law bill currently under discussion in the Israeli parliament, for example, proposes to effectively criminalize the commemoration of the Nakba,¹ and consecutive ministers of education have made sure that public schools in Israel would teach Zionist history and concepts and exclude the history and experience of the Palestinian people. Thus, for example, Israel’s current Minister of Education Gideon Saar announced on 1 September 2009, that his Ministry would launch yet another initiative for “entering Zionist concepts into the Arab education system” and to “begin teaching a new subject containing Zionist principles such as the Hebrew calendar, the Israeli national anthem, and the centrality of Jerusalem [to the state of Israel]” as part of the curriculum in the coming school year.² His ministry has also pulled the new history textbook “Nationalism: Building a State in the Middle East,” from the hands of history teachers until the chapter on the Nakba is modified to remove any mention of the expulsion of Palestinian refugees.³

The authors in this issue of *al-Majdal*, are directly involved in the process of Nakba education in various places, directing their work at different communities, and cover various aspects of the topic. Rami Salameh looks at education in Palestinian elementary and high-school classrooms and the need to develop the pedagogical methods in Palestinian Authority schools. Said Barghouti examines the way Israeli history textbooks over the past forty years have presented the history of the land to Palestinian students. Dan Walsh examines the way the “Middle East Conflict” is taught to U.S. high school students, suggesting that Palestinian poster art can be used to present this topic in a more accurate and student-empowering way. Also in the U.S., members of the Palestine Education Project describe their work with students in Brooklyn to learn about the experience of Palestinians and draw connections with their own lived experiences. Nidal al-Azza shares his reflections on teaching Palestinian refugee rights under international law to Palestinian law students. Also looking at education in the classroom, Amaya Galili describes *How do we say Nakba in Hebrew?* a recently launched resource packet developed by Zochrot in Hebrew for teachers wishing to engage Jewish-Israeli students about the Nakba.

Other authors focus on Nakba education outside of the classroom. Khaled al-Azraq, a political prisoner for the past twenty years, tells us how the Palestinian prisoners’ movement has educated its cadre. Mo’ataz al-Dajani looks at the efforts of al-Jana Center in Lebanon to engage Palestinian children and youth in the writing of their own history by engaging with older generations and with their surroundings, while Rich Wiles describes the educational activities of refugee community centers in the Bethlehem district.

While the articles in this issue provide a small sample of the forms that Nakba education can take, the experiences and work described by these authors offer a useful guide for others engaging in this field. Sharing and learning from the experiences of others is one of the ways educators can learn, and this issue of *al-Majdal* aims to be a contribution to this shared learning process.

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

The Gaza Strip: "*Never Again*" - Again

by Reem Mazzawi

*What remains of his home's
staircase, Gaza Strip 2009.
Photo courtesy of Zoriah*



On 29 September 2009, Judge Richard Goldstone submitted a report to the UN Human Rights Council in his capacity as the head of the UN Fact Finding Mission on the Gaza Conflict ("Goldstone Mission").¹ The 575 page report was the result of thorough and meticulous research and resulted in a flurry of activity and controversy that included deferring endorsement of the report, civil society mobilization protesting the deferral, and a special session of the Human Rights Council in which the report and its recommendations were adopted. As the report makes its way to the UN General Assembly and other arenas of law and politics, it is important that we understand the content of the report, the significance of its recommendations, and how it can potentially make a difference in the quest for accountability of those who have perpetrated serious violations of international human rights and humanitarian law.

The Goldstone Mission was established on 3 April 2009 by the President of the Human Rights Council – following the Council's Resolution S-91/ – with the mandate "to investigate all violations of international human rights law and international humanitarian law that might have been committed at any time in the context of the military operations that were conducted in Gaza during the period from 27 December 2008 and 18 January 2009, whether before, during or after."²

The Goldstone Mission was composed of four highly qualified experts, the first being Justice Richard Goldstone, a former judge of the Constitutional Court of South Africa and former Prosecutor of the International Tribunals for the former Yugoslavia and Rwanda. The three other members of the Mission were Professor Christine Chinkin, a professor of international law at the London School of Economics who was a member of the High Level Fact Finding Mission to Beit Hanoun (2006); Ms. Hina Jilani, an advocate of the Supreme Court of Pakistan and former Special Representative of the Secretary General on Human Rights Defenders and a member of the 2004 International Commission of Inquiry on Darfur; and Colonel Desmond Travers, a former officer in the Irish Armed Forces and member of the Board of Directors of the Institute for International Criminal Investigations.

Although the Goldstone Mission was charged with investigating allegations of war crimes committed not only in the OPT but also in southern Israel, the government of Israel refused to cooperate with the Mission and prevented it from traveling to the occupied West Bank and Israel to meet Palestinian and Israeli officials and victims. The main plausible explanation of Israel's refusal to cooperate with a UN fact-finding mission with such mandate was that "it had nothing to tell that could hope to overcome the overwhelming evidence of the Israeli failure to carry out its attacks on the Gaza Strip in accordance with international law of war. No credible international commission could reach any set of conclusions other than those reached by the Goldstone report on the central allegations," as noted by Professor Richard Falk.³

The Mission carried out a thorough and inclusive investigation which addressed the human rights violations committed by Israel, Palestinian armed groups, and the Palestinian National Authority both in the OPT, including the West Bank and East Jerusalem, and in Israel.⁴ The Mission conducted 188 individual interviews, reviewed more than 300 reports and documentation amounting to 10,000 pages, over 30 videos and 1,200 photographs. It also conducted field visits, including investigation of incident sites in the occupied Gaza Strip (entering through Egyptian borders), and held public hearings for Palestinian and Israeli victims in the Gaza Strip and Geneva.

The findings of the Mission were unsurprising in terms of substance. They confirmed the findings and reports of other human rights organizations that Israel had indeed committed war crimes and crimes against humanity in addition to other serious violations of international human rights and humanitarian law. While the government of Israel tried to portray the military operation on the occupied Gaza Strip as "essentially a response to rocket attacks in the exercise of its right to self-defense," the Mission found that these operations "have been directed, at least in part, at a different target: the people of Gaza as a whole."⁵ The Mission confirmed that the deliberate use of disproportionate force, attacks on civilian population and destruction of civilian property by Israel was designed to achieve political objectives, that is, "punishing the Gaza population for its resilience and for its apparent support for Hamas, and possibly with the intent of forcing a change in such support."⁶ As to the longstanding Israeli blockade of the Gaza Strip, the Mission has confirmed that it constitutes an instance of collective punishment, explicitly prohibited by Article 33 of the Fourth Geneva Convention. It also noted that:

"[T]he series of acts [including the blockade] that deprive Palestinians in the Gaza Strip of their means of subsistence, employment, housing and water, that deny their freedom of movement and their right to leave and enter their own country, that limit their rights to access a court of law and an effective remedy, could lead a competent court to find that the crime of persecution, *a crime against humanity*, has been committed."⁷

The Goldstone Mission also concluded that by launching rockets and mortars, which cannot be aimed with sufficient precision at military targets, Palestinian armed groups in the Gaza Strip had breached the fundamental principle of distinction. These groups failed to distinguish between military targets and civilian population and objects in southern Israel as a result. "These actions would constitute war crimes and may amount to crimes against humanity."⁸ Thus, a fair reading of the report reveals that the report is impartial, balanced, and took full account of Israel's arguments relating to security, and gave Israel the "benefit of the doubt" on key matters.⁹

Although there are many reasons to applaud the Goldstone Report, it still falls short of meeting Palestinian expectations. The report takes for granted dubious proposition that Israel was entitled to act against the Gaza Strip in self-defense, avoiding making a finding of aggression by the launching of the attack on the Gaza Strip.¹⁰ The report also ignores Hamas' repeated efforts to extend the ceasefire indefinitely provided Israel lifted its blockade of the occupied Gaza Strip. These efforts constitute a diplomatic alternative to war to achieve security for Israel's borders. Israel, on the other hand, disregarded these efforts and resorted to war knowing that recourse to war should be a last resort under international law.¹¹

Moreover, the Goldstone Report failed to draw any legal conclusions with regard to the unprecedented belligerent Israeli policy of denying an option of refuge to the entire civilian population of the occupied Gaza Strip.¹² This policy was discussed thoroughly in a previous report of the *Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights in the OPT*, Richard Falk, following Operation Cast Lead.¹³ The Special Rapporteur, concluded that the Israeli policy of refuge denial was an "inhuman action" against the Palestinian civilian population.¹⁴ All crossings from Israel were kept closed during the attacks, with minor exceptions. By so doing, civilians, particularly children, women, invalids and disabled persons were unable to avail themselves

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of the refugee option to flee from the locus of immediate harm resulting from the Israeli military operations. This condition was aggravated by the absence of places to hide from the ravages of war in Gaza, given its small size, dense population, and absence of natural or man-made shelters.¹⁵ Recalling that “international humanitarian law has not specifically and explicitly at this time anticipated such an abuse of civilians,” the Special Rapporteur called for an impartial investigation of this policy “to determine whether such practices of ‘refugee denial’ constitute a *crime against humanity* as understood in international criminal law.”¹⁶ Alas, the UN Fact Finding Mission to the Gaza Conflict did not take this investigation upon itself and failed to address this issue.

While the findings of the Goldstone Report were not new or surprising in substance, its recommendations go beyond previous reports of other UN Fact-Finding Missions to the OPT. The report of the 2006 Mission to Beit Hanoun, for instance, included similar findings to those of the Goldstone Report, but the recommendations of the 2006 report relating to holding perpetrators accountable were general and, for the most part, ambiguous;¹⁷ Israeli authorities and other UN Charter-based bodies have yet to take action to pursue investigation, prosecution and punishment of the Israeli perpetrators of the shelling of Beit Hanoun. Palestinian victims, in turn, have been left without remedy or redress. The Goldstone Report, on the other hand, makes strong and practical recommendations that firmly answer questions of *what* actions should be taken, *who* is responsible for each type of action, and *when* these actions should be taken. The report draws up a “Plan of Action” that aims to effectively prevent the longstanding impunity and the recurrence of serious human rights violations in the OPT through the promotion of criminal accountability. The report recommends that if, within six months, Israel and Hamas do not discharge their legal obligation to investigate, prosecute and convict the perpetrators according to international standards of impartiality, independence, promptness and effectiveness, then the UN Security Council should consider referring the whole issue of Israeli and Hamas accountability to the International Criminal Court.

Israel is unwilling to establish judicial accountability over its military actions in the OPT, as manifested in the pattern of delays, inaction or otherwise unsatisfactory handling by Israeli authorities of criminal investigations, prosecutions and convictions of military personnel. Therefore, the Goldstone Report called on States other than Israel to exercise universal jurisdiction to enforce international human rights and humanitarian law, combat impunity, promote international accountability and seek justice for victims. Certain conventions, particularly the *Fourth Geneva Convention* (1949), establish universal jurisdiction as an obligation of States parties. It requires each signatory “to search for persons alleged to have committed, or to have ordered the commission of, such grave breaches” and to bring such persons, regardless of their nationality, before its own courts.¹⁸

In its “Plan of Action,” the Goldstone Mission recommends not only that the international community provide for alternative accountability mechanisms, but also for an additional or alternative mechanism of compensation for damage or loss incurred by Palestinian civilians during the Israeli military operations.¹⁹ Whenever a violation of an international obligation occurs, an obligation to provide reparation arises. The current constitutional structure and legislation in Israel, however, leaves very limited possibilities, if any, for Palestinians to seek compensation and reparation.²⁰ The Mission went one step further to recommend that the UN General Assembly establish an escrow fund to be used to pay adequate compensation to Palestinians who have suffered loss and damage as a result of unlawful acts attributable to the State of Israel during Operation Cast Lead. The Mission also noted that the government of Israel should pay required amounts into this fund in accordance with its international legal obligations. The importance of this recommendation is highlighted by the fact that for many years, the international community has relieved Israel from the economic burden of its military aggression and occupation.²¹

One of the functions of reports such as the Goldstone Report is to attempt to pave the way for bringing remedy and redress to the victims of serious violations of international human rights and humanitarian law. The denial or deferral of criminal accountability and reparation amounts to the denial of justice and the restoration of dignity to victims. It reinforces the culture of impunity and has a negative impact on the credibility of the United Nations, and of the international community. If the recommendations of the Goldstone Report are not adopted by State Members and UN bodies and action taken accordingly, serious human rights violations in the OPT seem doomed to reoccur. Once again, the “*Never Again*” slogan will be hollowed of its meaning.

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

Readings from the Fateh Political Program: Affirming Refugee Rights while Advancing Strategic tools to Achieve these Rights

by Jamal al-Shati



Fateh's sixth general conference.
Photo: AP

Upon reviewing Fateh's political program, it becomes apparent the extent to which the *Draft Papers on the the Defense of Displaced Palestinians' Rights* (the Refugee Paper) discussed at the Sixth Conference of the Palestine Liberation Movement (Fateh), and which were the result of refugee community lobbying efforts at the Conference, were influential. Under the title "Principles," the political program adopted by the conference included:

Regarding refugees, the Fateh movement commits itself to the following:

Continuous work to achieve the right of refugees to return, compensation and restitution of property for all refugees, irrespective of their places of residence, including refugees in 1948 lands. The movement regards the preservation of refugee camps as a political and principled witness of the refugees and their experience, who were prevented from returning to their homes until the resolution of their cause... There is also a need to work on behalf of improving the status of refugees and refugee camps while confirming that the PLO provides the political reference for Palestinian refugees.

To affirm opposition to the principle of forced naturalization or the call for an alternative homeland... To this we say – "No naturalization in Lebanon and no to an alternative homeland in Jordan!" In the same context, and beneath the heading "the forms of struggle in the current period" the document states: "amongst the forms of this struggle which can be practiced with success in the current period to support and activate the negotiations, or alternatively, in the event of their failure," are included "boycotting Israeli products internally and externally by way of popular mobilizing, in particular with regards to consumer goods where a domestic alternative exists." Also included in forms of struggle are the "practicing of new forms of civil disobedience against the occupation, and action to escalate the Palestinian campaign to boycott Israel and its institutions and products and to benefit from the experience of the South African liberation struggle." It also proposes discussing "alternative

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*Fateh conference participants
carrying leaflets of political
prisoner Marwan Barghout.
Photo: Wafa News Agency*



Palestinian strategies if the path of negotiations fails to achieve results. This includes the proposition of the idea of calling for a unified democratic state which rejects racism, external domination and occupation, and developing struggles against Israeli apartheid and racism.”

With regards to work required to develop the performance of the PLO in negotiations, the political program confirms amongst other matters, the necessity for the PLO to remain committed to administering negotiations “on the basis of international norms and UN Resolutions 181, 194, 242, 338” and “rejecting the delaying of negotiations on Jerusalem, the refugee issue, or any final status issues.” The document also calls for “rejecting the recognition Israel as a Jewish state absolutely and unequivocally as a way to protect the rights of refugees and the rights of our brothers inside the Green Line.”

As for activating the PLO and its institutions, the program insisted upon three points: First, to strengthen the presence of the PLO amongst Palestinian refugee communities in the Diaspora, in particularly in the camps in the Arab world and beyond; Second, to revive and activate the bonds of the PLO with Arab and international solidarity forces, rebuilding relations with them; Third, developing relations between the PLO on the Arab and international levels, both on a popular level, as well as on the political party and governmental levels.”

In regards to it addressing the concerns of our people in exile, the program confirmed the necessity to reactivate and strengthen the role of these Palestinian communities, to support activists and skilled professionals, and to activate the unions and popular organizations in all places where Palestinians are located in exile. This is needed so as to “preserve the culture and belonging of communities outside the Arab world, including supporting their connections with their homeland by putting in place educational programs for them to teach their children Arabic and the history of their homeland, the struggle of their people and to preserve their belonging and their rights to return to their homeland.

As to the Palestinian community inside 1948 areas, it was confirmed that “our peoples in 1948 lands are an indivisible part of the Palestinian people and live under the danger of ‘Judaization’ and ethnic cleansing.” In that context the movement rejects calls for recognizing the ‘Jewishness’ of the state of Israel and racist calls for ethnic cleansing, while affirming the natural and historical right of the presence of our people in their homeland, both before the establishment of Israel and after its desecration [in the Nakba]. In that regard Fateh supports all those who strive to achieve the needs of our people for equality and to regain their rights...”

As for work on the international level, the document affirms the need to strengthen relations with political forces that can pressure political parties, unions and NGOs, particularly those that work in the field of human rights given their influence and effect nationally and internationally.”

This matter requires “preparedness to escalate the international campaign against Israel’s racist practices, arriving at an international boycott, similar to the experience of South Africa.”

Conclusion

The ability of the refugee paper to highlight the rights of Palestinian refugees and displaced persons within the Fateh program underscores how the refugee cause remains firmly implanted nationally, remaining at the heart of any final solution to the conflict. This modest influence is highlighted in many aspects, the most important of which have strategic influence in the following regards:

First, to affirm the right of return of refugees to the original homes to areas occupied in 1948, and to uphold the right to compensation and restitution of property. The articulation of these rights has never been so expressly put in writing in the program of Fateh or the PLO, at any time prior.

Second, the document's ability to affirm the unity of the refugee cause in historical Palestine and throughout the Diaspora, makes the PLO and not the PA the political reference for Palestinian refugees. In so doing, the situation returns to that which existed prior to the Oslo Accords. This principle also strengthens the role of the PLO which had been weakened in part through the role of the PA, and will have consequences upon all institutions regarding Palestinian refugees in all their localities, particularly those located in exile.

Third, the confirmation of the rights of 1948 Palestinians, including those internally displaced, considering them part of the Palestinian people, and entitled to the right to return to their homes, compensation, restitution and full equality. This reaffirms the national identification of Palestinian citizens of Israel as an organic part of the Palestinian people.

Fourth, the adoption of a boycott campaign against Israel as an effective means of struggle and to demand that Fateh activate this campaign in a popular and official manner on all levels, represents an advance step for the movement, particularly when compared with the ambiguity of vision and approach that the organization and its members have shown in the past towards this campaign.

Fifth, the opening of the doors before the possibility of proposing strategic alternatives such as the "single democratic state" idea, despite the fact that this matter is partly conditioned on the failure of the negotiations, represents a departure from the previous doctrine placing full trust in the strategy of negotiations being capable of achieving a just and lasting peace.

Sixth, the description of Israel as an "occupying, colonizing and racist state," that "practices judaization and ethnic cleansing" and as such calling for "developing the struggle against Israeli apartheid and racism" also has important repercussions. This clarifying terminology attempts to expose the colonialist and racist nature of Israel and implies the necessity of not cooperating with it because of this nature.

While it might be argued that in practice, Fateh's rule will not be restricted by texts, which for a long time have often been treated as merely ink on paper, this does not mitigate the importance of the inclusion of these elements in Fateh's political program, when the time comes to say "No" where it matters. While it might be said that that which takes place on the ground contradicts the text in form and content, this does not mean the text will not have great significance at decisive moments.

Furthermore, while various stipulations are not mentioned in the program, there are still opportunities for their inclusion upon the convening of the forthcoming session of the Fateh Revolutionary Council. It should also be said that the text will remain significant strategically, and not merely historically; it can play a role in supporting popular movements and popular activity in a period characterized by the need to restrain the direction of negotiations and the need for Palestinian collective empowerment. In such regard, these texts, even if they seem absent from the actions of the leadership, remain necessary for all those who desire to continue the path of struggle, not merely for purposes of being guided by them, but more so as a means to establish responsibility and to make it a basis for accountability.

**Jamal al-Shati is a member of Badil's board of directors and was elected as a member of the Fateh Revolutionary Council at the 2009 Fateh Conference.*

Palestine History Project: Teaching a Collective Narrative

by Rami Salameh

Inter-generational dialogue as part of Nakba-60 commemoration in Beit Annan (Jerusalem district), 9 May 2008. Photo: Husam Sheikh



Until recently, with some rare exceptions, writings about Palestine and the Palestinians tended to fall into the general category of the “grand narrative.” Absent are Palestinians as human beings. Instead, when they are murdered they simply become numbers; when they are driven from their homes they simply become refugees; and when they resist the occupation of their land and the theft of their patrimony they are labeled terrorists.

Some notable exceptions include Rosemary Sayigh who gives Palestinian women a voice in chronicling what happened in the 1948 Nakba. She argues that the absence of Palestinian voices parallels at the textual level the discounting of the indigenous Palestinian population by settler-colonists and imperialists. In the oft-cited Zionist slogan, Palestinians were non-existent on their “land without a people,” in the infamous Balfour Declaration, they become the “existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine.” In presenting women’s narratives, Sayigh challenges such narrative exclusions and proposes a live portrait of the Palestinian people as important actors in the shaping of their history and identity.

In *Homeland, the Oral Histories of Palestine and Palestinians*, Sam Bahour and his colleagues interview ordinary people who talk about major historical events they had witnessed. Palestinian historian Adel Manna calls for opening a new window to Palestinian social history beginning with the lives of ordinary peasants and other marginalized groups instead of simply focusing on political leaders and social elites.

We are beginning to see the emergence of a new framework for the Palestinian narrative. Instead of the old binaries that focused on erasure versus affirmation or occupation versus resistance, we now witness a trend toward narration that takes the Palestinian individual as a point of departure. In the process, we rediscover what it is about this collectivity that binds it together.

The late Edward Said captured the need for this new focus in the following manner:

...the fate of Palestinian history has been a sad one, since not only was independence not gained, but there was little collective understanding of the importance of constructing a collective history as a part of trying to gain independence. To become a nation in the formal sense of the word, people must turn their selves into more than a collection of tribes, or political organizations of the kind that existed since 1967 which Palestinians have created and supported.

Said then argues that the Palestinians never clearly understood the “power of a narrative history to mobilize people around a common goal.”

How can we understand this new trend of a Palestinian-centered history? History overlaps and is intertwined with other fields of knowledge. Anthropology, law, psychology, sociology and philosophy are interwoven with history and therefore, historical research increasingly relies on a combination of these various fields. Furthermore, the renewed interest in the study of indigenous societies and cultures comes as a reaction to the homogenizing trends forwarded and perpetuated by the all-engulfing global capitalist system. These indigenous cultures were once viewed as the “other,” partly human or savage people, in the framework of settler colonialism and imperialism.

We have asked a number of Palestinian history teachers to convene in a focus group discussion on the modalities of teaching Palestinian history. We wanted to know how they teach Palestinian history to their students in the eleventh and twelve grades. We wanted to know how they teach the Nakba for instance. What we discovered is not reassuring: they mostly focus on major political events and rarely talk about the social and political context; they rely mostly on official and key documents. No additional materials are used to supplement the textbook. And only one out of the five teachers said that she incorporates oral history techniques in her classroom. The teachers stay focused on the textbook, feeling pressured to finish it during the academic year.

Memorizing dates and events and numbers appear to be the only fundamental skills that the teachers try to achieve. We noticed during the focus group discussion with the teachers that they teach the Nakba in a very classical and frustrating way; for them, Nakba (as with the approach to history generally) is just a main event, specifically a political event that created the state of Israel and, at the same time, the Palestinian Diaspora.

The structure of the grading system, exams, activities, and the nature of these methods turn Palestinian students away from living the continuing reality of the Nakba. They are taught to see it as simply another historical event that they should memorize by recalling the numbers of refugees, and showing how different countries stand on this or that issue, whether they are with or against. Students can earn an extra mark for being able to recall these supposedly important facts. The destruction of society, the environment and human beings is totally missing from the texts of the Palestinian official education system. There is no critical thinking, no teaching how to think historically and no attempt to question established facts.

The new framework for the Palestinian narrative, live portrait, voice of the marginalized, human and social context, apparently has not yet penetrated teachers’ discourse and context. Therefore a lot of work needs to be done with the teachers at the level of both the high schools and universities by training them to become more familiar with modern methodologies in order to be able to teach Palestinian history and, at the same time, to begin the process of writing and telling their own history of Palestine, along with their students and their families.

New research methodologies which are sensitive to the needs of indigenous societies urge us to begin “centering our concerns and world views and then coming to know and understand theory and research from our own perspectives and for our own purpose” This is more likely to help us re-orient our issues and our concerns.

Future plans should proceed in two ways: to encourage the emergence of a new and more effective framework for the Palestinian narrative. Secondly, to reinforce and circulate this trend by communicating it through teachers and students,

instead of simply having it limited to English-speaking academic elites. To achieve these aspirations, we are preparing to launch a cooperative project that would include both The Qattan Center for Educational Research and Development (Ramallah) and Mada al-Carmel (Haifa), under the name “The Palestine History Project.” The project will be supervised by Professors Fouad Moughrabi and Nadim Rouhana, and will include training twenty Palestinian history teachers, ten from the West Bank and ten from among Palestinian citizens of Israel at both high school and university levels. The main goal of the project is to train these educators on the use of modern pedagogical methodologies in order to develop their abilities to teach Palestinian history, and at the same time, begin the process of writing and telling their own history of Palestine, along with their students and their families.

The project will involve the participation of Palestinian and Non-Palestinians historians in conducting the workshops for this group. So far our list includes well known historians like May Seikaly, Bishara Doumani, Adel Manaa, Issam Nassar, Salim Tamari, Ahmed Saadi, Rashid Khalidi, Mohammed Bamya, Partha Chatterjee, Homi Bahba, Frederick Hoxie, Steven Friedmann, and Patrick Wolfe, among others. These workshops will hopefully produce alternative resource materials which may even include lesson plans, translations, articles...etc which will be useful not just for the group but also for all Palestinian teachers. These materials will be placed on our website, and can be downloaded by any educator anywhere in the world. Eventually, and armed with a group of highly skilled teachers, we can conduct workshops for Palestinian teachers outside of Palestine.

One would think that now that Palestinians are producing their own history textbooks, Palestinian students will become more knowledgeable about their own history. Unfortunately, what we have discovered is that the generation of Palestinian students lacks basic and fundamental knowledge of their own history. This reality begs the question: is this deliberate or is it an oversight?

After more than a century, the process of Zionist colonization has failed to erase Palestinian identity. However, the current fragmentation and dispersal of Palestinian society poses a new existential question and for us a challenge: without a renewed effort to understand our history in a critical and intelligent manner, we risk marginalization and possible disappearance as a people from the world map. The irony is that while our Zionist enemies have failed to subdue us, our own historical ignorance may end up doing their job for them.

**Rami Salameh is a project coordinator at the Qattan Center for Educational Research and Development.*

A New Generation of Returnees: Challenges in Memory Projects with Refugee Youth in Lebanon

by Moa'taz al-Dajani



"Return of the Kites" Festival in Beirut organized by al-Jana, 2008. Photo courtesy of al-Jana Center.

"What use is it to remember now?"

These were the words of some Palestinian elders, as a response to our field team's questions regarding the recalling of the expulsions of 1948, a project that Al-Jana undertook in the year 1998, the fiftieth since the "Uprooting."

"Nobody teaches us history"

This is the comment made by a group of refugee boys when approached by a researcher who asked them how they would respond to the question "who are you?" Some boys said they were Muslims, or from Shatila camp, or both, others said from Palestine, but did not know where from exactly.

Analyzing the views of the elders and children who made these comments, although they are not representative of all, still indicate that the "Nakba generation" are no longer passing on their stories as eagerly as they used to; the schools have stopped enlightening the young about their history and culture; and the major influences on the identity of the children come from the electronic media, some dogmatic interpretations of religion, and a vague and uninspiring nationalist discourse.

After sixty years of refugee existence that still has no end in sight, and living in a country that subjects them daily to violence and discrimination, Palestinians in Lebanon experience oppression on more than one level. On one level, they suffer the denial of basic civil rights, the lack of appropriate and relevant schooling, and the lack of prospects for decent employment and a secure future. On another level, their insecurities, anxiety and lack of faith about their present are all magnified by being denied the hope of returning home.

Nakba Education

The Palestinians in Lebanon have become ghettoized communities under considerable pressures to disperse to new places of exile, and to forget.

During a presentation on “historical memory, identity and creative expression in work with Palestinian children” that I gave at a May 2000 conference for community workers in Guatemala city, one Guatemalan women who attended pointed out that some children who returned from exile in Mexico to Guatemala, considered themselves Mexican; other children said they were Guatemalan but didn’t know why. It is important to note that Guatemalans spent twenty years in exile compared to the sixty one years of the largest and longest standing of the world’s refugee populations.

Artwork by children of the
Ghassan Kanafani school, Burj
el-Barajneh refugee camp, Beirut.
Photo: Marcy Newman



In facing these challenges we in Al-Jana feel that it is important to focus our energies on several urgent tasks. The first is to engage elders and youth in as many stages of oral history or oral culture projects as possible. From the conceptualizing stage, to the recording, discussing the results, to the production of cultural and learning resources. Along these lines, Al-Jana has undertaken two projects since 1998, the fiftieth year since the 1948 Nakba.

One project which is relevant to discuss here is *Ya Baladna Leish Hajartina* (Our Country why have you Forsaken Us) which focused in part on answering the questions that we collected from the fourth generation of refugee children and youth, about the uprooting of 1948. Many of these enlightened questions are not answered in the official Palestinian national history. We collected the testimonies of 116 Palestinian women and men, a total of 140 hours of recorded interviews. Using this material, we worked to produce an active learning pack consisting of a story book, twenty testimonies, activity sheets, a video and a CD of recorded testimonies and ‘Ataba (lamentation songs) about the Uprooting. The resource pack was tested with many children and educators before it was published in the year 2000.

In their words, the elders who volunteered to give their testimonies were taking part in a *mission* to pass on *our history* to the grandchildren, *our hope*. As if in answer to the question by some elders of “what use is it to remember.”

The second main focus has been to facilitate the process by which people of all ages can reflect and share enriching and empowering experiences. People in the camps of Lebanon have survived all forms of adversity through resourcefulness, community solidarity, creative problem-solving, sheer will power, courage and stamina. These are qualities that young people need in order to deal with the challenges they face every day, and those that lie ahead.

Some of these profound human experiences should be shared with people around the world. A team of women from Al-Jana

is working with a group of women in Ein el-Hilweh refugee camp to document the empowering experiences of the women and girls who lived under Israeli occupation of south of Lebanon from 1982-84, while the men and youth of their community were incarcerated in Israeli concentration camps. Those women and girls reconstructed the destroyed camp and undertook ingenious initiatives in community building and civil resistance. These interviews are developing into forums for the exchange of experiences, and the whole process is being documented in a film directed by Dahna Abu Rahmeh and produced by Al-Jana.

A third important focus is the transformation of historical and cultural memory into exciting experiential learning activities for youth. These activities should involve young people in doing critical research with resource people in their community, and expressing their views in creative ways that engage both adults and children.

In a sense, this process embodies a double dialectic that involves a community to youth and a youth to community learning cycle. The second project undertaken by Al-Jana in 1998 was *"We exist": Palestinian refugee children record their lives and express their hopes*. In this project a group of thirty children (between the ages of ten and twelve) embarked on a four year active learning and creative expression journey, that started with working individually on family diaries. The work of the youth developed into a kind of photo-journalism, and led to several creative expression projects.

The children moved on to the "young book writers" project, and at the end of the second year (2000), the group published their bi-lingual *I wish I were a bird* book in both Arabic and English. The book included their different individual and group projects, artwork, photos and statements, ending with moments of hope in their lived experiences, that they can build on. Since 2000, the book has been printed in Spanish, Italian and German.

The young book writers later worked on the "young filmmakers" project, where they worked on three of their scenarios with three filmmakers to produce films that received awards internationally. The young photo-journalists, who worked on this project in groups, chose the issues that concern them and then researched these issues. It is noteworthy that all the groups of young journalists chose to collect testimonies from elders on the 1948 Uprooting, and they published some of them in the book. This goes to prove that the fourth generation of refugee children who were born in the camps, 50 years after the uprooting, care to know their history and make the effort, when given the chance.

The fourth vital task is transforming oral history and oral culture archives into an accessible hands-on, youth-friendly resource, where keen librarians can engage children and youth and facilitate the discovery process, through which young people find that critical research is not only useful, but also fun.

Our pedagogical framework involves choosing projects that engage youth in participatory research, critical thinking, creative expression and the production of pro-active materials that will inform and engage community members, decision-makers and young audiences around the world. This process-oriented, problem-posing approach, builds on the pedagogical ideas and methods of the Brazilian educator Paolo Freire's empowerment education; the growing use of "photo-voice" (photos that voice the concerns of people about their lives and rights); digital story-telling and "photo-novellas" (picture stories) created by underprivileged communities; and the importance of learner-developed materials as empowering products that help participants discover themselves as makers of culture and agents of change.

For any serious effort to succeed in engaging young Palestinians in exile in learning from and building on the rich historical experience, and cultural contributions of their communities, it has to become an integral component of a wider concerted grassroots struggle by all concerned bodies, including Lebanese civil society, and the Palestinian communities at large, for attaining civil rights, and the right of return and restitution. A struggle that rises from real popular participation in decision making on all issues that concern the community, and which capitalizes on the creative and positive energies of young people and their volunteering spirit. A struggle that gives all the hope that after sixty years in exile people can make a difference.

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Palestinian History and Identity in Israeli Schools

by Dr. Sa'id Barghouti

Children from Kufr Qasem develop their own activities to educate one another about history, geography and their rights as part of Badil's Youth Education and Activation project, August 2009. Photo: Badil.



This article is based on my personal experience as a teacher of Palestinian students in Israeli public schools and through my work as school inspector and history curriculum team coordinator for Arab schools from 1975 until 2004. During this period I was engaged in efforts at textbook reform, and on research about Israel's education system which I undertook for my doctoral dissertation.¹

Background

Israel has a highly centralized public education system which is operated and controlled by the Ministry of Education. The only major exception is the ultra-orthodox Jewish education system which enjoys autonomy for ideological reasons.² The state education system operated by the Ministry is composed of two separate streams: the public secular stream, and public national religious stream.

Palestinian students make up one quarter of all students in the Israeli state education system.³ All public schools in Palestinian communities in Israel belong to the public secular stream; no public religious schools are available for Palestinians. Public education for Palestinians is administered by the Department for Arab Education, which is a special administrative entity within the Ministry of Education and under its direct control. The Department for Arab Education has no autonomous decision making authorities.

Up until 1987, the Department for Arab Education was headed by a Jewish-Israeli director who was appointed by the Ministry and involved in policy making to ensure control over the Palestinian population.⁴ Since then, Palestinians have been appointed to lead the Department but have been excluded from policy decision making as a result of parallel organizational reform which provided for the integration of Arab public schools into the Jewish public education system and its local authorities. Thus, while the Department for Arab Education continued to exist and came to be headed by a Palestinian employed by the Ministry, the heads of Arab Education have held no real power. The Department is only meant to oversee the education of Palestinians and answer to Jewish-Israelis who continue to be in charge.⁵

From the beginning, Israeli politicians saw in the state education system, an instrument to realize Zionist political objectives: the founding of a Jewish nation with a shared identity rooted in Zionist beliefs.⁶ Conversely, the educational system was used to ensure a complete lack of Arab and Palestinian identity among the Palestinian citizens of the state.⁷

In 1953, Israel passed the Public Education Law with the aim to centralize the education system. In this context, the goals of public education were defined and formalized for the first time. The first goal stated that the educational system seeks to “raise youth on the values of Israeli culture, and love of the [Jewish] nation and people of Israel.”⁸ This goal remained in place throughout subsequent amendments of the law. No positive goals have been formulated for the education of Palestinians based on the values of Arab, Muslim and Christian culture and the Palestinian nation. Thus, the teaching of Palestine’s history in Israeli schools, both Jewish and Arab, is based on the Zionist narrative which holds that Jews are one people that formed their identity in the land of Israel (Palestine) more than one thousand years ago, and returned to it to form that identity again.⁹

Of course Palestine was, and has remained, inhabited by its Arab-Palestinian population, who have marked it with its culture, landmarks, and language. But the Zionist narrative avoids facing this reality. This is expressed in Israeli educational texts and curricula through:

- the secularization, of myths from the Torah, i.e. their transformation into “facts”: the myth of “the promised land”, for example, is turned into an actual “land of the forefathers” and the presentation of Israel as “the historical homeland of the Jewish nation;”
- promotion of a system of social beliefs, such as “we are victims,” “we call for peace,” “our wars are defensive,” “our arms are pure,” “Palestinians hate us,” “they are the aggressors;”¹⁰
- selectiveness in the choice of facts and explanations, ignoring contradictory arguments, especially facts connected to Arab-Palestinian history, or at best, presenting them as a “narrative” that is part of distorted history.

Main findings from research

In 1953, the Ministry of Education issued the first history curriculum for Jewish public and religious elementary schools.¹¹ This curriculum was translated into Arabic with some adjustments,¹² and Palestinian students were expected to learn the same narrative as their Jewish peers. Arab and Jewish teachers were subsequently charged with the task of preparing textbooks according to that curriculum. History at that time was taught in a complete chronological cycle, with ideas introduced in elementary school (fifth through eighth grade), revisited and expanded upon in High School (ninth through twelfth grade). In my research, I undertook, among others, to investigate how Zionist history has been presented to Palestinian students in history textbooks up until 1975.

Early history textbooks for Palestinian fifth graders,¹³ tell the history of Palestine from the perspective of the [Jewish] “people of Israel” based on the Torah. Exceptions are a few scattered paragraphs which state that the Canaanites colonized the mountains of “Judea” and the “Negev,” the Jebusites colonized the mountains of Jerusalem, and that Palestinians differ from Canaanites and are not Semites.¹⁴

As expected, the texts were strongly driven by the Torah: “The Hebrews were begot from Abraham, who crossed the Euphrates and settled in an area which naturally splits into three parts, including the middle region, called Sharon, and the northern region, which is separated from the middle region by the Jezreel Valley.”¹⁵ Canaanites that lived in that area are described as “the primitive tribes.”¹⁶

The textbook then mentions Jacob, calling him by his last name, Israel: “Israel became the father of the Israelite tribes.”¹⁷ It then describes the exile of the Israelites to Egypt, and their flight from Egypt, led by Moses: “The exodus of the Israelites led by Moses was an important event in their history that remained in the nation’s mind with the passing of eras. It was a great event that placed them in history as a nation.”¹⁸ When the book gets to Joshua Ben Nun, it points to his heroic feats and the sacrifice of his people, “which secured victory for them against their enemies.”¹⁹

The textbook follows the narrative from the Torah, era after era, until the destruction of the temple and the Babylonian

Nakba Education

The police station in the Palestinian Mahatta Ghetto in al-Lyd (Lod) is situated inside the school servicing Palestinian students. Photo: Badil.



capture. From there, the Jews return from captivity during the reign of Cyrus the Great. The book does not deviate from heroic descriptions of the Israelites, justifying all of their wars, and describing the indigenous population of Canaanites and others as “enemies and primitive people” while using contemporary Hebrew names for names of places and localities, and ignoring their original names.

This method is repeated with regard to the history of Palestine under Hellenic rule. The main thrust of the text here concerns the heroic deeds of the Maccabees and their wars, “Judah Maccabee went forth with his brothers to secure the foundations of governance and protect the people from enemies, battling the Adamites, and Omarites and the inhabitants of the Galilee, as well as standing up to military campaigns of the Seleucids.”²⁰

Sixth grade history textbooks do not differ in method or content. The history of Palestine under Roman rule is the history of Jews in “Israel” until the destruction of the temple in 70 BC. About seven hundred years of the indigenous Palestinians’ history is absent from the pages of the book until the onset of the Arab-Islamic conquest. It briefly mentions the Arab conquest of Jerusalem under the heading “The Conquest of Jerusalem,” with one sentence in particular standing out: “Omar [the second Muslim caliph] treated the Jews, who helped the Muslims, well, left them their property and pardoned them from paying taxes.”²¹ The aim of this sentence is to provide assurance of a Jewish presence in the city at that time.

Although this book revolves around Arab-Islamic history and Islamic civilization until the fall of the Abbasid empire, it does not mention Palestine until the start of the crusades. It also remains silent about Arab initiatives in Palestine, such as the building of Ramla by Sulayman bin Abd al-Malek, and the construction of the Hisham Palace in Jericho. Casual mention is given (pp. 155-156) of the building of the Dome of the Rock, and then the Aqsa mosque, during the reign of Abd al-Malek ibn Marwan.

Returning to the history of Palestine, a history textbook for seventh graders called “Yearning for Zion” contains the following sentence: “facing [the Christian oppression of Jews in Europe], their attachment to their beliefs grew and their desire to return to Zion, the land that the Romans forced them out of in the first century AD, deepened.”²² Under the heading “The Relationship Between Jews in Diaspora and the Land of Israel” the book reviews at length stories of individuals or small groups of Jews that immigrated to Tiberias, Safad, and the villages of Galilee between the years 1141 - 1662. It describes their achievements in every field, portraying them as the ones who made the area blossom.

To sum up, the textbook omits the history of Palestine from 638 to 1791 except insofar as it pertains to Jews. The two main exceptions are the construction the walls of Jerusalem by Sultan Suleiman the Magnificent in 1542, to protect the city from Bedouin attacks (p. 186), and the mention of Napoleon’s siege of Akka (p. 301).

The Zionist historical narrative is completed in the eighth grade history textbook²³ which presents the contemporary history of Palestine. The topic is divided into two units: “The English in Israel” (instead of the British Mandate in Palestine) and “The Founding of the State of Israel.” Thirty of sixty class periods that eighth graders must attend are devoted to this second chapter. In the spirit of the curriculum, the narrative in this book revolves around subheadings with suggestive meanings, such as “The Continuous Yearning for Return and National Independence” (pp. 178 - 182). This chapter, as well as the chapters that follow, address at length everything that has any connection to contemporary Jewish history from the perspective of the Zionist historical narrative, until the founding of the state of Israel in 1948. Under the heading “War of Independence” (p. 222), the book states that “the armies of the Arab countries entered the country in May of 1948 and fought against the Israeli forces . . . which were able to push back these armies until the four countries that have shared borders with Israel were forced . . . to sign a truce.” As for Arab-Palestinian society, it is completely absent in the textbook. Moreover, not even one word is spent on the Palestinian refugees.

This trend repeats itself in the high school curriculum and textbooks, and which are all translated from Hebrew, with the only exception of the book *The History of Arabs* prepared by Salman Falah (a former education inspector) who writes that Omar Ibn al-Khatab divided greater Syria into the regions of Hims, Hama, Aleppo and *Israel* [sic].²⁴

Efforts at educational reform

In 1975, I began my work as school inspector and coordinator for the history team in the Arab schools and set out to change the situation. A first success came in 1976 when a new curriculum was issued for elementary and middle schools.²⁵ The new curriculum differed from its predecessor in the following ways:

- The name “Palestine” was inserted into the curriculum for the first time, instead of “the land of Israel.” Places were named using their original Arabic names rather than the Hebraized names of the older curriculum;
- The emphasis on the Torah narrative was reduced, and the histories of other peoples, like the Canaanites, were highlighted. Emphasis on the Zionist narrative of the history of Palestine was reduced, and an Arab-Palestinian historical narrative was introduced for contrast. For instance, a new headline read: “The beginning of Jewish colonization and the Arabs in Palestine²⁶” instead of the previous “Yearning for Zion and the Return to Israel.” In other words, the focus of the curriculum shifted from the Zionist historical narrative of Israel towards a history of Palestine.

Following the publication of the new curriculum, I also oversaw the preparation of a series of books that replaced the previous textbooks. A new book which most strongly related to Palestinian history was a history textbook for the sixth grade.²⁷ It said, for example, that “The Torah states that the prophet Moses . . .” (p. 26), and that “Joshua Ben Nun resorted to subterfuge in his battle against the Canaanites” (p. 28). This stylistic change, which makes mention of the Torah in reported language, improved the objectivity of the text, allowing for a critical approach towards the Torah-Zionist narrative. A seventh grade textbook surveying at length the history of Palestine under the rule of the crusaders, moreover, notes: “The crusaders also built relationships with the Muslims in their everyday life by hiring Arab craftsmen, as well as being influenced by their Eastern style of dress and manners.”²⁸

Part two of the history textbook for the eighth grade contains the heading “Palestine in the Age of Political Organizations”, and says: “For forty years in the nineteenth century, the Ottomans tried to control the inhabitants of Palestine by recognizing local leadership.”²⁹ In this way, the Arab-Palestinian narrative began to gain ground in textbooks, albeit in a limited fashion.

As for high school, I oversaw the preparation of a new curriculum in 1999, which was only approved by the Education Ministry after a two-year long battle. This curriculum included an entire unit called “Modern Arab-Palestinian Society.”³⁰ It covers the Palestinian presence on the land until 1948. In the unit on “The War of 1948,” we prepared a chapter titled “The Origin of the Refugee Problem (Expulsion? Escape?).”³¹ By the time I stopped working with the Ministry of Education in 2004, a version of the textbook that included this chapter had not yet been published. The Arab-Palestinian narrative did however appear in a general, brief form in the three sections of textbooks over which I oversaw preparation.³² One chapter ends with the sentence, “many Palestinians whose cities and villages were occupied were forced to leave their homes and became refugees, because of the dangers of war and its destruction, and because of a number of massacres that were perpetrated against them, such as the Massacre of Deir Yassin in April 1948.”

The ideological backlash

In April 2004, I left my post at the Ministry of Education, but I continued to follow the government's development of the curriculum. A new high school curriculum was issued in 2007,³³ which was followed in 2008 by a new curriculum for elementary and middle school levels,³⁴ replacing both the 1976 and 1999 curricula. The new curriculum for elementary school completely erased modern Palestinian history. Also erased was the unit called "The History of Arab-Palestinian Society in the Modern Era" for high schoolers. Again, the Zionist historical narrative is imposed on Palestinian students in history textbooks which ignore the history and culture of the Palestinian people. Just as in the period before 1975, anything connected to the history of the Palestinian people has been erased in the revised curricula of 2007 and 2008.

Such orientation will leave a negative impact on students in the long term. First, the connection between the Palestinian-Arab students and their history, culture and identity is severed. This effect is reinforced by the lack of extra-curricular educational activities in Arab schools, such as the commemoration of important events, including the Nakba, massacres, and important political events. This in addition to the prohibition on commemorating national personalities and thinkers such as Ghassan Kanafani, Mahmoud Darwish and Edward Said. Such commemorations are now about to become explicitly banned by the Ministry of Education. Severing this connection means that the cultural wellsprings, which allow students to build their collective history and identity, are dried out. As a result, students are likely to slide towards alienation from their homeland, and opportunities for reflection on the Palestinian people's history and their ongoing Nakba, which are vital for students to form their world view, are missed.

The second impact of a Zionist historical narrative in curricula, including the use of Hebrew names and the Hebraization of Arabic names of places in textbooks, is to raise students on the idea that the country, Palestine, called *Eretz Yisrael* (the Land of Israel), belongs to Jews. Palestinian students are inculcated with the idea that Jews are the original and oldest inhabitants of the land and the most attached to it. Raising Arab-Palestinian students on this idea, while not providing adequate cultural and historical knowledge to challenge it, encourages alienation from their homeland.

Feelings of alienation will later on undermine the capacity of students to tackle oppressive policies, especially in matters of land and social culture, and transform them into easy prey for the dominant Israeli political discourse which can be summarized as follows: "this is the land of the Jewish people. We returned to our rightful historic homeland and built it up. You Arab-Palestinians are just 'passers-by,' strangers to this land, and a source of annoyance to our presence." This is the discourse underlying Israeli political demands for the recognition of Israel as a Jewish state.

Palestinian history teachers can do little to correct this negative trend. They are limited by the state curriculum and textbooks, and banned from deviating from these texts. They are also monitored by officials in the schools, and by the Ministry of Education. Ultimately, Palestinian students have no choice but to memorize history as it is presented in the textbooks, because they will take their final high school graduation exams (*bagrut*), in which the Ministry of Education prepares the questions and evaluates the students' answers.

Some would argue that history classes and textbooks are no longer central for students to get to know their history and build a collective memory and identity. New means of communication, as well as the role of television and computers, have become the "vectors" of that memory. Scholars, however, agree that school textbooks, and especially history textbooks, have remained central in building memory and fashioning identity.³⁵ This, because students, like others in society, absorb information from various sources in a haphazard and unsystematic manner, and usually in an individual setting. History classes on the other hand, meet day after day, year after year, and from an early age until maturity. School history education is delivered through systematic, didactic and pedagogical methods, and in a collective setting with peers. History classes and history textbooks therefore remain the central and strongest element in the fashioning of identity, and play a crucial role in building collective memory, or, as in our case, erasing it.

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

The Art of Resistance: Education through Grassroots Arts and Culture in Bethlehem's Refugee Camps

by Rich Wiles



Bad Luck performing in Dheisheh refugee camp. Photo: Rich Wiles.

Throughout the 1980's, and stretching back much earlier, Palestinian civil society represented a grassroots and politicized network of organizations supporting the national struggle and all inalienable Palestinian rights. In refugee camps, active Youth Centers and Women's Unions worked on a community level often operating as underground collectives gathering people together in an ad-hoc manner wherever possible. These organizations played a significant role in the Palestinian national liberation struggle, and supported and advocated resistance of different forms as tools in this role. Amidst their activity was collective cultural work such as dabka and choral troupes which continued in the rich traditions of supporting, and acting in their own right as, resistance.

These cultural elements of Palestinian resistance were nothing new. Writers, artists, poets, and musicians had always played their role in the national struggle. The writings of Ghassan Kanafani, Naji al-Ali's immortal 'Handala' character, and the resistance poetry of Mahmoud Darwish and Samih al-Qasim, are just a few examples of artistic and cultural practices that resonated both within and outside of Palestine's borders in defense of Palestine, its people, and its rights.

Such renowned cultural figures are still entrenched in the Palestinian national psyche today, and similarly took Palestinian issues into the homes and consciences of people across the world. The Israeli regime also had no doubts about the significance of this work as it demonstrated with the assassination and imprisonment of many of those who used arts and culture as their "weapons" of resistance; Ghassan Kanafani, a refugee from Akka, was assassinated by a car bomb in Beirut in July 1972; Naji al-Ali, a refugee from the Galilee village of Al-Shajara, was assassinated when shot in London in the summer of 1987; Samih al-Qasim, a Palestinian citizen of Israel, has been imprisoned several times for his advocacy for Palestinian rights.

Appreciating the changes facing Palestinian grassroots collectivism and politics since the Oslo Accords, one may wonder what is happening today in civil society within the framework of cultural resistance. To address this issue this article will

use Bethlehem as a case study and look among its three refugee camps at the diversity of arts and cultural work that is being undertaken in accordance with Palestinian principles of struggle.

Public art

In the summer of 2008, Shira'a Center in Dheisheh Camp hosted one of its annual summer camps. In common with most summer camps within Palestine's camps, Shira'a's programs combine recreational activities with programs aimed at strengthening the participants' understanding of their rights.

Ayed Arafah is a young artist from Dheisheh whose practice reflects his identity. That is not to say that Arafah's work is in anyway stuck in the past. In fact, far from it: his art represents progression and a contemporary vision without losing track of its roots and origins. Many of his public murals can be seen around Dheisheh and Bethlehem's others camps but also in the city itself. During Shira'a's summer camp Arafah worked with forty of Dheisheh's youth, aged between 11-15 years old, to create new public murals around the camp. The murals often seen in the streets of refugee camps are laced with traditional patriotic symbolism – keys, maps of Palestine, tents, Handala, and other symbols of a similar ilk. Some of Arafah's work follows these routes and he says that often organizers of these collaborative youth projects specifically request such images:

People ask for keys, tents, Handala, the same politics and symbols. For me it's important to keep Handala alive but we must also learn to work with him in new ways. If Handala is overused then he becomes nothing. We are trying to build skills in young people and create the space for them to think about politics in a new way.

Arafah points out that Naji al-Ali created something new when he first drew his immortal and most famous character; Handala's critical perceptions of life grabbed the national psyche with both hands. Yet whilst al-Ali knew the spirit of Handala would live on (he himself said Handala was "immortal") he would also have wanted a continuation of new ideas challenging regimes of oppression. Al-Ali was a man who challenged regimes of all viewpoints in his work focusing on the colonization of his country, but also challenging corruption within the Palestine Liberation Organization and the acquiescence of Arab states. His work never became stagnant in this context, and Arafah believes that contemporary work should also follow this progression:

Through these projects we aim to find young artists and teach them painting skills, provide them with materials and space, and encourage them to think. We provide them with questions and they provide their answers through their art.

Handala

"The child Handala is my signature, everyone asks me about him wherever I go. I gave birth to this child in the Gulf and I presented him to the people. His name is Handala and he has promised the people that he will remain true to himself. I drew him as a child who is not beautiful; his hair is like the spikes on a hedgehog who uses his thorns as a weapon. Handala is not a fat, happy, relaxed, or pampered child. He is barefooted like the children of the refugee camps, and he is an icon that protects me from making mistakes. Even though he is rough, he smells of amber. His hands are clasped behind his back as a sign of rejection at a time when solutions are presented to us the American way.

Handala was born ten years old, and he will always be ten years old. It was at that age that I was forced out of my homeland, and when he returns, Handala will still be ten. Only then will he start growing up. The laws of nature do not apply to him. He is unique. Things will become normal again when the homeland returns.

I presented him to the poor and named him Handala after the plant known for its bitterness. At first, he was a Palestinian child, but his consciousness developed to have an Arab and then a global and human horizon. He is a simple yet tough child, and this is why people have adopted him as a representative of their consciousness and conscience."

--Naji al-Ali



Some of the pieces created by the young people of Dheisheh during the Shira'a summer camp demonstrate this thinking. One of the murals which Arafah believes is particularly significant shows a leafless tree with a background of wide blue sea. Colorful fish swim in the ocean, planets are seen in the sky, and a range of different fruits hang from the tree – there are no tents or keys, and Handala is nowhere to be seen. Arafah explained that the symbols used represent different aspects of life gathered together in one place – nature, sea, food, symbols of life and a functioning planet. But the image is also Palestinian – the sea is the wide blue sea of Jaffa or Akka, the tree in Arafah's words "could be [the depopulated village of] Ras Abu Amar for example" – so the image reflects aspects of life from both the coastal areas and the Palestinian inland villages. In this context the mural clearly represents the Palestinian narrative without having to overtly illustrate the suffering of Palestine or refer back to traditional symbolism.

People (in the camp) liked the idea of the sea. Old people asked us to paint the oranges of Jaffa on the tree, others asked us to paint the old walls of Akka. They understood what we were doing; I think people wanted something new. For me, their reactions were enough...

Arafah says the children wanted to paint images of Palestine and felt that to do so they had to use the traditional symbols but he encouraged them to develop new ways to present Palestine without denying or forgetting their identity. Other murals show beautiful gardens with hanging vines of rich fresh grapes, whilst some children wanted to retain a more direct if contemporary symbolization of colonization in a mural of Israel's apartheid Wall.

The origins of this practice can be traced back to the pre-Oslo days when, often under the cover of darkness, shebab (youth) would write resistance slogans or paint flags on walls risking imprisonment or even death whilst doing so, as the Israeli military didn't allow any public displays of national symbolism. Such seemingly small actions took great planning and involved significant risk, but were carried out as acts of resistance. Since Oslo, these much simpler line drawings and political graffiti have evolved as the occupation forces no longer target such acts and today Palestine's camps, and the cities although to a lesser extent, are full of large and often detailed murals that can take days or even weeks to complete. Arafah believes that today "the *process* is resistance and not the act itself." He feels the mural is a physical representation of the resistance in people's minds, and that this process must consider all aspects of its creation including the materials themselves:

We must think on every level and understand our practice. Years ago I used Israeli paints but now I can get supplies from Nablus, or use paints manufactured in the Arab world or Europe. Think about the terrible irony of using Israeli materials to paint Handala.

Understanding such contradictions is a demonstration of practicing resistance within a process and not simply paying lip service to visual appreciation. In a similar vein, Arafah was recently offered a substantial fee to paint a mural on the Apartheid Wall for the music video of a U.S. singer, yet he refused the work:

I won't touch the Wall with colors. People used to come and see a bare gray Wall and be shocked, now they come as though it's the Eiffel Tower, like a tourist attraction, they see beauty now and not our suffering...

A global voice of dissent

Also in Dheisheh Camp, the Ibdac Center is very active and respected for its grassroots work. Amongst its many projects one in particular provides another contemporary take on supporting and practicing resistance with culture. *Bad Luck* is a four man hip hop group whose music pulls no punches in its defense of Palestine. At a recent performance in Bethlehem University, three of the band members – Dia'a, Mohammad, and Sa'ud – performed their track *Tatbi* ('Normalization'), an impassioned critique of people and organizations who work with Israelis whilst denial of rights continues. This critique was being delivered by the three seventeen-year old refugee schoolboys whilst in the university cafeteria some older and "more educated" (in academic terms only) Palestinians ate and drank Israeli products.

When *Bad Luck* want to write a new song they research and study the issues involved. Sa'ud recollects the process of writing *Tatbi*:

It (our work) is not exactly education... it's like explaining issues to people. About the boycott, divestment and sanctions (BDS) campaign – we studied all the issues, the pros and the cons, and then we wrote about this in our music.

Nakba Education

Bad Luck are educating themselves; they are learning about their lives and struggle in order to write and eventually communicate with others through their music. The young hip hop artists became a collective and began writing when they were just thirteen years old as a way to express themselves and “change the way people think.” Dia’a says they faced some problems in their early days:

It was a new idea. People were hesitant because they thought we were absorbing American culture and its values.

But far from accepting Americanization the boys know they live in a globalized world and feel that they must take whatever benefits they can from that. Hip hop is an art-form originating in struggles against oppression and racism that are similar to the Palestinian struggle. Sa’ud continues:

Hip hop is a world language of resistance; we use hip hop to make use of that. People try to struggle in different ways, so we want to work in a new way that focuses on young people. It could change the way people think. In *Tatbi* we explored the effects of normalization and its effects on Palestine – we can see results from this song in the way some people now think about this issue.

Other songs have explored other significant national issues such as political prisoners, the right of return and the Nakba, and the 2009 Israeli bombardment of Gaza. *Bad Luck* also now run hip hop workshops at IbdAA helping younger children to use the genre to express themselves. Fifteen children worked in these workshops lasting over a six-month period and, unsurprisingly for child refugees living under military occupation, Sa’ud says they had plenty to say:

They wrote about the apartheid Wall and Israeli military invasions of the camp. They wrote *Waseeah* (My will) about how they feel and what they want, and about the life for children in the camp.

Areej al-Jafari is one of the Coordinators at IbdAA Center, and she sees hip hop and other creative projects at the center in their historical context:

Our cultural resistance is because we love it - it’s in our roots. Our grandparents did it through song and dance. It’s who we are and part of our culture. We remember al-Nakba but we also live it every day - it never stopped. Oppression makes people creative, and it is our right to fight as we choose. It’s a way to survive and we will always continue to be creative.

Dreams of Home

At Lajee Center in Aida Camp grassroots cultural work is also flourishing. As with most other centers, dabka plays a major role in Lajee’s activities but the center’s use of another more contemporary practice has created a truly international platform for its young members. Photography began at Lajee in 2005 with the aim of developing new artistic skills through which members could explore new ways to express themselves.

The use of photographic projects amongst young people growing up in various social and political circumstances and struggles is not a new idea and was practiced under the South African Apartheid regime, amongst child refugees from Colombia, and best known of all is the international NGO Photovoice which has worked with children around the world including in Afghanistan, the Democratic Republic of Congo, and Sri Lanka amongst other countries. The practice has also been widely used in Palestine.

At Lajee, children from as young as eleven up to twenty years old have shown a passion for learning these new skills and for using them as tools of education, communication, and resistance. The educational aspects of this work are multi-layered. On one level the participants themselves learn new creative skills that they would otherwise not have access to. Secondly, the participants use these skills to learn about themselves, their identity, and the world in which they live. This has been a particular focus of the projects at Lajee as the projects are not simply aimed at producing aesthetically pleasing images but at running projects through which the children learn about issues far broader than photography itself.



*Amjad followed his grandfather's directions to find 'Ein al-Hanieh' and collected water so that his grandfather could once more 'taste' his village' – part of the 'Dreams of Home' project.
Photo: Rich Wiles.*

The 2006 project “A Child’s Rights in Palestine” used photography as a medium through which children learned about the UN Convention for Rights of the Child, first theoretically by studying the treaty, and then practically using photography to illustrate the realities of the convention on the ground in their daily lives.

The 2007 project “Dreams of Home” involved seventeen participants aged from eleven to fifteen studying their own history as refugees. The project included carrying out interviews and writing articles based on the oral histories of their grandparents’ recollections of Palestinian life before the Nakba. Following this process, after garnering solid background information the children were taken past the Apartheid Wall and back to their villages of origin, many for the first time, in order to see firsthand the contemporary realities in their real homes which they responded to photographically.

In “Dreams of Home” the children acted as “the eyes of the camp.” Being under the age of sixteen and therefore without ID cards and accompanied by adults with international passports, were able to pass the apartheid Wall and then the ‘green line’ to return to their original villages. Through the resulting photographic exhibition they expressed this information to others in Aida Camp and visitors to the exhibition at Lajee. The exhibition went on to be shown across Europe, and exhibited in both Melbourne and Sydney in large events that spearheaded Australia’s national Nakba 60 events in May 2008.

“Dreams of Home” was also published as a book including both the photography and the oral histories. It is already well into its second print run and continues to sell well both within Palestine and internationally. This wider body of work has therefore been seen directly in its exhibited form by several thousand people, and maybe 2,000 more have bought copies which they will have shown to friends and family – so total access to this project, including internet exposure and media coverage, will be into the tens of thousands, making this project an essential component of Nakba education by teaching many of these people about issues of which they were previously unaware.

This local and global education becomes a form of resistance as it counteracts Israeli propaganda on the issues, and the very act of attempting this project and successfully reaching the children’s villages of origin as part of the wider struggle for return is in itself an act of resistance that should not be underestimated given the logistical problems and risks faced to achieve this.

“Dreams of Home” is just one of four such projects that work along similar lines looking at individual and collective human rights

Nakba Education

and the Nakba in both the historical and contemporary ongoing context. Since 2005, Lajee has held twenty-two international photography exhibitions in eight countries and across four continents, and published three books of its photographic work.

Theater as a tool of education

On the other end of Aida Camp, Al Rowwad Center has also worked with photography, but is possibly best known for its work in performing arts. Dr. Abdelfattah Abu Srouf studied in France before returning to Aida Camp to establish the center and run theater workshops with young people:

Theater is one of the most amazing tools of self-expression; it is a way to build bridges that can help people to understand the real stories behind the mass media. We express our rights through our work and the plays express a political message.

But Abdelfattah believes the plays also address a need within Palestinian society:

A lot of people inside Palestine are not truly aware of the issues anymore. The new generations need to study the Nakba and refugee history again. During the first Intifada we lost so many people to Israeli prisons and this weakened education. We now have a Palestinian Authority, and leaders, who do not know how to deal with people on the ground.

The members of Al Rowwad's theater group are not all from Aida Camp, nor are they all refugees, and Abdelfattah says the demographic make-up of members has shifted slightly in recent years with more young people coming from areas such as Beit Sahour and Beit Jala than previously. The groups attend workshops weekly and during the summer months up to four or five days a week in preparation for performances including international tours. The Al Rowwad theater group has performed in different European countries, as well as in Egypt and the U.S., and in 2007 staged fifteen performances in refugee camps and cities across the occupied West Bank.

Abdelfattah says *The Children of the Camp* is probably their best known production. It looks into the complexities and struggles encountered by children growing up in the refugee camps. These issues are often misunderstood internationally given the failure of both the international community and its media to ever truthfully and justly address them. *Blame the Wolf* is a parody of Little Red Riding Hood in which the Palestinians become the wolf – misrepresented, stereotyped, and stigmatized without the oppressors ever really seeking, rather standing in denial of, the truth. Whilst in *The Village Close By*, the audience encounter a cultural production explaining issues of one of humanity's great injustices that led to the creation of the world's largest refugee population – the Nakba.

Not Politics – contemporary art exhibitions

Beit Jibreen Camp, also known as Al-Azzeh Camp, is Bethlehem's third refugee camp and the smallest one in the occupied West Bank. Its population of less than 2,000 falls below the minimum UNRWA size requirements to warrant its own educational infrastructure or UNRWA offices, but like other camps it has an independent community center servicing the women, children and youth of the camp. The Beit Jibreen Cultural Center (better known as the Handala Center) was established in 1999 and is the only active center in the camp.

The center runs the usual range of activities including summer camps, art, music, theater, and of course dabka which is the common national-cultural thread that runs among all such centers in Palestine's camps. Visual arts courses are run for the children and youth who attend the center and their works are exhibited throughout the building. Once every year a large art exhibition is held featuring the work of local practicing artists. Muhannad Al Azzeh is part of the center's administrative team and is also a practicing visual artist, recently graduated from Al Quds University with a degree in Fine Arts. His work was featured in the 2009 exhibition entitled *Not Politics*:

The exhibition focused on issues such as prisoners, refugees, and the key symbolizing our right to return. We wanted to say that these issues are not just political but basic issues of life here.

The featured artists worked in a range of genres from classical painting to installation art and sculpture, but all fell under the umbrella of Palestinian rights. Al Azzeh feels the established galleries in Bethlehem only attract the “bourgeoisie,” but the exhibition in the camp attracted more than six hundred people from all walks of society although only two hundred invitations were distributed:

This brings new people into the camp, but it also attracts many from within the camp itself who are used to dabka but not contemporary art exhibitions. Their experience with the exhibit shows them the role that this kind of art can play in our struggle.

The six young artists who exhibited their work are hoping to continue working together as they share a common commitment:

We believe in working as a collective, this is important because one of our problems in today’s Palestine is division. We need collectivism and unity. If we can succeed in arts in this way we can also succeed in life...

The Right of Return International Cultural Festival

The Doha Children’s Cultural Center is not located in a refugee camp, although the Bethlehem town of Al-Doha does have a demographic makeup of at least seventy five percent refugees. The Center’s work focuses on traditional cultural practices, such as dabka, as director Ayman Al-Ahmar explains:

Dabka makes the connection to the Palestinian identity stronger and keeps our heritage alive. Palestinian identity is denied today so through art we strengthen the connections with the land. In the Palestinian struggle for freedom, the core issue is that of the refugees, so we should defend and struggle for the return of the refugees by all means, including through the celebration of our cultural heritage.

For three days from late July into early August 2009, the Center staged the third annual Right of Return Cultural Festival at Bethlehem University, which brought together assorted dance troupes and musicians in defense of the right of return. Over 5,000 people attended the festival which aimed to ‘connect the political issues through arts and Palestinian cultural heritage.’ The Doha Center’s own children dabka troupe opened the Festival, performing alongside *Firqet al-Funoun al-Sha’biya al-Filastiniya* (the Palestinian Popular Arts Troupe), a professional troupe that performs to packed theaters internationally, and who combine traditional dabka movements with a more contemporary dance style in performances highlighting the Palestinian narrative. Such festivals provide a platform to which Palestinians from all walks of society can come together celebrating their heritage and demanding their rights.

Yesterday, today, and tomorrow

The range of grassroots cultural work highlighted in this article is merely a sample of what is happening across Palestine. The work of the centers, artists and activists discussed here all follows principles entrenched in Palestinian society in defense of all inalienable national, moral, and human rights. This includes refusing ‘normalization’ with Israeli organizations, and funding or support from USAID.

Over 60 years ago David Ben Gurion famously said that “the old will die and the young will forget,” but the young haven’t forgotten and neither will they as long as there remains the spirit of resistance. Palestine’s rich traditions of resistance through arts and culture continue to live on today as they always have done following in the footsteps of the likes of Ghassan Kanafani, Mahmoud Darwish, and Naji al-Ali.

*Rich Wiles is an artist, independent writer, & activist.

The Prison as University: The Palestinian Prisoners' Movement and National Education

by Khaled al-Azraq

Let me start by saying that the role of the Palestinian prisoners' movement in educating its cadre, and thereby contributing to Palestinian "national education" is a large topic, and one worthy of much more discussion and research. As a Palestinian political prisoner who has spent the past twenty years in Israeli jails I would like to highlight some of the general characteristics of the prisoners' movement's struggle to build a system of self and collective education as a central part of developing a patriotic and revolutionary culture that can be a pillar of the liberation movement.

It was at a very early age that I began to understand the occupation, and the state of being under occupation. Some of my first interactions with the occupation involved hearing conversations in my family, for example about how my older brother was not allowed to enter Jordan because of his "security file" with the occupation. I learned the meaning of occupation in the all-too-frequent days of curfew imposed on our refugee camp. Any question I asked about these difficult times were met with the same answer; "it's Israel, it's the occupation." Little by little I learned the meaning of *Palestine* through the stories narrated by my father and grandmother about the Nakba and the difficult early years of exile and refuge. I fell in love with Palestine through the stories of "*el-blad*," memories of the times before the Nakba, or "real life" as my grandmother used to call it. In those days of diving into my elders' stories – the late 1970s – I had no other source through which to learn about Palestine other than those stories and the few words of secretly uttered by a teacher risking the loss of his job and livelihood at the hands of the district military commander if the latter found out.

In the early eighties, Palestinian society transformed into a volcano of protest against the Israeli regime's attempt to impose the "village leagues" as a kind of political leadership that would replace elected municipal leaders and the Palestine Liberation Organization. This period of protests changed my life. I became an active part of the growing popular movement. My activism was not limited to participating in strikes, rallies and protests, for I had begun the lifelong process of political self-education.

Unlike many other groups that endure discrimination, people in detention do not benefit from a dedicated legally binding text, although there have been recent plans to present a charter on prisoners' rights to the United Nations. In 1990, however, the General Assembly, in its resolution 45/111, adopted the Basic Principles for the Treatment of Prisoners, in which it noted that:

- (a) All prisoners should be treated with the respect due to their inherent dignity and value as human beings (art. 1);
- (b) Except for those limitations that are demonstrably necessitated by the fact of incarceration, all prisoners should retain the human rights and fundamental freedoms set out in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and where the State concerned is a party, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the Optional Protocol thereto, as well as such other rights as are set out in other United Nations covenants (art. 5);
- (c) All prisoners should have the right to take part in cultural activities and education aimed at the full development of the human personality (art. 6).

The right to education is now accepted as encompassing the provision of an education that is available, accessible, adaptable and acceptable. No text allows for forfeiture of this right and, more essentially, forfeiture is not necessitated by the fact of incarceration.

– "The right to education of persons in detention" Report of the Special Rapporteur on the right to education to the Human Rights Council, Vernor Muñoz – (A/HRC/11/8 – 2 April 2009)



Palestinian prisoners writing their science Tawjihi exams in Ofer military prison, 2004. Photo: Getty Images

This was harder than it may seem. Finding books about Palestinian political history and the Zionist colonization of Palestine required a great deal of effort and discretion; all of these books were banned by Israel, and most of them had been burned or confiscated by the army. It was very difficult to find a book about Palestine or Palestinians, even if it was a novel by Ghassan Kanafani, or a book of poems by Mahmoud Darwish. I quenched my thirst for these texts by consuming the secret books and pamphlets which, you may be surprised to hear, were not instruction manuals for making explosives, but historical, literary, political writings by various Palestinian and international authors that we would secretly pass around from one person to another. If an Israeli soldier caught you with one of those texts, you would most likely end up in prison.

In those years I fed my revolutionary fervor with patriotic songs. I particularly craved the compositions of Marcel Khalifah and Ahmad Qa'bour, and the voice of Muthaffar al-Nuwwab reciting his own poetry. Tapes with recordings of patriotic music, like their printed counterparts, were also illegal as far as the Israelis were concerned. We recorded these songs on tapes with foreign love songs just in case a soldier decided to check. It was through these banned songs and poems that I learned the meaning of struggle for freedom, the meaning of international solidarity and how a victory for one can be a victory for all.

Despite the harshness and difficulty of those days, I miss them. Today, after two decades of isolation in prison, I say “if only I could relive those days!”

I was first imprisoned in 1982 at the age of sixteen. In prison I found what I was not expecting to find: I found inside the prison what I could not find outside of it. In prison I found Palestine's political, national, revolutionary university. It was in prison that I realized that knowledge is what paves the road to victory and freedom.

In prison, and through a long and arduous struggle, the prisoners' movement has been able to win and maintain the right to a library. Members of the prisoners' movement came up with ingenious ways of smuggling books into Israeli prisons, methods that Israeli prison guards were never able to discover. The movement systematically organized workshops, seminars, and courses held inside the prison to educate prisoners' on every relevant topic one can imagine. Every day, the prisoner holding the position of “librarian” would pass through the different cells and sections, and prisoners would exchange the book they had just finished for the one they were about to begin. The librarian carried the “library book,” a record of the books available in the library, and a list of the books each prisoner had requested.

Talking about this reminds me of one of the most memorable prison library moments. We had found out that the movement had managed to smuggle Ghassan Kanafani's *Men in the Sun* into the old Nablus prison. We all raced to get our names on the list of people wanting to read the book, and the wait lasted weeks! Several times, we resorted to making copies of sought-after books like this. Of course, copies were done with pen and paper, and I remember copying Naji Aloush's *The Palestinian National Movement* of which we made five hand-written copies. I remember how we all raced for the writings of Gabriel García Márquez and Jorge Amado, Tolstoy and Dostoevsky, Hanna Mina, Nazim Hikmet, and many, many others.

Through the will and perseverance of the prisoners, prison was transformed into a school, a veritable university offering education in literature, languages, politics, philosophy, history and more. The graduates of this university excelled in various fields. I still remember the words of Bader al-Qawasmah, one of my compatriots who I met in the old Nablus prison in 1984, who said to me, “before prison I was a porter who could neither read nor write. Now, after 14 years in prison, I write in Arabic, I teach Hebrew, and I translate from English.” I remember the words of Saleh Abu Tayi' [Palestinian refugee in Syria who was a political prisoner in Israeli jails for seventeen years before being released in the prisoner exchange of 1985] who told me vivid stories of prisoners' adventures smuggling books, pieces of paper, and even the ink-housing tubes of pens.

Prisoners passed on what they knew and had learned in an organized and systematic fashion. Simply put, learning and passing on knowledge and understanding, both about Palestine and in general, has been considered a patriotic duty necessary to ensure steadfastness and perseverance in the struggle to defend our rights against Zionism and colonialism. There is no doubt that the Palestinian political prisoners' movement has played a leading role in developing Palestinian national education.

*Khaled al-Azraq is a refugee who lived in Aida refugee Camp (Bethlehem) before being captured and imprisoned by Israel. He has been a political prisoner for the past 20 years, and is currently being held in Nafha (Hadarim) prison in southern Palestine.

Hearing Obama: How to Introduce an Authentic History of Contemporary Palestine Into the American School

By Dan Walsh

“...I am convinced that in order to move forward, we must say openly the things we hold in our hearts...”

- U.S. President Barak Obama in Cairo, June 4, 2009



“Palestine is not just an Arabic and Islamic question: it is important to many different and contradictory worlds that intersect one another. Working for Palestine means being necessarily aware of such open dimensions... As Mandela kept saying during his own struggle, we must be aware of the fact that Palestine is one of the foremost moral issues of our time.”

- Edward Said, 2002



This essay focuses on a little-understood aspect of the process of “teaching Palestine” in American schools: Palestine’s unwarranted status as part of the “null curriculum.” In his book *The Educational Imagination: On the Design and Evaluation of School Programs* (1994), Elliot Eisner outlines four categories of modern curricula: formal, informal, hidden, and null. Briefly, the formal curriculum is that which is “officially approved” by some institutional authority. For high schools in the U.S., this is the state government. The informal curriculum is that which is actually taught in the classroom; in other words, it is what the teacher does with the formal curriculum. The hidden curriculum is any subsidiary or unplanned teaching and learning that takes place as a result of delivering the official curriculum but which is not “officially” part of it. The null curriculum, the category that I am focusing on here, is content that is *specifically not taught*.

An example of a null curriculum controversy that gets a great deal of attention in the U.S. is the one related to scientific “creationism.” Proponents of this religiously-based interpretation of the origins of life are waging a very public and organized national effort to leverage its idiosyncratic ideology out of its null status. The goal of the creationist movement is to insinuate its textbooks, lesson plans, and curriculum into the formal curricula in the hope of replacing evolution, a theory based on scientific methods and empirical evidence. They have been spectacularly unsuccessful to date. Much of the credit for this goes to the science educators who organized to challenge creationism in the classroom, in the state house, and in the media.

Over the course of the past sixty years innumerable resources (books, curricula, films, teachers’ guides, extra-curricular activities, extra-credit options, visiting lecturers programs, maps, websites and more) related to the contemporary Middle East have been designed and introduced into the American high school classroom. Yet the majority of American high school students, and teachers, remain practically illiterate regarding the region’s core conflict, the one between Palestinians and Zionists. What explains this? As a follow-up question I ask, is any area studies history more important for Americans to be studying in light of the events of September 11?

In my opinion, much of what passes for curriculum on Palestine is in fact, mis-education and a disservice to teachers, students, and the wider community. Moreover I consider it functionally impossible to teach the authentic history of the contemporary Palestinian-Zionist conflict in U.S. high schools using the currently available “formal” resources. Educators relying solely on those resources are doomed to fail because the formal curriculum does not teach to the standard established by the National Council for the Social Studies. Specifically, no formal curricula on Palestine that I have seen or read about teaches for “civic competence” which is the ability of students to take the lessons learned in school and apply them to their adult lives. Civic competence, in essence, is a blueprint for participatory citizenship. Instead, most formal curricula teach a form of history trivia on Palestine; for example, dates of obscure historical documents such as the White Paper (1939) and the Sykes–Picot Agreement (1916). The formal curriculum on Palestine is a clear example of what Paolo Freire called the “banking” system of education: schools deposit trifles via the curriculum and then withdraw them via tests. Nowhere are the students’ critical faculties engaged or strengthened.

Background

Between 2007 and 2009, as part of the research for my graduate thesis at Georgetown University, I surveyed the official textbooks used in the Montgomery County, Maryland school system to teach the history of the Palestinian-Zionist conflict. During this same period I also field-tested my thesis, what I call the *New Curriculum Project*, at several locations: two undergraduate history classes offered by the Modern Hebrew department of the University of Maryland, in College Park; an International Baccalaureate teachers seminar in Fairfax County, Virginia; two advanced placement Middle East history classes at Bethesda-Chevy Chase and Montgomery Blair high schools; and at the Center for Policy Analysis on Palestine, in Washington, DC.

There is not sufficient space here to delve into all the shortcomings I discovered in the formal Montgomery County curriculum. Instead, I will pose three questions, each of which addresses a serious defect in the formal curriculum that I seek to rectify through the *New Curriculum*:

- 1) Where does the authentic historical arc of the Palestinian-Zionist conflict begin?
- 2) How can we overcome the debilitating effects on education of the conflation of anti-Zionism with anti-Semitism?
- 3) What role can the poster art of the Palestinian-Zionist conflict play in creating and maintaining a positive learning environment?

Each of these questions is addressed below.

Begin at the beginning

Where does the authentic historical arc of the Palestinian-Zionist conflict begin?

In every history book, syllabus, curriculum, and lesson plan that I reviewed in the course of my research, the origins of the Palestinian-Zionist conflict (variably called the “Arab-Israeli conflict,” the “Palestinian-Israeli conflict” or “the Middle East conflict”) begin on May 14, 1948. This is the day that, as one textbook explains, “Israel declared its independence and the Arab countries invaded.”

Those committed to “teaching Palestine” must address a major historical flaw in existing classroom resources, one so obvious it is somewhat amazing that it has persisted to this day: the failure to integrate the critical period of Zionist colonial activity that took place in Palestine between 1897 and 1948. May 14, 1948, was indeed an important date. But the actual starting point for the discussion of the Palestinian-Zionist conflict is August 31, 1897. On this date, the First Zionist Conference in Basel, Switzerland approved the Basel Program, a detailed strategy for the colonization of Palestine. Its text declares that: “Zionism aims at establishing for Jewish people a publicly and legally assured home in Palestine.” Theodor Herzl, the founder of political Zionism, said of this day: “In Basel, I founded the Jewish state.” *This* is the date that introduces American students to the *processes and psychology* of Zionism, not merely its main product, Israel. Study must begin in 1897 because that is the date which launches both Palestinian and Zionist curricula. By teaching from this authentic historical point American students can finally begin the study of the conflict on the same footing as students in Israel, Palestine and the rest of the world.

World Zionist Organization poster from 1947 by Zeev Raban. Text on top: “World Zionist Organization Jubilee - 1897 - 1947” - Text on podium: “The Jews Who Will It Will Have Their State” (quote by Theodor Herzl at the First Zionist Conference in Basel, Switzerland, 1897).



Creating a comfort zone

How can we overcome the debilitating effects on education of the conflation of anti-Zionism with anti-Semitism?



New Anti-Semitism is the concept that a new form of anti-Semitism has developed in the late 20th and early 21st centuries, emanating simultaneously from the left, the right, and fundamentalist Islam, and tending to manifest itself as opposition to Zionism and the state of Israel... Proponents of the concept argue that anti-Zionism, anti-Americanism, anti-globalization, third-worldism, and demonization of Israel, or double standards applied to its conduct, may be linked to anti-Semitism, or constitute disguised anti-Semitism. Critics of the concept argue that it conflates anti-Zionism with anti-Semitism, defines legitimate criticism of Israel too narrowly and demonization too broadly, trivializes the meaning of anti-Semitism, and exploits anti-Semitism in order to silence debate.

Blue Star PR poster from 2004 "Anti-Zionism is anti-Semitism."

This definition, the Wikipedia entry for “New Anti-Semitism,” illustrates the circular, empty rhetoric that surrounds the term “anti-Semitism.” Many Americans keep at arm’s length from engagement with this topic because they fear being branded as “anti-Semitic” even though the meaning of the “anti-Semitism” label has become so confusing. According to the U.S. Department of State there is no “universally accepted” definition of the term. Moreover, new complex, multi-leveled and seemingly incomprehensible definitions appear, unannounced, on a regular basis. Given this state of affairs, how reasonable is it to ask a history educator to “teach Palestine” and risk running afoul of the projections of “New Antisemitism” (and by extension run the risk of ending up on the Campus Watch list or being the subject of a “hasbara” attack)?

Anti-Semitism, as defined in the first sense by *Merriam-Webster’s New Third International Dictionary* (unabridged), is, of course, real. However, the hysterical discourse surrounding the “New Anti-Semitism” is merely a diversion, a distraction from what is actually important: challenging the central idea of Zionism, that “combating anti-Semitism is futile” a concept derived from Theodor Herzl’s personal, subjective beliefs. Few Americans will accept the idea that racism or any other form of inequality cannot, and therefore should not, be fought. Such defeatism is not in keeping with American civic values or the principles of the Constitution. One has only to consider how the U.S. has changed over the past fifty years in terms of civil rights, women’s rights, Native American rights, gay rights, voting rights, labor rights, environmental rights, and even animal rights to get a sense of how Americans feel about the ability, indeed the moral obligation, of their society to face down its inner demons. Yet this is exactly what Zionism teaches its adherents about anti-Semitism – that it is everywhere, will never go away, and there is nothing one can do to eradicate it. Zionism does nothing to “combat” or abolish anti-Semitism: instead it seeks to exploit it politically. Zionism’s core principle is functionally an anathema to the American experience yet, unfortunately, too few Americans have challenged Zionism’s misreading of American culture. Those who have, such as Norman Finkelstein, to name but one prominent educator who has written and spoken publicly on this issue, have paid an enormous personal and professional price for their courage.

Is there a way out of this morass? I believe there is by taking a page from the creationism drama. According to many science educators, the best way to confront the preposterous claims at the center of creationism is to have scientists challenge the purported “scientific evidence” that creationists put forward. Science educators have been very successful at poking holes in creationist attempts to justify their ideology as a scientific theory worthy of being taught. These educators engage the proponents of creationism *according to the norms of American language usage and the laws of empiricism*. I am suggesting here that “teaching Palestine” advocates adopt the exact same approach towards Zionism.

In the *New Curriculum*, an initial activity has students endorse an existing definition of Zionism and anti-Semitism or craft one of their own. They are invited to read their definitions aloud and defend them. This activity is central to breaking the false, reflexive conflation of anti-Zionism with anti-Semitism. It promotes civic competence because it puts control over language

into the hands of those who actually *own* the language: the students and teachers. By asserting their language rights, in this case by clearly stating the definitions that will be considered acceptable in class, the atmosphere in the classroom is improved immediately. Removing any doubts, early on, as to appropriate, agreed-upon terms demonstrates sensitivity to all views and establishes an open and supportive comfort zone for both students and teachers. This exercise primes the class for a teachable moment on Palestine.

Dictionary definitions are, in essence, social contracts; people voluntarily accept them because they make sense and reflect actual usage. The conflation of anti-Zionism with anti-Semitism, for example as found in *Merriam-Webster's New Third International Dictionary* (unabridged) is a *prescriptive* term; it does not reflect actual usage. Ordinary, mainstream Americans do not normally conflate the two terms. Only Zionists do that. In democracies, people are free to accept or reject prescribed terms. They can push back by crafting their own definitions. When students are given the opportunity to make an informed choice for their definition, they learn how to reflect upon and question a spectrum of political ideas they may have about Palestine and Israel.

Anti-Semitism, which has traditionally been defined as lies told in private about Judaism and Jews, now includes truths told in public about Zionism. Repudiating this contrived equivalence is key to creating an environment within which American teachers and students can embrace Obama's call to "say openly the things we hold in our hearts."

Anti-Semitism:

- 1: hostility toward Jews as a religious or racial minority group often accompanied by social, political or economic discrimination.
- 2: opposition to Zionism.
- 3: sympathy with the opponents of the state of Israel.

- *Webster's Third New International Dictionary* (unabridged), 2002

The school as art space

What role can the poster art of the Palestinian-Zionist conflict play in creating and maintaining a positive learning environment?

A common feature of the discourse around the Palestinian-Zionist conflict is that it tends toward polarization. There is little, if any, neutral ground for rational, dispassionate conversation. Zionists project their assumption of an eternally hostile and universally anti-Semitic world onto all outside its boundaries. Palestinians, not surprisingly, dismiss this world view with contempt. The elevated degrees of passion that define the discourse are off-putting to disengaged, uninitiated Americans such as high school students. Furthermore, the bewildering mix of languages, histories, religions, political parties, geographies, symbols, and other layers of facts in this complicated story tends to intimidate most mainstream Americans. At a time when U.S. interests in the Middle East have never been more complex, such a self-defeating response needs to be addressed.

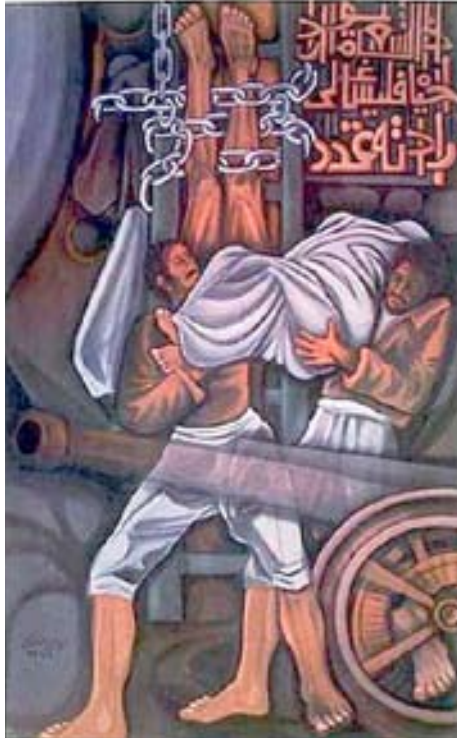
Ironically, the public discourses inside Israel and Palestine appear much more inclusive and democratic than the one that takes

Mark Rudin (Jehad Mansour), Poster from the First Intifada published by the Palestinian Popular Women's Committees, 1990.



place, when it takes place, in the U.S. Perhaps this is because the conflation of anti-Zionism with anti-Semitism (addressed in the question above) is a non-issue for Palestinians and Jewish-Israelis. In the U.S. an ostensibly outspoken exchange of opinions can be heard on cable TV, in Congress, at public demonstrations and over the Internet, but rarely in ordinary conversation. Many of these public exchanges are between ideological opponents and the language used often comes across as code or worse, as "weaponized." The classroom, however, is not a battle zone: different values apply there and we do a disservice to education when we either forget or overlook this ideal.

The classroom should be a place for students to explore ideas without the fear of humiliation or denunciation. It is a place designed to lay the groundwork for deeper, adult-like thinking. Ideally, a classroom is a place free of ridicule – where one is never wrong so long as one is making an effort to learn.



Poster commemorating the 1976 massacre of Palestinians in Tal al-Za'tar Refugee camp (Beirut) by Kamal al-Mughani (1977). The text in the top right changes the infamous verses by Tunisian poet Abu al-Qasem al-Shabbi to: "If a people one day desire to live, fate itself will be unable to stop them."

Art has been an aid to learning for as long as there have been schools, yet no U.S. curriculum that I am aware of has ever taken systematic advantage of the art produced by the parties to the Palestinian-Zionist conflict. This is mystifying, given the sheer amount, and quality, of art that is created on and around the conflict. The recounting of the two historical narratives, that of Palestinian nationalism and political Zionism, is perhaps nowhere more eloquently told than in their respective poster art traditions – traditions that have no equal in any other historical genre. One has only to skim through the posters featured at the Palestine Poster Project Archives website to get a sense of the phenomenal creativity, nuance, and historical breadth that is locked into this unique and uniquely pedagogical genre. It is because of the Palestine poster's storytelling potential that I have designed the *New Curriculum* around it.

There are many reasons educators might want to consider using Palestine poster art in the classroom, but I will elaborate on just two key benefits:

1) The interpretation of art is a value-free activity. No reading of a poster is "right" or "wrong." Students can differ in their readings of the symbols, colors, language, texts, imagery, meaning, message and history of the posters without taking sides. **Every opinion is legitimate.** Students-as-viewers do not have to agree with each other and in not agreeing they do not have to become antagonists. In all the times I have presented the *New Curriculum*, the projection of a Palestine poster image on the screen followed by the question "what do you see in this poster?" has led to a rich and insightful exchange. Teachers have reported that the posters were the most successful technique they had observed for engaging their students in the study of the conflict.

2) When analyzing the Palestine posters in the *New Curriculum*, students do the *speaking*. This is a seminal change in the way the history of Palestine is taught in the U.S. Via the *New Curriculum*, the students get to say what their definition of anti-Semitism is. They get to compare definitions of Zionism and determine

their own. They get to say whether or not they agree with the U.S. government's Middle East policy. They get to say whether or not the imagery in the Palestine posters is militant, beautiful, poetic, incomprehensible, disagreeable, or unforgettable. Through this vocalization, the students take their first step towards civic competence: they get to hear themselves say out loud what they think, feel, see, want, fear, and hope for relative to the contemporary Palestinian-Zionist conflict.

When the poster art of Palestine is used in the classroom, students assert their language rights, add their voices to the discourse, and reform the educational process. In effect, they forge a new democratic arena within which to register their positions relative to, in Said's words, "one of the foremost moral issues of our time."

Conclusion

When American students articulate their opinions regarding Palestine posters, they set the stage for articulating their opinions as adults in society regarding Palestine itself thereby advancing civic competence. When the authentic arc of modern Palestine history is taught it is liberated from the null curriculum and becomes a candidate for inclusion in the formal curriculum, where it belongs. By asserting their language rights students practice public speaking, strike a meaningful blow against real anti-Semitism, and move the national discourse closer to a rational perspective on Palestine.

*Dan Walsh is a graduate student at the Center for Contemporary Arab Studies at Georgetown University. The New Curriculum Project is his master's thesis which includes a searchable website currently featuring more than eleven hundred Palestine posters, from hundreds of sources. Several thousand additional Palestine posters are in the process of being added. The New Curriculum and the site are designed specifically for the use of American educators interested in incorporating the poster art of Palestine into their lessons. Access the New Curriculum or view the posters at: <http://www.palestineposterproject.org>

Teaching Culture and Resistance, from Brooklyn to Palestine

by the Palestine Education Project



Students participating in the Palestine Education Project (PEP) program in Brooklyn holding up their latest creation, 2008. Photo courtesy of PEP.

The same ground you walk on, we do too...

These words, excerpted from a poem written by Tyeeema, one of our students, and translated into Arabic for a mural now hanging in Balata Refugee Camp in Nablus, speak to a journey we have been making with students and educators in Brooklyn for the past three years.

Drawing on popular education models, and making use of grassroots media tools such as digital stories, hip-hop tracks and poster art, the Palestine Education Project (PEP) teaches a class we call “Slingshot Hip Hop: Culture and Resistance from Brooklyn to Palestine” at a small alternative high school. The school has its roots as a “transfer” school, a sort of last chance for students who have not “succeeded” at their previous schools, though as one of our students, Rahking, recently said, “we don’t say transfer school anymore – it is more of a *school of transformation*, a place where we learn how other schools have failed us and how we can educate ourselves.” A collaboration between students, teachers, artists, and community organizers, the class is collectively designed to examine systems of oppression, both globally and locally; to identify the common struggles people of color share against racism, militarism, and displacement; to empower students to discover their own voices of resistance; and to break down the walls that separate us. Our work is grounded in the belief that increasing our awareness of how our struggles are connected to others’ can prove a powerful means of challenging the systems of oppression that adversely affect all of us. What follows is a sketch of a journey that has inspired us to continually re-imagine what is possible both in and out of the classroom.

We start with what one teacher at the school has called “how the media gets between us.” Living in New York, there are very few positive associations with the word “Arab.” We ask our students why that is. Many will point to the 9-11 attacks and the

so-called “war on terror.” We follow the discussion with a screening of Jackie Salloum’s “Planet of the Arabs,” a mock trailer based on Jack Shaheen’s book *Reel Bad Arabs* about Hollywood’s overwhelmingly negative portrayal of Arabs in film. As clips play from films we are all familiar with, an understanding emerges - these negative associations *are constantly being fed to us*. The students we work with, growing up in predominantly Black and Latino/a communities, are familiar with being stereotyped and criminalized, and it doesn’t take long before we are able to engage in a deeper discussion about how and why the media reinforces these negative stereotypes. One of our first activities is one in which we watch and analyze the closing montage of Spike Lee’s film *Bamboozled*, a painful, but revealing history of how negative stereotypes of African Americans were, and continue to be, perpetuated through the media. Through this exercise, the gravity of misrepresentation hits home and the subsequent discussion helps lay the foundation for what will later become a deeper global political analysis of racism and white supremacy, and its effects on how we see ourselves and others. Developing this sort of awareness of how media can shape our image of the Other and ourselves is a key component of PEP’s work, especially as one of our main goals is to empower students to intervene in this process through the creation of a media of their own.

From deconstructing media (mis)representation and unpacking the negative stereotypes that surround most discussions about Palestine in the U.S., we move on to explore the history of colonization and resistance in Palestine. Gaining a sense of this history is crucial to understanding the current situation, and we have discovered it is important not to approach the history as a series of dates and events, but as people’s lived experience. With this in mind we’ve developed one of our most valuable and adaptable teaching tools - a participatory activity that invites students out of their seats and onto a large map of Palestine which is outlined before class with tape on the classroom floor. Some students are cast as Palestinian Arabs, while others represent Jewish settlers.

Where am I standing?

Student: The West Bank.

And now?

Gaza.

And Now?

Jerusalem.

Ok. So now that we have a lay of the land, can everyone who has a “Palestinian Arab” label take a step onto the map. Let’s have two of you living in Gaza, a few in the West Bank, and the rest in what will later become Israel. There is also a small Jewish population that has been here for a long time, so can we have someone with a “Jewish” label come live here, near Jerusalem. The year is 1920 and we are in British occupied Palestine.



With the help of narration and a slideshow of images and maps, students begin to physically “move” through the history of colonization and displacement in Palestine. For instance, when the state of Israel is unilaterally declared in 1948 -- taking seventy-seven percent of the land, destroying more than 530 Palestinian villages and expelling over 750,000 people who became refugees, all except one or two students playing Palestinians are pushed into refugee camps in the West Bank and Gaza. As the activity moves through the further military occupations of 1967 and approaches present day, Israeli settlements that further displace local inhabitants are established in the form of hula hoops. Selected students with “Jewish Israeli” labels are given hula hoops and invited to “move in” to areas in the West Bank and Gaza. The hula hoop settlements take up so much space that students with “Palestinian” labels are forced to live on increasingly smaller portions of the map.

The activity is supported by projecting maps of land ownership and confiscation, military repression, and occupation, as well as images of Palestinian resistance. Parallels are also made to South African Apartheid and the colonization of Native American lands.

In preparation for hosting the Native Youth Delegation, youth from Balata camp study the history of the indigenous sovereignty movement in Turtle Island (North America). Photo courtesy of PEP.

In processing the experience, many students initially talk about the violent nature of the oppression in Palestine - concrete walls, military incursions, checkpoints, mass arrests - as something that is extreme, far from them. "At least we don't have it that bad," is a common initial response. But the map activity invites students to move beyond this initial response and make connections they haven't made before. For instance, as those role-playing Palestinians are stripped of their identity (no longer Palestinian but now "Israeli-Arab"), or heavily policed and imprisoned, students often relate experiences of being targeted by the police in their neighborhoods based on their ethnic and cultural identity. During one class, after learning about the apartheid Wall being erected in the West Bank and how it often separates Palestinians from each other and their land, Carlos offered: "we don't have actual walls, but come to think of it, there are other kinds of walls put up in our community that keep us divided - economic and cultural walls."

Solidarity

In the film *Slingshot Hip Hop*, Palestinian rapper Suhel Nafar, talks about being inspired by American hip hop -- how after he and his brother see the Tupac Shakur video "Holla if You Hear Me," they feel the scenes in the video could've been shot in their own 'hood of Lyd. Many American ghettos are plagued by systematic discrimination and a lack of resources similarly to Lyd, and many of our students in Brooklyn are able to identify parallel conditions in their own lives. "Their occupation wears green, ours over here wears blue," wrote Khary in "Brooklyn 2 Palestine," a hip-hop track and music video he made as a final project for the class in 2008. In the same year that so many young people of color witnessed the full acquittal of the New York Police Department's officers who shot and killed an unarmed black man by the name of Sean Bell, this in-class opportunity to hold up their own deep sense of injustice alongside the injustice felt by Palestinians provided a collective space to express not only frustration and anger, but also solidarity.

This sort of "border-crossing" conversation manifests in different ways throughout the classes we teach, and becomes particularly relevant and powerful when we take a look at how the Israeli prison system operates as part of the criminalization and repression of Palestinian society. Using Joe Sacco's graphic novel *Palestine*, we take students on a narrative tour inside an Israeli prison for Palestinian political prisoners. Generations of Palestinians have now spent time in prison -- since the 1967 Israeli military occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip, more than forty percent of the adult male Palestinian population in the occupied territories has been incarcerated, and since the 2000 Intifada over twenty-five hundred Palestinian children have been arrested. As most of our students have friends or family members who have been or currently are incarcerated, this lesson presents an opportunity for students to reflect on how the prison system here in the U.S. has affected their lives and communities, as well as learning from the Palestinian experience. To that end, part of this lesson allows students to fill in empty text bubbles that we have blocked out in the graphic novel, inviting them to intervene in the story they are reading, and by extension, the story they see playing out in their own neighborhoods. Here's what Leroy had to say as he narrated a picture of Palestinian prisoners sitting in a cell and looking at a newspaper:

*We held meetings so we could try to fight back. But it won't be easy.
We need to do something about the soldiers. They are treating us like animals. We need to act NOW!
They say we are being treated fairly. They're hiding the truth from the people.*

Beyond the classroom

Having explored strong notions of solidarity, some students express that it is not easy to bridge the gaps that exist between the classroom and the "real world," where they must confront forces that are actively putting up the very same walls we are trying to dismantle in the classroom. For this reason the classes include collaborations with artists, community activists and grassroots media organizations working in New York City, the rest of the U.S., and in Palestine with the goal of creating their own media that connects their experiences of gentrification and racism to the experiences of apartheid and military occupation

Useful Resources

Student Media projects "Tadamon" and "Brooklyn to Palestine." Jackie Salloum's "Planet of the Arabs," and other valuable teaching tools, including the map activity, can all be found at: www.thinkpalestineact.org

Slingshot Hip Hop:
www.slingshothiphop.com

For more information on the Allied Media Conference, visit:
<http://www.alliedmediaconference.org>

Nakba Education

endured by youth in Palestine. This media is then shared with other youth in the U.S. and Palestine, fostering a larger network of solidarity.

We have also begun a partnership with the Allied Media Conference, a forum for grassroots media makers and young people seeking to share media tools and develop strategies with each other. At the conference students use the media they have created to conduct workshops for those in attendance and take part in a live video conference with youth in Palestine. For the first time, our students are able to speak directly with Palestinian youth and to share the connections they discovered. The media they create is translated into Arabic so that the youth in Palestine can learn from our students as well, making this a two-way exchange of stories and insights. The first video conference was indescribable. The room was packed with other conference participants who had heard about what we were up to and wanted to witness the exchange. One student, Chanel, worried that the young people in Palestine might be endangered by holding a video conference. “Will they get arrested?” she wondered. This was not just your typical youth exchange -- there was a deep concern for those on the other end of the line. The conference went on much longer than scheduled. It seemed nobody could stand the thought of hanging up.

We have seen students, many who reportedly do not participate much in their other classes, open up and contribute actively when given the chance to connect their own sense of injustice with that experienced by Palestinians. Building these relationships between struggles and people is a crucial part of undermining the structures that for too long have been building walls between us. We close with Botswana’s lyrics from last year’s final student project, a collectively written hip-hop track called “Tadamon”:

*No peace from the Middle East
Where the Palestinians is bein’ beat
With boulders, trying to take off they soldiers
And it’s still a gold rush, hold up,
let me load up my word cup*

*My flow is Che Guevara,
When I got the bones of Marcus Garvey
My pen said, my brain’s dead
Is just feeding off of oppression
That’s was caused in the community sections
That make mind relapse and come out the front like a
C-section*

Chorus:

*It’s time to be free
but its not just only me
It must be we
to have solidarity...*



On the set of “Tadamon,” hip hop video prepared by the 2009 class of the Palestine Education Project. Photo courtesy of PEP.

**The Palestine Education Project (PEP) is a multi-racial, multi-ethnic collective of educators, activists and artists based in New York City, Beirut and Ramallah. PEP is committed to popular education about colonization and resistance in Palestine and examining the connections between the struggle for justice in Palestine and that of oppressed people in the U.S./Turtle Island. We believe that popular education can in itself be a tool for resisting oppression, and that the classroom can and should be a place where walls are dismantled and solidarity fostered.*

Reflections on the Badil "Palestinian Refugees under International Law" Course

by Nidal al-Azza



Students of the Badil course organized an open air exhibit at al-Quds University titled "The Right of Return is not for Sale" (22-23 March 2009). Photo: Badil.

Intent on introducing Palestine's future legal cadre to a rights-based approach to the Palestinian refugee question, Badil entered a partnership agreement with al-Quds University in the fall of 2007. Since then, Badil's course on "Palestinian refugees under international law" has been one of the courses offered to law students, with larger numbers enrolling each semester. The target group of the Badil law course is university students, particularly law students interested in human rights. It is expected that law students, as part of the student movement that has historically played a major role in the national struggle, will influence their community and contribute to the right of return movement.

This piece addresses the importance of this law course as part of the broader campaign to defend Palestinian refugee rights. It tries to assess the impact of academic teaching on the right of return movement, specifically how it can strengthen the unity of the refugee return movement and promote self-organized initiatives upholding Palestinian refugee rights.

Hamdi al-Shaikh, one of the students enrolled in the Fall 2007 semester and himself a refugee, confirmed that he used to see the right of return as one item in a list of "sacred national rights," together with the right to self-determination, independence and statehood, but never paid attention to the importance of the law underpinning those rights: "When I chose the course, I was expecting a historical and political overview of our plight. I did not imagine that the Palestinian refugee question could be treated legally under so many bodies of law." For Badil

"... for us, the inclusion of the international law course on Palestinian refugees in the academic program is a distinct step reflecting our duty toward law students, as well as our commitment to Palestine and Palestinian rights. On one hand, it provides students interested in international law and human rights law with new course material. On the other hand, it explores, through the lens of Palestinian refugee rights, the prolonged conflict from a comparative legal perspective." (Muhammad Shalaldah, Dean of the Al-Quds University Law School, University Press Release, 19 May 2008)

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and for the right of return movement, planting and fostering such understanding is essential for building and strengthening the movement promoting solutions that respond to the rights and needs of Palestinian refugees.¹

After the Nakba of 1948 which resulted in the largest wave of Palestinian displacement from the homeland, the refugees' right of return was seen by Arab states, political parties and Palestinians themselves as an automatic result of the eventual liberation of Palestine, which was expected to come through the success of the armed struggle. It was then called a national and natural right, one that is inalienable, non-negotiable and one that would be automatically attained upon the liberation of Palestine. Accordingly, there was no perceived need to further explore the legal dimensions of this right, for example, by examining its human rights context or relevant sources in international law. Indeed, the need and benefit of representing the right of return as a human right enshrined in international law have been given priority only in the process of popular mobilization that came in response to the launch of the Oslo process in the early 1990s, a process that was marked by the organization of several refugee popular conferences.²

Since the early 1990s, similar messages and recommendations have been reiterated by all popular conferences: political negotiators are to respect the inalienable right of return when engaging in negotiations on the Palestinian refugee question; awareness must be raised locally and internationally about the rights of Palestinian refugees, and a new generation of Palestinians, especially refugees, must be raised with the capacity and skills required to defend these rights. The Global Right of Return Coalition, which is one of the most important outcomes of the popular conferences, has adopted these same recommendations in its statements and annual action plans. Palestinian parents and students confirm that Badil has succeeded to translate the popular message into a professional agenda of research, legal advocacy and teaching. Abdel Qader Nasser, a Palestinian activist and parent of one of the students enrolled in the Badil law course, said: "the first time I read from Badil that the right of return is an individual and collective right that is legal and possible I felt that this is different from what we heard from officials of the Palestinian Authority. Then I discovered that its meaning is the most accurate expression of my feelings as a refugee."

The Badil syllabus and course materials

Badil signed the partnership agreement with Al-Quds University less than two months before the start of the Fall semester of 2007, giving us only a few weeks of preparation time. However, the collection of research papers and legal studies already gathered and prepared by Badil on various aspects of the Palestinian refugee issue made it easier to put together the course materials and syllabus. Members of Badil's Legal Support Network, many of whom teach similar courses at universities abroad, provided valuable input into the design of the the course and contributed to the timely completion of preparations.

The course has been divided into two main parts: the first part explores the concepts and rights related to refugee status, state obligations, and the role of international agencies and mechanisms. Students study the provisions of the 1951 Refugee Convention, documents and recommendations of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, human rights treaty committees and relevant UN guidelines and declarations. Students learn about international standards for the treatment of refugees, and about examples of good and bad state practice. Students also learn how to assess states' practices in light of the relevant instruments.

"I studied International public law, international humanitarian law, the law of international organizations, and international human rights law, but I had not realized the importance of international law for ending the Israeli occupation before I took the course on Palestinian refugees under international law."
(Kifah Froukh, course of fall 2007)

The second part of the course examines the genesis of the Palestinian refugee issue, the rights and specific status of Palestinian refugees, and protection gaps resulting from Israel's violation of its legal obligations and the failure of the international community to ensure Israel's respect of international law. In this section students also learn about other cases of displacement and dispossession through specific examples, such as Bosnia-Herzegovina and Apartheid in South Africa.³ They also examine the implementation of relevant provisions of the 1951 Refugee Convention. Such comparative studies enable students to see the protection gap that affects Palestinian refugees, develop their knowledge of other cases and enhance their understanding of the potential of a rights-based approach for solving the Palestinian case, thereby improving their ability to play an active role in defending Palestinian refugee rights.

From a legal perspective, the course is unique in that it combines various bodies of international law, specifically the Law of Nationality in state succession, international human rights law, and international humanitarian law. It goes beyond highlighting the rights and obligations enshrined in international treaties by encouraging students to discover the links between the various bodies of international law and their connections with the realities on ground. The course emphasizes the importance of applying a broad body of international law rules to conflict analysis, treatment of its consequences and formulating the solution.

In political terms, the course deals with the root causes of the conflict, its evolution, and proposed solutions. Although these topics are fundamental for any student of the region, they have been largely absent from the Palestinian curriculum at all levels. As such, Palestinian students have for the most part encountered materials dealing with their own history and struggle in a way that has not sufficiently engaged them to form a nuanced perspective of the various historical, political and legal dimensions of the struggle. By examining these dimensions, the course provides what can be considered a new way of looking at the conflict and an attempt to analyze and overcome the deficit in both, the educational curriculum and the common approach to “solutions” debated in the public sphere which look only at the political dimension while ignoring history and law.

In practice, the course has contributed to mobilizing and advocating for a rights-based approach. Suhair Al Weradat, student of the Spring 2009 semester said, “the course opened my eyes to the importance of advocating for our rights, not only because we need to widen the support at the international level, but also because we need to always strengthen our home front.”

In early 2009, students of the Fall 2008 semester decided to organize a photographic exhibition explaining the ongoing Nakba in cooperation with the university’s students union. Their initiative was supported by Badil and welcomed by the Law School faculty. It was developed to include a book fair and two seminars, one on refugee rights and the other on the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions Campaign. Ahmad Noubia, a student of the Fall 2008 semester, noted that, “the title of the photographic exhibition - ‘Haq Al-Awda Mish Lalbay’ (the right of return is not for sale) - which took place in mid March 2009, had a significant impact on the student community at the university. After the exhibition, this title became a slogan that can still be heard in everyday discussions.”

“I have never believed that international law and mechanisms might be of any benefit for the rights of the Palestinian people. Even after I had taken three courses in international law, I could not see in international law any more than a tool in the hands of colonial powers. The course on Palestinian refugees under international law opened my eyes to see the possibility of using the same tool for defending our rights.”

(Bader al-Tamimi, course of Spring 2009)

* Nidal al-Azza is Badil’s Resource Unit Coordinator and teaches the course on Palestinian refugees under international law at al-Quds University (Abu Dis). He can be reached at resource@badil.org

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

How do we say Nakba in Hebrew?

Reflections on teaching Jews in Israel about the Nakba

By Amaya Galili

How should the topic of the Palestinian right of return be dealt with by the Israeli educational system? How should it be approached when the reality in Israel is that the topic is one “we don’t talk about”? How can we start a conversation, get people to listen, overcome objections?

The usual Israeli responses to the idea of the right of return are almost always bound up with inflammatory statements which heighten fears of Jewish-Israelis that they will once again become victims. They combine apprehension about potential future victimization with refusal to accept responsibility for Israel’s unjust treatment of the Palestinians, in the past as well as today. The result is that no serious, nuanced discussion of the Nakba and the Palestinian right of return takes place in Israel today. Jews in Israel who wish to be part of the solution to the conflict and live in an egalitarian society must be part of that discussion. Raising the issue in the educational system is essential to encouraging public discussion.

Zochrot, whose goal is to increase Israeli awareness of the Nakba and the right of return, has prepared educational materials aimed at Jewish-Israelis focusing on these two issues. We recently published a Learning Packet entitled *How do we say Nakba in Hebrew?* for use in the Israeli education system - those who are part of the formal educational system as well as others. This unique Learning Packet contains the first set of lesson plans and educational resources in Hebrew for teaching about the Nakba.

The Learning Packet is aimed at schools which are, for the most part, Jewish-Israeli, where Zionist discourse reigns, and is intended primarily for educators in the formal and informal school systems, including colleges, universities and teacher training institutions.

The Learning Packet is appropriate for students aged fifteen and older, and contains lessons, activities and resources for learning about the Nakba from various perspectives, addresses a range of topics, and employs a variety of educational methods. It includes units based on literary texts, artwork, historical material, film, and a variety of other media, and allows teachers and students to approach the topic modularly, from their own political, emotional and social perspectives. Each lesson unit

“That’s Not Something We Talk About: The Palestinian refugees’ right of return”

Unit 12 from the Learning Packet: “How to say Nakba in Hebrew?” (available on Zochrot’s website)

The lesson aims are to elicit questions about the meaning of return for Palestinians and Israelis. The lesson opens by providing information about the Palestinian refugees, how and at whose hands they became refugees and what their situation is today. It continues by discussing Israel’s decision to refuse to permit refugees to return during the war and how it prevented them from doing so, as well as international recognition of the right of return as expressed in UN Resolution 194. The second part of the lesson considers the meaning of return for Palestinians, using a photography exhibit by Palestinian youth from the project “Dreams of Home” created by Lajee Center in Aida refugee camp, Bethlehem. It continues with statements from Badil’s information packet by Palestinians about the right of return. The lesson ends by opening a discussion through the questions: What does the right of return mean to us as Jews in Israel? What happens to us when we hear about the right of return? How are we affected by the fact that many of us don’t recognize the right of return and are not even willing to discuss it?



in the Learning Packet can stand alone; used in combination, they encourage different learning processes. For example, the Learning Packet opens by referring to the student's personal situation, moving to what they know about where they live, about themselves, their families, the society in which they live and the history they are familiar with. It then moves on to more general discussions of the Nakba. Another trail in the packet looks first at the past, then at today's reality, and concludes by considering possible futures.

The Learning Packet draws on the principles of critical pedagogy, and links them to Zochrot's political perspective. According to the tradition established by Paulo Freire, critical pedagogy is learning that involves commitment, relevance and a call to take action. It assumes that learning depends on context, on one's location and on one's society, so that learning about the Nakba must be different for Jewish-Israelis and for Palestinians. The critical pedagogical approach allows us to undertake a process of educational change, without suddenly pulling the rug out from under the students. As part of the critical process, students face their own resistance to dismantling the core Zionist narrative, re-viewing their own ideas and basic assumptions, and even changing them.

It is an educational procedure which imparts knowledge and simultaneously involves a political-emotional process of reworking the new information as well as the old. For Jews in Israel, learning about the Nakba involves not only gaining new knowledge, but also understanding, and sometimes discovering, that much information about their own past has been deliberately concealed from them. That knowledge structures the individual and collective fundamental assumptions which are based on a Zionist/nationalist perspective. Learning about the Nakba, then, is not only about gaining knowledge, but is also a process which raises fundamental questions about Israeli identity and the Jewish state that must be faced and dealt with emotionally as well as politically.

In preparing the Learning Packet, the following question arose: How can we create an educational process which empathizes with the students but also avoids pandering to their deeply-held Zionist assumptions? Empathy is both the basis for the educational process and what makes it possible. Empathy, understanding, and sensitivity to the situation of Jewish-Israeli students are all part of the educational process, along with challenging and objecting to Zionism's basic assumptions – asking questions, providing information, recounting unfamiliar stories, deconstructing the unspoken assumptions of racism, power relations, colonialism, Europeanization, and so on. Students who were taught using the Learning Packet report that, in addition to what they learned about the Nakba and about Palestinian refugees today, many questions arose and challenged their view of the world: What is history and what is truth? Who writes the history? Why do we tend to pay attention to and believe written, rather than oral, history? How does the concept of "narrative" serve the stronger side, the one with power? What obligations does learning about the Nakba impose on us?

Tours and Signposting

Zochrot organizes tours to the sites of Palestinian villages that were destroyed in 1948, the existence of which is unknown to many people in Israel. The tours invite the public to re-encounter the landscape with new eyes, retracing the paths of the destroyed village and hearing its stories as told by refugees and scholars. During the tours we also post signs in Hebrew and Arabic marking village sites and distribute booklets containing original research on the village, testimonies, photographs, and maps. Zochrot Booklets (in Arabic and Hebrew) are all available on Zochrot's website. Unit seven of the learning packet offers different pedagogical methods for processing the tours with students.



Nakba Education

Noa Sandbank-Rahat, a member of a group of Israeli educators who learned about the Nakba under the auspices of Zochrot, and was part of developing the Learning Packet, had this to say about the process she herself went through in learning about the Nakba:

I came to *Zochrot* with great difficulty, even anxiety, at the prospect of going back past 1967, of reaching “Year zero” – 1948 – saying the word “Nakba” in Hebrew. I actually felt threatened, helpless, guilt-ridden.

I first came into contact with the Nakba with a group of other educators. Studying with that group allowed me to begin a journey that started with the eyes. Looking, first of all, at the process of forgetting, at memory’s shadow. Gazing at that shadow allowed me to recognize the existence of the memory itself. And then, very slowly, like an archaeologist caressing with his brush each discovery that emerges from the sand, I was able to begin touching that place, touching the Nakba.

To my great surprise, the process of looking freed me of those fears, that helplessness. Learning about the Nakba as part of a group allowed me to be in two places at once – the one where I mourned what had occurred, mourned the Nakba that surrounds us, what it did to me and to us all; and the other in which I seek ways to redress, to change and to fix in order to create a different present and a different future. Instead of being paralyzed by guilt, my sense of responsibility now motivates me to act.

So – how do we develop an educational program on the Nakba for Israeli Jews?

This is the question which guides the unit in the Packet dealing with the right of return, the one entitled “That’s Not Something We Talk About: The Palestinian refugees’ right of return.” The lesson combines two main questions: what is the right of return for Palestinians? What does it mean to us as Jews in Israel?

In workshops with educators where the Learning Packet was presented, the discussion also centered around the questions: What happens to us when we hear about the right of return? How are we affected by the fact that many of us don’t recognize



The Map Activity

The first map activity held on the grounds outside Tel Aviv city hall, where over 400 people took part.

In this activity, participants recreate a large-scale map of all the Palestinian localities destroyed in the Nakba. The map is actually a grid, made of adhesive tape or rope that correlates to the actual longitude and latitude lines of the map of Israel/Palestine.

During the activity, participants are “returning” individual cards representing each village to their correct location on the map according to the longitude and latitude number printed on the card. The participants can also personalize their cards or decorate the map using chalk, colored stones, stickers, ribbons... At an open microphone, participants can voice their personal connection to the village or to the community located at its site today. Instructions for building the map can be found at: <http://www.zochrot.org/index.php?id=556>

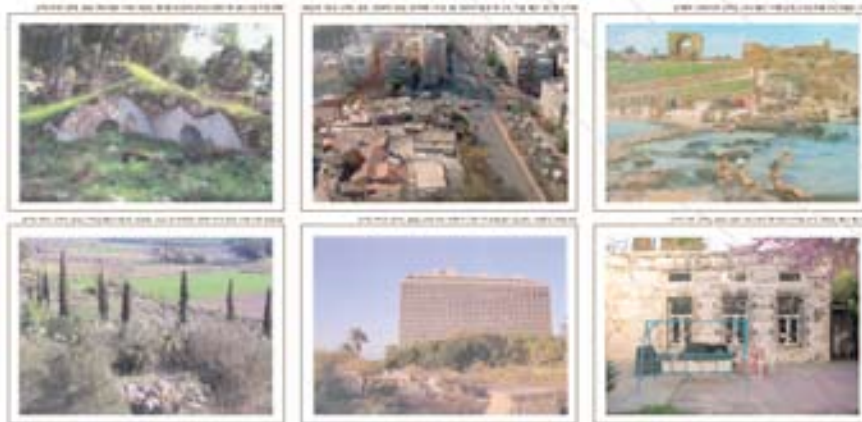
Landscapes of Home

What do we see when we look at the landscape? What don't we see?

Unit 2 from the Learning Packet: "How to say Nakba in Hebrew?" (available on Zochrot's website)

This lesson aims to give Jews in Israel a starting point to learn about the Nakba.

In this lesson, we look at images of various places in Israel, that are well known for Israelis, where remains of Palestinian localities destroyed since 1948 are found. We use the photographs to look at familiar surroundings with fresh eyes to recognize traces of the Nakba in the landscape and learn how Israel worked to erase evidence of the Nakba and Palestinian heritage.



The photos seen here present: Existing Palestinian structures; A village within the city; Neglect; Concealment; Sabra cactus; Changing names.

Recognizing in the Israeli surroundings the remnants of Palestinian life exposes the practices employed to erase the Palestinian Nakba from the Israeli landscape. These practices of erasure appear again and again in various sites throughout the country. We've found that these practices of erasure can be identified and grouped into different "series." Examining one example of each series can teach the participants about the series as a whole, about the particular practice of erasure. By practicing the pedagogical methods "reading photographs" we can develop a new way of examining our surroundings, one which also includes seeing the Nakba.

the right of return and are not even willing to discuss it? It raised the sort of fears and apprehensions I referred to earlier, and provided a place for expressing them. But what also came through was a feeling of helplessness in the face of such a complex and fundamental issue – that the chance of any solution was fainter and less likely than ever. Such helplessness is accompanied by a fear of raising the issue in front of students, of being labeled a leftist, an "Arab lover," as well as a pedagogical concern about leaving Israeli students with feelings of guilt and injustice. But these are exactly the issues that must be confronted in order to arrive at a solution and bring about reconciliation. Feelings of guilt need not be paralyzing; they can lead to accepting responsibility and action for change.

The question, "What does the right of return mean to us as Jewish Israelis?" makes it possible to conduct a discussion aimed at constructing a different reality. A reality of cooperation, one in which Israeli Jews are aware of and accept responsibility for Palestinian suffering as well, but also be part of developing mechanisms for justice and reconciliation. Talking about the right of return allows us to see possible solutions to the conflict rather than letting it continue. We borrowed from the methodology of the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commissions as an example of Transitional Justice that can be used as a mechanism for solving a conflict elsewhere, one not our own. Learning about other conflicts in the world gives us the opportunity to see that many ways exist to deal with and solve violent conflicts. The solutions aren't perfect, but learning about them can make us think about and plan solutions and political structures which don't sanctify the Jews as the sole nation possessing rights here.

Teaching Jews in Israel about the Nakba educates us for the future. It challenges the core Zionist narrative, and aims to create and encourage thinking about civic perspectives. It reexamines the fundamental assumptions of Zionist/nationalist education. For Israeli Jews, learning the story of the Nakba challenges the basis of their collective identity, fracturing it again and again. Jews in Israel are also obligated to search, research, and examine our own history. Such learning has the potential for us to play an active role in the struggle to create a future of reconciliation and establish relations between Jews and Palestinians based on accepting responsibility, recognition and respect. Learning about the Nakba involves not only learning about the injustice and plunder Palestinians suffered at Israeli hands, but also learning about aspects of the history of Jews in Israel which have been silenced.

*Amaya Galili is Zochrot's Educational Coordinator.

Child Authors Reflect on Writing *Flying Home*

by Sadeel al-Azzeh, Balqees Nafez al-Refai, Majd al-Khawaja and Maan Abu Aker



Sadeel al-Azzeh (age 12)

Working as a collective on this project was extremely enjoyable. On our first day, Rich Wiles asked us to draw something that captured the meaning of each chapter of the story. Afterwards, we set up a schedule in which each of us had a day to go out and take the photos. After we'd collected these, we discussed amongst ourselves how to choose the appropriate photos that would accompany the text of *Flying Home*. The discussions we had were perhaps the most important part of the project; we were all equals with each of us having our say in the photos that would accompany our section of the text.

Team-work taught me a great deal about cooperation, supporting each other, and the pleasure of working with others. If all the refugees came and worked on a book like this, they would take a big step toward achieving their dreams and goals. Among these dreams and goals is freedom for themselves, for the entire Palestinian people, and for all the peoples and refugees of the world living under oppression. If the world is not united, if it is not working as a team, they cannot achieve what they want. They won't be able to get rid of occupation and oppression if we all stay divided.

Working as a team is the best way to work because we cooperate and support each other in all the different aspects of the work. If I were to do this work on my own, I would not know how to get information I don't have. As I worked with my friends on this project, the same thought always came to my mind: that there is no doubt that some day we will all return to our villages, and that will be the day that we are truly free.



Balqees Nafez al-Refai (age 11)

From the story, I learned about the occupation and about the need to return to our homelands. I learned about photography too. I learned how to take a photograph and how to look at pictures and understand them. Each story has a meaning and these meanings are important in our lives. It is beautiful to learn photography. We learned about cameras and how to use them and how to frame a photographic scene. I learned to express my ideas by first sketching the image (prior to taking the photograph). I learned that we can create new stories like *Flying Home* and take pictures ourselves. In one of the pictures I took, I chose the right place to take the picture, told the boy to stand to the side, and showed the camp in the background. When I took the picture, I put the boy in-focus because he is the hero of the story and kept the background blurred because the boy is more important.

I took a photo of a caged bird and I set it in a way that the cage is in-focus while the Wall is in the background.

I learned to choose the right place to take pictures. I learned about freedom. I learned cooperation with others and team work. It is good because it reflects Palestinians' lives and how we should help each other to get rid of the occupation. I learned to think about the photos I take and how to edit them so that they will be viewed and understood positively.

I started to talk to people especially foreigners who ask about these photos and to explain how Palestinian children are connected to their lands and that these children... that we, will get our freedom someday.

Majd al-Khawaja (age 13)

I felt happy when I participated in this project; I felt it changed the way I think. I took photographs and learned a lot. I want all people to see this book. I hope people who read it will think about creating a space for children in the camp like a park or any other open space for us to play. I hope that people will realize how horrible the Wall is. I hope all other refugees, Palestinians, and internationals, will help us to destroy the Wall.

I do not know what people outside of the camp think about refugees, but this book will make them think about us and that we can create things. Such projects help us learn about our lives. I would like to participate in other photography projects too.



This book will also bring about change in people who do not respect the elderly. If a person does not respect his grandparents for example, this book teaches him the importance of the elderly who tell the history of our homeland. When we tell this story, the old refugees will know that their grandchildren are educated about their rights and that these grandchildren will keep telling their children our history and that we have the right of return and to take the settlements and the Wall away.

When people read about the flying birds and how birds can reach our homeland they will think about freedom, the time when the Wall will fall, and when we will all be free like birds. Our readers will learn about the Palestinian flag. They will also learn good manners, like not stealing, to respect others, to be good, and not to be bad. When they see photographs of the kite flying above the Wall, readers will feel hopeful about victory and freedom.

Maan Abu Aker (age 13)

The fourth project participant, Maan Abu Aker, was away from Aida camp during the production of this article, so his comments are not included above, but he was as much part of the team as all of the other participants. Immediately after conclusion of the project we talked to Maan about the project and his goals for the future. He told us of his dreams to become a doctor so that he can help children who are injured by the occupation, because he wants "all children to have a future." Maan told us that it is the first time he has ever produced something like *Flying Home*, and that he has never before seen his name printed in any publication. This was clearly, and rightly, a great source of pride for him. Maan's mother told us that every night he sleeps with a copy of the book beside his bed.



Book Review

Flying Home by the Children of Lajee Center with Rich Wiles

Reviewed by Toufic Haddad

Children of Aida Camp with Rich Wiles, "Flying Home," Aida refugee camp, Bethlehem: Lajee Center, 2009. 31 pages.



Flying Home is a touching new children's story produced by youth from Lajee Cultural Center in Aida refugee camp in Bethlehem, in collaboration with Rich Wiles, a British artist.

Thirty pages in length and illustrated with fifteen full-page photographs taken by the children themselves, *Flying Home* is a complete package. It is exceptionally well produced, an educational tool for young readers of both English and Arabic, and combines a powerful, human message that is neither culturally specific nor heavy-handed in its delivery.

Though the story of the book's production might invite cynicism or paternalism, a fair reading immediately rejects any tendency to belittle the final result. On the contrary, *Flying Home* stands on its own as one of the best children's books to come out of Palestine in a long time, while highlighting some of the best universal and emancipatory aspects of the human condition and the Palestinian revolution overall.

Flying Home tells the story of a child from Aida camp, whose youthful curiosity leads him to have a series of discussions with his wise grandfather. The child's questions emerge from the boy's growing awareness of his surroundings marked by the densely populated, concrete labyrinth of a 60-year old refugee camp, caged in by Israel's eight meter high Wall and its accompanying sniper towers. Though the child's questions are hardly political in nature, the pair's very existence in the refugee camp inevitably is. This puts the grandfather in the complicated situation of needing to explain aspects of the Palestinian reality in exile when the child himself cannot understand the full aspects of his family's history and the Palestinian predicament in general. But rather than fall in the trap of providing trite, clichéd answers, the grandfather repeatedly responds by emphasizing simple yet important guiding principles of humanity and dignity, including patience, determination, the importance of freedom, and the need to preserve one's dreams and rights.

At one point the grandfather decides to teach the child how to build a kite from a flag, as a means to illustrate how it can be made to fly. The pair build the kite together with the child soon releasing it into the sky next to the apartheid Wall. The child's initial elation at the sight of his creation soaring high is short lived however, as a large gust of wind whisks the kite from his hands, eventually causing it to crash on the other side of the Wall beyond the child's reach. The boy returns to his grandfather in tears, devastated by his loss of possession of their creation.

In a final, consoling and moving response, the grandfather responds:

You have given the kite and the flag, its freedom, and freedom is the most valuable thing in the whole world. We cannot see the kite right now but that does not mean it no longer exists. The kite has flown past the Wall to our homeland, for this is where it truly belongs....

Tonight we will both dream happy dreams as we have worked together and helped the kite achieve its freedom. One day you will see the kite again, for it will wait for you in our homeland until you can fly it once more, when we also find our freedom...

Flying Home's simple language, layout, and storyline are nonetheless remarkably profound and sophisticated. Its secret lies in its identification and portrayal of hidden tensions that lie beneath the surface of Palestinian existence, and extend to humanity in general: the tension between youthful ignorance and adult consciousness; between a people (in this case Palestinians, and particularly refugees) and the places they come from (the homeland to which they are prevented from returning); between one's hopeful dreams and an ever-present, caged-in reality; and the tension between seeking to possess something materially, and the knowledge that real possession is ephemeral, and in fact, that it is us who are possessed by our idea, history, nature, and cause. These tensions are magnificently symbolized in the analogy and image of the boy's hand holding the spool of string that controls the kite, and the uncontrollable forces of the wind that make it fly.

The grandfather's final response is profoundly orienting, emphasizing the need to set and uphold one's values and principles before all other seemingly more immediate considerations. It is these principles that define us as Palestinians, refugees, and human beings. Moreover, these can never be taken away from us without our consent, and can achieve realization through patient work, and not abandoning one's dreams and rights. Palestinian refugees' aspirations for return to their original villages are the obvious reference of the book's message, but it is also not limited to this. The story's emphasis on freedom being the most valuable thing in the world underlines how, though freedom is a physical state of being, it is also a state of mind. While Palestinians are denied its manifestation in the former, they can never be denied its existence in the latter, as long as they remain aware of this truth and exercise it in practice.

The story shows exactly how this can be done, by structuring itself through the grandfather-grandchild relationship, which also contributes to the story's power, effect and universality. This kinship bond through which the transference of wisdom and identity takes place, plays a crucial role in the preservation and development of Palestinian refugees' rights and struggle through living beings, and not just legal conventions. *Flying Home's* exceptionalism is that this transference is not of static or ossified knowledge, but that of common values of dignity, freedom and justice. Its message beckons Ghassan Kanafani's words in *Return to Haifa*, where the main character declares that "man is a cause," and that one's humanity and its realization must be the force at the base of the Palestinian struggle. It not only distinguishes oneself from one's oppressor, but also provides the tools for victory and liberation.

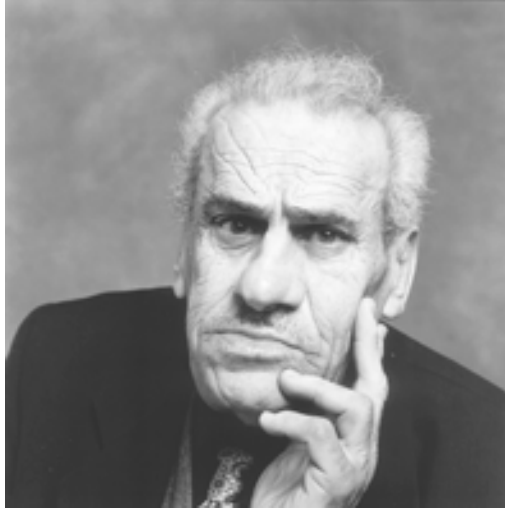
Seeing the continuity of this liberationist stream within the writings and photographs of the children of Lajee center is a beautiful testament of how these ideas remain alive within the Palestinian body politic, despite the overwhelming and seemingly never ending oppression it undergoes at Israel's hands, and the discouragement these ideas face within the national movement from those who have abandoned or ignored them.

*Toufic Haddad is a Palestinian-American journalist and author of "Between the Lines: Israel, the Palestinians and the U.S. 'War on Terror'" Haymarket Books, 2007.

The Pursuit of Happiness

by Adina Hoffman

The prospect of writing *My Happiness Bears No Relation to Happiness: A Poet's Life in the Palestinian Century* filled me with a fairly cavernous sense of dread.



Taha with renowned Palestinian poet Samih al-Qasem in the 1960s. Photo courtesy of Adina Hoffman.



Photo of Taha Muhammad Ali from the front cover of Hoffman's book. Photo courtesy of Adina Hoffman.

The book in question is a life and times of Taha Muhammad Ali, a marvelous Palestinian poet who was born and grew up in Saffuriyya, a Galilean village that Israel bombed during the 1948 war and demolished in its wake. After a difficult year spent in Lebanon as refugees, Taha and his family snuck back across the border and into a place that had been Palestine and was now officially, if not emotionally, Israel. Like the other Palestinian citizens of the new Jewish state, they were subject to the harsh restrictions imposed on them by the military government, which controlled much of their lives until 1966. An autodidact (he had just four years of perfunctory village schooling), Taha has spent nearly sixty years operating a souvenir shop near the Church of the Annunciation in Nazareth. At the same time, he has taught himself much of classical and contemporary Arabic literature, absorbed copious quantities of English and American poetry and prose, and evolved, slowly but with a stubbornly single-minded kind of determination, into a writer of formidable power. Most of his poems well up from the hard ground of his Saffuriyya childhood, at once mourning the loss of the village and celebrating it as a living, breathing, crowded place. In a sense, Taha has managed to preserve by way of his expansive imagination what has been obliterated in physical fact.

I, for my part, am an American-born Jew who has lived in Jerusalem for much of her adult life – assuming a sort of bifocal national identity in the process. I carry two passports, American and Israeli, and I first came to know Taha when my husband, the poet Peter Cole, began, together with Yahya Hijazi and Gabriel Levin, to translate his work into English. Within months of the outbreak of the second Intifada in 2000, Ibis Editions, the small, non-profit press that Peter, Gabriel, and I run together in Jerusalem, published a book of these translations. We must have known in some inchoate way then that bringing out such a volume – of Arabic poems inspired by a bulldozed Palestinian village, translated by a trio of two Jews and a Muslim, all three of them like the author himself, technically Israeli citizens – was, in its small way, an act of protest. (“Us [the Jews] here and them [the Arabs] there” had by then become the separatist slogan of many

liberal Jewish Israelis.) But it was only later, as the situation around us worsened considerably and we grew to know Taha much better, that I began to grasp the political, personal, and artistic implications of this alliance, this friendship.

Intrigued as I was by Taha's person and his poetry, the thought of writing a book about him was, as I say, daunting. The idea of setting out across the narrative minefield of Palestinian-Israeli history seemed at best masochistic, since – before I'd put a single word on paper – I could already hear a whole chorus of readerly complaints: I'd be damned by some indignant partisan no matter what I wrote.

Yet the closer Peter and I became to Taha and, ironically enough, the darker the political skies over all our heads grew – one survey from around this time showed that forty one percent of Israeli Jews supported the separation of Arabs and Jews in

places of entertainment, forty six percent were unwilling to have an Arab visit their home, and sixty eight percent objected to an Arab living in their apartment building – the more such hesitations fell away and the more I came to appreciate Taha’s undogmatic and ebulliently independent example. (Those numbers would, I’m certain, be still more disturbing today, as the ominously strong showing of now-Foreign Minister Avigdor Lieberman’s xenophobic party, Yisrael Beiteinu, in the most recent Israeli elections shows.) “Taking sides” is not the point here, because I do not consider myself and Taha – or Jews and Arabs, Israelis and Palestinians, for that matter – to be, at heart, on different “sides” at all; as I see it, and as the book tries to make clear, more joins than separates us, and the failure to focus on that shared realm of experience has had, and continues to have, a catastrophic effect on both peoples.

The notion of “taking sides,” though, is so central to the way the Middle East is thought, written, and yelled about that serious work is required to cut through it. One commentator is dubbed “pro-Palestinian,” another “anti.” Professor X gets blackballed as an “Israel hater,” while columnist Y is smeared as an “Islamophobe.” There are, amazingly, people who choose to spend good hours every day scouring newspapers, monitoring radio programs, dowsing the internet for any sign of perceived bias, keeping in hand at all times what amounts to an Us vs. Them scorecard – just waiting, that is, to take offense and to pounce. Such thinking is based on the highly dubious (but rarely questioned) zero-sum premise that what is good for the Arabs is bad for the Jews, and vice versa.

Alas, despite its best intentions, the media also falls prey to the trap that “balance” has become, as if every Arab who opens her mouth before a TV camera must be followed immediately by a Jew – preferably of the same height, weight, and hair color – who will counter her opinions word for word and in precisely the same allotted number of milliseconds. I am exaggerating, of course – but only slightly. Granted, most journalists are simply trying to be responsible, professional, and fair. But there are other forces at work here, and all too often it seems that fear is stoking this obsession with balance. (Who knows when those watchdog packs might attack?) For an American reporter to have his or her “objectivity” seriously questioned is tantamount to a charge of professional treason – or so the thinking goes. The inadvertent effect of such wholesale equalizing is, however, a different sort of skewing. Every actor in this terrible drama is reduced to playing either a representative Palestinian or a representative Israeli, and to reciting his well-rehearsed lines right on cue.

Meanwhile, lost in all this is what Henry James called “the spreading field, the human scene” – that is, the dynamic interplay of a whole host of very specific *individuals*, each with his or her own complex temperament and tastes, fears and longings. Lest we forget, this lies at the core of the conflict, and it is also the very essence of what drove me to want to write about Taha Muhammad Ali in the first place: a deep desire to understand how, despite everything that Taha has endured, he has managed to remain so alert and joyful. If Taha has been angry – and his poetry acknowledges that, at times, he has – he has not let this anger flare into hatred but has turned it into an art and a generosity of feeling that seem almost to defy history. And maybe geography as well, since his poetry reaches far beyond national borders to speak both to those who know the land intimately and to those on the opposite ends of the earth. It is profoundly local – and utterly universal.

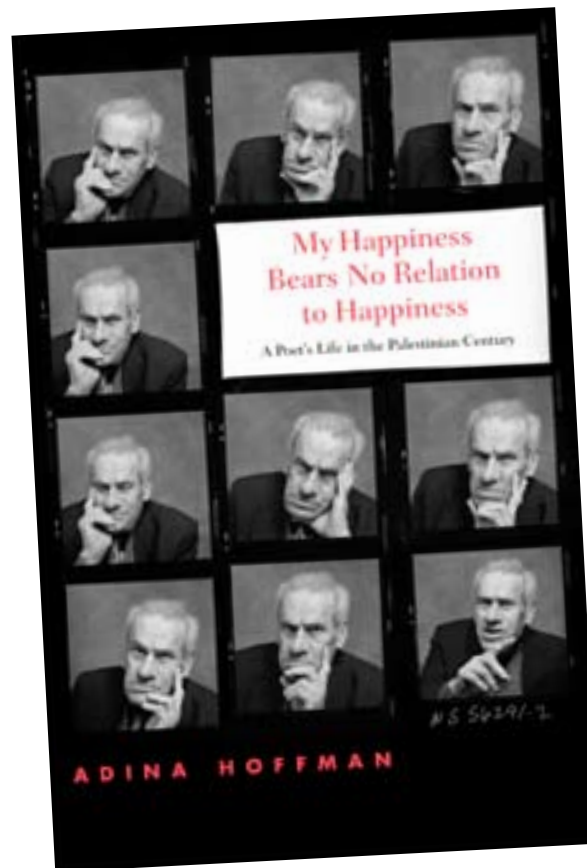
But the book is not just about Taha Muhammad Ali. In setting to work on what turns out to be the first full-fledged biography of a Palestinian writer to be published in any language, I quickly discovered how this one life ripples outward and eddies into the lives of many others as well. And as I wrote, I wanted to account for the whole panoply of thought, feeling, and experience that I encountered when I came to know Taha and all that surrounds him. In order to do so, I steeped myself in his rich (and, to the West, little-known) culture – absorbing the Arabic language, Palestinian literature, history, food, folklore, politics, music, and so on and on. At the same time, I came to know what felt like a galaxy of remarkable people whose lives have somehow intersected with his own: Arabs and Jews, peasants and poets, soldiers and shopkeepers, Saffuriyyans and Tel Avivans, Baghdadis and Philadelphians. It is this intersection of lived lives and, at their core, endangered dignities that this book is really about and that drew me past my dread.

* Adina Hoffman is the author of *House of Windows: Portraits from a Jerusalem Neighborhood* and *My Happiness Bears No Relation to Happiness: A Poet’s Life in the Palestinian Century*. Her essays and criticism have appeared in *The Nation*, *the Washington Post*, and *the Times Literary Supplement*, and on the *BBC*. One of the founders and editors of *Ibis Editions*, she lives in Jerusalem. An earlier version of this essay was first published on www.powells.com.

Book Review

Adina Hoffman's *My Happiness Bears No Relation to Happiness*

Reviewed by Dr. Hatim Kanaaneh



Adina Hoffman, *"My Happiness Bears No Relation to Happiness"*
Yale University Press, New Haven & London. 454 pages.

Adina Hoffman writes in a gripping rich language and with a charming poetic flare. Her avid documentary precision makes her obvious love for the subject of her biographical account and for his family, his surroundings and his people almost suspect, were such evil thoughts not rendered meaningless by her fidelity to the deeper nuances of Taha Muhammad Ali's deceptively simple and un-classical poetry. Her penchant for linking his every word to the traumatic events of his life and the lives of his fellow internally displaced Saffuriyyans, stay-put Nazarenes and ethnically cleansed Galileans gives special meaning to the book's subtitle: "A Poet's Life in the Palestinian Century." Her insistent delving into his private thoughts, and more significantly into his private life, makes his poetry almost as delectably meaningful read on the book's English language page as it is when heard in Arabic from Taha's own mouth and with his special delivery style and intonation in his now hesitant raspy voice.

The cover of *My Happiness bears No Relation to Happiness* gives the essence of the story inside: A dozen mug shots of Taha's strong-featured post-mature face, two of which presumably overshadowed by the book's title, all of which in various contemplative and silent pensive poses, the deeply furrowed face cupped and framed by his massive hand except for the very last in which the poet finally opens his mouth and speaks with an accusatory pointing of the finger. The autodidact Taha spent a lifetime silently absorbing what went on around him and peacefully resisting by earning a living for his family, resisting by educating himself, resisting by occasionally expressing himself in the local literary media, and resisting, above all, by honing his uniquely original poetic skill as the voice of the Palestinian *fellah* (peasant) from Saffuriyya whom we, his

Palestinian contemporaries, all know and identify with as our next-door neighbor expelled from his home for no guilt of his own, and who the world at large can appreciate for his lack of frills and pretensions: a struggling refugee with a large heart and a measure of guile and universality.

All of that and more I learned from Hoffman's book, though I have known Taha from as long ago as my teenage years. In the mid-1950s, the years I attended high school, Taha was a permanent fixture of the Nazareth landscape as one walked up from Sahit El-Karajat –Square of the Garages- to the Church of the Annunciation and the adjacent White Mosque or to the ancient souq. Later when I returned to Nazareth as Deputy District Physician for the Galilee I would always notice and greet him on my way to chat with a friend, none other than his brother Faisal across the way. Instead of being out hawking his souvenirs to the tourists, he sat in the shade of the corrugated-iron canopy in front of his small store or just inside it behind the glass vetrina. His impressive Abe Lincoln-minus-the-beard facial features and his total absorption in the books he constantly pored over added to the impression that one was looking at a part of the shop's display for the benefit of the tourists. Until one asked about the price of an item and Taha's thick lips parted with a broad smile and his deep raspy voice issued from his throat like a doomsday warning from a prophet let loose in the hills of Palestine of old.

My own close relationship then was with his younger brother, Faisal Essaffuri, the name we, his friends, called him, combining his real first name – meaning “sword of justice” – and a reference to Saffuriyya, the formerly prosperous town north-west of Nazareth from which his family was violently evicted during the Nakba, in place of a surname. (The irony of this combination in light of the powerlessness of my friend and his fellow uprooted Saffuriyyans to remedy by force the injustice that befell them never dawned on me before.) Faisal always looked rather pensive, quoted often from the old masters of romantic Arabic poetry, and convoluted whatever topic any of us brought up into an issue of existential philosophical significance revolving around his Saffuriyya childhood. Faisal had dropped out of school because of the family’s limited means and opened another souvenir shop right across from his older brother, Taha.

I allow myself the luxury of this piece of reminiscence to make a point: There is little in it that is not covered in full by Adina Hoffman’s account with the added advantage of a selection of dated photographs. The Nazareth scene around Taha is further fleshed out with a full accoutrement of family, friends, literary contemporaries, those who frequented his literary salon of a souvenir shop and others who did not, and the social and political milieu of Nazareth, and that further afield encompassing people and events all the way to his refugee childhood fiancé, Amira of Saffuriyya and Ein el-Hilweh refugee camp. Yet Hoffman never loses sight of her focus on her protagonist, Taha, obsessively arranging all else around him in concentric and ever-widening circles of love and understanding that shine through the pages of her book.

And yet it is all documented through orally recounted history buttressed by ample archival references starting with Taha’s childhood in Saffuriyya, through his community’s forced expulsion to Lebanon, his family’s adventuresome return to Galilee, first to Reineh at the edge of their former fields and within sight of their destroyed village and then to Nazareth, his lifelong entrepreneurial spirit and acceptance of responsibility as the breadwinner of his family as the first surviving son and considering his father’s physical disability, his lifelong love of literature and striving to learn through self instruction bordering on self flagellation, his marriage to another loving Saffuriyya refugee, building a home and raising a family and suffering the death of a teenage grandchild, all the way to crystallizing a private and unique poetic style and being discovered, translated and celebrated at the far end of his rainbow of a life.

I feel particularly enriched by the author’s forays into the literary lives of not only Taha Muhammad Ali but also his fellow Palestinian contemporary poets. Those were also my contemporaries, give or take a decade or two, and I knew several of them on a first-name basis. In a manner of speaking, this book gave me, an outsider to the field of literature, a welcome reintroduction to those friends as literary luminaries, from Michel Haddad, a close friend of my late teacher and writer brother, to Samih el-Qasim, a fellow member of the Boy Scout troop that received Danny Kay in Nazareth, to Nazareth’s forceful mayor and splendid poet, Tawfiq Zayyad. Of course, I had read some of their works with varying degrees of comprehension, appreciation and enthusiasm. But I never really knew any of them closely as literary figures. Now I feel I know all of them better, thanks to Adina Hoffman.

For example, I could never imagine anyone who didn’t live in Nazareth in the 1950s being able to grasp the intricacies of the personality and mental anguish of such a character as Michel Haddad till I read Hoffman’s account of his literary dabbling (for he dabbled in many things as she mentions and more people probably remember him for his radio program for amateur singers than for his poetry). I find it simply astounding that a person who didn’t see or hear him daily could grasp his character so precisely.

Taha, as expected, is covered even more thoroughly and sensitively. What is more he emerges not only as a Palestinian poet but also as “another Palestinian” from an era and a place that the author manages to un-camouflage for the uninformed, and, more importantly, for the misinformed reader. And for that we all, Palestinians, Israelis and all uninvolved others, owe her a tremendous debt.

Hoffman’s recounting and acceptance of Taha’s remembered version of events and her insistence on aligning such accounts with recorded documents is far from an easy task given the highly oral Palestinian narrative and the most incessant documentarian yet no less skewed Israeli parallel narrative. Taha’s account of the events of Saffuriyya’s Nakba, for example, supported by other Saffuriyyans who lived through the horrific events brings her up against the contrary version accepted in the Israeli narrative. The contradiction is finally, and for the first time ever, resolved in favor of Taha’s truth by Hoffman

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delving in the Israeli military archives and discovering the previously unknown records of the air raid that actually did take place despite the denial of no less a trusted source than Dov Yarimya, the Hagana commander who entered the abandoned village and who has since converted to pacifism and renounced Zionism altogether. He himself had never known of the air attack.

Hoffman's tome is written as a contribution to the study of Palestinian poetry and addresses the life of the poet as it shapes his art. Her account is rich with bits and pieces of Taha's poems as illustrations, though at the end one is left with the feeling that the account of the poet's life is no more than an explanatory note about the connived "simplicity," directness, authenticity, splendor and infectious magic of his village-based universal poetry. That much becomes clear as she signs off with his last poem entitled *Revenge* (translated by Peter Cole, Yahya Hijazi and Gabriel Levin) in which he imagines rising above taking revenge in a dual with his enemy,

*the man who killed my father,
and razed our home,
expelling me
into
a narrow country*

because Taha discovers that his enemy is another human being with family and friends. But even if this vile enemy were

*without a mother or father
with neither a brother nor sister,
wifeless, without a child,
and without kin or neighbors or friends,
colleagues or companions...*

he would choose as his revenge only

*to ignore him as I passed him by
on the street – as I
convinced myself
that paying him no attention
in itself was a kind of revenge.*

That done Adina and Taha go on a car ride to the fertile fields of Saffuriyya to buy fruits and vegetables for a feast celebrating the publication of his translated poems in the volume *So What: New & Selected Poems, 1971-2005*.

* Hatim Kanaaneh is a retired Public Health physician and author of *A Doctor in Galilee: The Life and Struggle of a Palestinian in Israel*.

Why I wrote *From Coexistence to Conquest*

by Victor Kattan

From Coexistence to Conquest was a difficult book to write. The manuscript went through so many drafts, the title, and even the subject matter changed so many times that I could probably write an article on that process alone. Initially, I had intended *not* to write a history book. I was supposed to write a legal book on the International Court of Justice's 2004 advisory opinion on the Wall. But my publisher protested; "Why write a book on just the Wall?" I was asked. If I was going to do that, I was told, I must address the conflict's history from an international law perspective to place the proceedings in context. But I was not quite sure where I was supposed to start my story.

When I first put pen to paper in January 2006, I wrote about the events which led to the 1947 U.N. Partition Plan when there was an attempt by several Arab states to refer a list of grievances to the International Court of Justice for an advisory opinion. These grievances took the form of a series of questions that were related to various aspects of the Palestine problem during the era of British Mandate over Palestine (1917-1948), such as whether Palestine was promised independence in the Hussein-McMahon correspondence in 1915, and whether Palestinians had a right of self-determination. It was at this point that it suddenly dawned upon me that the 1947 UN Partition Plan was actually the end of a long chain of events that had already been in play for fifty years leading up to the conflagration that sparked the 1948 conflict. So instead of writing a brief historical chapter leading up to the 2004 advisory opinion I ended up on a detour that took me further back in time, and what a can of worms I uncovered through this digression.

It was my general dissatisfaction with most of the history books on the Arab-Israeli conflict that kept me going. The more time I spent in libraries looking at dusty books and files from the National Archives the more I realized how much of the conflict's history had not been written. And yet there are so many books on the history of the conflict! How is it then that they do not answer what I think is one of the most important questions any scholar should first consider: why did the conflict start? Ask any historian: Zionist, anti-Zionist, Jew, or gentile, and you will get a different answer. Was it British imperialism and the Balfour Declaration, the aims of the Zionist movement, European anti-Semitism and the Holocaust, the 1948 Arab-Israeli war, the 1967 occupation, or a combination of factors? Is it really fair to describe the conflict as a clash of nationalisms as most history books do, considering that Zionism was foreign to the Jewish community living in Palestine prior to the 1897 First Zionist Congress? If this is an accurate description, then surely one must *first* explain how Jewish nationalism, which emerged in Eastern Europe, ended up being manifested in a distant corner of the Ottoman Empire. Was it just Manifest Destiny that millions of Jews should uproot themselves from Europe and settle in Palestine? Did international law even assume a prominent role among the protagonists?

To answer the last question first. The Zionist movement considered gaining international legitimacy, and that meant legality, to be of the utmost importance. I was struck by the close, one might say almost intimate, collaboration between the Zionist Organization and the British Government when the mandate was being drafted at the British Foreign Office and the *Quai d'Orsay* in 1919. The *travaux préparatoires* in Kew were most revealing. The Zionist Organization was even asked to submit several drafts of what they desired to be in the Mandate. And they got their way on many, albeit not all, the issues. Contrary to what Leonard Stein asserts in his book *The Balfour Declaration*, A. J. Balfour, the British Foreign Minister in 1917, and formerly Britain's Prime Minister, took a keen interest in the Zionist movement. This interest was not out of altruism or for any general concern for the welfare of European Jews. The truth is that Balfour, who was a confidant of Cosima Wagner, the wife of the famous composer, did not really care much for the Jews. Nor, for that matter, did he care for the Arabs. As for the question of self-determination and who was ultimately to control the destiny of Palestine, this is what Mr. Balfour told the Zionist Federation at a meeting he attended in 1923:

...the critics of this movement shelter themselves behind the phrase – but it is more than a phrase – behind the principle of self-determination, and say that, if you apply that principle logically and honestly, it is to the majority of the existing population of Palestine that the future destinies of Palestine should be committed. My lords, ladies and gentlemen, there is a technical ingenuity in that plea, and on technical grounds I neither can nor desire to provide the answer; but, looking back upon the history of the world, I say that the case of Jewry in all countries is absolutely exceptional, falls outside all the ordinary rules and maxims, cannot be contained in a formula or explained in a sentence.

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Notice what Balfour says about the case of “Jewry in all countries” being absolutely exceptional and that they fall “outside all the ordinary rules and maxims.” The idea that Jews were so exceptional that the law of nations did not apply to them, struck me as rather suspicious coming from the lips of Balfour, and one will understand why from reading my book. Moreover, were Jews not nationals of the countries they inhabited? And had they not just been emancipated? Why did Balfour, the main supporter of the 1905 Alien’s Act, which restricted Jewish immigration into England just after the height of the pogroms in Romania and Russia, which led to a mass Jewish exodus into Western Europe and the United States, identify with the cause of the Zionist movement? Suffice it to say that Edwin Montagu, the Secretary of State for India, and the only Jewish politician in the British government who was specifically consulted about Balfour’s intention to issue the declaration, opposed it. In the first of three memorandums addressed to Balfour in the summer of 1917, Montagu made the following astute observation:

...at the very time when these Jews [referring to Jews in Russia] have been acknowledged as Jewish Russians and given all liberties, it seems to be inconceivable that Zionism should be officially recognised by the British Government, and that Mr. Balfour should be authorised to say that Palestine was to be reconstituted as the ‘national home of the Jewish people.’ I do not know what this involves, but I assume that it means that Mohammedans and Christians are to make way for the Jews, and that the Jews should be put in all positions of preference and should be peculiarly associated with Palestine in the same way that England is with this English or France with the French, that Turks and other Mahommedans [sic] in Palestine will be regarded as foreigners, just in the same way as Jews will hereafter be treated as foreigners in every country but Palestine. Perhaps also citizenship must be granted only as a result of a religious test.

Montagu’s memorandum was most prescient. If Palestine was to become the home of the Jewish people as the Zionists desired, so that it would, in the words of Theodor Herzl, cure centuries of anti-Semitism, then why issue the declaration in the aftermath of their emancipation in the country where they had suffered most from persecution? Besides, the principle of self-determination, which in the early twentieth century was understood to imply majority rule, favored the Arab case. This would explain why Balfour wanted it set aside in Palestine. He did not, however, get his way entirely. George Curzon, his successor at the Foreign Office, was adamantly opposed to Balfour’s policy, and did his best, once in office, to “water down” the mandate he had inherited. “I want the Arabs to have a chance,” he wrote one of his colleagues, “and I don’t want a Hebrew State.” And of course, whatever the Zionists may have privately desired, the Balfour Declaration never explicitly stipulated Jewish statehood as the end result.

Writing a book is an education. During the research I found so many documents that I had never come across before, or seen in any other history book. For instance, I discovered memoranda and maps that supported the Arab interpretation of the Hussein-McMahon correspondence, and I found the first reaction of the U.S. Government to the Balfour Declaration, which, believe it or not, was negative. I also uncovered the British Foreign Office legal advice on the 1948 conflict, which completely contradicts the Zionist narrative. “If the Arab armies invade the territory of Palestine but without coming into conflict with the Jews,” they wrote, “they would not necessarily be doing anything illegal, or contrary to the United Nations Charter.” And then there was Anthony Eden’s top-secret memorandum to Winston Churchill lambasting the partition plan and a document prepared by the Foreign Office to tackle what they referred to as “inaccurate Jewish political propaganda” on the refugee question. As that document noted, “many Arabs fled before the Arab invasion of 15th May owing to the brutality and the atrocities of IZL [the Irgun] and Haganah, e.g. at Deir Yassin. This policy of intimidation had since been pursued fairly consistently.” It continued: “Jewish settlers have systematically moved into houses and land of Arab refugees.”

While writings on Palestine abound, one thing I have definitely learned through the writing of this book, is that there is still a great deal of information on Palestine’s Nakba that has not made the journey from the dusty archive to the vibrant realm of common knowledge. There is still much work to be done.

* Victor Kattan is a Teaching Fellow at the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, at the Center for International Studies and Diplomacy. His other book, *The Palestine Question in International Law*, was published by the British Institute of International and Comparative Law in 2008. Victor worked for BADIL as a UN Development Program TOKTEN consultant in 2003-4, and was formerly a Director of Arab Media Watch. You can read Victor’s blog, and his articles at his website www.victorkattan.com

Book Review: Victor Kattan's *From Coexistence to Conquest*

Reviewed by Yasmine Gado

Arundhati Roy has called Palestine one of “imperial Britain’s festering, blood-drenched gifts to the modern world.” Victor Kattan’s book *From Coexistence to Conquest: International Law and the Origins of the Arab-Israeli Conflict, 1891-1949* leaves no doubt her description is apt.

The story behind *why* the British would support the idea of establishing a “national home” for one people within the territory of another and *how* this novel “experiment” came to fruition is the subject of this excellent book. The author, an international law expert, describes the pivotal role that international law, and the lack of its enforcement, played in the creation of Israel and offers a general legal history of the conflict.

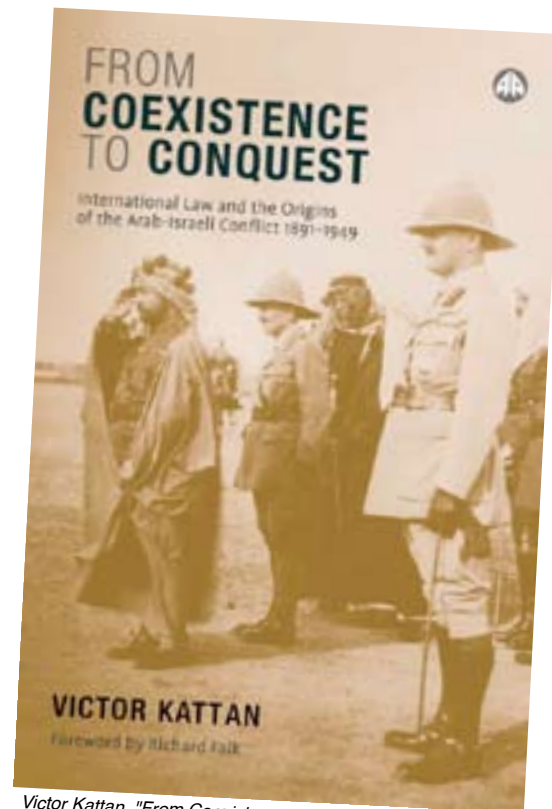
What makes this book important and unique is Kattan’s use of a wide range of newly disclosed historical sources, including declassified legal opinions, minutes, telegrams, reports and memoranda, in addition to traditional sources such as UN documents, books and law journals. I will highlight a few of the book’s salient points and revelations that may surprise some readers, citing a narrow selection of this extensive research and legal analysis.

Origin of the Arab-Israeli conflict

The book begins by addressing the origins of the Arab-Israeli conflict. In Kattan’s view, the conflict is rooted in anti-Semitism and colonialism, the driving forces behind British support for Zionism and ultimately the successful colonization of Palestine and creation of Israel. Zionism, he argues, provided anti-Semites in the British government with a pretext to stem the immigration to Britain of Jews fleeing persecution in Eastern Europe and Russia by diverting them to Palestine, while also supporting Britain’s imperial aims in the Middle East.

Alien immigration was a sensitive issue in England in the early twentieth century when anti-Semitism was common even among the educated elite. Kattan quotes A.J. Balfour making abhorrent statements about the “miseries created for western civilization by the presence of [Jews]” (pp. 20-21), and arguing that their Russian persecutors “had a case of their own” since Russians “were afraid of them” (p. 20). No surprise that he led the passage of legislation in 1905 restricting Jewish immigration to Britain. Kattan argues that within this historical context, the Balfour Declaration in which the British government stated its favorable view of “the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people” should be interpreted as Balfour’s solution to the “problem” of Jewish immigration.

If anti-Semitism provided the motive, colonialism provided the means to effect the Zionist project. The colonization of Palestine imitated other colonial models, except that it did not involve any desire to “civilize” or exploit the native population. The Zionists wanted the land with as few Arabs as possible – in Theodor Herzl’s famous words: “we shall try to spirit the penniless population across the border” (p. 34). Clearly, the Zionists had no regard for the possibility that Palestinians had a say in their destiny, or that they had a right to live on their land at all. Kattan spends much of the book analyzing exactly how far the British went in supporting this vision.



Victor Kattan, *From Coexistence to Conquest: International Law and the Origins of the Arab-Israeli Conflict 1891-1949*, London: Pluto Press, 2009. 544 Pages.

A Palestinian right to self-determination?

In 1937, Winston Churchill said of the Palestinians: “I do not agree that the dog in a manger has the final right to the manger, even though he may have lain there a very long time.” Putting aside the statement’s appalling racism, was he right that Palestinians were not entitled to independence and statehood in Palestine? After a comprehensive legal analysis, Kattan concludes that prevailing international law and British colonial policy provided ample support for a Palestinian right to self-determination.

The Balfour Declaration of 1917, the British Mandate of Palestine of 1922, and the UN Partition Plan of 1947, which Zionists view as the legal basis for the legitimacy of the Jewish state, in Kattan’s view also contained language that supported, implied and assumed a Palestinian right to self-determination. Although self-determination was not “an independent legal right” (p. 120) for all peoples until decolonization in the 1960s, Kattan explains that by the time the League of Nations was established in 1919, the Great Powers did apply that right to colonized peoples albeit through an “evolutionary process” via the mandate system. That system was established in the League of Nations Covenant, which referred to “*certain communities formerly belonging to the Turkish Empire [which would include the Arabs of Palestine] which deserved “provisional recognition” as independent states*” (p. 129). The mandate system was intended to assist colonized peoples to advance to a stage of development at which they could govern themselves. Palestine’s “A-Class” mandate status meant that it was considered sufficiently advanced to merit “provisional recognition” of independence.

The contradiction between Zionism and the above principles is obvious. Not only were the indigenous Palestinians outraged by the British Mandate, with its provision for a “Jewish national home” in their homeland, the policy was controversial among British officials as well. Balfour’s successor Lord Curzon remarked sardonically: “it is quite clear that this mandate has been drawn up by someone reeling under the fumes of Zionism” (p. 124). He spent much of his tenure as Foreign Secretary attempting to dilute the provisions for the “Jewish national home.” For example, Kattan reveals minutes and correspondence indicating the word “claim” in relation to Zionists’ rights in Palestine was omitted from the Mandate re-draft on the ground that Britain intended merely to “make room” for a Jewish national home, not to reconstitute Palestine as a Jewish state (p. 124).

Kattan also argues that the terms of the Mandate envisaged “one people for the purpose of self-determination...with Jewish self-determination envisaged only within the context of the self-determination of Palestine as a whole” (p. 128). In his view, the Mandate’s failure to mention Arabs in Palestine by name (instead of indirectly as “non-Jewish inhabitants”) did not negate their rights; and the reason the Mandate contained so many provisions to establish the Jewish national home was that the vast majority of Jews in the early 1920s were not physically present in Palestine while the Arabs already had centuries of continuous occupation there.

In support of this argument, Kattan cites documents such as the 1939 White Paper published by the British government, which stated that its objective in Palestine was the establishment of “an independent state in which two peoples, Arabs and Jews, share authority in government in such a way that the essential interests of each are shared” (p. 122); and a 1922 White Paper drafted by Winston Churchill which declared that “the status of all citizens of Palestine in the eyes of the law shall be Palestinian and it has never been intended that they, *or any section of them*, should possess any other juridical status” (p. 128).

Clearly, though, whatever right to self-governance had been recognized for Palestinians, that right was seriously compromised by the Balfour Declaration. But Kattan points out that even that document contained clauses safeguarding the civil and religious rights of non-Jewish communities in Palestine, and referred to a Jewish home *within* Palestine, not a Jewish state. While it has been argued that absence of the word “political” negated Palestinian self-determination rights, Kattan cites sources that suggest otherwise, such as Mandate drafting discussions in which Lord Curzon noted that under British law, civil rights included political rights. Much of the private correspondence and memoranda Kattan reveals indicate that when British officials communicated *among themselves*, a Palestinian right to self-determination was assumed and even explicitly recognized. Lord Balfour himself, chief architect of the “national home policy,” admitted in private correspondence with Lord Curzon that the Zionists’ “position was weak” because it “*declined to accept the principle of self-determination*” of

Palestine's "present inhabitants," and that Zionism was a "flagrant" contradiction of "the letter of the [League of Nations] Covenant" (p. 123).

There is a difficulty, however, with Kattan's use of opinions expressed in private to interpret legal documents and public statements in that he does not always take into account that the colonial powers often engaged in double-speak, claiming to protect those they were simultaneously oppressing. The mere fact that British officials privately spoke of certain Palestinian rights does not necessarily mean they intended to protect those rights in legally binding documents or statements of official policy that were in all likelihood deliberately vague and ambiguous. Should the back-tracking in the White Papers and redraft of the Mandate, for instance, be taken at face value, or was it really calculated political maneuvering designed to quell Arab anger? Perhaps more skepticism is called for in drawing a link between British officials' private knowledge and public actions.

Whatever the British intended regarding the level of compromise of Palestinian rights, one can conclude that although colonialism was still "legal" during this period, international law had advanced to a stage where rights of indigenous peoples, including the right to self-determination, were recognized and to be protected. The establishment of a national home, not to mention a state, for a people with no connection to a territory other than a claim of exile nineteen hundred years earlier, in a land where they were vastly outnumbered by a people with centuries of continuous residence was as much an anomaly then as it would be today.

Misconceptions about Israel's creation

Israelis today generally point to the UN Partition Plan as the basis for legitimacy of the Jewish state. Kattan makes a strong case that Israel could not *legally* have achieved statehood via the UN Partition Plan because, on its own, the resolution (UN General Assembly Resolution 181) was non-binding, and it was not implemented by the UN Security Council or the British, as would have been required for it to become binding. His argument is based on the fact that the UN Charter generally only grants the General Assembly the authority to make non-binding resolutions; the authorization of Resolution 181 by Article 10, which only authorizes non-binding resolutions; the language of the resolution which is explicit in its being a recommendation; and the opinion of the UN Secretariat at the time that the Resolution effecting partition had 'no obligatory character whatsoever' although the Security Council could choose to enforce the plan (p.155). Thus, it was up to the UN Security Council or the British as the mandatory power to enforce the plan, and both declined to do so.

Legal technicalities about enforcement aside, in practical effect the partition resolution gave the Zionists the legitimacy they needed to establish the Jewish state. Lack of enforcement *would* have defeated their claim to legitimacy, however, if events at the UN had not been pre-empted by the outbreak of hostilities on the ground. Kattan recounts a sequence of legal events just prior to the war between the Zionist militias and the Arab armies that may surprise some readers.

When it came time to enforce the partition plan, it finally dawned on the US that the plan was practically unenforceable, of questionable legality and clearly unjust. They could not secure the necessary votes in the Security Council for enforcement and the British refused to do so as well. Arab representatives accused the US of undue influence on weaker states to vote in favor of partition, and argued convincingly that their right to self-determination was disregarded. The inequity of the partition was obvious. Jews were granted fifty-seven percent of the land although they constituted only thirty-three percent of the population and Zionist organizations controlled less than seven percent of the country's territory, and they were allotted eighty-four percent of the agricultural land, while agriculture was the historic core of the economy in Palestine and citrus fruit the largest export. Jews were also given most of the Naqab (Negev) though they made up less than one percent of its population.

Kattan explains that, faced with the prospect of implementing an unworkable partition plan by force, the U.S. did an about-face and proposed a UN trusteeship which provided, among other things, that there would be one state of Palestine, that Arabs and Jews would agree on their form of government by referendum, and that future immigration would not be based on race or religion. In short, the trusteeship would have protected the right to self-determination of both peoples. As it turned out, the trusteeship was never voted on as war had begun and the Zionists ultimately imposed their own version of partition by force, going well beyond the recommendations of the partition plan, driving hundreds of thousands of Palestinians from

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their homes through deliberate and carefully planned military operations. Ultimately, partition was effected through the 1949 armistice agreements with the surrounding Arab states.

On 14 May 1948, Israel unilaterally declared its independence. Kattan reveals that the U.S. delegation to the UN, working to effect an equitable solution to the conflict, was stunned by Truman's immediate recognition of the Israeli state. They had received no warning. Apparently, U.S. diplomats (according to declassified top secret memoranda) did not view the idea of a Jewish state favorably, and did not believe the Balfour Declaration required that they support one.

As the UN had not been given the opportunity to vote on the trusteeship and implement a different vision, the partition resolution has remained in effect, providing Zionists with a credible argument that it established their state. However, despite what Zionists and their representatives assert today, Kattan reveals that Israel could not, as a legal matter, have been established by the UN Partition Plan, and was in reality established by conquest.

Israel's "exceptional" nature

In one of Lord Balfour's rhapsodies on Zionism's blissful promise, he states: "I cannot help thinking that this experiment . . . is a great experiment, because nothing like it has ever been tried in the world, and because it is entirely novel" (p. 251). In Balfour's mind, Zionism and Israel were "absolutely exceptional" – as Kattan puts it, "It was special. It was *sui generis*" (p. 251).

Unfortunately, this special status has also been granted to Israel by the UN, the body with the most significant mechanisms to enforce international law. The UN has accorded Israel virtual impunity since its establishment (and arguably in the manner of its establishment during the 1948 war, also addressed in this book). Israeli leaders illegally resisted the return of the refugees following the 1948 war and the U.S., bowing to the antecedents of the political forces it caters to today, did not use its power to enforce a condition on Israel's entry to the UN which required its compliance with international law on the question of refugees. The Holocaust, and the refusal of other nations to accept displaced European Jews undoubtedly played a part in this leniency; yet this does not excuse the failure of the UN to enforce international law vis-à-vis Israel. Even when the UN has attempted to discipline the Jewish state, through annual affirmations of the refugees' right of return, and UN Security Council Resolution 242 ordering withdrawal from the occupied Palestinian territory, Israel simply ignores the law without consequence.

Over six decades of legal impunity, the catalog of Israeli brutality and human rights violations has become vast. It includes: torture, illegal detention, assassination; assaults against civilians with missiles, helicopters, and jet fighters; annexation of territory; transfer of civilians for purpose of imprisonment; mass killing as in Gaza, Qana, Jenin, Sabra and Shatila; denial of rights to free passage and unimpeded civilian movement, education, and medical aid; use of civilians as human shields; humiliation; house demolitions on a mass scale; destruction of agricultural land; expropriation of water; illegal settlements; economic pauperization; attacks on hospitals, medical workers, and ambulances; and the killing of UN personnel, all carried on with UN acquiescence. Even when a UN fact-finding commission finally had the temerity to report evidence of war crimes by Israeli soldiers in the Goldstone Report covering events in Gaza earlier this year, accountability is a remote prospect.

What has Israel gained by this impunity? Territory that can only be retained through a costly and brutal military occupation. Increasingly, its officials risk arrest when they travel abroad. Comparisons with apartheid South Africa are ubiquitous. In fact, while some might argue Israeli impunity proves the irrelevance of international law, one could view it as proof of the indispensability of international law in that Israel has never known peace. Given consistent Arab opposition to Zionism since the nineteenth century, most likely it never will – that is, as a nation led by a Zionist regime.

As Kattan concludes "in the end it is unlikely that a lasting peace would subsist unless it is based on equity, justice and principles of international law, which have been sidelined throughout the course of the Arab-Israeli conflict to the detriment of all concerned" (p. 261).

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Recurring Dispossession and Displacement of 1948 Palestinian Refugees in the Occupied Palestinian Territory

Joint written statement submitted to the U.N. Human Rights Council, Twelfth Session
14 September - 2 October 2009

by Adalah – The Legal Center for Arab Minority Rights in Israel, Badil Resource Center for Palestinian Residency and Refugee Rights, Center on Housing Rights and Evictions (COHRE), Housing and Land Rights Network – Habitat International Coalition (HIC), non-governmental organisations in special consultative status. In cooperation with Al-Maqdese Society Developing Establishment, Arab Association for Human Rights (HRA), Association for the Defense of the Rights of the Internally Displaced Persons in Israel (ADRID), Civic Coalition to Defend Palestinian Rights in Jerusalem (CCDPRJ), Comitato Internazionale per lo Sviluppo dei Popoli (CISP), Israeli Committee against House Demolitions (ICAHN), Palestinian Grassroots Anti-Apartheid Wall Campaign and Zochrot Association.

1. During the 1948 Arab-Israeli War, Palestinians fled or were expelled from parts of Mandate Palestine, many finding refuge in the Occupied Palestinian Territory (OPT), including East Jerusalem ("Palestinian Refugees"). At the beginning of 2009, there were over 1,813,000 Palestinian refugees in the OPT representing 45% of its population of approximately 4 million Palestinians. More than 754,000 reside in the occupied West Bank, and over 1,059,000 in the occupied Gaza Strip.¹
2. Israel not only disrespects the right of these refugees to return to their homes of origin, but continues to dispossess and displace them within their place of refuge, namely the OPT over which Israel exercises effective control as an occupying power.
3. While aiming at illegally asserting control over the maximum amount of land with a minimum number of Palestinians and implanting Jewish-only settlements, Israel is forcibly displacing the Palestinian civilian population, refugees and non-refugees, in the OPT including East Jerusalem. Different measures have been adopted by Israel to achieve its goal, such as land confiscation, home demolition, eviction and the construction of the Wall. These practices run counter to international human rights and humanitarian law.
4. Dispossession and displacement of Palestinians, including refugees, in occupied East Jerusalem, illegally annexed by Israel, has noticeably increased. These policies and practices aim at asserting pressure on this community to leave the city.² Of particular concern are Palestinian neighborhoods that face ongoing mass eviction and home demolition including those in Sheikh Jarrah, Silwan, Beit Hanina and Al-Turi.³
5. In some cases, Israel expropriates Palestinian-owned property through a complex system of legal, administrative and institutional mechanisms, subsequently leasing or transferring these properties to Jewish settlers. In other cases, settlers make use of Israeli courts to lay claim to property inhabited by Palestinians, claiming ownership by Jewish individuals or associations prior to 1948. The Israeli Supreme Court has ruled in favor of such claims while failing to recognize the rights of Palestinian refugees to reclaim lost land and property.
6. For example, some Palestinian refugees who moved to Sheikh Jarrah in 1956 following an agreement between UNRWA and the Government of Jordan were evicted from their homes by Israeli authorities on 2 August 2009, following a court ruling.⁴ As a result, 53 Palestinian refugees, including 20 children, have once again been displaced. With no alternative residence, the families are forced to camp out on the street in front of their homes. Their appeal to overturn the eviction was rejected on 9 August 2009. Their properties were handed over to a settler organization that intends to build a new settlement in the area, while placing 300 refugees living in the area at imminent risk of forced eviction dispossession and displacement.⁵
7. Settlers have also laid claim to several other plots in Sheikh Jarrah, including 33 buildings that are home to almost 175 people, most of whom are refugees. Although the case is still pending in the Israeli courts, a group of settlers, accompanied by Israeli police entered the area on 26 July 2009 and occupied one of the buildings.⁶
8. While the Israeli executive branch plans what it calls the "Judaization" of East Jerusalem, and the judiciary fails to respect and protect the rights of Palestinian refugees and their property, it is the legislative branch that plays an active role in preventing refugees from reclaiming lost land and property. On 3 August 2009, one day after the eviction of tens of Palestinian refugees in

¹ Badil, *Survey of Palestinian Refugees and Internally Displaced Persons 2008* (forthcoming).

² OCHA, *Special Focus: The Planning Crisis in East Jerusalem: Understanding the Phenomenon of "illegal" Construction*, April 2009.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Civil Court case 4744/02, TPS 12705.

⁵ OCHA, *Fact Sheet: Sheikh Jarrah*, August 2009.

⁶ OCHA, *Fact Sheet*, Op. cite.

Documents

Sheikh Jarrah, the Knesset adopted a new land reform law – *Israel Land Administration (ILA) Law* - that legalizes the privatization of land originally owned by Palestinians, including refugees who currently reside in the OPT. This law retroactively legitimizes the ILA's sale of absentee property, which includes refugee property. Thus, for instance, 96 such tenders were issued in 2007, while 106 tenders were published in 2008.⁷ The new law has repercussions on the right of Palestinian refugees to restitution and violates their property rights, in contravention of international humanitarian and human rights law.⁸

9. The new law allows the transfer of land from state and the Jewish National Fund "ownership" into private Jewish-ownership in occupied East Jerusalem, illegally annexed by Israel. The privatization process will encompass the settlements and areas planned for development (settlement construction) in occupied East Jerusalem. In essence, Israel will generate huge profits from the privatization of land in the OPT, despite its legal obligations as an occupying power under international humanitarian and human rights law to respect the right to private property and refrain from permanent confiscation of such property.

Recommendations

We therefore urge the Human Rights Council to call on Israel to:

1. Immediately halt dispossession and displacement of Palestinians, including refugees, in the OPT by putting an end to forced eviction and home demolition;
2. Facilitate the return of the displaced to their homes as a result of forced eviction and house demolition; ensure the implementation of the UN *Principles on Housing and Property Restitution for Refugees and Displaced Persons* ("Pinheiro Principles"); and seek a durable solution to the refugee plight, namely repatriation;
3. Protect the rights of Palestinians to land and property and ensure respect for international human rights and humanitarian law;
4. Annul the new *Israel Land Administration Law*, end the transfer of ownership rights over Palestinian refugee property, and promote the right of Palestinian refugees to property restitution.

⁷ *Adalah to Attorney General and Custodian of Absentee Property: Israel's Sale of Palestinian Refugee Property Violated Israeli and International Law*, Press Release, 22 June 2009).

⁸ The *1907 Hague Regulations* stipulates the need of combatants to respect the right to private property and explicitly prohibits permanent confiscation of private property following the termination of warfare. The U.S. Military Tribunal at Nuremberg was the first to address the confiscation of property following the end of fighting in the Second World War. In *U.S. v. Alfred Krupp et al.*, the tribunal ruled that such confiscation of property and its subsequent acquisition by the Krupp firm constituted a violation of Article 46 of the *1907 Hague Regulation*. *U.S. v. Alfred Krupp et al.* cited in *How Does Law Protect in War? Cases, document and teaching materials on contemporary practice in international humanitarian law*, 2nd ed., Vol. 2 (ICRC, 2006), p.1030, and Adalah's letter addressed to the Attorney General on Tenders for selling absentees' property administered by Amidar, 19 May 2009.

Summary of Findings

Badil's Survey of Palestinian Refugees and IDPs - 2008

1. Scope of Palestinian Displacement 2008

The Palestinian refugee and IDP population described here comprises the total estimated number of Palestinians and their descendants whose "country of origin" is the former Palestine (now divided into Israel and the OPT), who have been displaced within or outside the borders of this area, and who do not have access to voluntary durable solutions and/or reparation, including the right to return to their homes of origin and the right to repossess their properties.

By the end of 2008, at least 67 percent (7.1 million) of the entire, worldwide Palestinian population (10.6 million) were forcibly displaced persons. Among them were at least 6.6 million Palestinian refugees and 455,000 internally displaced persons (IDPs).

Only 33% of the entire Palestinian population worldwide have never been displaced. The latter reside in Israel and the OPT.

1948 Palestinian refugees	5.7 million (80.5% of all displaced Palestinians); persons displaced in 1948 (the <i>Nakba</i>) and their descendants, including:
	UNRWA-registered refugees 4.7 million
	Refugees not registered with UNRWA 1.0 million
1967 Palestinian refugees	940,000 (13.5%) Persons displaced <u>for the first time</u> from their homes and country in the context of the 1967 war.
IDPs in Israel since 1948	335,000 (4.7%) Persons displaced in the 1948 <i>Nakba</i> , as well as those displaced subsequently. No reliable data available for the total number of persons displaced in 2007-2008.
IDPs in the OPT since 1967	129,000 (1.3%) Persons displaced in the OPT during the 1967 war and subsequently. This number includes displaced refugees (approximately 37,000).

2. Distribution

Today, Palestinian refugees are living in forced exile in many parts of the world. Despite the changes in the pattern of distribution of Palestinian refugees over the last 60 years, however, the **majority of the refugees still live within 100 km of the borders of Israel and the 1967 OPT**, where their homes of origin are located.

Most refugees do not live in camps: UNRWA-registered refugees in camps comprise 29.4% of the total UNRWA registered refugee population and 20.7% of the total Palestinian refugee population. In addition, hundreds of thousands Palestinian refugees reside in one of the at least seventeen unofficial camps in the OPT, Jordan, Lebanon, and Syria.

Most Palestinian refugees (approximately 79%) live outside UNRWA's 58 camps. Many West Bank villages and towns, for example, host a significant refugee population. There are approximately 100 localities in the occupied West Bank in which 1948 refugees comprise more than 50% of the total population.

Between 1997 and 2007, the proportion of refugees living in the West Bank showed a significant change in certain governorates. For instance, the percentage of refugees in Jerusalem decreased from 40.8% to 31.4%; the refugee population increased in Qalqilya from 39.9% to 47.0%, and in Jenin from 28.8% to 32.8%.

Documents

Table 2: Estimates of the Palestinian Refugees and IDPs Worldwide, 2008

Country	Refugees/IDPs (2008)
Australia ^a	20,914 - 31,422
Austria ^a	1,151
Belgium ^a	157
Canada ^a	43,918 - 52,284
Chile ^a	365,987
Denmark ^a	24,051
Egypt ^e	75,706
Finland ^a	1,046
France ^a	1,569 - 3,142
Greece ^a	3,142
Germany ^a	146,395
Israel (IDPs) ^g	335,204
Italy ^a	4,183
Libya ^e	9,585
Iraq ^f	14,937
Jordan ^b	2,478,424
Kuwait ^c	43,713
Lebanon ^c	460,490
The Netherlands ^a	10,457
Norway ^a	3,137
Occupied Palestinian Territories (IDPs) ^g	128,708
Occupied Gaza Strip ^d	1,059,584
Occupied West Bank ^d	754,263
Other Gulf countries ^c	137,785
Other Arab countries ^c	7,236
Poland ^a	1,046
Saudi Arabia ^c	341,770
Sweden ^a	41,827
Syria ^c	488,656
United Kingdom ^a	15,685
United States ^a	225,867 - 261,420

Sources: Most host countries outside the Middle East do not classify Palestinian refugees as refugees in terms of asylum statistics. Hence, the numbers listed are estimates provided by the Palestinian communities in these countries, not official statistics.

a. Information estimates for Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, Chile, Denmark, Finland, France, Greece, Germany, Italy, The Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Sweden, the United Kingdom and the United States were provided by the Oxford University Civitas Foundations of Participation Project database. See <http://civitas-online.org>. Estimates for 2008 are calculated on the basis of a growth rate of 1.5%.

b. The number for Jordan is based on *Living Conditions Among Palestinian Refugees and Displaced in Jordan*, FAFO Institute for Applied Social Science, 1997. The number of Palestinian refugees in 1996 amounted to 1,843,000; estimates for the period 1997–2008 are calculated according to a growth rate of 2.5%. Refugees constitute 85% of the total estimated number of Palestinians in Jordan (2.8 million).

c. Data for Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, other Gulf countries, Lebanon, Syria and other Arab countries is derived from *Abstract of Palestine 2005*, Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, 2006, with calculations for 2008 based on a growth rate of 2.5%. While PCBS provides data on the global distribution of the Palestinian people, rather than refugees only, it can be assumed that the all of Palestinians living outside historical Palestine are refugees. Figures are indicative rather than conclusive.

d. Data for the occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip represent UNRWA-registered refugees at mid-2008 as stated by the UNRWA Headquarters Public Information Office, Gaza, 2008.

e. Data for Egypt and Libya is based on the estimated number of Palestinians of concern to the UNHCR at the end of 2005. The calculation for 2008 is based on a growth rate of 2.5%.

f. The number of Palestinian refugees in Iraq is unclear. Palestinian refugees numbering 22,700 were registered with the UNHCR in 2003, but registration has stopped as a result of the ongoing armed conflict. The UNHCR estimated that approximately 34,000 Palestinian refugees resided in Iraq in 2003. However, by the end of 2006, it was estimated that no more than 15,000 Palestinians remained in Iraq. The whereabouts of the 15,000 persons who have left is unknown. See UNHCR, *Aide-Memoire: Protecting Palestinians in Iraq and Seeking Humanitarian Solutions for Those Who Fled the Country*, Geneva, December 2006. Data for 2008 is based on 2007 global trends of UNHCR.

g. The number of IDPs in Israel and the OPT is derived from Table 2.1.

3. Data Sources

There is no single authoritative source for the global Palestinian refugee and IDP population. Available data on the size of the Palestinian refugee and IDP populations is uneven and shifting, primarily due to the absence of a comprehensive registration system, frequent forced displacement, and the lack of a uniform definition of a Palestinian refugee. Internal displacement is also difficult to track because ceasefire lines have changed frequently and there is no internationally recognized border between Israel and the 1967 OPT.

BADIL estimates of the Palestinian refugee and IDP populations are calculated based on UNRWA data combined with data from the 2007 PCBS population census in the OPT and population growth projections.

The UN Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) has registered 1948 Palestine refugees since 1950; its records cover 75% of this group of refugees. UNRWA administers registration of Palestinian refugees as part of its relief and social services program. UNRWA registration data is not statistically valid, as reporting is voluntary. UNRWA has never carried out a comprehensive census of all Palestinian refugees under its mandate.

- Until 1993, refugees wishing to register with UNRWA had to meet requirements of need and initial flight in 1948 into a country where UNRWA operated. Revision of UNRWA's eligibility and registration criteria in 1993 eliminated these two requirements, which led to the registration of some previously-undocumented Palestinian refugees.
- In 2006, UNRWA issued new consolidated eligibility and registration instructions. Since then, services were extended to children of registered refugee women married to non-refugees. These children, however, are not registered as refugees in UNRWA's registration records.

The Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) maintains records of Palestinian refugees who are outside UNRWA's area of operations and are eligible for protection. Registration with UNRWA and the UNHCR are not mutually exclusive; i.e., Palestinian refugees outside UNRWA's area of operations may be registered with both.

- In general, the UNHCR has registered only a very minor portion of the Palestinian refugee population. At the end of 2008, only 342,681 Palestinian refugees were registered with the UNHCR as a population of concern. The majority resided in Saudi Arabia (240,025), Egypt (70,174) and Iraq (12,302) and Kuwait (6,000).
- For political reasons, UNHCR records refer to the country of origin of Palestinian refugees as the "occupied Palestinian territory." It is not possible, therefore, to identify how many Palestinian refugees registered with UNHCR are 1948 refugees, 1967 refugees, or Palestinians displaced from former Palestine after 1967. Palestinian IDPs in Israel and OPT are not included in the UNHCR data regarding IDPs worldwide.

Census data and population growth projections represent an additional source of estimates of the refugee and IDP populations with numerous limitations:

1. The Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS) has conducted two OPT population censuses in 1997 and 2007 which include refugees as a category, as well as questions regarding forced displacement. PCBS, however, has limited access to Palestinian populations in the OPT, Israel and abroad;
2. Israel (ICBS) publishes little statistical data about its Palestinians citizens and does not keep separate records of internally displaced Palestinians;
3. Few Arab host countries carry out a regular census of their resident refugee population. Some countries, such as Jordan, include Palestinians as a census category, but this data is not publicly available.
4. In North America and Europe, Palestinian asylum-seekers are often included in a general category of "stateless" persons, or classified according to their place of birth, or the host country that issued their travel documents.

Badil announces the statistical results of the 2008-2009 Survey of Palestinian Refugees and IDPs at a press conference on World Refugee Day (20 June) 2009



Palestinian Officials in Geneva: Sacrificing the Rights of Palestinians at the Altar of False Promises

(Photos Source: al-jazeera.net)



Badil Statement, 2 October 2009 – The recommendations of the UN fact finding mission to the Gaza Strip headed by Judge Richard Goldstone represented a golden opportunity for the Human Rights Council, the Security Council, the General Assembly, and all member states – particularly the United States and the European Union – to exercise their moral and legal obligations to hold Israel accountable for its crimes committed during its 2008-2009 war against Gaza. Yet the official Palestinian position calling for the postponement of the vote to endorse the report's recommendations now hamstring these opportunities. In so doing, it has undermined the principle of international legitimacy as a basis to resolve the Palestinian issue and prevents the Palestinian victims of this assault from achieving redress.

Badil Resource Center, working alongside Palestinian human rights organizations (particularly those with UN ECOSOC consultative status), and other international organizations and bodies, campaigned to ensure support for the report's recommendations from over two-thirds of the States represented on the Human Rights Council. Adoption by the Council of the report's recommendations would have raised them on to the Secretary General, the General Assembly, the Security Council and possibly on to the International Criminal Court. However the official Palestinian position, voiced by PLO Ambassador Ibrahim Khreisheh, now prevents this from taking place. This surprise position came without warning, and is a retreat from a battle that had already been won.

In its defense, elements of the Palestinian leadership attempted to deflect responsibility by claiming that the PLO is no more than an entity with observer status at the UN, and hence without the authority to propose or withdraw draft resolutions. But this does not explain what happened, nor does it constitute a justification for the Palestinian representative to act against a report, which is undoubtedly to their benefit.

Statements made by a number of Palestinian officials both accompanying and following Ambassador Khreisheh decision indicate a serious lack of coordination, and a failure to inform members of the PLO Executive Committee of the decision and its reasons. Badil views the position taken by Palestinian officials in Geneva as self-contradictory, and contrary to the struggle for the implementation of the rights of the Palestinian people. It marginalizes the application of international law and squanders the rights of Palestinian victims at the altar of false political promises.

Badil believes that the official Palestinian position cannot be justified by claiming a lack of preparation within the Council, or the need to give another chance to "peace efforts." Rather, we see in this official Palestinian stance, the continuity of similar previous retreats. For example, on the eve of the Durban Review Conference held in Geneva in April 2009, the PA Minister of Foreign Affairs acquiesced to dropping specific reference to the question of Palestine at the conference. Ambassador Khreisheh's predecessor at the UN also opposed a proposal made by the President of the UN General Assembly to pass a resolution condemning Israel's assault on the Gaza Strip, and calling for the formation of a tribunal to investigate Israel's violations of international law in January 2009.

In light of these considerations, Badil calls upon the Executive Committee of the PLO:

1. to issue a formal statement explaining the reasons for this position which contradicts the interests of the Palestinian people in general, the victims of Israel's assault on the Gaza Strip in particular, and the supreme national interest of holding Israel accountable for its crimes;
2. to take all legal, judicial and political measures to hold those responsible for this action accountable;
3. to work towards the establishment of a national body to coordinate between Palestinian human rights organizations and representatives of the PLO, to strengthen the role of these institutions, and the struggle to defend the rights of the Palestinian people before international bodies.

Justice Delayed is Justice Denied

Decision of Palestinian Leadership and International Pressure an Insult to the Victims

Statement of Palestinian Civil Society Responding to Deferral on Goldstone Recommendations Endorsement, issued by:

*Adalah * Addameer * Aldameer * Al Haq * Al Mezan * Arab Association for Human Rights * Badil * Civic Coalition for Jerusalem * DCI-Palestine * ENSAN Centre * ITTJIAH * Independent Commission for Human Rights * Jerusalem Legal Aid and Human Rights Centre * Palestinian Centre for Human Rights * Ramallah Centre for Human Rights Studies * Women's Centre for Legal Aid and Counselling **

Yesterday, 2 October 2009, the Palestinian leadership – under heavy international pressure lead by the United States – deferred the draft proposal at the Human Rights Council endorsing all the recommendations of the UN Fact Finding Mission (the Goldstone Report). This deferral denies the Palestinian peoples' right to an effective judicial remedy and the equal protection of the law. It represents the triumph of politics over human rights. It is an insult to all victims and a rejection of their rights.

The crimes documented in the report of the UN Fact Finding Mission represent the most serious violations of international law; Justice Goldstone concluded that there was evidence to indicate that crimes against humanity may have been committed in the Gaza Strip. Violations of international law continue to this day, *inter alia*, through the continuing Israeli-imposed illegal blockade of the Gaza Strip. The findings of the Mission confirmed earlier investigations conducted by independent Palestinian, Israeli and international organizations.

The injustice that has now been brought upon Palestinians has been brought upon everyone on this globe. International human rights and humanitarian law are not subject to discrimination, they are not dependent on nationality, religion, or political affiliation. International human rights and humanitarian law apply universally to all human beings.

The rule of law is intended to protect individuals, to guarantee their fundamental rights. Yet, if the rule of law is to be respected it must be enforced. World history, and the Israeli occupation of Palestinian land has shown us that as long as impunity persists, the law will continue to be violated; innocent civilians will continue to suffer the horrific consequences.

Justice delayed is justice denied. All victims have a legitimate right to an effective judicial remedy, and the equal protection of the law. These rights are universal: they are not subject to political considerations. In the nine months since Operation Cast Lead, no effective judicial investigations have been conducted into the conflict. Impunity prevails. In such situations, international law demands recourse to international judicial mechanisms. Victims' rights must be upheld. Those responsible must be held to account.

The belief that accountability and the rule of law can be brushed aside in the pursuit of peace is misguided. History has taught us time and time again, that sustainable peace can only be built on human rights, on justice, and the rule of law. For many years in Palestine international law, and the rule of law, has been sacrificed in the name of politics, and cast aside in favor of the peace process. This approach has been tried, and it has failed: the occupation has been solidified, illegal settlements have continued to expand, the right to self determination has been denied; innocent civilians suffer the horrific consequences. It is now time to pursue justice, and a peace built on a foundation of human rights, dignity, and the rule of law. In Justice Goldstone's words, there is no peace without justice.

The justifications given by the Palestinian leadership regarding the decision to defer are inappropriate. Consensus is not required, the United Nations system works on a majority basis. Since the beginning of the UN, and over the course of the Israeli occupation begun in 1967, consensus has rarely been acquired. The UN was established to represent the will of the nations of the world; it is inevitable that there will be dissent and disagreement. Decisions must rest on the will of the majority.

As human rights organizations we strongly condemn the Palestinian leaderships' decision to defer the proposal endorsing all the recommendations of the Fact Finding Mission, and the pressure exerted by certain members of the international community. Such pressure is in conflict with States international obligations, and is an insult to the Palestinian people.

As human rights and civil society organizations concerned with rights and justice, we declare that we will double our efforts to seek justice for the victims of the violations of human rights and international law in OPT without delay.

Badil Launches Fourth Annual Al-Awda Award

Badil Statement

We are from there...We are Alive and Will Continue to Live... and the Dream Lives On

Bethlehem, Palestine, 13 October 2009 – The Badil Resource Center for Palestinian Residency and Refugee Rights has announced the launch of the 2010 Annual Al-Awda Awards competition, now in its fourth consecutive year. The Award is an initiative of Badil which aims to provide a platform for the use of creative expression to promote Palestinian cultural identity and Palestinian refugee rights, foremost among them the right to return.

The categories of the 2010 al-Awda Award are:

1. **Al-Awda Award for Best Caricature (depicting an aspect of the Ongoing Palestinian Nakba);**
2. **Best Nakba Commemoration Poster**
3. **Best Research Essay**
4. **Best Article (Written Journalism)**
5. **Best Photograph (Photographer under 18)**

General Rules and Regulations

- Participants must adhere to the rules and regulations for the competition category in which they wish to participate;
- Submissions must be original and previously unpublished;
- Participants can only participate with only **ONE SUBMISSION PER COMPETITION CATEGORY**, but may participate in more than one competition category;
- Prizes will be awarded to the winners in each competition category at the Awards Ceremony to be held in May 2010;
- Badil commits to publishing the winning submissions as separate publications or as part of Badil's regular publications as specified for each competition category;
- Winners are selected by independent juries which include specialists in each field. Badil adheres to the decisions of these juries;
- Badil reserves the right to use, edit and publish all submissions at its discretion, while respecting the participants' intellectual property rights;
- The May 2010 Awards Ceremony will include exhibits of the top submissions from the caricature, poster, and photograph categories;
- Members of Badil's staff, board of directors, oversight committee, or juries are excluded from participation;
- The deadline for participants to send their submissions to Badil is 15 March 2010.

Note: Each Competition Category has its own category-specific rules and regulations.

Visit: <http://www.badil.org/annual-al-awda-award>
for the complete call for submissions
or contact awdaaward@badil.org

How to Participate

Submissions should be: Sent by email to awdaaward@badil.org
Hand delivered to the Badil offices in Bethlehem (al-Majd Building, beside Bethlehem Hotel, Karkafeh Street, Bethlehem)
Sent by post to:
Badil Resource Center
PO Box 728
Bethlehem, Palestine
Badil commits to confirming receipt of each submission in writing.

BDS Campaign Update

mid June – September 2009



Photo: Rich Wiles.

French activists protest Paris air show

20 June 2009 - A group of French activists from the French BDS campaign held a non-violent protest against Israeli participation in the Paris - Le Bourget Air Show. Le Bourget Air Show is one of the largest weapons and aerospace technology fairs in the world. The protest took place outside the Israeli pavilion, where several Israeli arms companies had come to sell their military technologies to potential European buyers, while French president Nicolas Sarkozy was visiting the air show. Despite forced removals by police, the BDS activists were highly visible, and distributed several thousand informational leaflets to the public.

Toronto Palestine Solidarity Activists Protest Dead Sea Scrolls Exhibit

June-July 2009 - The Coalition Against Israeli Apartheid and Women in Solidarity with Palestine conducted a campaign of protest against the Royal Ontario Museum (ROM), for their exhibition of the looted Dead Sea Scrolls. For several weeks, BDS activists conducted successful protests and pickets to inform the public about the theft of the Dead Sea Scrolls following the refusal of the museum's directors to make public the documents it claimed proved the legality of the exhibit, as well as their refusal to seek a UNESCO opinion on the matter. The campaign called on the ROM to recognize the Scrolls are looted Palestinian artifacts and to dissociate itself from the Israeli Antiquities Authority, which has systematically looted millions of Palestinian artifacts.

SOAS Students Mobilize against Normalization with Tel Aviv University

9 July 2009 – The School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS – University of London) Student union overwhelmingly passed a motion criticizing a lecture series attempting to whitewash Tel Aviv's colonial past and present and called for the end of SOAS's collaboration with Tel Aviv University (TAU) in hosting the series on the grounds of its role in giving key legal, technological and strategic support for maintaining and expanding Israel's colonial occupation. In response to the director's failure to acknowledge the serious implications of collaboration with TAU that undermined the reputation, integrity and fundamental ethical principles of SOAS, the SOAS Palestine Society prepared a briefing paper for him and the Governing Body outlining TAU's intensive, purposive and open institutional contributions to the Israeli military. For more and to download the report, visit: <http://www.bdsmovement.net/?q=node/502>

BDS Updates

U.K. hits Israel with partial arms embargo over Gaza war

13 July 2009 - Britain slapped a partial arms embargo on Israel, refusing to supply replacement parts and other equipment for Sa'ar 4.5 gunships because they were used in Operation Cast Lead. The embargo followed a government review of all British defense exports to Israel, which was announced in April 2009.

HeidelbergCement tries to sell West Bank mines as BDS pressures grow

13 July 2009 - HeidelbergCement's subsidiary, Hanson Israel, manufactures ready-made cement, aggregates and asphalt for Israel's construction industry and operates a quarry in the occupied West Bank. In March 2009, the Israeli human rights organization Yesh Din filed a petition with the Israeli high court demanding a halt to illegal mining activity in West Bank quarries, including Hanson Israel's Nahal Raba quarry. Attorneys representing Yesh Din called upon the court to put an end to this "clearly illegal activity, which constitutes blunt and ugly colonial exploitation of land we [Israel] had forcefully seized." In May 2009, Israel ordered a freeze on the expansion of Israeli-run stone and gravel quarries in the occupied West Bank.

EU Opens Investigation into Israeli Settlement Products

14 July 2009 - Hamburg Finance Court opened an investigation to decide whether Soda-Club devices made in Ma'ale Adumim can be imported into the European Union exempt of customs, like all other Israeli industrial products. The Hamburg court has consulted with the European Court of Justice about obtaining a "preliminary ruling" that would settle the issue in a binding manner for all 27 EU member states. If the court decides that a customs duty can be levied, it will be tantamount to handing down a decision against Israel's settlement policy, in effect an implementation of economic sanctions.

Ken Loach withdraws from the Melbourne International Film Festival over Israeli funding

18 July 2009 - English filmmaker Ken Loach withdrew his film *Looking for Eric* from the Melbourne International Film Festival because the festival receives funding from the Israeli government. In a letter to festival executive director Richard Moore, he said that "Palestinians, including artists and academics, have called for a boycott of events supported by Israel." He cited "illegal occupation of Palestinian land, destruction of homes and livelihoods" and "the massacres in Gaza" as reasons for the boycott which is not aimed "at independent Israeli films or filmmakers," but at "the Israeli state."

PACBI Issues Guidelines for Applying the International Cultural Boycott of Israel

20 July 2009 - The Palestinian Campaign for the Academic and Cultural Boycott of Israel (PACBI) issued guidelines for applying the cultural boycott. These criteria are mainly intended to help guide cultural workers and organizers around the world in adhering to the Palestinian call for boycott, as a contribution towards establishing a just peace in our region. Read the Guidelines at: <http://www.bdsmovement.net/?q=node/500>

CodePink Launch Campaign to Boycott Ahava

11 August 2009 - Activists from CODEPINK launched the Stolen Beauty campaign to boycott Israeli cosmetics corporation Ahava by staging a protest action at the Hilton Hotel in Tel Aviv. Some put on bikinis, wrote on their bodies with mud NO AHAVA/NO LOVE, while others carried signs with slogans such as "There is no love in occupation." They chanted, sang and made the Israeli evening news. Visit the campaign website at: www.stolenbeauty.org

Amnesty International Withdraws from Leonard Cohen's Israel Concert Fund

18 August 2009 - Amnesty International announced that it will abstain from any involvement in the Leonard Cohen concert in Tel Aviv and will not be party to any fund that benefits from the concert's proceeds.

European BDS Activists launch Ramadan Campaign targeting Israeli Dates

20 August 2009 - BDS campaign activists launched a broad based consumer boycott campaign targeting Israeli dates that coincided with the beginning of the month of Ramadan in the Hijri (Islamic) calendar. The campaign targeted Israeli agricultural export giant Agrexco, which sells flowers, vegetables and fruit, including dates, produced on both sides of the "green line." The campaign was launched by solidarity organizations in Belgium, France, the Netherlands, South Africa and the United Kingdom.

BlackRock Bank Divests from Settlement Construction

20 August 2009 - The British bank BlackRock announced its divestment from Lev Leviev settlement projects in the occupied West Bank. The divestment decision followed pressure by three Norwegian financial institutions (Storebrand, Norwegian-Swedish bank Skandiabanken, and the Norwegian-Danish Danica Pensjon) marketing BlackRock funds. BlackRock was second biggest shareholder in the Israeli firm.

Prominent UK Chef: "Don't buy West Bank Produce"

25 August 2009 - Joanna Blythman, a top UK chef and popular food journalist, recently called on retailers and importers not to buy goods from settlements in the West Bank. The "fruit and vegetables grown [in illegal Israeli settlements in the West Bank] amount to stolen goods," Blythman wrote in an article published in a food magazine.

Norwegian Pension Fund divests from Israeli military giant Elbit

3 September 2009 - The Norwegian Ministry of Finance excluded the Israeli company Elbit Systems Ltd. from the Government Pension Fund – Global, on the basis of the Council on Ethics' recommendation. The Council on Ethics found that investment in Elbit constitutes an unacceptable risk of contribution to serious violations of fundamental ethical norms as a result of the company's integral involvement in Israel's construction of a separation barrier on occupied territory. "We do not wish to fund companies that so directly contribute to violations of international humanitarian law," said Minister of Finance Kristin Halvorsen. The surveillance system that Elbit supplies to the Israeli authorities is one of the main components in the separation barrier and its associated control regime. The surveillance system has been specially designed in close collaboration with the Israeli military and has no other applications. Furthermore Elbit is clearly aware of exactly where and how the system is intended to be used. While not related to the Council's decision, it is important to note that Elbit is also involved in the construction of the wall on the U.S. Mexico border that aims to block the passage of refugees from Latin America into the United States.

Ken Loach, Jane Fonda, Danny Glover, Alice Walker, John Greyson, and many others protest Toronto International Film Festival's complicity in Israel re-branding

3 September 2009 – An international group of more than 50 prominent filmmakers, writers, artists and academics—including Ken Loach, David Byrne, Naomi Klein, Alice Walker, Wallace Shawn, and Danny Glover – signed a letter protesting the Toronto International Film Festival's decision to spotlight the city of Tel Aviv and the work of 10 Israeli filmmakers. The "Toronto Declaration" had a massive effect in raising the profile of the cultural boycott of Israel, the effect of Israel's apartheid practices on Palestinian citizens of Israel, and recent Israeli efforts to "re-brand" and whitewash itself as a benign entity within both arts communities and the broad public, particularly in North America.

Legal Action to enforce Human Rights Conditions in EU-Israel Association Agreement

8 September 2009 – British parliamentarian Clare Short and the European Campaign to End the Siege of Gaza launched a legal action to require the European Union to uphold the human rights conditions entrenched in the EU-Israel Association Agreement. The action was launched in a letter sent to President Barroso and Javier Solana, the High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy, spelling out the way in which the Treaty conditions are being breached and the way in which international law applies.

IPSC targets Israeli Dead Sea Products in Jervis Shopping Centre

12 September 2009 - As part of the international BDS campaign, the Ireland Palestine Solidarity Campaign launched an action against Dead Sea Products, an Israeli cosmetics firm, which has a stall in Jervis Centre in Dublin. Activists from the IPSC wearing "Boycott Israel" t-shirts surrounded the Dead Sea Products stall on the top floor in Jervis Street shopping center, handing out leaflets and asking people not to buy products from an apartheid country such as Israel.

U.S. pension fund giant divests from Africa-Israel

12 September 2009 - The U.S. pension fund giant, TIAA-CREF, confirmed that it divested from Africa-Israel Investments, owned by Israeli billionaire Lev Leviev. The fund's investment in Africa Israel amounted to \$257,000, so the financial effect of the divestment is minimal, but the news of the divestment came as the Israeli firm announced that it was unable to meet its liabilities to its bondholders.

Brazilian Parliament Calls for the Freeze of the Israel - Mercosur Free Trade Agreement

13 September 2009 - The Brazilian Parliamentary Commission on Foreign Relations and National Defense has recommended that the parliament should not ratify the Free Trade Agreement between Mercosur (the trading bloc of the Latin American countries) and the State of Israel until "Israel accepts the creation of the Palestinian state on the 1967 borders." This decision is an explicit act of pressure on Israel to comply with international law, and a rejection of years of incessant Israeli lobbying, pressuring for a vote to ratify the agreement. The decision is an enormous blow for Israel's economy and foreign relations as it poses a massive stumbling block for the enactment of the agreement, which since its signing in 2007, has been stalled due to a lack of ratification by Mercosur member countries. The Mercosur is one of the world's most quickly expanding markets and the fifth largest economy in the world. Israeli exports to the Mercosur amounted nearly 600 million dollars in 2006. It is important to also note that Brazil alone, even without a Free Trade Agreement, is Israel's third largest export destination.

Britain's unions commit to a mass boycott movement of Israeli goods

17 September 2009 - British trade unions representing 6.5 million workers overwhelmingly passed a resolution voting to commit its members to participate in and build a campaign involving boycott, divestment and sanctions against Israel. The motion was passed at the 2009 annual Trades Union Congress (TUC) held in Liverpool after being submitted by the Fire Brigades' Union. The TUC is a coalition of 60 different unions representing the vast majority of organized British workers. The congress voted to condemn "Israeli military aggression and end the blockade on Gaza" and calls for an end on all arms trade with Israel, the imposition of a ban on the importing of goods produced in Israeli settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, and to support moves to suspend the E.U.-Israel Association Agreement. It also calls for the TUC's main leadership body, the General Council, to affiliate with the Palestine Solidarity Campaign (PSC), to push for boycott, divestment and sanctions of Israel. The PSC is a major Palestinian solidarity organization in the U.K. that has worked with British trade unionists in different capacities to advance their work on Palestinian-related causes.

BDS Updates

Spain boycotts Ariel College for being on occupied territory

16 September 2009 - The "University Center of Ariel in Samaria" (AUCS) was excluded from a prestigious university competition about sustainable architecture that was held in Spain. "Ariel University Centre of Samaria" was one out of 21 teams selected last April to compete for the Solar Decathlon-Madrid 2010, the most prestigious competition for sustainable architecture in the world, organized by the Spanish Ministry of Housing together with the Universidad Politécnica de Madrid. Selected teams, formed by architects and engineering students are asked to design and build a real house entirely driven by solar energy. Every house should be built in one of the 20 sites in the "Solar Villa" planned in Madrid to host them. To facilitate participation of the various teams, the Spanish Ministry of Housing allocated a sum of 100,000 Euros to every project. The decision to exclude AUCS represents the first case of sanctions against an Israeli academic institution in Spain.

Bilbao Cooperation Council Adopts BDS

18 September 2009 – Members of the Municipal Council for Cooperation of Bilbao voted to join the BDS Campaign against the State of Israel. The Municipal Council for Cooperation of Bilbao is an official advisory body to the city's municipal government representing the different social agencies working in the field of aid and development in Bilbao. It is currently made up of forty-five NGOs and representatives of the four political parties represented in the municipality. Its purpose is to unite efforts and promote improved management in the work of solidarity and cooperation.

BDS Activists Occupy Ahava for a Second Time

19 September 2009 – In coordinated actions in Code Pink in Washington DC, Jews for Justice for Palestinians in London and the Bathrobe Brigade in Amsterdam conducted a coordinated action to confront Ahava. Ahava's cosmetic products are manufactured in the illegal settlement of Mizpe Shalem. Based inside Occupied Palestinian Territory, the Israeli Settlement has stolen land and natural resources away from Palestinians. Furthermore, the sale of these products acts to finance and support war crimes committed by the Israel. For more on the campaign against Ahava, visit stolenbeauty.org

Large French Trade Union joins the BDS Campaign

22 September 2009 - The Union "Solidaires Industry" joined the international campaign for Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions through a decision of its general membership. In the BDS resolution, the union delegates stated: "The rights of Palestinian workers in the 1948 borders or in those of 1967 are not equal to those of other Israeli citizens. Discrimination is evident, 50,000 Palestinian laborers working in the settlements and the Jordan Valley without rights, with wages less than half the minimum wage in Israel...[French company Alstom continues with] the construction of the tramway in Jerusalem which will increase discrimination against Palestinians. In Languedoc Roussillon our fellow workers in Solidaires thirty-four are struggling against the Israeli company Agrexco, which does not respect the rights of Palestinians. Industrial action is possible." Read the full text of the resolution (in French) at: <http://www.solidaires-industrie.org/Boycott-Israel>

PACBI Issues Guidelines for Applying the International Academic Boycott of Israel

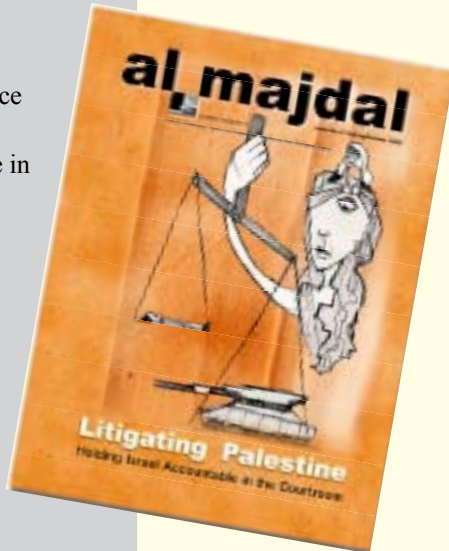
1 October 2009 – The Palestinian Campaign for the Academic and Cultural Boycott of Israel (PACBI) issued guidelines for applying the academic boycott. These criteria are mainly intended to help guide cultural workers and organizers around the world in adhering to the Palestinian call for boycott, as a contribution towards establishing a just peace in our region. Read the Guidelines at: <http://www.bdsmovement.net/?q=node/566>

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About the meaning of al-Majdal

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

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

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

Badil has Launched its New Website

The new website features pages in English, Arabic, Spanish, Italian and French, as well as a variety useful pages containing background information, resources for visitors and activists, photographs, publications and a large document archive. Visitors can also search Badil’s library online.

The new site also includes a calendar of relevant global events. We encourage organizers around the world to help keep this calendar updated by sending us information about their events and activities.



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