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Palestinian Refugees:

Different Generations, but One Identity

The Forced Migration and Refugee Unit
The Ibrahim Abu-Lughod Institute of International Studies
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INTRODUCTION

Zarefa Ali

Palestinian refugees constitute perhaps the largest group of refugees on the globe. Their plight, created in 1948, endures to this day as their children, grandchildren and subsequent generations are yet living in refuge. When one speaks of the problem many aspects come to mind including psychological, social, economic, existential, humanitarian, and political ones. All these, in addition to the political environment refugees reside in, have had a significant impact on the status of Palestinians. In some Arab host countries, Lebanon being one, they have been deprived for two-thirds of a century of their basic rights, and suffer from recurring conflict and oppression. The policies of host countries, in addition to the overall geopolitical context in which they reside, powerfully affect the formation and development of their Palestinian identity.

Intergenerational differences between Palestinian refugees constitute a significant issue which the various articles included in this book seek to explore. It is often assumed that the majority of Palestinian refugees live in refugee camps, and a large portion of the specialized literature has been devoted to the status of camp refugees, whether inside the oPt or in host Arab countries. The diversity of this book is exemplified by the variety of geographic settings covered in the articles it includes, exploring the status of Palestinian refugees inside and outside of refugee camps and in various parts of the world. In addition to space, extended time is also presented. One finds a comparative study of refugees in Lebanon and Brazil, as well as intergenerational differences among Palestinian refugees in the oPt, Amman, Lebanon, Syria, and other diasporic areas.

After six decades of living in exile, Palestinian refugees continue to share characteristics which place them under a broader identity, notably that of Palestinians more generally.[1] In the context of studying the issue of Palestinian refugees, the emphasis should not only be on *Jeel Al-Nakba* (first generation refugees) but also on the conditions and status of their children and grandchildren. The question of intergenerational differences between Palestinian refugees is an issue worth further exploration, particularly when searching for solutions for their continued state of exile. Some insist on the

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[1] As stated in the Concept Note for the Conference entitled "Palestinian Refugees: Different Generations But One Identity," Birzeit University. This conference was held on November 21-22, 2011 and the abstracts were selected by a research committee at the Ibrahim Abu Lughod Institute of International Studies. The submitted papers were then carefully revised by a publishing committee.

dream of return, while others choose to resettle in the first or second country of refuge. However, the different perspectives of Palestinian refugees does not undermine nor conflict with their inalienable Right of Return. They all have the individual right to choose either returning to their lands or integrating in the country they currently reside in, as per the UNGA resolution 194.[2] As a result, these differences should be taken into consideration while suggesting solutions for their prolonged problem. This book broadens the analysis, from generational/temporal factors to geographical and social ones, noting that differences among Palestinian refugees also extend to the areas they live in, whether in refugee camps or outside of these camps. Here many issues come into play such as level of education, political mobilization, health, labor, social, psychological and many others aspects. The geo-political space likewise plays a fundamental role in determining the status and integration of Palestinian refugees. Due to contrasting legal contexts, many differences arise as to how to deal with the 'refugee problem' in a given space. Nevertheless, the diversity of opinions and solutions advanced does not weaken the Palestinian cause, but rather strengthens it. This is reflected in the richness of the various articles included in this book, with their different but always rich and dynamic perspectives and recommendations.

The various chapters were first presented in a conference organized by the Forced Migration and Refugee Unit at the Ibrahim Abu-Lughod Institute of International Studies, Birzeit University, entitled "Palestinian Refugees: Different Generations, but One Identity." As the title suggests, despite the differences that exist between the conditions and outlook of Palestinian refugees, their cause is one and their identity is one, Palestinian. Whether holding American, Jordanian or any other citizenship, they identify themselves first and foremost as Palestinians. In this book, and perhaps contrary to tradition, various approaches and methodologies were employed to underpin the Palestinian refugee problem such as the legal, humanitarian, political, ethnographic, social, and psychological dimensions. We thereby emphasize the importance of studying the issue of Palestinian refugees from different angles, with emphasis on the intergenerational differences. And we call for further research on the matter of intergenerational differences among Palestinian refugees, a new and intriguing field.

The first chapter of this book focuses precisely on Palestinian refugees' experiences and intergenerational differences. Rosemary Sayigh's study examines how the fourth and fifth generations of Palestinian refugees in

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[2] Article 11 of Resolution 194 states that "refugees wishing to return to their homes and live at peace with their neighbours should be permitted to do so at the earliest practicable date, and that compensation should be paid for the property of those choosing not to return and for loss of or damage to property which, under principles of international law or in equity, should be made good by the Governments or authorities responsible."

Lebanon feel and live their identity, taking a sample of those residing in Bourj Al-Barajna refugee camp. She argues that there are many factors that influence Palestinian identity such as geo-political space, place and class of origin. Based on interviews with Palestinian youth in Bourj Al-Barajna, Sayigh argues that they identify themselves as Palestinians, and this self-identification is just as strong as it was in the 1970s. In her article, Ilana Feldman examines Palestinian refugees experience in a changing humanitarian order, notably in light of the distinctiveness of the Palestinian refugee condition. She focuses on humanitarian practice with emphasis on camp structure, ration provision, infrastructure, and development projects. Her study is empirically based on archival sources in addition to ethnographic fieldwork carried out in refugee camps in Lebanon and Jordan. Feldman examines how over the past six decades, humanitarian work has shaped Palestinian identity and experience. An important issue which was raised in one of the studies is how Palestinian refugees reject being labeled as victims: Kristine Beckerle's article argues that Palestinians have been labeled as victims by the United Nations, and therefore provided with pity and care by the international community. Based on interviewing Palestinian refugees in the West Bank, Beckerle examines how younger generations of Palestinian refugees overtly reject their victim role.

Chapter two sheds light on Palestinian refugees' identity and the Right of Return, with some articles presenting comparative studies. Leonardo Schiocchet for example compares between Palestinian refugees in Lebanon and in Brazil, with an emphasis on the most important referents of identity and social organization in the context of life in Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon. His study is based on fieldwork carried out since 2006 among refugee communities, with an emphasis on three refugee communities: Al-Jalil and *Dbaye* refugee camps in Lebanon, and a set of 110 Palestinian refugees who arrived in Brazil in 2007 from an Iraqi refugee camp. Sari Hanafi, for his part, discusses the Palestinian refugees' Right of Return under what he calls an "extraterritorial nation-state solution" motivated by the Arab uprising. Hanafi explores the interplay between three factors which affect the construction of Palestinianness and which impact the process of return: social boundaries, geographical borders, and nation-state policies in the region. Some chapters in this book explore intergenerational differences in the return narratives of refugees in the West Bank. These include Sophie Richter-Devroe article analyzing interviews with first, second, and third generation of Palestinian refugees residing in the West Bank. She further examines how refugees' political narratives, imaginaries and practices regarding return are shaped by their generation, gender, and other factors.

Chapter three deals with the psychological and spatial dimensions of Palestinian refugees by studying refugee camps and in one instance applying psychoanalytical theory. Khaldoun Bshara argues that the production of refugee identity by the use of spatial practices takes place under the 'psychic space.' Unlike other studies conducted on Palestinian refugees, Bshara studies the psyche as the research base, applying psychoanalytical theory to investigate Palestinian refugees' feelings. He also explores how the refugees try to keep alive connections to their places of origin. Nell Gabiam describes over UNRWA's plan to rebuild Neirab refugee camp in Syria, revealing the existence of competing understandings among refugees regarding the meaning of the camp as a refugee space. Based on interviews conducted with Palestinian refugees residing in the camp, Gabiam argues that by replacing the barracks in the camp there would be nothing left to testify to Palestinian suffering and loss.

To conclude the articles in this volume, Rana Barakat presents an analysis of the various ethnographically- and theoretically based articles and illustrates their contribution to Palestinian refugee studies. She also concludes that, while attempting to answer the main questions of this volume, the authors raised new questions which inspire further research.

As can be seen through this rapid introductory overview, the present book (and the conference on which it was based) presents a diverse and yet concise kaleidoscope of refugee lives, past and present, as well as projected futures based on the core values and modalities of justice and humanity. It also conveys a clear idea of the various methodologies that are being applied to the conundrum of the Palestinian refugees and to refugee studies in general at the beginning of the twenty-first century, thus offering the reader a valuable tool for analyzing a phenomenon which increasingly haunts the international system, and challenges decision makers, civil society organizations, and the world citizenry with a loud call for change.

Chapter One:

Palestinian Refugees' Experiences: Intergenerational Differences

Palestinian Refugee Identity/ies: Generation, Region, Class

Rosemary Sayegh

Introduction

My starting point vis-à-vis 'identity' is a paper by Brubaker and Cooper where they usefully distinguish between 'hard' and 'soft' meanings of the term (Brubaker and Cooper 2000). Identity, they write "tends to mean too much (when understood in a strong sense), too little (when understood in a weak sense), or nothing at all (because of its sheer ambiguity)" (Brubaker and Cooper 2000, 1). Following these authors I make a primary distinction between authoritarian registrations of citizens, refugees, etc, and the varying affiliations that a person adopts throughout her/his lifetime. Brubaker and Cooper further authors propose that 'identification' should be used in the case of authoritarian attributions, and that other terms such as 'self', 'belonging' or 'self-identification' should be used for 'soft', or subjective meanings. This distinction can be described as one between the 'objective' and the 'subjective', except that to do so essentializes their separateness. People may feel an intense subjective affiliation with a national identification, particularly in a case like that of the Palestinians, deprived of their homeland by colonialist negation. But even though the duration of their exile increases Palestinian refugees' desire for Palestine, reinforcing their sense of shared identification, yet it simultaneously deepens colorings of 'self-identification' though different locations, class positions; politics and ideologies. This poses the likelihood of a growing gap between a shared 'Palestinianness' and differing class, regional, political or individual interests.

Dispossessed of a territory and a state, the Palestinians occupy an ambiguous situation in world politics, recognized as a 'people' with a right to partial membership in the United Nations, and conceded a 'national authority' without sovereignty or independence. If their struggle is to continue, and include refugee rights to repatriation, it must depend on subjective feelings of 'commonality' and 'sameness' rather than international recognition. Because the hard meaning of identity still evades them, these 'softer' usages carry a political charge above and beyond the case for citizens of a 'normal' nation-state. In their case a diaspora-wide sense of national belonging is an essential element in a struggle for recognition waged against more powerful antagonists. In this paper I will use the term 'Palestinianness' to indicate this strategic fusion of objective and subjective identity.

While a century of struggle against imperialist-colonialist negation has produced a strong sense of 'Palestinianness', we must be careful not to exaggerate the political effects of a unity of sentiment based in a suppressed national identity. Far from having a unifying effect, the struggle to assert a suppressed identity is likely to be politically divisive, as cases such as those of the Kurds and Tamils as well as the Palestinians show. Diasporas are not likely to produce political, social, or cultural homogeneity even when a sense of shared origin is strong. When exile and scattering are as long-lasting as in the Palestinian case 'local' attachments and interests are likely to develop, especially in the absence of a state. The essential role of the state in nation-creation has been noted by many scholars, for example Arjun Appadurai who notes that the modern state is empowered by "a well-bounded domestic authority. This never exists in itself but has to be continually created through *'people production'*" (Appadurai 1996, 43, my italics). 'People production' requires a discursive and institutional emphasis on shared history, customs and identity that can only be carried out by states or national liberation struggles.

The magnitude of the problems Palestinian face generates readiness to struggle, especially among the young, but also confusion, soul-searching, 'dropping out', and 'individual solutions'. Attachment to the land is unifying on a rhetorical level, but also divides those living in historic Palestine from those outside its borders. Except for the brief period of Resistance movement mobilization (1968-1982), little has linked Palestinians of different regions, classes, and generations beyond the fact that all live the consequences of the *Nakba*. Questions to be asked are: what is the situation in diaspora communities vis-à-vis identity? How do young adults in particular diaspora regions view the 'identity issue'? What is needed to develop a unifying sense of identification not only with the land but with other Palestinians? These are the questions that frame the observations that follow. Their empirical basis is ongoing work with a group of teen-agers in Bourj al-Barajneh camp, and with young adults outside the camps involved in non-partisan, national-social work. The use of interviews means that it is discursive rather than behavioral aspects of identity that are discussed.[1]

Strands Within Palestinian Refugee Identity

Even during the period of greatest self-identification of Palestinians everywhere with the Resistance movement, the many strands or colorings of this identity were evident to ordinary camp residents, Resistance cadres, and an outsider like myself, doing fieldwork in Bourj Barajneh in the early 1970s.

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[1] This paper presents only preliminary observations as the research on which it is based is continuing.

To review briefly the components of this multi-strandedness, it included:

i) Place of origin in Palestine; this was still a marker of belonging through particularities of food preparation, accent, custom, camp residence, and local memories.[2]

ii) Original class in Palestine, whether urban or rural, land-owner or landless, schooled or illiterate; the urban/rural class divide was replicated in camp/non-camp residence as well as integration/non-integration into Lebanese society. Original class was still alive in camp relationships, for example in marriage-making.[3]

iii) Traces of political attitudes from pre-48 Palestine still existed in the 1960s, taking forms such as opposition to political parties in general as harmful to national unity, or in partisanship for Hajj Amin Husseini as opposed to the PLO (ibid, 50-53).

To these pre-1948 differentiations, exile added new ones: in camps, educational level and work status began to weigh more heavily in prestige and influence than pre-1948 land ownership, and salaried employment created a new class boundary as the majority of camp inhabitants were forced into unskilled labor. Lebanon divided Christian Palestinians from Muslims through separate camps, introducing a level of sectarian consciousness that had not existed before. As younger camp refugees entered political parties, or clandestine resistance, new ideologies and strategies of struggle had their effect on subjective identity. Arab and Palestinian nationalism replaced old political orientations, but added new ones with a stronger hold over self-identification.

In Lebanon, and probably in other diasporic regions too, generation became the basis of identity differentiation. Based in the initial rupture of the Nakba, everyday discourse in camps marked those already adult in 1948 as the 'generation of Palestine' (*jeel Filastin*); those born just before or after 1948 as the 'generation of the Nakba' (*jeel al-Nakba*), and those exposed in childhood to the Resistance movement as the 'generation of the Revolution' (*jeel al-Thawra*).[4] Linked to changes in Arab politics and the regional environment, such an emphatic degree of generational differentiation reflects the refugees' exposure to historic flux. Yet it also points to a strong form of subjective

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[2] See (Sayigh 1994, 63).

[3] Space allocations were influenced by status in Palestine; larger, richer villages dominated the informal councils formed in the first decades; poor urbanites drafted into camps separated themselves physically and socially from rural people (Sayigh 1994, 37).

[4] In Jordan, according to Abdallah, four generations were specified and named 'Filastin'; 'al-Nakba'; 'al-Saoudi'; 'al-Jedid': (Abdallah 2006, 134-3, 145, 149, 159). Some say that the fourth generation in Lebanon is named *jeel al-haroob* (the generation of wars), but this usage is less widespread than the first three.

identity shared by Palestinians of the same age-group across diasporic space and social hierarchies, and differentiating refugees from members of the host societies.

With the coming of the Resistance movement to Lebanon in 1970, factional affiliation became the most important marker of self identification as well as the dominant way of expressing 'Palestinianness.' Membership in a Resistance group was seen as the optimal channel through which to express national belonging; factional belonging affected every aspect of behavior. Camp inhabitants identified each other primarily through their position vis-à-vis specific Resistance groups. Membership was seen as lasting for life, and was given a family-like character through values such as loyalty to a permanent father-leader, and pressures towards in-group marriage.[5] The gradual decline of the influence of the Resistance groups from the 1970s until today is a product of many international, regional, and national factors: American intervention, change in the balance of Arab regime support, the Palestinian leadership's adoption of the 'two state solution', and its cooption of the 'opposition.' There were additional factors that particularly affected Palestinians in Lebanon, subverting identification with the Resistance groups, such as the distancing of the PLO in Tunis after 1982, the Oslo Accords (1993-4), and memories of Resistance 'mistakes.'[6]

During the period of the Resistance movement in Lebanon, the force of national mobilization challenged family cohesion in a way that reminds us that household family and kin group inflect subjective identity to a degree that fluctuates with the political temperature. In the 1970s, a major narrative of young adults was how they had joined the Resistance against the wishes of their parents. Resistance discourse strove to suppress pre-national belongings such as that of family or locality. One of the tasks of cadres who worked in camps was to negotiate with families to let their daughters marry *fedayy'een* from 'outside', surrendering their preference for the kin-group or community (Peteet 1991, 179-183). When I condoled with a fighter on the death of his cousin in South Lebanon, he responded: "He is not closer to me than any other Palestinian". Para-military scout groups for children were another way of strengthening self-identification with the nation (or faction) while loosening that with the family.

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[5] "Women members and cadres were expected to marry from within the organization…The family-like atmosphere that is fostered among cadres has expanded to encompass subtle forms of matchmaking and an endogamy based on political affiliation": (Peteet 1991, 181).

[6] By 'mistakes' people meant abuses against Shi'ite inhabitants of the South, corruption and betrayal on the part of certain PLO leaders, and 'abandoning' the community in 1982.

1982: End of 'Ayyam al-Thawra'

The evacuation of the PLO from Lebanon in 1982 left a vacuum of influence and support, as well as anger in those who felt they had been abandoned to Lebanese hostility. One symptom of anger was the rebellion that erupted within Fateh. A symptom of the vacuum was the revival of the village funds and committees that had existed before the advent of the Resistance, along with exhibitions of village memorabilia and displays of keys and other nationalist symbols in camp homes (Khalili 2004, 10). This revival of village belonging preceded the more politicized commemoration of villages that accompanied the post-Oslo, diaspora-based *Haqq al-Awda* movement, formed to contest the leadership's marginalization of the refugee issue. The beginning of the village books in 1895 was yet another symptom of resurgent village-belonging (Davis 2011, 50-1). From here unfolded a revitalization of village-based identities linked to a politics of rejecting Palestinian-Israeli negotiations, asserting refugee rights to return to their original homes, and demands for restoration of the whole of Palestine rather than the establishment of a mini-state in the West Bank and Gaza. Among the many signs of this revitalization were the use of village names in young adults' email addresses (Khalili 2005, 130); return visits to villages of origin (Davis 2011, 218; Wiles 2010, 180-185); posters showing maps of Palestine with keys; and village commemoration days in Syria (Al-Hardan 2011, 163).

Two other suppressed layers of self-identity resurfaced after 1982: religious belonging and refugee status. NGO workers reported that mothers in camps were telling their children to say 'Muslim' if strangers asked them who they were. A friend in Shatila, an active member of the Women's Union, began to wear long-sleeved coats and the *hijab*. She explained to me that Islam was "like a mask", and that it didn't affect her nationalist belonging. But it soon became evident that the return to Islam was deeper than mere protection, involving perhaps self-blame for having neglected religious practices, and blame of the national movement for having been too secular.[7] Piety in clothing and speech spread through the camps. Qur'anic verses replaced Resistance martyrs on home walls. There were several families in Shatila camp where the father was Marxist while the sons were *mashayekh*. The new Islamism deepened as it connected Palestinians ideologically with trends in the wider Arab world.

A debate heard in camps after the evacuation of the PLO was whether identification as refugees was not, in fact, an asset to be claimed because

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[7] In 2010 I asked a friend in Shatila whose dead husband, Abu Ahmad, had been a local cadre of the Marxist PFLP, how she thought Abu Ahmad would have reacted to the family's turn to Islam. "He would have understood and felt the same as us" she replied.

of the rights contained within it. Such affirmations came in stark contrast to declarations in the 1970s expressing gratitude to the Resistance for having restored camp peoples' true identity as Palestinians against the false one of refugees. Similar debates can be heard today: some reject the term refugee as humiliating, but others affirm it as signifying that they belong in Palestine and not in Lebanon. From a recent recording in Bourj al-Barajneh: "Q: *The word refugee, do you accept it as a part of your identity, or do you refuse it?* A: Of course (I accept). The word refugee means that I'm Palestinian, and it specifies from which area. We must cling to it" (F.S. July 27, 2011). However another speaker said: "No, of course I refuse it. It means that others are higher than me. We're on the ground, they are in the sky" (S.H. July 31, 2011).

Women from Shatila camp who recorded their life stories with me in the late 1980s used phrases such as "all our lives are tragedy" to describe an existence deeply scarred by loss and displacement, with no hope of return in the near future.[8] Women I recorded with in Gaza and the West Bank between 1998 and 2000 told more up-beat life stories, perhaps anticipating that Israeli occupation must eventually end, leaving them 'at home'. That regional diversity affects identity as perceived by others is supported by numerous anecdotes: for example, describing a meeting in France of Palestinian youth from different diasporic regions, Racha Salah notes how 'different' they appeared to each other at first sight, and how it took time to establish commonalities.[9] Young Palestinians who have visited '1948 Palestine' with non-Arab passports report being commented on because of their 'different' clothes and accents. Diasporic region accumulates specificity as exile is prolonged. Increasingly tough border and document regulations immobilize the refugees, and encourages the development of regional particularisms, a trend reinforced by PLO paralysis since Oslo.[10] Listening in 2011 to young Palestinians in Lebanon describe their impressions of fellow Palestinians in other diasporic regions suggests that adaptation to different hosts has produced a layer of regional specificity that colors their shared 'Palestinianness'. Regionalism weakens national unity to the degree that it allows separate interests to crystallize. No common educational program exists to give Palestinian children a shared cultural background.

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[8] All but three out of twenty speakers had lost a close family member, or more than one, through Lebanon's many wars.

[9] "At Bordeaux, studying with Palestinian comrades from the Occupied Territories, I noticed that our mentalities differed. Only the suffering of the absent land was common to us" [Salah 1996, 190-1. *My translation from French*.]

[10] Palestinian holders of travel documents issued by the host countries face crushing difficulties in traveling to or through other Arab countries. For example Palestinians from Gaza, Syria and Lebanon are not allowed into Jordan. Holders of Egyptian travel documents cannot visit Syria, Lebanon, Morocco, etc. Getting a tourist visa for the EU or North America is almost impossible: Dr Bassem Serhan, personal communication. Easy movement across national borders is limited to Palestinians with financial assets, other nationalities, or 'global elite' status.

Palestinian Refugee Youth in Lebanon Today: Generation, Region, Class

Lebanese reactions to the wholesale destruction of Nahr al-Bared camp in 2007 showed that hostility towards the Palestinians is always present under the surface (Khalidi and Riskedahl 2007; Sheikh Hassan and Hanafi 2010). It is true that the civic rights campaign on behalf of Palestinians achieved a higher profile with debate in the National Assembly during 2010, but legal changes were minimal, hardly lifting the bars against Palestinian employment. Young people feel they have no future in this country and do everything they can to leave, but escape routes are blocked except for the tiny minority that succeeds in obtaining scholarships to study abroad.[11] At a meeting to discuss possible projects for youth in Bourj al-Barajneh camp, one of the shabab made an eloquent speech expressing the despair of his generation. He began by denouncing physical and political conditions in the camp, and reminded us of the delegations that continually visit without anything ever changing.[12] Most of the others agreed with him. Despair is widespread among camp youth, a product of exclusion, immobilization, and the stagnation of the national struggle.

Further discussions with Palestinian youth suggest that self-identification as Palestinian is as strong as it was in the 1970s. The term 'Palestinian' is the first young adults from Bourj` would use when asked by a stranger "Who are you?" For example one of the speakers said, "I'd answer I'm a Palestinian, I live in the camp of Bourj Barajneh. My 'belonging' (*intima'i*) is Palestinian.". I asked, "*If it was someone from the university administration what would you say?* I'd say I'm Palestinian, from Bourj camp. *And if it was a Lebanese policeman?* Also Palestinian from al-Bourj camp. *If it was someone in a company who might give you work?* The same thing, a Palestinian, from al-Bourj camp" (F.S. interview, July 27, 2011). Respondents spoke of love for, and curiosity about, the land of Palestine. They spoke of the times when their feeling of being Palestinian was most intense:

> The time of the Nakba commemoration, it affects me a lot. When there are events in Palestine, when I'm just sitting and watching TV, a lot. And especially in demonstrations, I feel my belonging more. (F.W. interview July 27, 2011).

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[11] A recent study comparing employment and earnings of Palestinians and Lebanese across industries and occupational categories found that, while employment rates do not differ greatly, "Palestinian men and women earn lower wages than their counterparts in the overwhelming majority of categories". The psycho-social effect on youth (especially male) are higher rates of school drop out than either Lebanese or Palestinians elsewhere: (Abdulrahim and Khawaja 2011, 157-8; 163).

[12] From my notes. January 30, 2010: "We can do nothing now, we can barely take breath. …. We need to secure our economic situation. Young people think only of emigration but there's no road open. No one has thought for Palestine. The factions that represent the Palestinian people … express the helplessness of the leadership. Everyone dreams of return but they know it's not possible…The Arab regimes are all against the Palestinian return. Our generation can't do anything".

Another response:

> If there's a demonstration, or they sing Palestinian songs. Or if we see on TV that there's shelling in Palestine. If there's a demonstration or a meeting I feel more… When we went out to Maroun al-Ras, because we were very close to Palestine. We saw how many Palestinians want to return. There was only a little distance separating us from Palestine, but we couldn't enter, we couldn't do anything. I felt it then. (F.S. interview, July 27, 2011).

The Bourj group also spoke of their need for a country, testifying to deep depression over this lack:

> Sometimes I'm sitting alone and thinking of making a suicide operation, of going and killing myself . From when I was young. I'd think a lot. I'd think everyone has a country, it wouldn't matter being poor but we don't have a country, we don't have anything, we remain Palestinians in the camps. (F.W. interview, July 27 2011).

When mixing with Lebanese students in university young camp Palestinians suffer from their association with the camps, which are stereotyped by some Lebanese media and population sectors as nests of crime and squalor. During the 1980s when Amal militia was attacking the camps, it was so dangerous to be a Palestinian that people had to learn to 'pass' as Lebanese. Yet all the Bourj adolescents say they wouldn't change their accents in Lebanese milieus. For example:

> Never! I never change my accent. Whatever the circumstances. Only if I want to make fun of them. If I go into Lebanese society I speak Palestinian *aa'di*. I'm Palestinian! I hate Palestinians who speak Lebanese. (F.S. interview July 27, 2011).

Another respondent said,

> No. I talk the same. Just as I am, the Palestinian accent. As I accept that they talk with a Lebanese accent, so they must accept that I talk with our Palestinian accent. I don't like to change. I feel that if I changed my accent even a little it's as if I'm deserting Palestine…" (F.W. interview July 27, 2011).

Acknowledging anti-camp prejudice in Lebanese milieus, a young woman student said it was being in the university that made her feel most Palestinian:

> They are surprised [by me] because they have a mistaken idea about Palestinians. I show them I'm proud of being Palestinian. I'm one

hundred per cent Palestinian but I'm not a barbarian, not like this bad idea they have". (S.H. July 30, 2011).

Asked about their feelings towards Palestinians in other diasporic regions, youth in Bourj expressed contradictory ideas and feelings. Palestinians, they said, are 'one people' – some even spoke of *wihdat al-damm* (the unity of blood, a retreat from the Resistance slogan of *wihdat al-nidal*, unity of struggle). For the camp group, their strongest sense of connection is with the Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza, whom they see daily on TV confronting Israeli soldiers. For example, one speaker said:

> …I don't like talking to any Palestinians except those who live in Palestine. Those outside, I don't like them…It's true we're outside and they're outside. I'm a stranger *(gharib)* and they are strangers. Whenever I talk to anyone from a family inside Palestine, I enjoy it a lot. Through internet for example. Someone there once drew a heart with the word Palestine under it and my name… and sent it to me, I was very happy. The people in Palestine, I love them, they're fixed, stabilized in Palestine, I love to talk to them. But those outside, no. (F.W. interview July 27, 2011) .

Like the other Bourj speakers, this young woman not only expressed a greater sense of solidarity with Palestinians in Palestine, seen as ideal strugglers, but also a sense of alienation from Palestinians living in regions of the diaspora, such as America, viewed as wealthy. The same speaker said, "I talked once with someone once from Jordan -- by email -- a Palestinian -- I didn't like her. They don't like us either. (F.W. interview July 27, 2011).

Such alienation from 'other' Palestinians works both ways. The Bourj speakers had set up email correspondence with same-age Palestinians in other areas, mainly in Occupied Palestine. Several reported that young Palestinians in Palestine had accused them of having 'abandoned' the country in 1948, and of having become 'like the Lebanese'. There has also been re-connection through internet with Palestinians in Galilee, where most 'Lebanese' Palestinians have relatives, but here too accusations of refugee flight in 1948 have surfaced, while refugee youth take issue with their compatriots' use of the word 'Israel': For example one of the young Palestinians said:

> I quarrel a lot with my friends in Palestine. I have friends in '48 in 'Akka, and I have a friend in Tulkarm…They say "I'm going to work in Israel". I say "There isn't anything called Israel. There's Palestine". They say, "No. We have to say Israel"… I say, "If you in Palestine say 'Israel', what should we say here?"(F.S. interview July 27, 2011).

This stereotyping of Palestinians between diasporic regions contrasts

strongly with the way, in the 1970s, people in Bourj Barajneh camp used to tell me how they felt that any Palestinian was like a 'sister' or a 'brother'. It seems as if political stagnation is generating negative feelings between people of different diasporic regions. While internet gives youth the means to connect with each other across national boundaries, I have the sense that the availability of internet may emphasize geopolitical distance as well as re-connect.[13] Here it is important to remember that, apart from what they see on TV, most Palestinian youth have little knowledge of conditions in other diasporic areas than their own.

By far the most striking difference between camp youth today and the *jeel al-Thawra* is in feelings towards the Resistance groups. For the *jeel al-Thawra,* group membership was an integral part of their self-identification as Palestinians. Young people today see the groups as motivated by interests rather than *al-'adiyya* ('the cause'). This is one opinion:

> No. I don't like to sit with people who belong to Fateh or Hamas… I don't feel that they represent anyone. These people quarrel over who's stronger… None of them work for the cause, they work for their interests. That's what matters to them, before anything else. (F.W. interview July 27 2011).

Asked if she felt the PLO represented her, another speaker said,

> No, they represent just themselves… Before it was it wasn't like now when everything is material. Now if someone is with the PLO it's just for the sake of money. The pretext is to help everyone, but *they* take the money. They say they're taking the money for the Palestinians here, but no, it's just the name and the appearance. (F.S. interview July 27, 2011).

A young adult activist from outside the camps targets the 'peace process' as having led to the decline in PLO institutions and the Resistance ethos:

> Over the past twenty or so years…the so-called peace process has worked to neutralize the most important of the organized manifestations of our identity (the PLO, its factions, its institutions, etc.). In the past, these organizations acted as a kind of cradle for that part of our identity that related to the liberation and return struggle -- the one I see as the most important and meaningful part of our identity. Part of this, has been a redefinition of Palestine as the West Bank and Gaza, a rewriting of our history and present…and a very

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[13] Aouragh's study of Palestinians' use of cyberspace, also notes such 'little cracks', as for example when a youth in Bourj camp chats with a Palestinian who supports a "US-led agreement with no concern for the Right of Return" (Aouragh 2011, 128).

clear distancing away from that insurrectionary and angry part of our identity that stems from the last 90 or so years of our history… (J.H. email correspondence, October 2, 2011).

Young adult Palestinians activists seem to be aligning themselves today on the basis of strategies and issues rather than on Resistance group membership. Moreover, as their generation emerges with its own voice and mission, they are drawn into work and debates specific to the current period, in response to a political environment very different from that of their parents, relatively liberated from sloganizing but deprived of unifying aims. An activist with the NGO Ajial[14] conveys part of this transformation:

> I think most of the people I meet get influenced by the political belonging of their parents… But now there are new political parties. So how do we identify ourselves with regard to these new political factions?... You have people who are not Fateh but they accept the idea of *al-barnamaj al-marhalli* (liberation through stages, equated with the 'two-state solution'). And you will find someone who was PFLP who won't accept the program of stages, so they will affiliate with newly appearing parties such as the religious ones…Some people want to be with those who are doing resistance, whoever they are. And there are those …who belong to a line of political activism such as armed struggle…Other people choose civil resistance but with the strategic goal of liberating all Palestine, and not negotiating with Israel (S.R. interview October 2011).

Generational belonging since the *jeel al-thawra* has become less marked. Some use *jeel al-harb* to describe all generations since the mid-1970s, but this is not as common usage as earlier ones were. Absence of generational distinctions is doubtless partly due to the Palestinians' situation since 1982, characterized by exclusion and pressures to migrate.[15] Linked to Lebanese exclusion, one finds a renewal of family solidarity compared with the 1970s, expressed both in discourse and behaviour. In the days when armed struggle was the marker of a generation, membership in a Resistance group trumped all other relationships. This was a period when children often asked their parents "Why did you leave Palestine?" Today young adults show sympathy for parents of the *jeel al-thawra* who struggled and sacrificed. Moreover, the post-1982 restoration of Islamic piety has been accompanied a reaffirmation of family values, and ideals of 'proper' behaviour. The following speaker emphasizes continuity rather than difference between generations in

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[14] Ajial's website gives vision, scope and aims: www.ajial-lb.com

[15] The Taef Accords of 1989 that ended the Lebanese civil war through entente between Lebanese leaders and Syria based on intensified exclusion of the Palestinians was a moment of marked deterioration: Knudsen 2007.

relation to Palestinian belonging:

> I think my generation has the same sense of belonging or maybe a higher one….The type of struggle has changed but it still has the same aim. My generation and the old generations talk the same language when it comes to Palestine, but we talk different languages when we talk about strategies and tools. (H.M. email correspondence October 7, 2011).

An idea that was common to all the Resistance groups in the 1970s, even the leftist ones, was the priority of national struggle over class or gender issues. Today, young Palestinian activists do not side-track issues of social inequality:

> …we have to keep up with social and economic matters. People today are living the dilemma of whether the struggle will be on the socio-economical level or the political level. When we talk political we're talking liberation, we're talking opposition to political formulas, or approaches made by different people, like now the leadership is going to the UN. And then what? You stop living the social issues of the people in Lebanon, let's say in the camps? But that has a political side, it's their socio-economic situation that moves people. (S.R. interview October 2, 2011).

Awareness of class and gender as issues that obstruct the Palestinian struggle are clear in this testimony about culture and communication obstacles in the Palestinian Youth Movement:

> … middle and upper class Palestinians from the Arab world are usually comfortable expressing themselves in English, while those from poorer backgrounds or from Latin America are not…English tends to dominate in international Palestinian gatherings, and middle class Palestinians from activist backgrounds in Europe and North America often come with an arsenal of arguments about how Arabic discussions 'exclude' them and are thus politically problematic. Gender issues often arise, in which women consider a man cutting them off mid-sentence to be evidence of Arab sexism… Conversely, religious youth often feel uncomfortable in such predominantly secular spaces…

The existence of an independent Palestinian youth movement is an important sign of difference between today and the 1970s. The Union of Palestinian Students was a crucial building block of the post-1948 national movement, becoming part of the PLO after 1964; each Resistance faction formed its own student and *ashbal* section. But the current Palestinian Youth

Movement (PYM) is not part of the PLO, and includes 1948 Palestinians.[16] The PYM recently demonstrated its independence of the national leadership by criticizing the Palestinian state initiative of 2011. Al-Multaqa, formed in 1999 to hold summer camps for Palestinian youth, is another transnational youth network, formed by Ajial, a Lebanon-based NGO.[17] Al-Multaqa works within the PLO framework, and those who attend its meetings are delegated by local groups -- factions and NGOs -- and thus are more likely than PYM members to represent factional divisions, though a founding member says that delegates are encouraged to speak for themselves as Palestinian youth rather than for factions.[18] Both Al-Multaqa and the PYM engage with youth in camps. These developments cast youth gatherings as an arena where a shift in self-identification may take place, with the youth sector taking on a stronger role in national strategizing. Class, region and culture certainly exercise a divisive influence, but a summer camp delegate describes how 'mixing' dissolves such differences, and allows common feelings of 'Palestinianness' to rise to the surface:

… when [Ajial] first did summer camps, the youth would stand in their regional groupings, and not mix. The only ones who could mix were those from the West Bank because to everyone else they were heroes. After a few days of songs, discussions, and interaction you could see that the differences had gone. It's evident that there are many differences, many disappointments. The West Bank youth admitted that "we welcomed Oslo, we believed it would end the occupation. We didn't know how much you in Lebanon had suffered. We thought you were okay there."[19]

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[16] The PYM was formed as a Network in 2009 by young Palestinians from all parts of the diaspora as a move towards transnational unification. It became more firmly established as a Movement in August 2011, with an elected International Central Council. See http://pal-youth.org

[17] See: www.ajial-lb.com

[18] S.S. meeting September 29 2011.

[19] R.S. meeting, September 29 2011.

Conclusion

The quotation above shows that barriers of region and culture separate young Palestinians even when their support for *al-'adiya* is strong enough to bring them to a youth camp. It also shows that such barriers dissolve through interaction that brings up common issues and renews a sense of common belonging. However such meetings involve only a small proportion of Palestinian youth, and only occasionally. While such moments of unity are politically important, their reach is reduced by immobilization. Can a revitalized sense of national belonging, and solidarity with 'other' Palestinians, spring from the youth movement with its new technologies of internet connection? It is a question with theoretical as well as practical political interest, since a case of building a nation *before a state* would extend our understanding of how nations can be produced.

The interviews quoted above suggest that attachment to a territory is not enough to create a sense of national identity that includes solidarity with national 'others'. While local communities are basic to the reproduction of 'Palestinianness', the almost total absence of a circuit of communication connecting them to each other or to a centralizing institution limits the development of consciousness within them. The Palestinian National Authority can make no contribution to change in this regard, since it does not represent Palestinians outside the West Bank and Gaza, and such educational and cultural efforts as it exerts are limited to the residents of these areas. Given this gap in representation and communication, though community-based programs are vital to sustaining attachment to the land, they cannot substitute for a fully national institution in drawing different sectors of the Palestinian people into a closer, more citizen-like relationship.

Survival in difficult circumstances makes practical demands of accommodation. In Lebanon, the failed hopes of the 'generation of the revolution' stands as a warning that patriotism and self-sacrifice may lead nowhere. For many young adults inside and outside the camps today there appears to be no authentic national program, no genuine leadership with which to identify, and to which to commit. True, this generation asserts its Palestinian belonging with pride, demonstrates, responds to national symbols, but without the mobilizing, inter-connecting framework of the 1970s. However strongly they may feel national belonging, most young Palestinians today know little of their history, or of the situation of Palestinians outside their own region. Their capacity for citizenship in a still incomplete nation needs to be recognized and encouraged through mutually constructed educational, cultural, history and civics programs circulated through the whole diaspora.

Given the intrinsic difficulty of the Palestinian liberation struggle, there is a danger that national identity will become a taken-for-granted resource for sustaining a minimal trans-national unity. Such a strategy is deceptive because it *assumes* national identity rather than producing and developing it, thus giving it a 'default' role in the national struggle. A second danger is to leave national identity in its latent, undeveloped state, failing to work on it to give it political and cultural substance. However strongly they may feel national belonging, most young Palestinians today know little of Palestinian history, or of the situation of Palestinians in other diaspora regions than their own. Nor do they receive prompting to imagine a common future. What kind of state do Palestinians want? What kind of society? Are patronage and *waasta* part of the national heritage? Does maintaining cultural authenticity inevitably mean constraints on women? What does citizenship involve? The sacrifices Palestinians have offered do not deserve the answer Arafat is said to have given to someone who questioned him about patronage and corruption in the National Authority: "Do you expect us to be better than the other Arab states!?"

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Palestinian Refugee Experiences in a Changing Humanitarian Order

Ilana Feldman

Introduction

Palestinian refugees are among the largest and longest-lasting of what the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the body responsible for protection and assistance for the bulk of the world's refugees, terms protracted refugee communities. Displaced Palestinians do not by and large come under the jurisdiction of the UNHCR but are rather provided services by UNRWA [UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees]. This difference in service provider is just one of the distinctive features of the Palestinian refugee experience, its longevity being another. Despite this distinctiveness, it would be a mistake to describe the Palestinian refugee condition as utterly exceptional, as neither comparable to any other case nor relevant to understanding the broader humanitarian world. In fact, precisely because of the longevity of displacement and of the humanitarian response to that displacement, Palestinians have experienced the full range of transformations in humanitarian practice over the past sixty years. For this reason, examining this particular experience can provide an excellent window into understanding the broader post-World War II humanitarian order. Similarly, given the importance of humanitarian assistance to Palestinian communities in different countries and over more than sixty years, looking at transformation in humanitarian practice through this period can help us understand the experience of being a Palestinian refugee over the long term.

This paper does not try to analyze the entire apparatus of humanitarian practice as it has transformed over this time. Rather it highlights a few exemplary forms of humanitarian practice to suggest something of what is at stake in these transformations. The interventions considered are: rations provision, camp structure and infrastructure, and development projects. These forms of assistance work together as part of a larger humanitarian system so it would be a mistake to overstate their distinctions. Recognizing this, it is nonetheless possible (and important) to point to some key differences in the targets of these forms of aid. All are directed at the protection and promotion of human life, and particularly of vulnerable life, but each focuses on a different aspect of that life. For rations delivery the first and primary goal is to ensure the physical survival of a population. Camp structures and infrastructure clearly have the aim of survival in mind, as shelter is a basic human need. But this field of humanitarian material assistance also

operates on both familial and social life, as the spaces that people occupy (whether domestic or public) directly shape relations in both these realms. For development--whether large-scale works projects or, more recently popular, small-scale and micro-finance projects--the idea of progress, not just continuity of life or community, but also transformation of both is a principal goal.

In looking at forms of humanitarian practice that have related, but also distinct, targets and goals it becomes possible to see the complicated terrain that constitutes humanitarianism, and therefore to understand more clearly how refugees might be impacted by changing humanitarian practice over the long run. In terms of the focus of this conference, on Palestinian refugees across generations, I approach this concern less by looking at the question of identity head on and more by considering the conditions, material objects, institutions, and structures of practice that help shape that identity.

The Humanitarian System Over Sixty Years

UNRWA is the single most significant agency providing humanitarian assistance to Palestinian refugees. Still aid provision began before UNRWA was created and even after its establishment there have always been multiple actors in the humanitarian field, including host governments, local NGOs, international humanitarian agencies (such as CARE, MSF, and Save the Children), political actors (such as the PLO and Hamas), and religious institutions. Mapping this entire field is beyond the scope of this paper, but I would like to note some of the key transformations in humanitarian practice over this sixty year period.

The UN was involved in providing humanitarian relief to Palestinian refugees from the earliest days following their displacement. Initially delivery of this relief was managed by organizations commissioned by the UN to distribute supplies (the American Friends Service Committee [AFSC] in Gaza, the League of Red Cross Societies in the West Bank and Jordan, and the ICRC in Lebanon). As in any humanitarian crisis, the first step for each of these organizations was the work of "triage" (Nguyen 2010), determining which persons were eligible for assistance. This triage proceeded along several lines: determining who should count as a "refugee" (both displaced and dispossessed), identifying who was in need, and categorizing people's relationships (family size and condition). It is important to recognize that not all aspects of this triage were about determining who was in the greatest need (as the medical origin of this term suggests), but equally about figuring out how people fit--or didn't--into an emerging set of humanitarian categories. At times these categorical

imperatives were in fact at odds with people's material needs (as in Gaza where natives were not recognized as refugees even when they were often dispossessed of their property and in very significant need) (Feldman 2007).

The first form of assistance provided was food rations, clothing, tents, and basic medical care. Education was first undertaken as a voluntary effort by refugees who had been teachers in the Mandate school system, and was fairly quickly taken up as a service provided by the humanitarian agencies (Feldman 2008: 211-12). Once UNRWA was established, it sought to fulfill its dual mandate of providing both "relief" and "works" to Palestinian refugees by exploring possibilities for development projects that might take refugees off the ration rolls and enable their communities to be self-sustaining. These projects, including one in Jordan modeled on the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA), generally floundered in the face of limited capacity, refugee opposition to anything that might undermine their return home, and difficulties with host governments (Al Husseini 2010, 8).

The question of the political consequences of humanitarian interventions also arose early on in relation to the infrastructure of refugee camps. As displacement wore on with no sign of resolution, UNRWA began the task of improving the housing in camps and of replacing tents with more solid (and potentially more permanent) structures. Refugees responded differently to these projects in different places. In Syria and Lebanon, refugees actively resisted any projects that they thought "might mean permanent resettlement" (UNRWA (a), 25). Accordingly, "experimental houses, erected by the Agency, have been torn down; and for many months, in Syria and Lebanon, there was widespread refusal to work on agency road-building and afforestation schemes" (UNRWA (a), 25). In Gaza, by contrast, UNRWA reported a smooth implementation of the building project: "The new camp construction programme in Gaza was completed before the onset of the winter of 1954-55, and now no refugees in camps in Gaza remain in tents. The Agency's Gaza officer has however, some 2,800 applications for shelter from persons outside camps; in addition births, marriages, and other social changes create a demand for shelter that has so far not been met" (UNRWA (b), 3). The politics of both building and rehabilitation of shelters has been a recurring issue over the years – though again one that is quite differently inflected in different places.

Every change in UNRWA services has been contentious, reflecting refugee concern that these changes might indicate a lessening international commitment to a just resolution of their situation and a material hardship when changes meant a retrenchment in services. Changes in rations regimes have acutely linked these two concerns. When UNRWA was first established,

it provided regular rations to all refugees on its lists; indeed, being registered with UNRWA meant being on the rations rolls. Quite quickly this total provision (which was never universal as there were all sorts of reasons why people might not have been registered on the rolls) became qualified by gradations in need. That is, if one of the first questions for UNRWA had been 'needy or not?' it was quickly transformed to 'how needy?' Income scales were developed to determine when and by how much a family's rations might be cut. New categories of refugee status were created to mark different levels of access to services. Finally, in 1982 for most Locations and in the early 1990s for Lebanon, the widespread provision of rations was halted. From this point on only families that qualified as "hardship cases" received rations, and only in limited amounts. Moments of crisis, such as the Israeli blockade of and attack on Gaza, are often accompanied by a return to rations distribution on an emergency basis.

As an agency that is entirely dependent on voluntary contributions and with an ever increasing client population, UNRWA is under constant financial pressure. It is frequently underfunded, meaning that contributions do not meet its budget requirements. It is no surprise, therefore, that services have decreased over the years and that the organization relies heavily on volunteer labor by refugees themselves to manage programs. In Jordan, for example, UNRWA has initiated a number of social service programs, such as the women's program committees, rehabilitation centers, and old age support, for which it provides almost no budget support. The programs are meant to be self-sustaining and in a number of places they have control over properties on which they are able to collect rents; most of the people who work for these programs do so on an essentially volunteer basis.[1] They receive nominal compensation for their work, but it is largely symbolic. Other developments in UNRWA programming over the years have included the introduction of micro-finance programs, the development of human rights curricula, and an increasing focus on non-communicable disease, all of which reflect changing priorities in international humanitarianism more generally. Just as in other areas of humanitarian and development interventions, a considerable amount of the programming directed at Palestinian refugees is driven by donor agendas (Al Husseini 2010; Rempel 2010).

Having identified the general trajectory of UNRWA services over the life of the Palestinian refugee problem, I turn now to the three forms of humanitarian action that are my focus here. This discussion seeks to begin to develop a picture of the humanitarian landscape within which people act and therefore is meant to be suggestive more than definitive.

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[1] Interview, UNRWA field office, 22 December 2009.

Rations: Basic Sustenance and Refugee Life

Rations are among the most basic and urgent of humanitarian goods. Because of this immediacy and the way that food aid sustains the most fundamental aspects of life, rations provision can seem to exemplify the humanitarian focus on "bare life," as Giorgio Agamben (1998) terms it. I should note that the reference to bare life does not mean simply a focus on the biological, but additionally the imposition of restrictions on the capacity of persons (refugees or victims) targeted by these interventions to exercise a broad range of human capacities: to express both biological life and political life. Rations provision is in fact a highly contested political field, one in which both aid providers and refugees confront and struggle over the meaning of aid. Questions and confrontations emerge at multiple junctures in the rations process, from the calories provided and the procedures for distribution to the uses to which refugees put the food given them. In each of these areas rations limn the line between providing for simple survival and refugees seeking resources for additional aspects of living.

When recipients and providers struggle over procedures and regulations for rations provision one of the issues at stake, even if not always clearly articulated, is about the meaning of rations themselves. Are they meant only to sustain life in the biological sense (clearly an important goal) or are they also part of a broader intervention into lifestyle? When refugees, for instance, sold some of their rations to be able to purchase other goods, UNRWA officials had mixed reactions. At some points such sales were seen as a problem, evidence that those recipients were not wholly in need and were using rations not for sustaining "life itself," but rather as a fungible resource for developing and maintaining a certain "lifestyle." At other moments, though, aid providers recognized that the inadequacy of rations provided for the sustenance of life meant that the lives of refugees often, in fact, depended on their capacity to mobilize such resources (UNRWA reports indicate both a relatively low calorie provision and a highly restricted diet).

If humanitarian attitudes about the meaning and use of rations were varied and sometimes contradictory, refugee attitudes have been equally complex. In the current rations regime, one that is, in most UNRWA fields, limited to "special hardship cases" and which provides very little in the way of rations even for those who qualify, the question of lifestyle looms large. Many refugees question the grounds on which determinations of need are made. In this case the question is not about rations being used as fungible resources, but about whether having other sorts of fungible resources should disqualify one for eligibility for rations. In interview after interview in Burj Al-Barajneh refugee camp near Beirut, people described their frustrations with

the home inspections that are part of this determination.[2] I was told that any material object that people have in their houses--a television, satellite, or refrigerator-- could keep them out of the category of the needy. But refugees see these material objects and lifestyle markers as different matters. They believe quite strongly that even the most destitute, the most abject, to use UNRWA's new vocabulary, deserve something more than bare survival, more than just "life." They too deserve some pleasures, something that amounts to a "lifestyle."

Camps: Defining the Boundaries of Refugee Space

The question of the camp has been a subject of considerable debate and discussion among anthropologists in recent years. This discussion has been characterized by two almost divergent emphases. One thread of conversation references Giorgio Agamben's work and approaches the camp as a space of exception: a space beyond law and order, inhabited by persons nearly wholly stripped of *bios* (political life) and reduced to the position of *homo sacer* (a person whose death has no meaning). For Agamben (1998), the paradigmatic camp form is the Nazi death camp, though he also clearly identifies humanitarian spaces and practices as part of the phenomenon he explores and decries). Anthropologists who have developed this investigation of the camp as a space of exception have highlighted the vulnerability of living outside of law.

Another line of inquiry about refugee camps has approached the camp as a space of almost maximum regulation, noting its utility not only as a place to house and protect vulnerable persons, but also to maximize the bureaucratic management of life that is part and parcel of humanitarian endeavors. Camps make almost every aspect of humanitarian aid delivery easier: from head counts to rations delivery and healthcare provision. It is for this reason that the condition of urban refugees has created particular challenges to aid delivery. In this second approach, the emphasis is on the camp as a space that produces refugees as manageable persons and populations. Of course, it is not only scholars who have puzzled over the meaning and impact of camps for refugee life. Aid providers and refugees alike have expressed concern about its effects. In the Palestinian context, this question has often been particularly acute in debates about the implication of changes in camp infrastructure for Palestinian political rights, and most especially the Right of Return (these debates have been quite different in different fields) (Gabiam 2012).

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[2] As part of a multi-sited research project tracing the Palestinian experience with humanitarian assistance in the years since 1948, I have been conducting ethnographic fieldwork in refugee camps in Lebanon, Jordan, and the West Bank. This fieldwork includes observations of humanitarian programs and interviews with refugees from multiple generations.

Another feature of the Palestinian case, and not entirely unique to it, is a set of challenges around defining the camp as a space, both in terms of boundaries and in terms of status. Palestinian refugees have always lived in a range of spaces and never have more than half of them lived in camps. Beyond the distinction of camp versus town life, there has been another distinction, between "official" and "unofficial" camps, or between "gatherings" and "camps." These unofficial camp spaces, which neither fit easily within the framework of UNRWA practice nor fall entirely outside it, in some ways trouble the smooth operation of humanitarian action. In addition, and not surprising given the longevity of Palestinian displacement, the boundaries even of official camps are often murky. As populations have increased, and given that camps having no horizontal space to grow (vertical growth has been significant), in many places camps have spilled beyond their borders. Similar housing style, roadways, and populations exist on either side of an official, but often entirely unmarked, camp boundary. Over the years both aid providers and refugees have had to contend with categorical irregularities and spatial uncertainties as they plan services and live their lives. This murkiness in both category and space suggests that we may need to privilege a third line of analysis for refugee camps. Neither space of exception nor field of total regulation, we also need to explore camps as dynamic places of living. These places are not fixed either bureaucratically or spatially. They are sites of negotiation, contestation, and affective experience and looking at their borders can be a way into understanding this range of experiences.

Development Projects: Changing the Conditions of Living

The questions that arose in relation to shelters and camps make it abundantly clear that humanitarian action is about much more than basic survival. It also raises key questions about the future of the community being aided--about its progress and indeed about its development. Although some humanitarian organizations seek to sharply distinguish their work from that of development agencies, in practice these distinctions are difficult to maintain. This is especially true in the case of long-term refugees such as the Palestinians for whom crises of survival are superseded over time by the general problem of living with and in displacement for extended periods. In the Palestinian case, the development question was further complicated by UNRWA's mandate to be a "works" as well as "relief" agency and by the complicated politics of efforts to develop works projects; in particular, there was a concern among refugees and host countries that such projects would undermine the refugee Right of Return and delay or derail resolution of the Palestinian national problem.

That development projects were politically challenging is not a unique characteristic of the Palestinian case; even a cursory review of the literature on development shows how widespread such concerns are, though the particular political questions of this case are especially charged. Similarly, the trajectory of development efforts for Palestinians over the past sixty years, broadly speaking, moving from large-scale works projects which targeted entire communities, and which often envisioned significant environmental reconfiguration, to an emphasis on more micro-development efforts which target individual capacity building, is a result both of the specific challenges of development in the Palestinian refugee case and of broader transformations in the development field.

In early large-scale development projects, such as a proposal to develop portions of the Sinai for agricultural use and the resettlement of refugees living in Gaza,[3] much of the hoped for social transformation was future-oriented. The goal was to raise a new generation who, in the words of one UNRWA official, would be "removed from the debilitating and frustrating environment and the bitterness they will imbibe from the older generation who remember the old life in Palestine . . . this will at least mean that 75,000 children (average family) will not become refugees, who might otherwise have done so."[4] Those already living as refugees (particularly those who were middle-aged and already raising families) were seen as essentially lost causes. The hope lay in raising a new generation that would have both a different lifestyle and a different set of life aspirations. For a range of reasons, the Sinai project, and others like it, failed.[5] Ultimately it proved difficult to keep Palestinians from being refugees as long as they were born into and lived in displacement.

More recent development efforts, which are part of a global landscape of neoliberal economic practice, target individuals in the first instance (though the hope is certainly that broader social change will occur through individual change). In addition, they are present as much as future-oriented. That is, the goal is to remake lives and opportunities for current generations. The goal is not to make them non-refugees, but to enable them to live more productive lives whatever their categorical position. Typical of such projects are educational courses that seek to prepare refugee youth for the job market by learning to both understand and articulate their own personalities, skills, and

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[3] UNRWA Inactive Files, Box 2, E-810-5, Sinai Project - Construction Agreement.

[4] UNRWA Inactive Files, Box 2, E/810 - Part , Egypt - Sinai Project General, Memo to Chief, Technical Division from Leslie J. Carver - Acting Director, Subject: Feasibility Report, 31 December 1954.

[5] UNRWA Inactive Files, Box 2, E/810 - Part 1, Egypt - Sinai Project General, Summary Record of Discussion Held in Colonel Gohar's Office in Cairo at 10:30 am on 18 August 1955; and UNRWA Inactive Files, Box 2, E/810 - Part 1, Egypt - Sinai Project General, To Henry R. Labouisse - Director, UNRWA, From Alexander E. Squadrilli - UNRWA Representative to Egypt, 2 November 1955.

values. If earlier projects foundered in part because they did not recognize the political significance of trying to change categorical positions without resolving underlying causes, some of today's projects may fail because, despite the planners' awareness of such impediments, they cannot account for the extent to which such categories necessarily impede "capacity."

Conclusion

This brief discussion of these three forms of humanitarian effort and conditions, over the course of more than sixty years of displacement and assistance of Palestinian refugees, suggest some of the ways that humanitarian action structures refugees' lives. As people live their lives (as individuals, families, and communities) they necessarily respond to changes in humanitarian practice, sometimes through complaint or opposition, sometimes through an adjustment in lifestyle. To fully show how this happens would require considerably more space than I have here, but there is no doubt of the importance of humanitarian work, whether addressing life or lifestyle, whether targeting individuals or communities, and whether seeking to remake the present or the future, in shaping Palestinian experience and identity.

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Pity Versus Rights' Recognition: Rejection of the Victim Label by Palestinian Refugees

Kristine Beckerle

"The refugees are sick of being the quintessential refugee question for all of these years. They just want to live and to be allowed to live."

Laila, a 35-year-old Palestinian refugee in the West Bank

Introduction: The Parallel Use of Victimization and Reconciliation to Confront Conflict

Over the last fifty years, the international conception of the "victim" has evolved. In his groundbreaking work, *The Empire of Trauma (2009)*, Didier Fassin documents the growing trend of humanitarian organizations to prescribe the "victim" label to both sides of a conflict. The emphasis has been on responding to trauma, which can follow the experience of being subjected to violence, perpetrating violent acts, bearing witness to violence, or being a part of a community that has been mistreated or attacked or has mistreated or attacked another community. Humanitarian organizations increasingly concentrate on providing psychological care to individuals and traumatized populations following conflict (Fassin and Rechtman 2009).

In a related trend, the international community has begun to focus on providing "restorative justice" following mass human rights violations rather than retributive justice. The restorative justice model has been actualized in the truth commissions that are becoming the norm in transitional justice frameworks (Hayner 2002, 5; Weinstein et. al 2010, 35). Restorative justice does not focus on punishment of the perpetrator of crimes, but rather on "correcting imbalances and restoring broken relationships." (Kiss 2000, 69). It recognizes the common humanity of the two sides previously labeled perpetrators and victims, emphasizing communication, connection and forgiveness over punishment and legal action (Minow 1998, 92). Mechanisms to establish "truth," understood as the construction of a new historical narrative that takes victims' accounts into consideration, are given primacy (Kiss 2000, 69). Restorative justice focuses on recognition and respect, attempting to help victims, all victims, move beyond a sense of anger (Minow 1998, 92).

Academics and practitioners in favor of restorative justice tend to argue that punishment is not always necessary. The belief is that, through wider society's recognition of the truth of what happened, the victim's dignity will be restored and relationships can be remade (Kiss 2000, 73). Yet, acknowledgment of the harm the victim has undergone and recognition of their place as a rights-

bearing subject are two very different things. It is possible to pity a victim for the pain they have suffered but to continue to view them only as an object in need of charity and direction. Restorative justice mechanisms have been critiqued as focusing too much on forgiveness at the cost of justice, as well as for emphasizing moral repair rather than material repair. Discussion and opportunities for expression are provided to victims, but there is often little emphasis on making real changes to unequal social and economic structures or providing material reparations (Minow 1998, 92; Weinstein et al. 2010, 31 – 47).

In short, the growing trend of the international humanitarian community to focus on the victimization of a people has brought increased awareness to the psychological pain, trauma and suffering that different populations are subjected to. It has brought an increased understanding of the complexities of conflict and the wrongs that both sides have suffered. However, it has also led to the creation of a system where being recognized as a victim is no longer explicitly equated with the need for justice, but rather with the right to pity. By drawing parallels between perpetrators and victims and placing them on an equal plane, by claiming they are connected in their common trauma, the language of "victimization" tends to obscure questions of disparate force, power dynamics, and culpability.

The Palestinians' position as victims gained international attention during the Second Intifada. Images of little boys throwing stones at army tanks flooded the media, while teams of psychologists arrived in the West Bank to provide care for the "traumatized" Palestinian population. There was hope that the new international awareness of the victimization of the Palestinian people would correspond to the delivery of justice. However, it quickly became clear that international pity was not necessarily a precursor to international action.

Palestinian refugees had previously experienced the false promise of the victim label. When labeled "refugees" by the United Nations, they were provided pity and care by the international community, but little was done in the way of "protecting" the Palestinians' rights under international law, particularly their civil and political rights. The remainder of this article will discuss the link between the "victim" and "refugee" labels, use a small sample of interviews with Palestinian refugees in the West Bank to examine a general frustration with the "victim" label and finish by discussing the possibilities open to the international community to begin responding to and remedying the situation, specifically with an increase in UNRWA's rights' protection role.

The Voiceless and Victimized Refugee

The global governance structures that currently deal with refugee outflows have developed over the past sixty years. While important work is being done

in terms of providing immediate assistance and working towards finding durable solutions, humanitarian agencies, as well as the international media, often objectify, depoliticize, and homogenize those designated as refugees (Malkki 1996, 378).[1] Refugees are often treated as a category unto themselves, as passive recipients of aid in need only of assistance, rather than as individuals with unique histories and the right to redress (Malkki 1996, 378).

Refugees are often silenced during their experience of displacement. As Liisa Malkki discusses in her article, "Speechless Emissaries," civil society, in particular the international media, often depoliticize the category of refugee, portraying refugees as "pure victims" rather than specific persons, and as belonging to a "miserable sea of humanity" where no person has a name or face (Malkki 1996, 378). Images of refugees, generally focused on their flight and the refugee camps, are prevalent in the international realm, while individual refugee testimonies are not. This renders the refugees mute (Malkki 1996, 377-8 ; 386-7). A historical, universal humanitarian object is constructed by projecting the idea of the refugee as a member of a homogenous, helpless group in need only of humanitarian aid. The onlooker may pity this category, this image of "bare" humanity, but does not conceive of the refugee as subject and agent in his or her own future (Malkki 1996, 386-389). The vast differences and individualities present in any community, including a refugee one, are forgotten, and it is often assumed that refugees are passively following the dictates of politicians who claim to represent them (Malkki 1996, 394).

Humanitarian interventions tend to further this objectification in their tendency to ignore the specific histories, political and economic conditions and contexts of individual refugees (Malkki 1995, 496; 1996, 378, 386-387). According to the mandates of most agencies, they are meant to be nonpolitical and strictly humanitarian. The refugees are treated in the context of their present condition, provided with healthcare and other essential services, and assessed based on their current needs and vulnerabilities. They are then resettled or returned home depending on the situation. Humanitarian agencies' interventions in countries of origin tend to remain limited to assessing whether the situation is safe and conducive to a dignified return (UNHCR, "Protection"). Reparations, justice, and civil and political rights remain largely outside of these discussions and interventions.

While UNHCR places primary emphasis on including refugees' opinions in the facilitation of long-term solutions (UNHCR. "Durable Solutions"), the refugees still remain objects until resettled. The prevailing idea is that finding a durable solution and providing a refugee with citizenship is the

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[1] Malkki's essay is a wonderful exposition on the importance of empowering refugees by giving them a voice in their individual and collective futures. She looks specifically at the case of Hutu refugees from Burundi living in Tanzania.

most important goal. While not disputing the merits of this goal, I do dispute the assumption that refugees must wait until they gain a nationality and national protection to access rights and recourses to justice. Otherwise, until a durable solution is found, refugees are tied to the provision of aid from the international community, powerless to direct their own futures, and often stripped of the authority to give "credible narrative evidence or testimony about their own condition in politically and institutionally consequential fora" (Malkki 1996, 378).

In situations of protracted displacement, the damage done to the civil and political rights of refugees can be even greater. While UNHCR and UNRWA were not designed to provide long-term relief and protection to refugee populations, there are a number of refugee groups that have been displaced for decades, with the thirty-year plight of Afghan refugees and the sixty-year plight of the Palestinians particularly striking. In situations of protracted displacement, there are serious deficits in democratic participation of and procedural due process for refugees (Rimmer 2010b, 9). It also becomes increasingly clear that questions of the individual refugee's broader human rights under international human rights law (IHRL) and international humanitarian law (IHL) cannot be put off until citizenship has been gained. Their rights as individuals should not be abrogated in the wait for a solution that may never come. The international community must rethink its absolute focus on the political needs of refugees in regards to their future. Rather, it is necessary to bring the need for fulfillment of the right to justice and the protection of civil and political rights in the present, while refugees remain under the protection of UNHCR or UNRWA, into focus.

Some of these deficits stem from the fact that refugees tend to be treated as subjects of international refugee law (IRL) alone, which focuses on humanitarian needs, rather than as individuals with standing under IHRL and IHL. Both the UNHCR and UNRWA definitions for a refugee are problematic. The definitions consider refugees as in need of humanitarian assistance, rather than of advocacy and representation as individual victims of a specific crime, for example, forced displacement. The preamble of the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees refers to the "social and humanitarian nature of the problem of refugees" (Preamble, 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol; Guy S. 2008, 6 – 8). A reconception of the refugee that emphasizes the crime suffered and the right to claim reparations would remind the international community that most refugee outflows involve a perpetrator and thus require reparative justice.

I classify a refugee as any individual who is a victim of forced displacement[2]

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[2] Under international law, f*orced displacement constitutes a gross violation of human rights. The key factors in forced displacement are within the term itself--the use of force and the displacement of peoples.* Forced

and continues to lack national protection.[3] The definition I provide is meant to use the term "refugee" as a legal classification describing a group of diverse individuals who have been subjected to the same type of crime.[4] It is not meant to further embed the idea of a refugee as a "pure victim" (Malkki 1995, 511, 513), but rather to move the refugee beyond the protection of IRL and into the broader realms of IHRL and IHL. As will be discussed in the fourth section of this article, these broader bodies of law promise the right to redress, remedy, and reparation, all of which could go a long way to restoring the agency that is stripped from refugees during the initial crime and their subsequent objectification under the international assistance regime (UN General Assembly Resolution 2005, 11). *Importantly, they force a reconception of those designated as refugees as individuals with specific rights, rather than merely victims with the need for pity and bare-needs assistance.*

The debate on the effects of the refugee and victim labels is not only theoretical. The detrimental consequences of these are felt on the ground. I have had numerous interesting and insightful discussions with Palestinian refugees about their definition of justice and the emphasis they place on the need for individual empowerment and recognition. I will attempt to place their individual notions of justice in relation to the kit of "justice measures" generally employed by the international community. Many refugees equated justice with choice, tied to a prolonged and explicit frustration with their life of "victimhood." While the older generation tended to continue to focus on the crimes suffered by the Palestinian community, younger generations of refugees tended to more emphatically reject their "victim role." Both groups complained of a lack of agency, noting the restrictions placed on them by Israel and their exclusion from decision-making by UNRWA and the PA. Most interviewees noted the inadequacy of moral support and symbolic gestures if not tied to material redress in the form of real changes to the current social structure. They also often called on the international system to provide political pressure and to provide opportunities for empowerment and greater inclusion.

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displacement, according to articles 7 and 8 of the Statute of the International Criminal Court, constitutes a crime against humanity and a war crime. It refers to expulsion or other coercive acts that force residents to leave the area in which they are lawfully present, without grounds permitted under international law. The 1949 Geneva Conventions also prohibit individual or mass forcible transfer of civilians. According to the 1977 Additional Protocol to the Geneva Conventions, "Civilians shall not be compelled to leave their own territory for reasons connected with the conflict."

[3] National protection generally refers to the normal guarantees governments provide their citizens regarding basic human rights and physical security, including travel documents and legal advocacy in international fora.

[4] While this would exclude refugee groups displaced by natural disasters, these groups are fundamentally different and require different forms of assistance and healing than those who were forced to flee due to the actions of specific perpetrators.

Localizing Reflections: Palestinian Views on Justice and The "Victim Label"

In January 2011, I spent sixteen days in the West Bank conducting 14 in-depth interviews with a representative sample of refugees, including men and women ranging in age from 18 to 85. The majority of the interviews took place in Dheisheh refugee camp in Bethlehem, while several were with refugees who lived in other areas of the West Bank or in the city of Bethlehem. In each of these hour-long conversations, I was consistently impressed by the depth of understanding the refugees had of their situation and the environment within which they were working. I began these conversations by asking my interviewee to define justice. The definitions they provided were both personally and theoretically mature.

Some of the men and women I spoke with emphasized that ideal justice did not exist on this earth, explaining it could only be found with God. The majority, however, equated justice with the "Right of Return." When claiming that justice was the Right of Return, my interviewees were not only referring to the physical land lost. Rather, return referred to the much broader claim for the restoration of life as it had been, a metaphoric return to the conditions lost rather than a physical move to previous properties. For Mahmud, a 50-year-old refugee, justice was "to go back to my own town, to have my rights, to be free, to not be occupied, to live as a normal human being." Nimer, a 30-year-old refugee who was heavily involved in the community, explained that return was "all of these things--to the village, compensation, a state, equality." As Malak, a bubbly 20-year-old, put it, there were many things "inside" the Right of Return, such as, in her words, "the end of occupation, work, school, education, water, electricity--we need all these things to have a life." Ibrahim, an eloquent 23-year-old refugee, agreed with Malak, explaining that the physical land did not matter if security, freedom, and the rights due to you did not come along with it. While my interviewees placed different emphases on what was most important to their right to return, they generally included equality, freedom, and autonomy under the umbrella term of justice.

These were not merely wishes referring to an idealized notion of how life should be, but were rather specific justice claims tied to the crime of the refugees' initial displacement. A number of the refugees I spoke with explained that these demands were legitimated as they were tied to the notion that the hardship the refugees currently suffered could largely be attributed to the loss of their lands in 1948. Amani, a 50-year old mother of five, explained that if the events of 1948 had never happened, the Palestinian community would largely be well off. Ibrahim noted that his family had left everything in their homes in 1948, "money, furniture everything." He asked,

"Why don't I have this money? I am 23 years old and if my little brother asks for money, I can't give him anything. How do I explain this to him?" He believed that restoration of that which had been taken, as well as that which had been lost in terms of opportunity and potential must be restored. Rectifying current inequalities was included in justice demands as these inequalities flowed from past crimes.

Specifically, claims generally included calls for restitution of the land taken, compensation for the value of the property lost, compensation for the profit Israel had made off of the land, and reparation for the "63 years of suffering" the refugees had undergone. The right to reparation for the years of suffering was particularly stressed by Abed, Kareem, Nimer, Laila, Ibrahim, Maher and Suhayl. In separate interviews, each noted that, whether or not refugees chose to return to their lands, they had all suffered during their displacement. As Kareem observed, the refugees had been dehumanized by Israel, and this must be materially redressed. Nimer focused on the fact that the Palestinians had lost their story, history, and culture along with their land in 1948. To him, payment for these less tangible, but similarly painful, losses must be included in the Right of Return. Suhayl emphasized the humiliation that came with being a refugee. He pointed to the regular, extensive security checks and the many hours spent at checkpoints and borders, which was "simply because of his refugee status." He said this was evidence of the lengthy and continued humiliation that a refugee suffers. For Suyahl, compensation had to include not just "money for the lands and the suffering" but also compensation for the "humiliation."

While my interviewees' claims to justice included references to non-material losses, they called for material, rather than symbolic, action. Many of the men and women I spoke with responded with incredulous looks when I asked them if there were any symbolic steps they believed could or should be included in justice packages. Amani and Ara immediately pointed to the history of negotiations with Israel, noting that during times when words like "peace," "reconciliation," or even limited apologies began to be heard, the situation on the ground tended to worsen, with houses continuing to be demolished and rights increasingly restricted. For them, the resulting distrust had made it impossible for words to be meaningful without material action to prove sincere intent. Mahmud, on the other hand, simply could not conceive of the possibility that Israel would ever admit its guilt. He referred to the Israeli refusal to apologize for the attack on the aid flotilla heading to the Gaza Strip in the summer of 2010. If Israel could not accept guilt for this "small" thing, he said, how would it be possible that they would ever admit their part in 60 years of the refugees' displacement? In an ideal world, Mahmud said Palestinians might ask for an apology, but what was much more important was that Israel accept the refugees' Right of Return, their

right to a state and their right to freedom.

Mahmud was not the only refugee I spoke with who drew a distinction between an acknowledgment of the wrong done and an apology. Laila, an outspoken 35-year-old Palestinian with two masters' degrees, noted that acknowledgment of the atrocities in 1948 was a must if a peace settlement were to survive. She was unsure however, if she even wanted an apology. Ibrahim also demanded acknowledgment of his rights, but argued that Israel should not bother apologizing. He believed their words did not matter, and that Palestinians only wanted to see "good, practical steps" taken. Abed agreed that the first step must be Israeli recognition of the Palestinian people, but that this symbolic step must be followed with real material support if justice was to be anything more than words. Yasmeen also noted that there should be a proper ordering of Palestinians' demands, explaining that justice must first include return to their lands, followed by compensation for their suffering and finally, an apology. Acknowledgment was generally viewed as necessary because it entailed recognition of the refugees' rights and legitimate claims to justice. To my interviewees, it seemed to them that apologies, would be offered instead of, rather than on the way towards, real justice. In short, acknowledgment of wrongs tended to be seen as a first step, while apologies tended to be seen as a last.

Tied to these definitions of justice was a very explicit frustration with the life of "victimhood" forced upon the refugees. Laila declared, "Justice is the realization of one's rights. It is… whatever you decided upon that was mine and that you did not have the right to decide, that you acted upon, that you decided without and against my will, it is for you to undo that." She went on to describe the suffering she has undergone as a refugee and how that suffering is tied to being forced into a victim role. She said:

My problem wasn't losing people. I never thought dying for a good cause is something we should regret. Dying is a natural thing--we can deal with that. What is not natural, what is abnormal and unfair, is this victimhood life. I am not a victim. I do not want to be a victim. I want a different a life. I want a life where I think about legislation or women's programs or policies. Or… not think at all, to just watch TV, maybe even go on safaris. I just want to be able to decide where I go… My whole life I haven't been able to decide. I couldn't even decide what I studied. I wanted to study law--but I couldn't, because there were no law schools here and no money to go anywhere else. They decided my life from Day One. For this, I cannot forgive. I couldn't do what I wanted, I still cannot do what I want.

Kareem was more frustrated by the continual perception of the refugees as victims. As a member of the camp's popular committee, an elected refugee organization that works in the community and with UNRWA in order to

improve services, Kareem works to organize and educate the residents of the camp, particularly youth, about their rights and heritage. He explained, "We do not want to organize people to cry. If you are crying all the time, you are never achieving anything. You need to do something. So many people have this idea that everyone in the camp is crying all the time. I hate that idea. We are strong. We work hard. We have responsibility." He took immense pride in the work the popular committee has undertaken. As he put it, "We need to be more serious in life, in this life, to change things." Kareem went on to describe various projects the refugees had undertaken and the different opportunities available to continue making progress.

In addition, conversations with first and second generation refugees (between 45-85 years) tended to focus more explicitly on the crimes the refugees had suffered at the hands of Israel in 1948. Almost 75 percent of my conversations with Mahmud (50 years), Nida (85 years), Abed (60 years), Amani (50 years), Ara (55 years), Maher (48 years) and Rawiyah (86 years) focused on 1948 and the period immediately after, with interviewees relating stories of the attacks on their towns, their family's flight and the difficulties they had suffered. They tended to emphasize the need to bring their story to light and to make the international community aware of their pain. Many of them asked me to share their stories, emphasized the responsibility that was on my shoulders and noted that it was the international community that could make change. Kareem (60 years), as discussed above, was the one exception to this trend in the older generation.

On the other hand, my conversations with the younger refugees (between 18 -35 years of age) tended to focus on questions of representation, advocacy and different means of changing the situation on the ground. Laila (35 years), Suhayl (30 years), Nimer (30 years), Ibrahim (22 years), Malak (20 years) and Yasmeen (18 years) all expressed a very explicit frustration with the maintenance of the status quo in their way of life. They wanted to talk more about ways available to the refugees themselves to create change, rather than the history of what had made them refugees.

As Nimer put it, "No one can represent Palestinian refugees, except Palestinian refugees." Two young women believed UNRWA represented them "because they help all the people in the camp." Nimer claimed he was "against UNRWA" because "UNRWA is not meant to help the Palestinian refugees get their rights; it is just to support them, to give them services and to help them find alternative work… This is not what I want. I do not want the international community to give me things. I just want them to put pressure on Israel to give us our rights… I do not want food, aid, clinics… we can solve our problems on our own. We just need the political support." Laila disagreed. She believed that if UNRWA were to expand its protection mandate to include

resettlement and compensation, it "would be a suicide mission" and "UNRWA would disappear in a "minimum of one week." She claimed it would be seen by the refugees as a renouncement of the Right of Return and an attempt to try to solve the problem without leadership from the Palestinian community.

Laila did agree with Nimer, however, that it was up to the refugees to advocate for themselves. She believed they had to become better at presenting themselves. Laila thought the most effective way for refugees to "bring themselves to the front of the battle and to bring themselves to the negotiating table" would be to come up with alternative, concrete plans, "to step out seriously from our victim role and to present a plan for ourselves." She claimed the international community had been able to avoid taking action by saying they had to plan for the refugees. The majority of my interviewees agreed with Laila in some way, believing that the voice of the individual Palestinian is currently muffled and often ignored in favor of the self-serving interest of other, more powerful parties. While the older generations tended to emphasize the responsibility of the international community to make change, the younger interviewees continuously pointed to the possibilities presented by TV, advertisements, newspapers, court cases and, occasionally, armed struggle for refugees to make change for themselves.

Embedded in the majority of my interviews was a fierce and continued call for empowerment. Many of the refugees I spoke with expressed the feeling that decisions being made for them, either by Israel or the international community through the system of humanitarian aid, only served to reinforce their victimization. As 85-year-old Rawiyah put it, the Palestinians had more dignity before the catastrophe in 1948. Nimer emphasized that he felt patronized by UNRWA, which he believed provided the refugees with aid but did not empower them. Nimer's and others' demands for empowerment included calls for participation in discussions about their future and the right to choose their own fate, be it to return to their original homeland, to remain in the camp, or to be resettled. Twelve of the fourteen refugees I spoke with also emphasized the importance of the recognition of their rights as a means of acknowledging the refugee as a human being with justifiable demands.

Refugee testimonies highlight the disconnect between local and global agendas and document a widespread frustration with being ascribed the label of "victim." When an individual is designated a refugee, they are often reduced to Giorgio Agamben's notion of "bare life," an existence "marked by a condition of pre-political absolute victimhood" that "exists in tension with the attempts to produce political beings found in the struggles of individuals" (Shaw 2010, 8). The refugees' frustration with their passive role vis-à-vis UNRWA and their continued perception as victims reminds of their position as civil and political rights-bearing subjects with legitimate claims

to justice, autonomy, and representation. Their continued emphasis on the need for empowerment and material action, rather than symbolic gestures, makes clear that many of the actions and moral repairs advocated for by restorative justice frameworks would likely be rejected by them and only serve to deepen the objectification the refugees already feel in their daily lives, this time forcing them to forgive.

The lack of alignment between the refugees' understanding of justice and that of the international community is important. Through justice mechanisms, the international community broadly aims to end conflict and cycles of vengeance. For this to occur, individuals and communities must feel that justice is delivered (Minow 1998; Kiss 2000). If international legal norms do not correspond to local understandings of justice, it is unlikely that populations will feel their grievances have been adequately addressed. Researchers have become increasingly aware of the danger of this disconnect, beginning to head into the field to conduct surveys or ethnographic research with local populations regarding their desires for a solution and understandings of justice in post-conflict settings (Shaw and Waldorf 2010). This research is important in helping to ensure that the justice mechanisms eventually established do not leave too many festering questions, complaints, or doubts among local populations. While ideal justice can never be delivered, it is better to attempt to match holistic response mechanisms with local demands to ensure justice delivery is as effective as possible. One way available to the international community to begin matching the services they provide with the demands being made by Palestinian refugees would be a continued expansion of UNRWA's protection role, particularly in terms of international protection.

Empowerment Through Protection

One aspect of restoring the agency of refugees, or empowerment, consists of educating them about their rights under international law, as well as helping them to advocate for, access, and make claims for themselves in internationally consequential fora. This type of empowerment falls under the duty of "international protection" of humanitarian agencies such as UNHCR and UNRWA, specifically mandating that the two agencies ensure that refugees *are provided the rights due to them as both refugees and individuals.*

The Responsibility to Protect doctrine (R2P) states that the international community has a duty to intervene to protect individuals whose states are unwilling or unable to protect them from the most egregious crimes under international law, including genocide, ethnic cleansing, war crimes and crimes against humanity (UN General Assembly 2009, 1; Rimmer 2010b, 1).

According to the definition given above, refugees require protection as they are victims of forced displacement (classified as a crime against humanity and a war crime) and lack national protection. In addition, R2P emphasizes the need to prevent conflict. The international community has perceived a link between the forced movement of peoples, the attendant human rights violations, and instability. Refugees are often seen as a threat to international peace and security (Rimmer 2010b, 2-3, 7). The most recent report of UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon on R2P states that mainstreaming the protection of refugees and the internally displaced into the priorities of UN agencies would help further the R2P doctrine (Rimmer 2010b, 7).

In the humanitarian field, protection refers to "all activities aimed at obtaining full respect for the rights of the individual in accordance with the letter and spirit of the relevant bodies of law." The definition was most recently enunciated by the Inter-Agency Standing Committee, which brings together a broad range of UN and non-UN humanitarian actors. It has been developed since the 1990s in workshops led by the International Red Cross and is currently the most widely accepted definition of protection within the international humanitarian community (Bartholomeusz 2010, 466). In the case of Palestinian refugees, the relevant bodies of law include IHRL and IHL.[5]

While UNHCR has an explicit mandate to "protect" the majority of the world's refugees, UNRWA does not. The exclusion of Palestinian refugees from the 1951 Convention was meant to afford them a heightened protection, regime through the United Nations Conciliation Commission for Palestine (UNCCP). However, the UNCCP is now obsolete, and Palestinians have been left without an agency mandated to provide them protection since the early 1950s (Akram 2000).[6] They have lacked the benefit of the advocacy and interventions that the majority of the world's refugees receive from UNHCR (Akram 2000). Rather than reviving the now defunct UNCCP, UNRWA is best situated to take over the role of international protection for the Palestinian refugees, increasing their work to ensure the refugees' human rights are

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[5] For most of the world's refugees, the relevant bodies of law include IHRL, IHL and IRL. Palestinian refugees, however, are excluded from the IRL regime due to Article 1D of the 1951 UN Refugee Convention (for more, see: Takkenberg 1998). The way in which the international refugee law regime categorizes, conceives of, and defines responses for a refugee, however, has still influenced UNRWA-mandate refugees. The conception of a refugee in the international community (discussed in the first part of this paper) was shaped by and arose from the legal regime on which it was based. This conception is broader than the legal definition, and has impacted the way in which Palestinian refugees are understood and the humanitarian responses to them defined. Even within UNRWA, there is still an effort to uphold the principles of international refugee law, despite formal exclusion from the legal regime. For example, in the UNRWA Jordan Field Implementation Plan 2012-2013, IRL is included as one of the bodies of law to which UNRWA should look to when striving to ensure the rights of Palestinian refugees are protected.

[6] While another UN agency, the Office of the United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process (UNSCO), was established in 1994 following the signing of the Oslo Accords, the agency is weak, largely inactive, and lacks a specific mandate on refugees.

respected and their agency restored so that they can make their demands heard in discussions concerning their futures.

Despite the fact that UNRWA lacks a specific protection mandate, UNRWA has begun to increase its protection role over the past few years. This work has been recognized both within the agency and within the broader UN system (Morris 2008, 1). In 2010, the General Assembly (GA) noted in the main resolution concerning UNRWA that it was "aware of the valuable work done by the Agency in providing protection to the Palestinian people, in particular, Palestine refugees."[7] The GA had used the same language in resolutions in 2007, 2008 and 2009.[8] In 2010, the GA further expressed "special commendation to the Agency for the essential role that it has played for over sixty years since its establishment in providing vital services for the well-being, human development and protection of the Palestine refugees and the amelioration of their plight."[9] The UN's recognition is significant, and UNRWA has taken it as a confirmation of their protection role and right to undertake protection work.

UNRWA defines protection as ensuring that every refugee feels "assured that his or her rights are being protected, defended and preserved."[10] According to a report prepared by consultant Nicholas Morris in 2008, protection has four components for UNRWA, two relating to internal agency matters and two regarding external matters.[11] The first external protection component, the right to a just and durable solution, highlights the difference between UNHCR and UNRWA. While UNHCR includes the search for durable solutions in its protection mandate, UNRWA is asked to leave the achievement of solutions to other actors (Morris 2008, 3). UNRWA's role is merely to "highlight the urgent need for that solution and to help ensure that in its elaboration the rights and interests of the refugees are safe-guarded" (Morris 2008, 3). Yet, leaving the search for durable solutions for individual Palestinian refugees to other actors has led to the abrogation of the individual right to justice in the name of collective demands.

The second external component Morris takes up is "international protection." Morris writes that in regards this form of protection, UNRWA can and should continue promoting respect for the rights of the refugees through monitoring violations, offering support and advice to individuals, advocating at all levels, directly or indirectly engaging with host governments and the

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[7] *Operations of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East*, UN General Assembly Resolution 65/100 (A/RES/65/100), 10 December 2010, (emphasis added).

[8] (Bartholomeusz 2010, 466); For more on the gradual expansion of UNRWA's protection role, see Kagan (2010, 511-530) and Kagan (2009, 417-438).

[9] UN General Assembly 2010, Emphasis added.

[10] Morris (2008, 2-3), quoting UNRWA's Interim Programme Strategy 2008 – 2009, 24 September 2007, 1.2.

[11] Nicholas Morris, a retired UNHCR staff member, acted as a consultant for UNRWA for two months in order to examine what protection means for UNRWA in concept and practice.

international community and reporting to bodies "whose recommendations are legally binding and require monitoring" (Morris 2008, 4). The consultant specifically recommends that UNRWA make "increased use of the UN human rights system, concentrating on those mechanisms whose findings and observations carry most weight" (Morris 2008, 4).

UNRWA is working to increase its' protection role by adopting some of UNHCR's best practices in regards protection. To highlight the improvements UNRWA is attempting to make, it is necessary to examine UNHCR's work for refugees. Yet, this strategy is limited. While UNRWA would improve by adopting the best practices of UNHCR, both UNHCR and UNRWA need to rethink their protection work in order to ensure that every refugee's rights are holistically "protected, defended and preserved." Reparations provide a useful lens for understanding the limitations that remain in UNHCR's protection work, as well as offer some practical first steps UNRWA could take in order to empower and better protect Palestinian refugees.

UNHCR's Protection Role

In the Statute of the Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees, it states that UNHCR, "acting under the authority of the GA, shall assume the function of providing international protection… to refugees."[12] Despite this statutory mandate, UNHCR shied away from human rights work for decades, focusing on "protecting" refugees in the context of humanitarian and nonpolitical work, looking specifically at the rights guaranteed under the 1951 Convention and the principle of non-refoulement (Stavropoulou 1998, 546). It was only in the 1990s that UNHCR began increasing its dialogue with human rights bodies and IHRL frameworks. It began addressing the Human Rights Commission, increasingly contributing to human rights treaty body deliberations and urging its staff to include human rights in their efforts to protect refugees (Stavropoulou 1998, 546).[13] UNHCR has also promoted the inclusion of human rights in international conferences on refugees and the setting of standards in the area of forced displacement (Stavropoulou 1998, 546). These advances have helped pave the way for a greater role for UNHCR in representing and protecting refugees in regards to their human rights. Yet,

[12] Quoting the Statute of the Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees (Wolfson 2005, 55-56).

[13] A human rights treaty is a formal document that imposes binding obligations on the states that ratify the document. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights make up the core of international human rights treaties. Over the years, additional treaties have been ratified which address more specific human rights violations. The eight principal treaties have a corresponding "treaty body" that consists of committees of independent and impartial experts that oversee the implementation and monitoring of the treaties; "Treaty Bodies," Amnesty International Information Publication. Accessed 28 March 2011.
http://www.amnesty.org/en/united-nations/treaty-bodies/what-are-treaty-bodies

discussions have *tended to focus on monitoring the human rights of refugees while they are refugees, rather than looking at the need for justice for the crime of displacement and the right to reparations.*

UNHCR already has experience offering legal protection to refugees, mainly in the context of voluntary repatriation to their country of origin (Wolfson 2005, 58-9; Rimmer 2010, 3). UNHCR helps identify and remove legal and administrative barriers to return and undertakes rule of law activities in the realm of citizenship, property, amnesties, and documentation (Wolfson 2005, 58-9). In post-conflict and transitional justice settings, UNHCR has played an important role in implementing property restitution schemes and, in some cases, intervening with governments on the refugees' behalf and ensuring refugee participation in decisions concerning them (Dumper 2007, 394- 395).[14] The organization also provides support, both financial and legal, local capacity building, advice on drafting legislation, and help with implementation and enforcement of legislation. In addition, UNHCR leads informational campaigns, offers legal advice to returning refugees and monitors their human rights situation (Wolfson 2005, 58-9). In short, UNHCR serves in a protection role before, during, and throughout the transitional period for returning refugees.

UNHCR's protection mandate does not only extend to those refugees returning to their country of origin, however. UNHCR has a representative role to play for all refugees, particularly in protracted refugee situations (Wolfson 2005, 58-9; Rimmer 2010, 3).[15] Yet, while a refugee remains displaced, the agency continues to focus primarily on the rights guaranteed to them under the framework of IRL alone, concentrating on issues of non-refoulement, asylum claims and advocating for durable solutions (UNHCR. "Protection").[16] There is no concentrated focus on empowering refugees to make claims through the use of IHRL or IHL while they remain refugees and the discussion of the human rights violations that actually caused

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[14] In Guatemala in the late 1980s, refugees created a group of representatives to negotiate the terms of their return directly with their government. UNHCR gave the group logistical and other support, despite the fact that the Guatemalan government originally tried to ignore the refugees. An agreement for return was eventually reached between the refugees and the government. Consultation fora and monitoring groups were also established so that the refugees could bring forward complaints and voice their concerns throughout the return process. The case of the Guatemalan refugees is a success story of refugee participation in voluntary repatriation programs and an example of the assistance that can be offered by the international community through UNHCR or UNRWA.

[15] As discussed, there is a prevailing idea that refugees must wait until they gain a nationality and national protection to access rights and recourses to justice. In situations of protracted displacement, a refugee may never achieve a nationality.

[16] The principle of non-refoulement, a part of customary international law, prohibits the forcible removal of a person to a country where there is a real risk of persecution. For many refugees, this has come to apply to countries in which they are seeking asylum that wish to return them to the country of origin from which they fled.

refugee outflows remains largely absent (Malkki 1995, 518). In addition, while refugees who return have been beneficiaries of restitution schemes, refugees who have been resettled have generally not been compensated for lost property. In short, refugees' broader right to reparations has been largely ignored (Malkki 1996, 390).

Protection Through Empowerment: Linking The Refugee to IHRL and IHL

Both UNHCR and UNRWA are uniquely placed to create linkages between the relevant bodies of law (for UNHCR, IRL, IHRL and IHL; for UNRWA, IHRL and IHL) to combine humanitarian protection with legal protection and advocacy. Each body of law, although occasionally overlapping, offers a different set of protections to distinct groups. IRL focuses on protecting those seeking asylum or those recognized as refugees, primarily guaranteeing economic and social rights and ensuring that the principle of non-refoulement is respected. IHL outlines the rules of war, including the protections due to civilians during conflict. IHRL entitles each person to a "Bill of Rights" on the international stage. It is the latter two bodies of law that offer the most in terms of helping refugees move past bare-life, victim status.

When recognized as a refugee by UNHCR, an individual gains standing under IRL. Yet, as a victim of forced displacement and as an individual, they also have standing under IHRL and IHL. Palestinian refugees, while excluded from IRL, have standing under IHRL and IHL. These broader bodies of law provide one of the only means available to individuals to seek justice while still designated a refugee. IRL does not include the right to redress and reparation for the crime of forced displacement or any arenas where individuals can bring justice claims. IHRL and IHL protect the right to reparation and, while limited, offer some fora where refugees could bring claims. For example, four of the eight core human rights treaties allow individuals to lodge complaints against states for violating their rights (ADH- Genève. ND. "The Rule of Law in Armed Conflicts Project").

Both UNHCR and UNRWA have begun to focus on reporting violations of refugees' rights through the UN's human rights mechanisms. Their concentration, however, has been on monitoring and reporting violations of rights for the refugees, rather than on providing refugees with the tools necessary to advocate for themselves as subjects under IHL, IHRL and/or IRL. These efforts do not effectively, fully empower the refugees.

Furthermore, discussions with refugees as to their rights under IHRL and IHL are noticeably absent from UNRWA's own definition of its protection work, which reads:

Promoting respect for Palestine refugees' rights through monitoring, reporting and intervention, delivering services in a manner that promotes and respects the rights of beneficiaries, ensuring that protection needs are addressed in all aspects of programming, policies and procedures and advocating in public statements as well as private interventions with a broad range of interlocutors to promote the protection of refugee rights (UNRWA "About UNRWA").

Without empowerment, the fundamental failure of the UN and the involved states over the years to provide the Palestinian refugees the right to choose--to return, to stay, to leave, to start again--continues. Their victimization is embedded.

This is not to say that the humanitarian assistance and protection that UNHCR and UNRWA currently provide refugees is not important. It is merely pointing out that this work is limited and could be improved. "Protection" as currently understood does not incorporate the right to justice for these individual victims of forced displacement. Increasing protection to include justice is the first step to ending the "victimhood life" of the refugees, at least in regard to their relationship with the UN. A discussion of individual reparations packages can be the basis for exploring the importance for humanitarian agencies' to link and incorporate the three bodies of IRL, IHRL and IHL more fully to better fulfill their protection mandates.

Linking Reparations and Protection: "Burden Bearing"

Reparations offer one potential option for humanitarian agencies to begin the process of empowerment. Reparations claims for the crime of forced displacement address both the material and the moral realms of repair needed after being subjected to a crime and highlight the need to create linkages between IRL, IHRL, and IHL (ADH- Genève. ND. "The Rule of Law in Armed Conflicts Project"). Further, reparations remind of the need to bring the questions of perpetrators, guilt, and burden-bearing into discussions concerning refugee outflows and their solutions.

Individual reparation packages hold great promise for refugees. These packages can help refugees overcome the victimization that began with the violation of their human rights and continued through their experience as a refugee due to their objectification under the international assistance regime. Reparations help facilitate agency, particularly through the empowering process of advocating for one's rights.[17] Reparations could help in the acknowledgment that refugees are more than mere humans

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[17] For more on reparations, see Hayner (2002) or Minow (1998).

undergoing suffering. They also have "narrative authority, historical agency and political memory" (Malkki 1996, 398). Practically, reparations can help refugees establish themselves in their new countries or their old ones, easing some of the extreme economic hardship that often accompanies refugee status. Finally, as symbols of justice, reparations can be the keys to closure for refugees and their families, especially if they are coming from, and thus holding accountable, the perpetrators of forced displacement (Rimmer 2010, 2). There are even some precedents involving reparations for refugees. These have all been seen, however, in a transitional justice context in societies reconstructing themselves following conflict, rather than through the use of established human rights machinery.[18] In short, reparations remind that many refugees are victims of a specific crime, but are not merely bare-life victims. They require justice, both individual and collective.

As outlined by the 2006 UN Basic Principles on the Right to a Remedy, victims of gross violations of human rights hold a broad right to reparations, including restitution, compensation, rehabilitation, and the right to an apology. As victims of forced displacement, classified as a crime against humanity and a gross violation of human rights, refugees, including Palestinian refugees, are legally entitled to reparations in the eyes of the international community.

According to the Basic Principles on the Right to a Remedy, there are three specific rights under IHRL and IHL that are promised to victims. First, the Basic Principles promise access to relevant information concerning violations and reparation mechanisms. Second, the Basic Principles promote the right to equal and effective access to justice. Third, they promise adequate, effective and prompt reparation for harm suffered (United Nations General Assembly 2005, 11). Each right has a set of corresponding practical measures that could be taken in order to empower refugees to make claims for the rights due them both under the Basic Principles and more broadly. These rights are not specified or provided by IRL. Only by incorporating the two broader bodies of IHRL and IHL into their protection work can UNHCR and UNRWA help refugees access their right to empowerment by way of reparations claims. Here, I will discuss both UNHCR and UNRWA, but focus specifically on the Palestinian case. Of course, there are many ways in which the two agencies could work to restore refugees' status as subjects. The recommendations below represent only one example.

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[18] The truth commissions in Sierra Leone, Guatemala, Peru, and Timor-Leste all viewed displacement as a human rights abuse, yet their efforts were ad hoc and constricted. In Guatemala, reparations were given to the displaced for the violations they suffered before, during, and because of displacement. In Bosnia, when large numbers of refugees were returning, restitution programs restored actual land, homes, and lost property (Rimmer 2010, 2).

Access to Relevant Information

To ensure access to information, both UNHCR and UNRWA could lead information and awareness-raising campaigns with the refugees about their rights under IHL, IHRL and/or IRL, discussing their rights as refugees, as victims of forced displacement, and as human beings. More specifically, UNRWA should begin a meaningful dialogue with the refugees as to their desires for the future. Providing refugees' access to full and accurate information regarding their potential claims is an important part of this dialogue. It would also serve to increase the refugees' agency by facilitating the making of informed decisions.

There are two particular sets of documentation to which the refugees should be given access. First are the recently digitized UNRWA records, in particular the "Family Files." The UNRWA Commissioner General has stated that the efforts to preserve these files "underscore our commitment to the protection of the refugees we serve" (UNRWA 2009) For the refugees, the records contain a wealth of information that could be useful in making claims or decisions regarding their futures. The wide range of archives includes over 16 million refugee records dating back more than 60 years. The records, according to an UNRWA report, contain factual information "that could be relevant in the settlement of the Palestine refugee issue" (Nasser 2003, 4). The records have not been systematically disseminated to the refugees, and it is unclear as to whether or not refugees would be provided access to them upon request.

The second set of files that should be provided to Palestinian refugees are those compiled by the UNCCP that relate to them and their families. The Commission completed an extensive identification and valuation project in 1964, compiling figures as to the state of individual Palestinian property holdings in 1947 (United Nations General Assembly 1961, 51 – 52). While these records have also been digitized,[19] they have still not been released to the refugees, remaining under lock and key in the UN archives in New York (United Nations General Assembly 1961, 51 – 52). Practically, as both the UNRWA and UNCCP systems are digitized, it seems a realistic possibility to link the two sets of files. If provided access, this would allow the refugees to use the UNCCP documents to establish their property claims and successive generations to use the UNRWA documents to establish their relation to the original owners of the properties.

Over 50 years ago, UNCCP Special Representative Joseph Johnson recommended that the commission begin consultations with the refugees

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[19] The project to preserve and modernize the UNCCP records was completed in 2000 (see: Annex to a note by the Secretary General: *fifty-fourth report of the UN Conciliation Commission for Palestine* (A/55/329), 31 August 2000; For more on the project of transforming the paper files to a computer database including the names of all property owners, location of properties and property, see Fischbach (2003).

regarding their current position and realistic possibilities for their future. This dialogue, simply intended to ensure that the refugees were fully informed of their rights and options, never began. UNRWA has the ability to begin these consultations for the first time. As laid down in international law, refugees have the right of access to relevant information--the UNCCP and UNRWA files are certainly relevant. To increase their agency, the refugees should be provided the information necessary to make an informed and realistic choice regarding their future. For those who choose, the records could provide the basis for a strong legal claim for reparations.

Equal and Effective Access to Justice

It is through individual complaints and adjudication that human rights are given real meaning and, quite literally, put into force. By drawing attention to the violations of international norms, individuals can remind of the need for justice. Yet, in the case of individuals lacking citizenship, there are very few avenues available to make claims heard. Human rights treaty bodies offer one potential means for bringing individual complaints in front of a quasi-judicial body, but their promise for refugees remains limited, as they only pertain to specific violations of particular treaties, and no current treaty deals with the crime of forced displacement as such (Stavropoulou 1998, 539). For this and other reasons, human rights treaty bodies remain extremely underutilized by refugees (Stavropoulou 1998, 540).

For Palestinian refugees, the hurdles to accessing justice are even higher. Israel has shielded itself domestically and internationally.[20] While Israel is a signatory to many of the principal human rights conventions, it has submitted reservations that would prevent individual legal challenges by Palestinians, refused to submit to the jurisdiction of the conventions' enforcement bodies, and has not incorporated the treaties' dictates into domestic law (Akram 2000b). There is currently no meaningful mechanism through which individual Palestinians can challenge past and present violations of human rights (Akram 2000b).

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[20] Lawyers have made restitution and compensation claims on behalf of Palestinians in Israeli courts without success for years. In domestic law, Israel's legal claim to Palestinian property is based on the "laws of absentee property." The law includes in the definition of an "absentee" the vast majority of Palestinians who left their homes, however briefly, as a result of the 1948 conflict. Once defined an "absentee," a Palestinian immediately loses their right of ownership to their property. The sole right, title, and use of all absentee property was given to the Custodian of Absentee Property, to be used for the benefit of Israel. In 1961, the Israel Land Administration (ILA) was created to take over the administration of almost all Palestinian refugee land confiscated under the absentee property laws. The creation of the ILA insulated the state from claims from the original Palestinian landowners of wrongful taking of property and discriminatory application of the laws, and the ILA, as a "non-state" entity, was able to include regulations on every land transaction that prohibited the transfer of the property to non-Jews. (Similar "restrictive covenants" used by whites in the US to prevent the transfer of land to blacks were declared illegal decades ago). Finally, Israeli legislation declares that the only compensation to be paid in case of challenge by the owners of the "absentee property" is value fixed at 1950 prices, with prohibitions on the restitution of the property (Akram, 2000b).

Yet, international case law is clear that a right must be distinguished from the procedural capacity to exercise that right. An individual, even if unable to exercise their right at the international level, still holds that right.[21] For Palestinians lacking a court through which to bring individual reparations claims, creativity is needed to make their voices heard. As Susan Akram, a Boston University law professor who has extensively studied the legal position of Palestinian refugees, points out, there are a number of different avenues through which Palestinian refugees could attempt to apply pressure for reparations claims. While unable to submit individual complaints, refugees and refugee organizations can and should continue to collect and present evidence to the various human rights treaty bodies on the ongoing violations of their rights every time Israel is due to submit its periodic compliance reports. Palestinians could use advocacy techniques to pressure Europe and those countries trading with Israel to mandate its compliance with the human rights treaties. Refugees could also advocate for a case to be brought against Israel in the International Court of Justice (ICJ). As only states and, theoretically, international organizations, have standing with the ICJ, individuals would have to lobby either UNRWA or a host country to bring claims (Akram 2000c).

UNHCR and UNRWA do not have the power to establish effective legal mechanisms in which refugees could bring claims. The agencies do, however, have the power to help refugees navigate the complex international fora through which there is potential for making their voices heard. Through advocacy, the greater need and desire for access to justice mechanisms will be brought to light.

Adequate, Effective and Prompt Reparation for Harm Suffered

Neither UNHCR nor UNRWA can ensure the delivery of adequate reparation. The agencies can facilitate the expediency of the process. Advocacy and the attempt to bring legal claims are important sources of pressure to ensure delivery of justice. Even failed legal claims allow a form of non-violent protest against the original crime and help indicate gaps in the current legal system. In addition, the advocacy process can be a cathartic and empowering experience for refugees (Akram 2000b). Both UNHCR and UNRWA have a duty to increase refugees' knowledge of their rights and access to different fora to make their voices heard in order to facilitate the achievement of reparation. Further, applying this pressure and making publicly known the refugees' knowledge of and attachment to their rights could impact negotiations. It would remind that the individual's rights, as mandated by law, cannot be abrogated in the name of collective appeals or political expediency. If

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[21] This was affirmed by the Permanent Court of International Justice in the *Jurisdiction of the Court of Danzig* case. Similar logic was followed by the International Court of Justice in the *LaGrand* case in 2001; (Schwager 2005, 419).

pressure is not applied and claims are not made previous to an agreement being reached, however, there is serious danger that the right and ability to achieve individual justice will be extinguished (Akram 2000c).

Conclusion: Broadening The Scope of Discussion and Burden-Bearing

The importance of international law for Palestinians is in the legitimacy the language of law offers to them. Twelve of the fourteen refugees I spoke with noted that their rights derived from international law, appealing to UN resolutions in order to provide their demands with more weight. Specifically, refugees tended to refer to UN resolution 194 as the source of their right to return and compensation. Adopted in 1948, resolution 194 has taken on a life of its own in popular Palestinian rhetoric, often pointed to by the Palestinian Authority, local leaders, and individuals as evidence of the international community's promise that justice will one day be delivered to Palestinian refugees (Khalidi 1992, 31). When making claims for justice, either on an individual or communal level, resolution 194 is usually utilized to emphasize that these claims, codified in international law, must be respected.

In addition, the case of resolution 194 demonstrates the ability of laws to gain or lose power depending upon the saliency they have in the public sphere. Historically, Palestinian claims to justice have revolved around this singular resolution, prioritizing it over other, international legal rights to which Palestinians are entitled. For example, the right to reparation as discussed above and elucidated by the UN Basic Principles offers much more explicit and broader reparation packages than those provided for by resolution 194. Yet, the Basic Principles have not gained a place in Palestinian demands. While the language of international law plays an important role in the Palestinian community's claims for justice, the rights it promises have not been holistically acquired. Rather, certain aspects of international law have gained primary saliency, while others have largely been ignored.

The refugees are currently waiting for nation-states to deliver justice, but rights are not easily granted from above. The law must be used to assert and claim rights in order to achieve them. While Palestinians have been unable to either access, or make successful claims in, domestic or international legal fora, the language of law and human rights help make the community's claims legible and legitimate to the outside world. For the Palestinian refugee community, law is not justice. Rather, law is utilized as one form of pressure-inducing advocacy that may eventually lead to the structural changes that would actually comprise true justice. UNRWA, and UNHCR for other refugees, has a duty to help refugees utilize international law as such.

Palestinian refugees are in absolute need of international legal protection. While UNRWA has increased its protection role over the past few years, its work remains limited. The agency is uniquely placed to restore the agency of Palestinian refugees by increasing their ability to advocate for themselves and make their claims heard for reparations and solutions. UNRWA asserts that it focuses on the "human development" of the refugees. This development must include more than education and healthcare. It must empower the refugees to become agents in the determination of their individual futures.

More broadly, refugees, and particularly Palestinian refugees, remain a profound concern in the field of international relations. Mass migrations cause domestic instability, place burdens on states and regions that are often already over-burdened, aggravate interstate tensions and threaten international peace and security (Malkki 1995, 504–507). The international community focuses on "burden-sharing," working towards lessening the tension refugees cause by providing aid. The refugees become further and further dependent on the international community and, by extension, donor governments (Rimmer 2010b, 9). There is no discussion of holding accountable the states and individuals responsible for causing refugee outflows in the first place (Rimmer 2010b, 8). By bringing culpability for displacement into the discussion, the focus could shift from "burden sharing" to "burden bearing," with the payment of reparations helping to lay the groundwork for a preventative strategy regarding new refugee outflows (Rimmer 2010b, 10).

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Chapter Two:

Palestinian Refugee Identity and the Right of Return

Palestinian *Sumud*: Steadfastness, Ritual, and Time among Palestinian Refugees

Leonardo Schiocchet

Introduction

This article presents an analysis of an important tendency related to the social belonging process of Palestinian refugees which is firmly tied to variations of a Palestinian conception of time. This tendency is to symbolically link the definition and experience of Palestinianness in the present through the concept of *al-Sumud* (steadfastness). Through the notion of *Sumud,* an Islamic divine attribute, and *Samid* (plural, *Samidin*), a derived term that denotes the subject who possesses the qualities of *Sumud*, the Palestinian conception of time is, for many Palestinian refugees, in large measure inscribed into an Islamic praxis.

This study is based on fieldwork since 2006 among a few Palestinian refugee communities, with special emphasis on three of them: Al-Jalil and *Dbaye* refugee camps in Lebanon, and a group of about 110 Palestinian refugees, who arrived in Brazil in 2007 from an Iraqi refugee camp, and are today spread around the country. This study also takes into consideration my fieldwork in many other Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon and with Palestinian refugees in Syria and Jordan. In terms of reach, my argument is thus more general. What I present in this paper is a broad tendency of refugees to define, express, and experience Palestinianness.

Existence as Resistance

In practice as much as in discourse, the most general understanding of Palestinianness among refugees passes through the shared experience of loss and the condition of exile to which they are subjected. In the face of more than six decades since the beginning of the original diaspora, Palestinian refugees are haunted by fears of the effacement of their properties, rights, lifestyles, and, more importantly, their own identity. Such fears mark their understanding of themselves, which in turn position their engagement with the world. The fear of self-effacement also leads to an idealization of one's own existence as resistance. Within Palestinian refugee camps in general, being a refugee is one more element reinforcing the equation "existence = resistance" as an attribute of Palestinianness.

The "existence=resistance" equation defines the sort of passive resistance that characterizes the idea of *Sumud* as opposed to, for example, *muqawama*

(resistance), which is a more active form of resistance (armed resistance, for instance). Palestinian refugees tend to feel and say they are *mahrumin* (dispossessed). Their shared experience of dispossession makes them *mahrumin* at the same time that it makes their mundane, quotidian routines an act of resistance in their eyes. Through language, folklore, and practices, they insist on their dream of living the plenitude of their Palestinianness - that is, being Palestinian without the attached stigma of the term and the practical impediments that this stigma generates. The most pressing of these impediments is the refugee condition itself. Thus, living as a refugee automatically entails being *samidin* (unless the refugee actively undoes this qualification through certain behaviors such as becoming a spy or collaborator for Israel), but does not necessarily entail participation in the *muqawama*.

All *Samidin* Palestinians are thus also considered martyrs of *Al-Qadyia al-Falastinyiah* ("The Palestinian Cause") upon death, not only according to the discourse of the political parties and social movements, but also according to popular understanding. However, participation in, for example, a martyrdom operation,[1] whether independent or organized by an Islamist or secular political group, generally provides the participant more social capital, thereby adding to his/her Palestinianness. Today, this differentiation has even led to a modification in colloquial Arabic usage, introducing the new term "*istishhadi*"[2] (a martyr that deliberately seeks his martyrdom) as opposed to *shahid* (a martyr).

Al-Sumud in Context

Despite the contemporary, and sometimes involuntary, tendency to inscribe *Sumud* into an Islamic praxis,[3] the concept has also a more "secular" history as evidenced by the PLO usage of the term, which emphasizes that to live as a refugee and to insist on being Palestinian alone (for example, through celebrating Palestinian food or dance) is already an important form of resistance against the imperialist objectives of Israel. But even among the Palestinian Christians[4] or Marxists to whom I spoke, for whom Islam did not define the terms of their vernacular politics, conceptions of *Sumud* were still greatly influenced by the sociality that the term has for Muslims. This is partially because, consciously or unconsciously, even the PLO's framing of

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[1] Most non-Arabic sources ethnocentrically understand (or incorrectly translate) `*amalyia istishhadyia* as being a "suicidal" operation regardless of the intention behind it.

[2] For more on this read Nasser Abufarha's The Making of the Human Bomb (Abufarha 2009).

[3] I understand Islam more broadly as a culturea, so in this case even the understanding of most Christian Palestinians is somehow tied to an Islamic definition and popularization of the concept. And, more strictly, Islam also means a religion for a Muslim religious activist segment among the Palestinian refugees who are the object of this paper.

[4] The Palestinian refugee camp, *Dbaye*, consists almost completely of Palestinian Christians.

the "Palestinian cause"--which popularized the general usage of the term *Sumud* in Palestinian cultural and political dialects--borrowed many of its idioms from Islamic culture.

However, *Sumud* is not always a force shaping Palestinian refugees' lives. In *Dbaye*, a Palestinian refugee camp located in *Metn* (Mount Lebanon, Lebanon), for instance, I found that although the idea of *Sumud* was still very much present, especially in the older generation's discourse, it was not particularly important for younger generations nor did it define either generation's everyday social practices. Among the most important reasons for *Sumud's* effacement from the discourses and practices of younger generations in *Dbaye* is that, due to a very specific and special historical context, most of these youth do not in fact define themselves unambiguously as "Palestinian."[5]

That older generation, which still tends to define itself unambiguously as Palestinian, continue to assign great importance to the idea of *Sumud*, which attests to the general indexing of Palestinianness through the commitment to being *Samidin*.[6] Furthermore, the reason that in *Dbaye* the older generation's social practices do not reflect a *Samidin* posture as much as those of the same generation in other Palestinian refugee camps that I knew in Lebanon is the difference between these refugees' identity discourses and their social practices. This difference can be explained by the older generation's lack of hope of return to their now changed homeland, and consequently, the tentative accommodation of their lives to a foreign environment as they maintain a stereotypical discourse of Palestinianness. Thus, being "Palestinian" today for this specific group in *Dbaye* has more to do with how they lived their lives in the past than with how they live their lives in the present. In contrast, younger generations in the same camp tend to define their identity through their present engagement with their Lebanese surroundings and the largely Lebanese composition of the camp itself.

The Palestinian conception of time, related to the concept of *al-Sumud,* was historically generated and maintained within the context of the secular activism of a Muslim majority, but today its vernacular language has become ever more Islamized. In the cases where *Sumud* is an essential component of social practices (not just in discourse), I found a tendency toward what I call a "hyper-expression of identity," which is responsible for the ritualization of the quotidian. The focus of this paper, the process of social belonging of these Palestinian refugees as informed by the concept of *Sumud*, encompasses both identity and social organization, and is critically inspired by the writings of

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[5] Although I will develop this theme later in this paper, a much deeper analysis of this context and social belonging in *Dbaye* is offered in my PhD dissertation (Schiocchet 2011).

[6] Through this paper I will be presenting a very widespread tendency. It must be understood that this general tendency has infinite variants, potentially, and that it certainly does not apply to every single case.

Edmund Leach (1990, 2001, 2008), Jack Goody (1961), Stanley Tambiah (1981, 1997), and Roy Rappaport (1999). The process of ritualization mentioned above and thus the ritual analysis are based on forms of Palestinian social belonging I witnessed in the field, which were firmly tied to variations of a Palestinian time conception that has also in part been noted by Lena Jayyusi (2007) and Rosemary Sayigh (2007).

Quotidian Refugee Palestinianness Expressions and Ritualization

In 2003 there were 7,553 Palestine refugees registered in the total area of 42,300 square meters of the Palestinian refugee camp, Al-Jalil, according to UNRWA's most recent statistics.[7] Many Al-Jalil inhabitants told me that about seventy percent of all people in Al-Jalil (*Ahl Al-Jalil*) live today in northern Europe, and I myself met some of them when they flocked to the camp during summer to reconnect with their families and friends. During my field research, the camp was surrounded by the walls of interconnected, small, concrete buildings. Large abandoned buildings that once served as French barracks still stood above a large number of smaller buildings, sometimes built on top of one other and creating two-story buildings, at the center of the camp. This configuration left just enough space for a paved street to cut across the wall of small buildings and the cluster of small buildings surrounding the old French Barracks, where the camp was built. The main street was in the shape of a square, closed circuit, and was just as wide as a car, plus a few centimeters, in its narrowest part, and with the width of two cars plus some centimeters in a few of its wider parts. Narrow alleys between the buildings wound irregularly throughout the whole camp, where young men gathered to smoke *argile* (water pipe) and chat, while old men and women chatted at the doorsteps of their houses.

The public spaces of gathering mostly faced the main street; there were stores, political offices, NGO and charitable organization centers (*marakaz* or *jam'ayet*), as well as the mosque and the UNRWA school. A *hajiz* (checkpoint), built next to one of Fataĥ's offices, guarded the right side of the camp's main entrance. On the left side of the entrance was a *zawye* (corner) clear of buildings and regularly used as a gathering place for discourses, demonstrations, strikes, celebrations, etc. The back of this *zawye* harbored the UNRWA office, and usually the main speakers in an event were photographed and filmed (by local organizations) in front of this office--although, when mentioned, UNRWA was usually attacked for its incompetence, goals, and/or behaviors.

The first thing I noticed upon seeing Al-Jalil for the first time was how physically demarcated it was from its surroundings. Not all Palestinian

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[7] This camp is officially known as *Wavel* by UNRWA (United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East) and the Lebanese government alike.

refugee camps look like this. In fact, most camps' physical boundaries are not demarcated as clearly as those of *Al-Jalil*. In Syria and Jordan, camps tend to be much more open, and some can even be confused with poor local neighborhoods generated by more internal urbanization processes. Al-Jalil's physical boundaries, however, as with most Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon, tend to be much more defined. For instance, the camp has only one public entrance, which is guarded day and night by armed Palestinian factions. Other Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon (such as *'Ain el-Helwe*, *Rashidyie*, and *Nahr al-Bared)* also have Lebanese checkpoints at their single entrances. While most of the 12 camps in Syria and the 10 camps in Jordan do not have their physical boundaries as clearly defined as Al-Jalil's, most of the 12 camps in Lebanon and the 27 camps in the Occupied Territories (19 in the West Bank and 8 in Gaza) are much like Al-Jalil in this respect.

In most cases, including that of Al-Jalil and *Dbaye*, the camps' physical boundaries do not confine Palestinian refugees within them, since typically a large population of refugees lives in the areas surrounding most camps. Camp boundaries do tend to determine a social territory, however. For instance, in Al-Jalil, people who live on the outskirts of the camp still spend most of their time within the camp, and have the pace of their daily lives very much defined by social processes emanating from the camp as their epicenter. Also, camps such as *Dbaye* and *Shatila* in Lebanon, and a few others in Syria and Jordan, are characterized by their large, stable population of non-Palestinian inhabitants. But this should not be taken as an index of effacement of Palestinian social belonging. For instance, although nearly half of *Shatila* inhabitants are not Palestinian today,[8] the camp's quotidian life is still very much marked by social processes related to Palestinianness, similar to the ones I will now describe as I experienced them in Al-Jalil.

My experience of living in Al-Jalil was significantly defined by what I called before the "hyper-expression of identity." It was not just any kind of identity, but specifically a Palestinian identity that included expressions ranging from collective practices and narratives to personal practices and discourses, all of which were understood mainly in national terms, and was almost always bound up with ethnic, political, and religious conceptions. For example, during political rallies in the name of the national cause, the invocation of religion and ethnicity was generally integral to the event. In Al-Jalil I would often hear the *shahada*[9] (*La illahu ila Allah, wa Muhammad rasul Allah!*) in connection with the denunciation of anti-Arab postures or to address a Palestinian national-political demand.

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[8] Many of these non-Palestinian inhabitants of Shatila are of Gypsy, Sudanese, Pilipino, Kurd, Syrian, SriLankan, or even of poor Lebanese origin.

[9] The *shahada* is the profession of faith that, if properly done and witnessed, oficialized a subject's conversion to Islam. It is used by Muslims, among other things, as a statement of faith.

In Al-Jalil, I usually woke up to the sound of music coming from one or another office of the various political parties or local foundations. There were about twelve "political parties" or "movements" (*harakat el-siyasiya*) at the time of my fieldwork in the camp between 2006 and 2008, and about the same number of NGOs and local foundations (most of which depended on international donors). While political offices frequently played military marches as party hymns, the offices of local foundations typically preferred Palestinian traditional folk music (*debke*) or national singers and poets such as Marcel Khalifa or Mahmud Darwish.[10] In some cases, there was a confluence of both types of music. For example, the headquarters of *Fatah al-Intifaďa* lent a large empty room in their office to a local youth *debke* group for rehearsals.

Besides waking up to nationalist hymns, I would be confronted with an infinite number of posters covering virtually all the camp walls each time I opened the doors of my bare, concrete and brick lodging and faced the camp. These included posters of specific political parties, pictures of martyrs of the Palestinian cause (*istashhadyun* – those who were nationally considered to have actively pursued martyrdom), posters of certain Lebanese or other Arab leaders considered to be keepers of the Palestinian cause,[11] and calls for political and social engagement from local foundations, as in a "march for the liberation of Gaza," for example. Under and over these posters, the walls would also be covered with graffiti of Palestinian symbols, some of the most common of which were the Palestinian flag, Quranic sayings, keys (symbolizing the re-opening of Jerusalem for the Palestinians), the Dome of the Rock, the pre-1948 map of historical Palestine, and other national symbols (most of which were not only national but also political, ethnic and/or religious).

Along with the density of the music and sounds (which often emanated from multiple places) and the visual density of the posters and graffiti, the streets of the camp contained a multitude of people carrying their own personal charms, such as necklaces, t-shirts, rings, wristbands, and other paraphernalia that reproduced the same symbols which were spread throughout the public space of the camp. In their discourse, the people would also disseminate these same themes, fueling this very high-density expression of Palestinianness in everyday life. The density and frequency of these expressions, and the depth with which I felt they penetrated the everyday life of the community and of individuals, were unparalleled in my own personal experience. I have known many countries and peoples in my life, but I had never seen such as heavy

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[10] Although Marcel Khalifa was in fact Lebanese, Palestinians consider him a national hero due to the singer's pro-Palestinian stance during the Lebanese civil war.

[11] While in al-Jalil, posters of Ḣasan Nasrallah (leader of *Hizbolla*) were common in other camps, which had different hegemonic politics, posters of other leaders could be found. In Baddawy or Nahr al-Bared to the north of Lebanon, for instance, I found posters of Saddam Hussein. In Ďbaye, I even found posters of the Lebanese general Michel 'Aoun (who is generally considered to have a largely anti-Palestinian posture).

display of identity before. What I witnessed in Al-Jalil was a hyper-expression of identity (Palestinianness), which I understood to be highly associated with the boundedness of the local community to its refugee condition. I will return to this later, but for now I wish to continue to draw a picture of this hyper-expression of Palestinianness.

I do not present here all the forms of expression of Palestinianness in Al-Jalil, since for our discussion the selected examples suffice. Broadly speaking, however, the camp also had a calendar of events ranging from fixed yearly celebrations to one-time, extraordinary national events that happened frequently. Besides that, even personal celebrations such as birthdays, marriages, and funerals were often flooded with nationalist expressions. At a marriage, for example, it was common to hear discourses depicting how the groom was a committed Palestinian. At a funeral, a Palestinian flag (or that of a political party) would cover the deceased's coffin as a sign of moral rectitude.

Among the annual calendric celebrations were, for example, *al-'yd milad al-naby* (The Prophet's Birthday), *ywm al-nakba* (*Nakba* Day),[12] *ywm al-ard* (Land Day),[13] *ywm al-quds* (Jerusalem Day), and many others. These are but a small fragment of the calendar that Al-Jalil shares with most other Palestinian refugee camps and with other Palestinians, refugees or not, living all around the world. Among the extraordinary celebrations were, for example, the coming of a new political party to the refugee camp, labor strikes at UNRWA facilities against some perceived injustice, boycott campaigns against Israeli products made in the Palestinian territories, a "successful" Palestinian martyrdom operation, and popular culture exhibits (such as folk dance or theater performances).

Most of these extraordinary celebrations were not primarily motivated by religion and, having been established long ago, were already squarely placed on the camps' calendar. There were also many personal, extraordinary celebrations, such as marriages, funerals, and others. As mentioned before, these were also often infused with nationalistic, religious, ethnic, and political themes. I did not mention them, however, in the previous list including strikes and boycotts because, although they also had a collective dimension, they were not defined by a horizontal bond of shared experience as in the case of strikes and boycotts. Even in the celebration of a martyrdom operation, the *istishhady* is different than the shahid in this sense. Although any death can inspire national feelings, the primary purpose of celebrating an *istishhady* is to instill a shared experience of Palestinianness and create a specific political

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[12] The significance of this term to Palestinians will be developed in what follows, but for now it suffices to say that *Nakba* in Arabic means "catastrophe", and it is used by Palestinians to name the 1948 creation of the state of Israel and consequently the beginning of their condition of refugeeness.

[13] Land here means specifically the land of Palestine.

effect i.e. if not another *istishhady*, then at least *Sumud* (steadfastness) among the community. It is precisely in this entailment of generating and maintaining *Sumud* ritually, something akin to what Benedict Anderson said about map, museum and census (Anderson 1983), that I see the basic general structural similarity between calendric and extraordinary collective celebrations in Palestinian contexts, including in Al-Jalil refugee camp as well as many others.

Rosemary Sayigh has called these series of commemorations in Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon an aspect of "the tempo of daily life," in the following passage:

> With the expansion of PRM [Palestinian Resistance Movement] programs, the *tempo of daily life* in the camps changed, becoming charged with commemorations and celebrations: international days such as 1 May and 8 March. All these were occasions for speeches by Resistance leaders, displays of handicrafts, performances of plays, songs and dances. Such events became part of and helped people to absorb, the continual attacks and losses. 'We mourn and marry on the same day' is the way one young PRM cadre expressed this new popular culture of resistance (Sayigh 1994, 104).

Like Sayigh, I am interested in public performances such as festivities and celebrations (*ihtifalat*), rallies and demonstrations (*masirat*; *mudhaharat*), and strikes (*idrab*) as channels for expressing identity. My analysis is geared toward a more explicit understanding of how such practices compose a set of rituals that, in turn, account for the socialization process, social organization, and the interaction among different groups inside a community such as Al-Jalil.

While the types of celebrations may vary and while different camps may celebrate similar events differently, nonetheless, it is possible to point to a certain ritual structure that is reproduced every year in most Palestinian refugee camps, at least in Lebanon:

> An event generally starts with a walk around the camp (or, occasionally outside the camp), and is driven by the chanting of an infusion of nationalistic, religious, political, and ethnic themes. Participants hold high symbols relating to these themes. By far, the most common of these symbols is the Palestinian flag. Participants are typically organized in groups, although the structure is loose- -passersby, curious or circumstantial participants, and others uncommitted to any party, movement, or institution are always part of the march. Most of the time, a certain group which organizes the event makes itself prominent. Events promoted by political parties usually have their party leaders and local and invited notables at the

very front of the march. It is also common for these representatives to create a human chain as they march together hand-in-hand or arm-in-arm; who marches after them often varies. In events promoted by local institutions, such as NGO's, humanitarian groups, charity organizations, and cultural centers, performance groups, especially those comprised of children, often lead the march. Local Boy Scouts, promoted by a political party or any other organization, are a must at these events. After one or two (or three) turns around the main streets, depending on the size of the camp, local leaders and, sometimes, invited guests make speeches, a staple feature of the event. These speeches generally embed ethnic, religious, political and other themes with Palestinianness, and instill *Sumud* in the participants. After the speech, the march tends to disperse and the event ends.

As a result of the values instilled through these events and the consequent establishment of an ideal Palestinian posture, it is common to attribute moral value to a person's life depending on how "active" (*nashat*) he/she is in "The Palestinian Cause." One measures one's own commitments in terms of degrees of a *samidi* posture: the *istishhady* is generally at the top and the collaborator is almost invariably at the bottom. [14]

The pace of daily life in Al-Jalil, as in most other Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon and the Occupied Territories, contains the same rituals that are found in the circuits of celebration described above. Thus, there is a common feature of instilling Palestinianness and *Sumud* in the quotidian, mundane life. I call this continuum of the entire range of ritual behavior in such Palestinian contexts a "ritual tempo" (Schiocchet 2011). I understand this concept to be an elaboration of what Sayigh called the "tempo of daily life," pointing to this "tempo's" ritual properties, of which perhaps the most pervasive is the (not necessarily causal) instilment and spreading of *Sumud* among the participants, and its frequent attribution as a measure of Palestinianness.

Al-Jalil's high level of ritualization of daily life can be attributed mainly to the value of *Sumud* that pulls individuals and groups to a hyper-expression of their personal and collective selves, a process connected to two other interconnected processes of "hyperinfrormation" and "hyperredundancy,", as described by Valentine Daniels and John Knudsen (Daniel and Knudsen 1996). For Daniel and Knudsen, the refugee experience is difficult to comprehend due to its extreme uncertainty and unpredictability. This ambiguity generates what the authors call hyperinformation, that is, an experience devoid of redundancy. Hyperredundancy, by contrast, is a process

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[14] I am careful here because not all Palestinian refugees in Lebanon agree on the tactics of fighting for the "Palestinian cause." Many of them are actually against martyrdom operations, although most of them would still attribute to *istishhady* a very high measure of steadfastness and commitment to Palestinianess.

by which "individual identities and continuities" tend to be "systematically neutralized" generating a condition of hyperredundancy, "once again making for meaningless existence."

Ritual tempo, being the ritualization of the rhythm of daily life, is not simply a synonym for ritual, but rather a context in which much of daily life is framed. Although not everything that the inhabitants of Al-Jalil and *Dbaye* do is ritual, the very context in which the mundane is framed in these two settings is ritualized. The ritual tempo is in the ritualized context, pace, and rhythm, of daily life, and not in a ritual performance with a clear setting, structure, narrative, and pre-conceived symbolic system. My premise is that the subjunctive interstices composed of ritualized interpersonal relations between subjects create and coordinate peoples and things through a process akin to that of a more generalized and ritualized version of Gadamer's fusion of horizons (Gadamer 2005). Thus, ritual tempo is not beyond the individual but is never within the individual either. Rather, it is located in the interstices and boundaries between individual and context.

Therefore, ritual tempo, the ritualization of the rhythm of daily life, is not simply a synonym for formal ritual, but rather a pervasive context in which much of daily life is framed. Although not everything that the inhabitants of Al-Jalil do is ritual, the context in which the quotidian is framed in the camp is ritualized, largely because of the experience of time within time that compels the refugees to constantly rearticulate and recreate their condition through ritualized modes of behavior.

In sum, Al-Jalil's ritual context, as I experienced it, was marked by ubiquitous symbols of Palestinianness such as the Palestinian flag, images of the fighter and the martyr, the key, and the map. While the Palestinian flag and the map evoked the continuum of the nation in Palestine and in exile, the fighter, the martyr and the key evoked the process by which the community engaged in searching for a utopian union. These symbols were generated inside the offices, public places, social organizations, and creative minds of individuals, and then reproduced and dispersed throughout the community via group networks and public performances constitutive of the community's ritual tempo.

Sacralization and Ritualization of the Quotidian

Since the end of the 1980's, social movements and political parties explicitly characterized as "Islamic" have been gaining momentum in the Palestinian political and social scene, as much as in other Middle Eastern countries. Islam has been increasingly incorporated into the nationalist, political, ethnic, and moral language in two different ways: first, as rejection of discourses and practices seen as non-Islamic and a substitution of discourses and practices seen as Islamic; and second, as the Islamicization of discourses and practices

that once were perceived as secular.

The concept of *Sumud*, developed as a secular praxis (although with inspiration from Islamic culture), has become more and more inscribed into an Islamic praxis by Muslims, in the same way that political activism and Palestinian resistance have been increasingly conflated with Islamic resistance. Based on what many Palestinian Christians said to me, this was one of the main reasons for their discontent with the Palestinian political scene today, and the reason why some no longer dream of returning to Palestine, despite their overall maintenance of the *Sumud* discourse. Thus, niches exist whereby *Sumud* is not re-Islamized and the concept (and the "resistance") continues to have a primarily secular character.

While political resistance has become increasingly associated with Muslim resistance in many Palestinian social circuits, what makes the concept of *Sumud* particularly susceptible to Islamicization is that historically *Sumud* is one of the divine attributes. It is possible to find in the *Qur'an* and in the *Sunna* direct justification for the necessity of a *Samidi* posture and for the maintenance of its sacred meaning. Given that most Palestinian political activists are Muslims (and at least somewhat religious), and given that Islam is also a cultural reference beyond religious praxis, the majority of the Palestinian political activists today maintain some Islamic reference for the meaning of *Sumud*.

However, more pervasively, the concept of *Sumud* allows for all Palestinians to feel and be recognized as foci of resistance. Thus, a very large part of the Palestinian population – especially those composed of refuges and the inhabitants of the Occupied Territories – gives meaning to its own existence through the idea of *Sumud*. This, in turn, confers to *Sumud* a variable measure of sacredness dependent on the subject in question. This sacredness may be Islamic or only a referent to the sacralization of what is considered "The Palestinian Cause".

In the case of the Palestinian refugees living in most of the refugee camps in Lebanon, the social, territorial and identity confinement to which they are subjected evokes and reinforces the subjects' Palestinianness even in the most mundane of quotidian tasks. And, as with all things relating to the sacred, *Sumud* involves certain obligations at the same time that it gives meaning and legitimization to the subjects' actions and conceptions. Because the subjects invested with *Sumud* turn their own existence into something sacred, quotidian life routines are by extension sacralized. Thus, enduring the hardships of the camp, the pain of dispossession, or the suffering of loss, separation, and prejudice becomes a moral imperative, a sacred mission. Finally, this sacralization is an integral part of a process by which the quotidian becomes ritualized.

Palestinian Time

Palestinian refugees in Al-Jalil, *Dbaye*, and also Brazil spent much of their time thinking and talking about their condition, as their refugee status makes the present time a "time within time."[15] While living among these refugees, I had the impression that this "time within time" constitutes a force compelling individuals to collectively articulate their existential condition, and thus further ritualize their daily lives. In what follows I will be exploring what this local conception of the present entails for the refugees among whom I conducted fieldwork.

Ritualization was more pervasive and overt in Al-Jalil than in *Dbaye* and Brazil. This occurs in the context of camp environments that are more closed off from the rest of their geographical and social contexts, as Palestinian refugee camps in the Occupied Territories and Lebanon tend to be, for different reasons. As already discussed, *Dbaye* camp residents lacked the social practice of *Sumud* and other ritual behaviors mainly because their Palestinianness was not celebrated as much as in most other camps in Lebanon.[16] Palestinian refugees, who very recently arrived in Brazil from Iraq, were generally not very well integrated into the local context, despite the pattern of individual isolation of each family.[17] It is precisely because of their isolation from one other that these refugees did not manifest as much of a *Sumud* posture linked to a hyper-expression of their Palestinianness, or as much ritualized behavior relating to these first two concepts. But as suggested in the beginning of this paper, the praxis I observed in Brazil does not necessarily break the general linkages between an ideal Palestinian posture of *Sumud*, the hyper-expression of Palestinianness, and the ritualization of quotidian time. And, although the different contexts generate certain internal differences in how Palestinianness is conceived and lived, these differences do not completely interrupt a certain Palestinian time conception, but instead tend to introduce many variations on the same theme.

Largely due to their refugee condition, Palestinians in both camps live

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[15] The term is from Lena Jayyusi (Jayyusi 2007).

[16] This has possibly much more to do with the historical impossibility of *Dbaye* residents living their Palestinianess than with the lack of willingness to do so. An interpretation for this will be given in the section entitled "Palestinian Time without Return."

[17] This pattern has to do in part with a conscious policy of separating these refugees in small familial groups and sending them to different cities in Brazil so they would be "integrated" to the local context easier – or so goes the thought of the UN agency (ACNUR), the Brazilian government, and the NGO's who worked for ACNUR. But this pattern has also to do in part with the fact that these refuges, contrarily to those living in the refugee camps in Lebanon, lived for the most part of their lives outside refugee camps, and did not know each other before experiencing life in the Iraqi camps five years before reaching Brazil. That is, they were not used to acting as a corporate group before coming to Brazil, as such the sociological conditions for their mutual identification and socialization in Brazil were not very impressive.

the present time as a "time within time" (Jayyusi 2007) in contrast to the "normal time" of non-refugees. That is, the present is a disturbance of the normal historical development of the Palestinian nation, for it does not allow Palestinians to live the plenitude of their Palestinianness. Only in the future, when a corrective measure resets the national calendar, will Palestinian time be back to normal and Palestinians will be allowed to be Palestinians again as they once were (in the past before 1948). Thus, this "time within time" constitutes a force pulling individuals to collectively articulate their existential condition, and further ritualize their quotidian routines.

The ritualization process I presented so far is firmly anchored into variations of a Palestinian time conception symbolically propelled by the notion of *Sumud*. But even when ritualization is weak or inexistent (as among *Dbaye* residents and Palestinian-Iraqi refugees in Brazil, respectively), I still found variations of this same time conception that characterizes the present as a "time within time", as I will develop here. An aspect of this Palestinian conception of time was noted previously by Rosemary Sayigh (Sayigh 1979; 1994; 2007), Lila Abu-Lughod & Ahmed Sa'di (Abu-lughod & Sa'di 2007), and especially by Lena Jayyusi; another part of this concept had previously emerged within the political debates surrounding Palestinian civil society. My understanding of the basic structure of this Palestinian time conception first emerged as a consequence of my interaction with Palestinian refugees from Al-Jalil and *Dbaye* camps in Lebanon, and then my interaction with the group of Palestinian refugees that came from Iraq to Brazil in 2007.

As stated throughout this paper, the way in which the notion of *Sumud* is constitutive of daily life in most of the refugee camps in Lebanon accounts for the sacralization and ritualization of the quotidian. This sacralization is partially anchored in a Palestinian time conception that is at once reinforcing and being reinforced by the ritualization of the quotidian.

The first element of this temporal conception is the notion of "*Al-Nakba.*" This term, in its common Palestinian usage, refers to the creation of the state of Israel in 1948, the displacement of refugees, and the consequent emergence of the refugee question. *Al-Nakba* means literally "the catastrophe," and it is thus a mythologized event, stating the origins of Palestinian refugeeness. Being a refugee, for most Palestinians, is not the ideal way of being Palestinian. In general, among the Palestinians I studied, to live Palestinianness in its plenitude meant to be able to live in ways that evoked the pre-*Nakba* past. There is a general commitment among Palestinians to search for the possibility of living the plenitude of an ideal Palestinianness that can be found in a future that includes a return to a pre-*Nakba* past.[18] This

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[18] This does not mean that there are no exceptions.

commitment is then translated into a steadfast posture generating *Sumud, which is* directed toward versions of "the Palestinian cause" and provokes the sacralization of the quotidian.

The second element of this general conception of Palestinian time that I found among the refugees I studied "the return." The implementation of "the return" as a temporal conception is as follows: Palestinians invest the quotidian with *Sumud* through/toward the Palestinian cause. The utopic objective of such a cause is understood more generally, and almost independently of political orientation, and thus of the means in which it is employed, as *Al-'Awda* (the return). In this way, *al-Haqq al-'Awda*[19] (the Right of Return) is invested with exceptional meaning, inspiring social action and shared worldviews among groups of Palestinian refugees and individuals in Lebanon, Brazil, and all around the world.

The final element in this temporal conception is the present, which is therefore understood twofold: first, as a temporary, irregular aberration to be abolished upon The Return and through the Right of Return (an idealized conception motivating agency, identity and social organization in the present); and second, as an almost ineluctable but also unacceptable condition determining Palestinian fate in the present (a "realistic" conception also motivating present-time agency, identity and social organization). Either way, the present is a "time within time" in the sense of a repudiated mythic time to be abolished by reaching a future that is largely contained in an ideal past. In this way, time folds within itself. Generally speaking, to be Palestinian is therefore to experience a shared identification with the consequences of *al-Nakba*, and to agree on the rightfulness of the mythic return as a personal and collective right.

Palestinian Time without the Return

Even among Palestinians who do not actually desire "going back" to Palestine, in most cases one can still find this general Palestinian temporal conception marked by the pre-*Nakba* past, the aberrant present, and rightful return as defining Palestinianness. Among these Palestinian individuals and groups, the professed unwillingness to return to Palestine tends to appear as though it has caused them to split from the larger group in terms of their life choices and trajectories, but not in terms of their Palestinianness or the commitment to the general right of choosing "the return" or not. This is best shown by examining closer the cases of the *Dbaye* refugee camp in Lebanon and the Palestinians who came to Brazil from Iraq.

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[19] This concept, as employed by Palestinians, is originally based upon different understandings of the UN General Assembly Resolution 194 and of what it entails.

As in the case of Al-Jalil and most Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon, *Sumud*, when directed toward "the Palestinian cause," is the main force driving the hyper-expression of Palestinianness, and the sacralization and ritualization of the quotidian. But, this was not the case in *Dbaye*. Every single camp has its own specificities, and even Al-Jalil is different from 'Ain al-Helwa, Beddawy, al-Buss, Shatila, Mar Elias,*Dbaye* and others. But *Dbaye* was different in an exceptional way. It was perceived as singular to the extent that most Palestinian refugees who actually knew of its existence would state that *Dbaye* was not a Palestinian refugee camp.[20] The most important differences include: the complete absence of Palestinian political parties, social movements, charitable organizations, and other institutions; the perceived lack of commitment to the Palestinian cause (and thus the lack of *Sumud*); the isolation of the camp from other camps, since inhabitants of *Dbaye* generally did not participate in activities that brought together other camps, and since other camp inhabitants generally had little or no information about *Dbaye's* happenings; the supposed higher standard of living of *Dbaye* inhabitants; and, finally, the fact that almost the entire camp was Christian. All these elements were mutually reinforcing and understood in conjunction with each other.[21] Thus, other Palestinian groups frequently resorted to stripping *Dbaye's* social space and its inhabitants of their Palestinianness.

In *Dbaye* there is indeed a certain lack of *Sumud* related to "The Palestinian Cause" that lead the camp away from further collective sacralization and ritualization of their quotidian, and the germane process of hyper-expression of Palestinianess. Many Palestinian refugees from other camps said that *Dbaye* was different especially because of its lack of *Sumud*. They also somewhat commonly said that *Dbaye* residents were not committed to "The Palestinian Cause" because they were Christian. They claimed that because of their Christianity, they must be eagerly awaiting *tawtin* (to take local citizenship), which refers to the process of taking up Lebanese citizenship, in this case.

Taking up local citizenship is perceived by most Palestinian *samidin* (self-proclaimed or not) as giving up one's Palestinianess, a process that is considered to have broad consequences. Through *tawtin*, the *muwatan* (the citizen/the one who has citizenship) is also compromising "The Palestinian Cause" by effacing the refugee question yet maintaining the *status quo*. *Tawtin* allows for the erasure of a Palestinian's refugeeness thereby undermining one of the most important and evident traces of *Al-Nakba*. Therefore, *tawtin*

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[20] Many refugees do not know of the existence of a Palestinian refugee camp in Mount Lebanon, which is composed almost exclusively of Christian Palestinians. Reasons for that are explored in my Ph.D. dissertation (Schiocchet 2011).

[21] In my Ph.D. dissertation I disagree with this local theory, and bring forward a more detailed historical account that offers an alternative interpretation of why *Dbaye* is as it is.

is diametrically opposed to *Sumud*; both terms are conceptually, contrary.

Thus, it is precisely the lack of *Sumud* that makes *Dbaye* different in the eyes of most Palestinian refugee camp dwellers in Lebanon. In spite of the evident lack of *Sumud* in *Dbaye*, it is not religion alone (or mainly) that explains its historical difference from the other camps. The general tendency toward *tawtin* instead of *Sumud* as the founding element of a widely shared ethos in *Dbaye* has to do with the historical circumstances of this camp. The lack of *Sumud* has to do with the impossibility of the implantation of Palestinian *tanzimat* (political organizations) in *Dbaye*. *Dbaye* is located in an area that since the 1970s has been dominated by Lebanese Christian political parties overtly hostile to the Palestinian refugee presence in Lebanon. Unprotected, *Dbaye* residents suffered through three major Lebanese invasions. During the Lebanese Civil War (1975-1990), Phalangist militias took the camp and established political and military offices inside it. Palestinians then learned to play down their Palestinianess as a means of survival. After the last conflict in 1990, many of the Lebanese militia remained inside the camp. As a consequence, the camp was completely devoid of all Palestinian institutions.[22] *Dbaye* developed a very specific socialization process, especially relating to younger generations, and adaptation to life around the camp (Schiocchet 2010; 2011).

No other remaining camp in Lebanon was devoid of Palestinian institution-building. Supporting my historical thesis, as opposed to the religious one, about *Dbaye*'s singularity, is the fact that other Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon with a relatively large number of Christian Palestinian refugees, such as Mar Elias and Jisr al-Basha, did not develop the same ethos as did *Dbaye*. While Lebanese and Palestinian fighting in the 1970s during the Lebanese Civil War completely destroyed Jisr al-Basha, Mar Elias still presents examples of Christian families living their Palestinianess in similar ways to Muslim inhabitants of the camp, within the general conception of Palestinianess and its relation to the notion of *Sumud*. Mar Elias even has a cemetery for the Christian martyrs of "The Palestinian Cause."

From the *Dbaye* inhabitants' perspective, the following factors relating to the PLO generally undermined their bond to the Palestinian political and social apparatus as a whole: the PLO was never established in *Dbaye*; it never seriously tried to take control of the camp during the Lebanese civil war (possibly because this would have been a very expensive military operation and a position difficult to hold for long given the location of the camp); the PLO never helped *Dbaye* inhabitants militarily during their conflicts with the

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[22]   The influence of Palestinian institutions in the local socialization processes in the camps during the period of the Lebanese Civil War (1975-1990) cannot be compared with other influences. This influence, although sometimes through different hegemonic political ideas, continues to be as important even to this day (Schiocchet 2010; 2011).

Lebanese; and it never invested much in terms of financial, health, education or other services in the camp. Without the support of Palestinian institutions, and given their tendency to accuse the PLO and other Palestinian political institutions of neglect,[23] *Dbaye* inhabitants were not socialized to emphasize their Palestinianess as much as other identitarian traces. Consequently, and due to other several factors, most of the camp's inhabitants did not wish to return to Palestine.

As a consequence of this historical context and the general ethos it shaped,[24] *Dbaye* inhabitants were not very committed to the idealization of a future return (*al-'Awda*) as a possibility of living the plenitude of their Palestinianess. This, in turn, has practical consequences for the general Palestinian temporal frame that I presented in the previous section. Personal idealization of the future tends to be thus open-ended and dependent on individual and group will. While many simply wished to become Lebanese and refrained from a more collective Palestinian discourse, others still pointed to the importance of the Return as a collective solution while choosing another path for their individual selves and their families.[25]

The case of the Palestinians who arrived in Brazil from Iraq in 2007 exemplifies yet another variation of the basic temporal scheme presented in the last section. Like *Dbaye* inhabitants, most of these Palestinian refugees had a different relation to *Sumud*. The concept tended to appear in discourses more piercingly then it appeared in *Dbaye*, and yet it was less evident than in the social interstices among people in Al-Jalil. Among the refugees in Brazil, there was not the same reaction against *tawtin* that I found in Al-Jalil, since the former had resettled in Brazil from Iraq, where most of them had lived until the Iraq war. Almost all of these refugees sated that before the Iraq war they had lived in politically and socially similar conditions to the Iraqis themselves. They did not gain citizenship from the regime of Saddam Hussein, but they enjoyed all the civil rights of Iraqis, except the right to compete for the highest-profile political jobs.[26] With one or perhaps two exceptions, this group expressed support for Hussein's reign, stressing that he was a great leader.[27] Some of them even had jobs in the state department

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[23] The reasons given by the locals for the PLO's alleged lack of interest in *Dbaye* are many. They range from the Christian profile of the camp to other interpretations more empathetic with the PLO (for instance, those which accept the general historical impossibility of a military operation that would put *Dbaye* into Palestinian care).[

[24] For a far more complete characterization of this context and general ethos, see Schiocchet (2011).

[25] Some already have Lebanese citizenship. The process by which many of them got their Lebanese citizenships is explained in Schiocchet (2011).

[26] Some, not these, refugees would say that this prohibition did not make them different at all from most other Iraqis.

[27] This position is also very common in Lebanon, given that Saddam Hussein militarily, financially and politically supported the PLO during the Lebanese Civil War against a few Maronite political parties, the

during Hussein's regime, and most of them enjoyed what they saw as a protected minority status. It was precisely this status that made them a target of political groups fighting Hussein supporters.

Thus, the majority of these refugees living today in Brazil did not live in refugee camps before the war, but rather in normal residences chosen by them and spread among the main cities of Iraq, especially Baghdad. For only five years before being resettled in Brazil, they had to live in refugee camps located in the no-man's land between Iraq and Jordan.[28] While some lived in a camp named *Mukhayam al-Karame* for a while, they all met in a camp named Rawaished, located within Jordanian borders. Palestinians were a minority in Rawaished (and al-Karame), as the camp also sheltered Kurds, Sudanese, Iranians, and Iraqis, among others. The camp was under strict Jordanian surveillance, and many refuges reported later, while in Brazil, that even their charitable institutions were under the command of the Jordanian state.

As the camp was mixed politically and ethnically, there was no common flag among the refugees, and the inhabitants directed their resistance against the difficulties of everyday life, such as the lack of food and water, rather than a specific social actor. The Palestinian refugees who ultimately went to Brazil were selected by a triageprogram that sent all the other camp dwellers to other countries such as the United States and Sweden.[29] Despite the harsh living conditions in Rawaished, some refugees at first rejected the idea of going to Brazil--some because their relatives were settled in other countries and they wished to be reunited, others because of reasons having to do more directly with their expectations of Brazil. But, as per the international regime regarding refugees, refugees have no right but to submit themselves completely to the mercy of "humanitarian" agents (Malkki 1995). As a result, despite some resistance, the entire group had to go to Brazil. Adding to the initial feelings of the refugees about the subsequent sequence of failures on the part of the responsible parties in Brazil, consisting of the UN, the NGOs hired by the UN to work on its behalf, and the Brazilian government, the result deepened the general discontentment among the refugees with their resettlement in Brazil.

This discontent caused different groups of Palestinians in Brazil to rally against their situation. Although their Palestinianess was very much part of these expressions, their demands were more localized, having to do with the future of the group and not necessarily with all the Palestinians in the world. Therefore, *Sumud* was involved in this resistance, but although "The

Shi'a group AMAL, Syria, and Israel.

[28] There were other such camps between Iraq and Syria.

[29] This story was presented to me by them, by the Brazilian government agency responsible for the refugees (CONARE), and by the UN refugee agency representatives in Brazil (ACNUR). From Iraq, only this group of Palestinians was resettled in Brazil.

Palestinian Cause" was very frequently present in their discourse, it was not exactly Palestinianess that was at stake. While they may have attributed the cause of their dispossession to being Palestinian, instead of demanding a solution to the Palestine question they tended to demand a solution for their own problems in Brazil.

In this situation, *tawtin* was not the opposite of *Sumud* precisely because of this dislocation of the Palestinian cause to much more circumscribed, local, civic goals. "The return" was invoked in resistance against the injustices of the resettlement in Brazil, as a claim to a rightful resettlement procedure rather than as the main goal of resistance. In other words, since the *Nakba* is generally seen by Palestinians as the creation of Israel by an international body namely, the UN, and at least tolerated if not celebrated in most parts of the world, the Palestinian cause tends to rest on the idea that the international community has the full responsibility of committing to the wellbeing of the Palestinian refugees, until a solution to the Palestinian question is reached. Thus, rallying against the failures of the resettlement program in Brazil was seen by the different groups of affected refugees as justified since at a minimum refugees have the right to proper conditions of resettlement, if not return to Palestine. I see this as the group's counterargument to the international humanitarian regime imposed upon them. Ironically, by accepting the terms for negotiating their condition, this thinking may in some measure legitimate the international regime.[30]

These issues point to one of the main differences between rallying for a cause in Al-Jalil and doing so in Brazil. Namely, the collective character of mobilization in the former is centered on Palestinianess, as opposed to the more circumscribed character of the latter, which, although justified in terms of Palestinianess, is much more centered on local demands than on the national cause. "The Palestinian Cause" still stirred up some participation among the Palestinian refugees in Brazil, but only in the sense of much lesser demands and shared motivations generally attached to more mundane goals, such as food and shelter in Brazil.

Thus, there is a difference between the *Sumud* called upon in Al-Jalil and that in Brazil. Further influencing this difference is that Palestinian social institutions did not socialize the refugees who came from Iraq, as in the case of the refugees in *Dbaye*. In addition, the refugees living in Brazil were not grouped together and they lived in relative isolation and autonomy from their host society; they felt like a minority protected by the host society's regime. As a result, they did not know and did not claim to know as much

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30 Because of that, groups and individuals sympathetic to groups like Hamas or the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine tend or tended to reject the basic legitimacy of the international humanitarian order.

about Palestine or about being Palestinian refugees as did their counterparts in Al-Jalil and *Dbaye*.

More importantly, until the war in Iraq, and especially until their relatively recent move to the Iraqi refugee camps, they did not have their Palestinianess excessively emphasized above other forms of social belonging, unlike the experience of Al-Jalil inhabitants. The socialization in Iraq of this group of Palestinian refugees did not make them feel like local pariah, as refugees tended to feel in Lebanon (in Al-Jalil, *Dbaye*, and in other camps in general). Thus, this group did not develop the same hyper-expression of Palestinianess as did Al-Jalil inhabitants. Since they did not have a very dense Palestinian public sphere through and against which to live their quotidian lives, ritualization of the quotidian did not happen in the same way that it did in Al-Jalil, and identity maintenance was not as much marked by Palestinianess.

That is not to say that the Palestinians coming from Iraq to Brazil were not committed to their Palestinianess and to the Palestinian Resistance (almost invariably an expression of their commitment to what they understand as ("The Palestinian Cause"). Many in this group were veterans of the resistance around the world (in the Occupied Territories, Libya, and other countries), and a few of them actually fought (or claimed to have fought) during the war in Lebanon. Many of them have indelible scars on their bodies and psyches left by torture, long-term imprisonment, armed conflict, social stigma, and other elements marking their Palestinianess. Such marks of Palestinianess were generally most evident among the older generation within these groups of Palestinian refugees. But, this same generation seemed to have lost much of its will to continue the resistance. Many of these individuals, while maintaining a rhetoric of *Sumud*, seemed to have resolved that their time of endless physical resistance was over, and this task should be taken up by younger generations. Illustrating this sort of resignation, I commonly found people living in houses for more than six months (and at times more than a year) without making it their own home. Contrary to Arab custom, they would neither clean their houses, nor even place personal paraphernalia on their walls. In many houses I found Catholic symbols left by their previous owners still hanging on walls, and a complete absence of any signs of Palestinianess. In addition, many of these residents reported to me that they had lost their religious faith as an effect of living in Brazil.

These behaviors and views can be seen as a form of rejecting settlement in Brazil. And yet, most of these Palestinians told me that they liked the country and wanted to live there for the rest of their lives. The only impediments they complained about were the tough conditions of their resettlement in Brazil, including for instance, their refugee status, the failure of a proper Portuguese

language program,[31] lack of social and health care, and especially a lack of financial assistance. Therefore, resistance to settling in Brazil cannot be taken necessarily as an index of *Sumud*. On the contrary, it can be taken as a loss of will to live in resistance. These refugees seemed to have slowed down their resistance in the name of their Palestinianess, but without having abandoned the ideal attached to their definition of Palestinianess.

Conclusion

To conclude, the hyper-expression of Palestinianess and the sacralization and ritualization of the quotidian are features of certain contexts that tend to increase the physical and social isolation (and stigmatization) of refugees. These social traits only emerged in the refugee camps in Lebanon through a socialization process very much influenced by Palestinian institutions (especially those of the PLO during the Lebanese Civil War) that made possible a shared understanding of their condition and joint social action. Perhaps the most powerful element in this socialization was a certain Palestinian notion of time that tended to push Palestinians toward understanding their present condition as an aberration, to be resolved by a posture defined by *Sumud* and geared toward what was understood as "The Palestinian Cause." But even when social isolation was not present, and socialization lacked the Palestinian nationalist apparatus, a general notion of Palestinianess still tended to be defined by some key elements, such as the notion of the *Nakba*, the abomination of the present Palestinian condition, and the utopian notion of *'Awda* (return), at least as a social possibility independent of personal choice.

To illustrate this point, I conclude with a brief anecdote from my fieldwork. Talking to a Palestinian refugee in Brazil, a scholar from Baghdad University, I heard something that expressed much of the ambiguous relationship that many like him, in this group, seemed to have to the idea of *Sumud*, in the context of their *tawtin* process in Brazil. Citing Michel Foucault and Edward Said, this man told me that *al-Haqq al-'Awda* (the Right of Return) did not exist in practice, and that, as such, it should be substituted by the notion of *Qudra al-Dhahab* ("power to go to…"). He also explained to me that he could not return to a land that he did not actually know in practice, as he was born and raised as a Palestinian in Iraq. According to him, the concept of return (*'Awda*) was a fiction as much as the idea of "rights" (*haqq*). "And what right do we have?" he asked me. Rights for him was only *wa'ad* (promise), and *qudra* (power, possibility, or decree). It was not something found only in the sphere of ideals and in the future, but something found in the present and through

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[31] Many among the older generations were still only capable of uttering a few words and sentences in Portuguese, after about four years in Brazil. Those who learned the language did so on their own.

practice. This new term (*Qudra al-Dhahab*) permitted him to justify his own political stance in relation to his personal goals, something that, according to him, *al-Haqq al-'Awda* had not yet made possible. With his own framework he could reconcile his preference to remain in Brazil with his more general political stance of remaining loyal to the collective Palestinian "power to go" to Palestine for every single refugee who might wish to do so. Thus, *Sumud*, as explained in this way, is not contrary to *tawtin*, for the collective power is disentangled from personal desires.

While maintaining the collective commitment to *Sumud* toward "The Palestinian Cause" in discourse, and at the same time maintaining the commitment to his own *tawtin*, this refugee's proposition changed significantly his own personal, temporal frame without necessarily changing the Palestinian temporal frame whereby the return is seen as a coming back to an idyllic, pre-*Nakba* past. On one hand, this compromise seemed to generally attract more many of the refugees who arrived in Brazil along with this scholar. On the other hand, *Dbaye* camp inhabitants and those who once inhabited Rawaished refugee camp in Iraq were the two most extreme cases of departure from the kinds of social processes I found in Al-Jalil. There are certainly other cases as or even more distant to this process. Nonetheless, all these cases point to some important regularity.

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Palestinian Refugees and The Right of Return: Towards an Extraterritorial Nation-State Solution in Light of Arab Uprising

Sari Hanafi

Introduction

Many studies have shown a contradiction between the two-state project and the demand for the Right of Return. One of the first who suggested this is Azmi Bshara, who showed how the Right of Return takes its full meaning only under a one-democratic-state solution. Bshara notes:

Maybe the time has come to confront the self-deceitfulness of the Palestine Liberation Organization during the entire phase of speaking of a two-state solution (an Arab and a Jewish state), and dividing Palestine with insisting on attaching refugees' Right of Return with these two states, as if the word "and" is enough for the formation of a reasonable association. There is no possibility of implementing Palestinian refugees' Right of Return inside the Jewish state. As there is a structural contradiction between a two-state solution and the Right of Return for Palestinian refugees, which will change the demographic composition of the Jewish state, this will only take place with the permission and content of the Jewish state itself (Bshara 2002, 80).

In the Bethlehem Fatah communiqué of December 2003, the authors refused to consider the Palestinian state as a substitute for the Right of Return: "If we must choose between the Palestinian state and the Right of Return, we will choose the latter." But is there a solution that encompasses the Right of Return and a Palestinian state? What are the forms of political action that refugees can use that are inspired by the reality of the Arab revolutions? This is what my article will examine.

An Extraterritorial Nation-State?

The Palestinian negotiators often invoke questions revolving around rights or the number of eventual returnees or the technical economic and social capacity for absorption, but not around the question of the nature of both the Palestinian and the Israeli nation-states, Palestinian and Israeli concepts of state sovereignty and its inherent violence, and the inclusion/exclusion that the state exercises to determine who is a citizen. Nowadays, in the time of the quasi-failure of a viable two-state solution to the Palestinian–Israeli conflict, a democratic one-state solution seems equally unlikely in the foreseeable future. Moreover, the problem is not only about the feasibility of the two-state solution but also about its normative stance. A creative

solution that preserves the Right of Return thus should be envisaged.

In view of my research (Hanafi 2010), I found a profound tension between the transnational practices of Palestinian transmigrants/returnees/refugees and the policies of countries in the region, including the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) and Israel. Despite refugees' intense longing to obtain the Right of Return, they have experienced various forms of relationships with the societies of host countries, including integration and in some cases the feeling of belonging, especially from the third and fourth generation. This is what I call flexible behaviors in spite of the inflexible policies of the states in the region, policies that have seen flexibility and mobility as a threat to the classical authoritarian pattern of sovereignty.

This is why I have called for the establishment of an extraterritorial nation-state. I define it as a state that consists of geographical space just as any other country,[1] but one that distinguishes between social citizenship and nationality. By social citizenship I mean the individual resident obtaining all rights except the right to vote, and equality under law, whereas nationality requires enjoying all rights including the political rights. An extraterritorial state differs from a strict classical form of a nation-state which confirms that each citizen has a single belonging to his/her nation state, with no place for a dual belonging.

There are three prerequisites for a solution based on a model of extraterritorial nation-states: the ability to hold three nationalities, one of the current host country (or a third country), Palestine, and Israel; full responsibility being assumed by Israel for the creation and plight of the Palestinian refugees; and any restriction of these advantages being subject to bilateral or multilateral agreement between concerned states. Here Lex Takkenberg stressed the importance of convening an international conference to reach agreement on a harmonized approach to citizenship and residency for Palestinian refugees (Takkenberg 2007). The joint effort of the Organization of Security and Cooperation in Europe and the United Nations (UN) Higher Commissioner for Refugees on harmonization of citizenship and residency standards in the countries of the Community of Independent States is one example that may be considered for guidance. Lack of harmonization could engender continued forced migration across the region and could lead to instability and/or conflict where one state's citizenship or residency laws—in the context of unresolved displacement or new flows—could be regarded as a threat by another state.

Accordingly, the rights and the duties of those who live in the Occupied

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[1] So it is not a (De-territorialized Nation-state) as considered by the anthropologist Basch and her colleagues (Basch, Glick Schiller and Szanton Blanc 1994). Meaning that wherever the forced or economic migrant goes, his state will move with him. As Smith (1998) shows that the nation-states are of "spatial dimension" by definition.

Palestinian Territories (OPT) would not be a function of their nationalities (i.e., whether they are Palestinian or not). At the same time, those who live abroad and are of Palestinian origin could also enjoy rights and duties, even though they do not reside permanently in the OPT.

However, such an arrangement will be possible only if the PNA is able to enter into special agreements with countries that host Palestinian refugees, to facilitate the attainment of full dual citizenship. Accordingly, Palestinian citizenship would be available even to people residing outside of Palestine. This, particularly in light of salient questions regarding the possibility of absorbing Palestinian refugees, could be an honorable solution for those who are not willing to return but who would nevertheless like to belong to a Palestinian nation and be involved in Palestinian public affairs.

As a result, the solution of an extraterritorial nation-state will enable a Palestinian refugee in Egypt, for instance, to have Palestinian, Israeli, and Egyptian citizenship. This would allow him/her to reside and work in any of these three countries. He/she could also live in Gaza because of the low housing costs, while working in Jaffa, for example, or for that matter could live in Jaffa and work in Gaza.

The only nation-state in the region that takes this form is Israel. Israel defines itself as a state for all Jews in the world, with an unclear limitation of its international boundaries and with a problematic relation to the land of Israel. In addition to the borders of the land, it recognizes the dual nationality of its citizens. However, all this does not enable Israel to becoming an extraterritorial nation-state, because Israel is a state built on a racist colonial project that does not treat its citizens equally, and the state's identity is defined by the majority of newcomers.

Thus it is a nation-state only for Jews throughout the world, who are characterized as communities, each of which has the "right to return" and also full rights of citizenship in any country where they reside. As a result, Israel is a paradigm of a classical nation-state, and the unity of this state is based on religion, a nationalism-religion combination, or simply nationalism, as multiple alternatives.

The logic of an extraterritorial nation state is not only embedded in administrating the refugee problem, but also in finding solutions for it through promoting migration and residency regulations. The suggested solution is a national, international, humanitarian, legitimate right that represents the essence of the struggle. So the extraterritorial project in the Arab countries and the Palestinian state aligns with the way Arab nationalism has perceived a solution for residency and citizenship when the Arab nation is dispersed in different nation-states. This project inspires as well from the,

classic German mode of separating between nationality and citizenship and the from the nationalist Arab thought, formulated by Sati' al-Husri, Zaki al-Arsuzi. This is a way to push toward the Arab unity.

The Arab framework will allow a Palestinian in Syria, for instance, to be a Palestinian and a Syrian at the same time, or for a Palestinian in Egypt to be both a Palestinian and an Egyptian. There are two factors that play a positive role in supporting the model of a territorial state: first of all, the presence of refugees in the region, as Hannah Arendt describes them, as a leading actor and a vanguard for humanity (Arendt 1958, 280) as thanks to them the classical form of the nation-state founded after World War II revealed its incapability to deal with the displacement and other repercussions of war and conflict. The second factor derives from the recent Arab revolutions, not only in terms of changing regimes but also in implementing new values that are based on activating the spirits of the Arab nation and respecting human rights, including that of refugees.

This form of solution aligns with political developments in other areas of the world. It no longer involves considering, in a traditional manner, that "in the Nation State each citizen stands in a direct relation to the sovereign authority of the country" (Bendic 1977). It does not reflect the terms of admission to citizenship, which separate the "insiders" from the "outsiders." Neither does it extend this type of reflection which uses citizenship as its foundations for the territory of the nation-state.

In Europe, for instance, any French citizen is also a European, who can go to the European court to sue his/her government or any group located in his/her own country. The majority of Bosnian refugees, since the Dayton Agreement of 1995, have enjoyed resident status or are even naturalized in a Western European country, as well as possessing the Bosnian nationality, as they have the right to return there.

Some might argue that this model has been applied only in developed countries where economic factors play a determining role, but we also find informal or formal flexibility in many developing countries in Asia (as in the relationship between China and Hong Kong) and Africa (as with very permeable borders between some African states).

The Middle East is far from being in the phase of post tough form of nationalism. It is important, however, to note that this model exists. In this framework, taking into account the very pro-Israeli position of the West, I propose the possibility of connecting Palestine and Israel to a European space as a carrot strategy convincing the belligerents (mainly Israel) of the fact that no matter what their national sovereign space is, both national spaces are part of the European space's frontier.

The suggested model of allowing the possession of dual or multiple citizenships, which was previously considered a threat to the international order and to nation-states, has become accepted and even protected under international law (Stasiulis and Ross 2006, 330). Some theorists argue that if "citizenship is inclusive and rights-enhancing, then dual citizenship should be doubly so" (Stasiulis and Ross 2006, 330).

On the basis of this concept, and in the framework of the extraterritorial nation-state, one may follow the thoughts of the Israeli historian Amnon Raz about a two bi-national states, one Palestinian state with Palestinian and Jewish persons and the other a bi-national Israeli state with Jewish persons and Arab Palestinians. This leaves us with a political separation, without a geographic separation.

This article has argued in favor of the model of two extraterritorial nation-states (Israeli and Palestinian), and this model falls somewhere between the two-state solution --because of power inequities and now leading to an apartheid system-- and the relatively unpopular bi-national state solution. A sort of "confederation" may be a more feasible solution: two extraterritorial nation-states, with Jerusalem as their shared capital, contemporaneously forming, without clear territorial division, two different states.

Two possibilities can potentially resolve the Palestinian refugee problem: one that follows the model of the two rigid -states solution, and the other that follows the model of extraterritorial nation-states. If the current solution has been based on the assumption that the return of refugees is a matter of demographic and political instability, I argue that in the new framework the debate should shift to other issues at stake, such as citizenship and circular mobility (meaning that an individual may undertake geographic movement between many countries, including his/her country of origin).

This solution differentiates between citizenship and actual residency. While all refugees should benefit from multiple nationalities (or multiple citizenship in the case of Palestinians in Lebanon, wherein many Lebanese refuse granting Palestinians Lebanese citizenship), the possibility of exercising their Right of Return will not necessarily translate into a mass movement of populations. In other words, any other solution must be regional (with an initial condition that preserves Palestinians' Right of Return); otherwise, the lack of coordination between host countries and the country of origin could end up sending refugees in a perpetual orbit between countries because they are denied resident status.

The ability to hold three nationalities, including that of the current host country (or a third country), could constitute one of the possible just solutions to the refugees' problem, while nation-states in the region would prefer other solutions which utilize less of a rights-based approach. For instance, other

constitutional arrangements based on residency and not on citizenship could be feasible, allowing refugees to have multiple residencies instead of multiple nationalities. However, this is likely to generate conflict rather than resolve it, as traditionally the countries of the region are quick to expel non-citizens in the event of social or political conflict. Another possibility, which is worse, could be based on circular migration, managed and regulated by the states in the region to determine the quotas of admitted refugees in such a way that they match labor needs in specific economic sectors. Both cases are an attempt to escape from rather than discover a just solution that is based on respecting the Right of Return.

Regarding the UN Bid and its relationship to the Right of Return, I will seize the opportunity to open discussion regarding whether it is plausible to work on finding sovereignty on a portion of Palestinian land, and at the same time finding a just solution for the refugee issue. This approach results in adopting an historical settlement which does not neglect the legitimate rights of refugees.

There are three scenarios: First, that the Palestinian leadership should establish a Palestinian nation-state on the 1967 borders in a unilateral way, an effort which could only be buried while still in the making, a futile effort at returning Palestinians to all the cities and villages of which they were dispossessed. In the second scenario, the leaders would search for a creative solution, for a strong state which I call "extraterritorial," which cannot conflict with the principle of the Right of Return and which establishes justice and the right of an historic settlement for the Palestinian-Israeli struggle. The third scenario is the continuation of the status quo of the Palestinian National Authority, which is an inadequately functioning institution with delusive sovereignty and without the ability to deal with the refugee problem and the Right of Return.

I consider the second scenario a premise to start a new phase that is based on the return of the human rights approach and the invocation of international law to end the Israeli occupation, in addition to returning broader Arab sentiment to the cause (as when Arabs went to the UN united) and rejecting the confinement of political action to negotiation with exclusive US mediation, and supporting the resistance. This approach promises new horizons, especially as it coincides with the Arab revolutionary movement and with the support of emerging democratic Arab states.

Within the context of this premise, the US-Palestinian Community Network organized a demonstration on September 15, 2011 in front of the UN building, demanding "equal sovereignty, and implementing Palestinian refugees' Right of Return." Such claims are a prerequisite for the extraterritorial nation-state that is sensitive to the issue of citizenship.

The creative solution is built on the extraterritorial nation-state, which is first of all a solution that fits the spirit of Arabism, Arab nationalism, and the movement of history, which is represented in the establishment of a flexible nation-state. It is not only a political approach that is sharply focused on how to solve problems (including the Right of Return), and the outcome of which would be acceptable and satisfying for both conflicting or disputing sides, in which each side finds a solution for its problem. More than this, it exceeds the limitations of this approach, as the creative solution does not limit action to the circles of decision-makers who are thus far unable to resolve their disputes and struggles, but expands into the mobilization of public pressure on the matter.

Refugees Dancing to the Beat of the Arab Spring

The Arab revolutions are national revolutions,[2] but their implications go beyond narrow nationalism. The Arab revolutions have brought back a sense of nationalism as it pertains to all Arabs. In a lesser way, they have also promoted the Islamic dimension (as with the relationship between Turkey and some Eastern Asian countries). The popular and official welcoming of Ismael Haniya, Palestinian prime minister of the resigned government, by a massive crowd in Egypt and Tunisia, is the most obvious proof of a new Arab intensity regarding the Palestinian cause in all the incidents of the Arab Mobilization.[3] Despite this, one can imagine a far less optimistic scenario. As a result, implications are still open, and these revolutions and the Palestinian cause (especially regarding the refugees) will affect each other.[4]

The Arab spring has brought back the project of establishing the Arab unity

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[2] The Arab revolutions advocated the saying, "There is no voice louder than the voice of battle," which crowned the hieratical thinking of prioritizing the battle with Israel and imperialism at the expense of democracy, freedom, and social justice issues. This was clear in the discourse of some of the Arab regimes and in the discourse of some of the political parties which mobilised society and allowed security and military forces to acquire some of the civil positions under the cover of prioritizing battle.

[3] Neither the Egyptian nor Tunisian revolutions overlooked the Arab-Israeli struggle, although I was glad to see that this issue wasn't the priority of the revolutions. Both regimes are at the axis of moderation, and this is what led to a huge dichotomy in their speeches. The feelings of the public who saw their moderation for green cards as the continuation of the Israeli settlement project, blockade of Gaza and oppressing Palestinians. Some of the writers in *Al-Ahram* newspaper in addition to both governments' news caught my attention as they criticized Mubarak's greeting of Netanyahu on January 4. The next day Israel announced the demolition of Arab houses in Jerusalem and bombarded Gaza; three Palestinians were killed. In this context, the Israeli fear from both revolutions carries a meaning. The weak Arab situation will not continue defending its regimes. One of the possible scenarios is returning the leading role to Egypt in uniting Arabs, and enabling the representatives of the Palestinian society (PLO and Hamas) to fight the Zionist project. The use of the word dignity in many of the speeches of the representatives of the revolutions also grabbed my attention. The dignity of a nation has been compromised by Arab regimes through its dependency on nations which support the policies of the Zionist entity.

[4] This section of the research is based on intense observation of the paths of the Arab intifadat and a number of interviews which were conducted with activists in the Arab Intifadat, and with some Palestinian leaders.

but this time from below, and the Arab channels (al-jazeera, al-Arabeyya, etc.) have played a crucial role in doing so, through informing Arab publics beyond the nation-state. Additionally, if the question of Palestine is a common factor for many Arab societies, the issue of freedom, dignity, and social justice on a larger scale becomes blended with it. As a result, demonstrations filled the Arab streets in collaboration with revolutionaries of Aden, Tahrir, Tunis Babo Amar (Hums) and Diraa, etc.[5] In light of the formation of this new Arab identity, the Palestinian cause is promoted in two ways: first, the call for ending the occupation and overthrowing the Zionist project, second, resolving the Palestinian refugee problem on the basis of the Right of Return and by granting refugees some of their basic economic and social rights enshrined in human rights doctrine, international treaties and conventions relating to refugees, thus defeating the rightwing' racist project in some of the Arab countries (like in Lebanon).

The Arab revolutions not only reactivate new political subjectivities (Hanafi, 2012), they also enacted a new form of political action: peaceful, non-violent action. In this arena, the *common sphere* (informal groups, local communities and reflexive individuals) has been activated after proving that theories which reduced the society into a binary private sphere and a public sphere are incapable of comprehending the dynamics of political and social mobilization in the area. Jürgen Habermas has predicted the importance of NGOs, parties, and unions in the public sphere, considering that they are the mediators between a citizen and the state. Tony Negri and Michael Hardt (2009) have added that the common sphere, not the public sphere, plays a main role in mobilizing communities.

The common sphere indeed is the one that made the Tahrir Square in Suez, Alexandria, Sanaa, Aden, and Bab Omar (the liberated squares) the places in which collective action was formulated, far more than the capability of any of the NGOs, unions, or political parties. New political subjectivities moved

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[5] This national identity is in the making and meets with two other identities. The first identity is the national identity. In any Kufmanian reading for the liberated fields (according to Daram Basam) one notices that it has transformed into laboratories that give birth to new national feelings that consist of solidarity, sacrifice and interdependence. I present an example of the Syrian case nowadays: while everyone confirms the danger of the emergence of tribal and sectarian conflicts in Syria, not many have paid attention to the formation of a new Syrian identity. Meaning, this country which has been penetrated by corruption and neoliberalism has in some cases reinforced some of the local geographic identities and tribal identities in the past. It has also created boundaries between these localities. One can talk much about how the people of Aleppo detest the people of Idleb, or how the people of Damascus have put negative judgments on the values of "Shuwai" Deir Zour and the "Fellaheen" of Houran Bedouins and Kurds. The Syrian revolution brought back the inseparable social unity and thus has formulated a new identity based on citizenship that respects the particularism of some of the ethnic groups and minorities. This has helped in reinforcing the national identity of the opposition, which is an opposition to the tribal authoritative discourse which depicted this revolution in the first speech of Bashar Al-Assad into the issue of "disorder". There is a new national identity in formation which will form the fortress in front of the formation of tribal and local identities; which is the formation in which foreign powers play a role in separating the right of minorities from the issue of granting citizenship for all.

from these places to Palestine, where the new protest movements have linked the national, the political and the social of the everyday life. Here I will present four examples of the impact on the Arab revolutions:

The first example: ever since the beginning of the Arab uprisings, Palestinians from the West Bank and Gaza have set off demonstrations but did not directly claim to end the occupation, but rather to end the division between Gaza and the West Bank, between Fatah and Hamas, etc. With that in consideration, the reinforcement of the internal front is a prerequisite for the end of the occupation. The youth of Palestine have initiated the revolution via Facebook, with the slogan "people want to end the division," and they set a date of February 11, 2011 to be a decisive moment, but the world was preoccupied at the time with the Egyptian situation. Another date was suggested, March 5, for protests in the West Bank and Gaza calling for and end to the division, yet the security forces in the West Bank and Gaza have suppressed these demonstrations despite the fact that they were peaceful and raised the Palestinian flag. Even so, those demonstrations have mobilized efforts at reconciliation. Indeed on February 6, Al-Doha sponsored the completion of the reconciliation between Mahmoud Abbas and Khaled Mish'al, so that they would begin with executive steps to form a consensus government headed by Abbas and activated by the PLO, thus opening the way for elections. However, this attempt so far failed but the tension between Hamas and Fatah is much less.

The second example: there is a problem between connecting refugee camps with the urban texture of surrounding cities, and this has resulted in "purposeful" neglect of these camps, which are predominantly poor, and whose inhabitants have no say in local council elections. In this context, the inhabitants of Arroub refugee camp have appropriated land from the region near the camp in order to build a soccer field after Israel and the PNA have refused (for various reasons) the construction of this land. The message thus is that it is no longer acceptable in the era of Arab revolutions to broadcast slogans about liberating Jerusalem, without liberating camps from discrimination. Palestinian camps are perceived as places for inhabitants without services provided to them from the Lebanese state, or as places in which refugees have been deprived of their basic rights of work and ownership.

The third example is in the resistance of the settlement project from the inside through groups who are not associated with classical institutions of the civil society, but rather through the civil-based sphere, which has flexible and weak ties with the civil society that has local extension and global solidarity. Since international relations reflect economic and political interest, BDS (Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions) activates its strategies through boycotting all cultural, academic and economic Israeli institutions. Some Palestinian youths have suggested even to boycott the countries

and companies that support Israeli colonial practice by creating an index of these entities. They have announced that they are not boycotting Jewish companies, but companies that support Israel. In short, the Arab revolutions have a significant impact on the future of the Arab-Israeli conflict, through activating the civil-based sphere.

The fourth example: a group of Palestinian youth decided to use social networking to carry out mass demonstrations toward the borders of Israel. Indeed, these independent young groups organized a demonstration aimed at put again in the local, regional and international agendas the issue of the refugees return after being marginalized by the official Palestinian political discourse, in conformity with two decades of Oslo process paradigm. If the first demonstration on May 15 was so successful in terms of mobilization, it has also led to the loss of a number of youths who were killed by the bullets of Israeli soldiers on the southern borders of Lebanon and the occupied Golan heights in Syria. Needless to say, the youth movements have been terminated by many Palestinian factions that rejected the autonomous role these youths played in leading the 'return' demonstrations (for more see Shaheen 2011). This is the same position adopted in June 2010 by many pro-Syrian factions regarding the social and economic rights organized by a network of 112 Palestinian and Lebanese civil society institutions.

Some of the young Palestinian leaders we interviewed have called for a march towards the borders of the Zionist entity, because what happened in the week that followed the commemoration of the Nakba on the Syrian borders (the second demonstration) was not related to the symbolic act of the return of refugees, but it served as a message sent by Syrian regime that this regime is ready to 'bother' Israel if international pressure continues against it.[6] The May 27 demonstration has led to the death of fourteen persons, plus eight others from Yarmouk camp, after the victims' families burned the office of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine- General Commandment. Their parents maintained that the organization had recklessly sent their children towards the borders and without protection.

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[6] See Rami Makhlouf's interview in the *New York Times,* which connects the stability of Syria with the stability of Israel.

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Return Narratives of Palestinian Refugees in the West Bank: A Generational Perspective[1]

Sophie Richter-Devroe

Introduction

The Right of Return is arguably one of the central aspects preventing a resolution of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, and certainly one that stirs debate. Critiques centre on the two-state solution, and, more specifically, on arguments which understand the Oslo Accords to mean that refugees must be settled within the 1967 borders (see e.g. Badil 2001). Such approaches, justified by its advocates as 'pragmatic' and exemplified, for instance, by the Nusseibeh-Ayalon Agreement (Nusseibeh-Ayalon 2002), consider the full implementation of the Right of Return utopian. These positions have been contested, by, for example, Abu-Sitta (2001) who has statistically shown that space, in fact, is not a problem: all refugees could return. Moreover, the Right of Return is a legal right enshrined in a number of United Nations resolutions and international human rights instruments, most importantly United Nations General Assembly Resolution 194.

More recently proposals for a one-state solution or a bi-national state (e.g. Abunimah 2006 and Pappe 2008) have put a further challenge to the current negotiation agenda, its focus on a two-state solution and its abandonment of the refugee question. These proposals move beyond narrow nationalist, legalistic and/or 'pragmatic' approaches, identifying the Right of Return as central to the Palestinian question and finding that any solutions to the conflict must guarantee the right and possibility for all Palestinian refugees to return to their home towns and villages - not only as a requirement of international law, but as an essential step towards dismantling Israeli ethno-nationalist and settler-colonial policies.

In this paper I propose an ethnographic approach aimed at tracing and comparing different political cultures on the Right of Return as articulated and proposed by refugees themselves.[2] Based on more than two years of

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field research (2008-2011) and over a hundred interviews, this paper will focus on generational differences in the return narratives of refugees in the West Bank, asking the following two main questions:

1. What does return (and/or the village/place of origin) mean to different refugees?

2. How exactly do different refugees envisage return, and thus their 'Palestine-projects'?

Answers to these questions differ widely; refugees' political narratives, practices and imaginaries on return are shaped by their class, gender, generation, political context and various other factors. While refugees are without doubt united in their demand that the Right of Return is inalienable and must be recognised, they differ in their proposed political narratives and scenarios on how exactly this right should be implemented. Return, and more specifically the village/place of origin, carries different meanings for different refugees.

Adopting an intersectional approach, I argue here that generation is one of the main factors shaping refugees' different political cultures on return. Particularly interesting are the narratives and imaginaries put forward by the younger generation of ca. 35 years and below. Palestinian youth[3] often display the most creative and innovative political cultures (see also Sayigh 2011). They tend to provide a challenge and critique to elite (Palestinian as well as international) politics, and also urge us to rethink what (doing and imagining) politics for Palestine mean today (see also Salih 2011).

Theoretical Consideration

Studies on Palestinian refugees have been predominantly of a statistical, demographic, developmental or policy-oriented nature. Over the last two decades literature that sees Palestinian refugees as active agents of change, tracing not only their living conditions, but also their memory dynamics, imagined homelands, histories of dispossessions and different forms of participation in the national struggle, has grown (e.g. Brand 1988; Farah 1997; Gandolfo 2005; Hanafi 2011; Knudsen and Hanafi 2010; Lindholm Schulz 2003; Masalha 2004; Nabulsi 2006; Peteet 2005; Sayigh 1994; 2011; Shiblak

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longer version of this article, proposing a comparative analysis of refugees' return narratives in Lebanon, Jordan and the West Bank has been submitted to the *Refugee Survey Quarterly*.

[3] Youth tends to be taken for granted as a 'natural' category. In fact, as Swedenburg (2007) shows "youth" is a socially and culturally determined category, a transitional phase between childhood and adulthood that, in its contemporary form, is a product of modernity." As such, "youth" indicates a particular socialised life cycle and way of living with specific social and economic responsibilities. In the Palestinian context, due to unemployment and delayed marriages, "youth" as a social category can expand up to 35 or even 40-year-olds (see for example Swedenburg 2007 and Farah 2005, 112).

2005). Studies have thus increasingly shifted from focusing on Palestinian refugees as victims and recipients (of aid, development, policies, etc.) to considering them as active political agents with distinct (and multiple) political subjectivities and cultures.

Refugees' political cultures, particularly regarding return, are not uniform. The spatial, political and social dismemberment of the Palestinian community has given rise to new forms of (often more locally/context-specific) political cultures and actions (see also Taraki 2008). Refugees' political subjectivities thus are varied and fluid, and their political narratives, strategies and cultures creative and diverse. Nevertheless, in official political rhetoric the uniformity and exceptionality of the Palestinian refugee experience is often stressed to create unity among the dispersed nation. Political actors often present their Palestine-projects, their return agendas and their Palestinianness as 'authentic', and 'untainted' by, or even in opposition to, international or transnational political agendas. They might view different political projects proposed for Palestine with suspicion, fearing that these might further fragment and/or paralyse the Palestinian national struggle.

In reality, however, different return narratives and projects are not 'authentic' or bounded, but rather constitute a merging of different local, national and trans- and international political discourses. Political cultures in and on Palestine – and particularly if they deal with a highly symbolic, sacrosanct and politically sensitive topic such as the Right of Return – are thus not only political in nature, they are also struggles for identity, for legitimacy, support and power. Across different generations, but particularly among younger refugees, the Right of Return, as the ethnographic data presented here will show, is no longer framed only within a nationalist narrative, but is increasingly merged, treated within, and linked by local actors to international or global rights discourses. Accounting for these dynamics, my aim in this paper is not only to trace differences in political cultures on return, but also to identify how and why such different return cultures came about: How do local actors 'indigenise' international political agendas and transnational solidarity projects? More particularly, how (and why) do they appropriate, rephrase and merge international rights discourses, nationalist discourses, and/or transnational/global justice agendas into their own local political narratives and imaginaries? The constructed narratives on the Right of Return, of course, stem from political convictions, but they are also a way for local actors to prove and demarcate their identity boundaries, as well as to challenge social and political opponents. The specific local context thus plays an important role.

Refugees in The West Bank

The total number of UNRWA registered refugees in the West Bank reaches around 727000 (UNRWA 2012). Ca. a quarter of refugees in the West Bank live in one of the 19 official refugee camps.

Refugees in the West Bank are caught in a paradoxical situation of living as Palestinian refugees within the Palestinian quasi-state under Israeli occupation. Residing in the Occupied Territories, they are, just like most Palestinian citizens (*muwatineen*), considered resident aliens or foreigners under Israeli civil and military law (see also Khalil 2007, ftn 76; Badil 2003; 2005). In contrast to other refugees outside the 1967 borders, refugees in the West Bank can, just like the *muwatineen*, run for and vote in the Palestinian Legislative Council elections. While all refugees in the West Bank (inside and outside the camps) can participate in these national elections, only those residing outside the camps in villages and towns vote for municipal elections (Badil 2005; Al-Husseini and Bocco 2010, 274). Refugees in the West Bank may thus sometimes act as Palestinian citizens (e.g. in national elections), but at the same time they are careful to maintain their distinct refugee identity as different from the *muwatineen* as an enforcement of their right to return.

In the West Bank, as elsewhere, refugees operate under various regimes of sovereignty, most importantly that of the occupying power (Israel), their (host) government (the PA), UNRWA, different political parties, but also refugee organisations, such as the popular committees in the camps. The PA builds its legitimacy on its rhetoric to guarantee refugee rights, but its actual practices cement the exclusion, marginalisation and discrimination of refugees. The vast majority of refugees to whom we spoke experienced such discrimination. They criticised the PA for its policies, and – most importantly – for abandoning their cause by accepting the two-state solution in Oslo. Instead, refugees are calling for political change, democratisation and adequate representation.

Criticism, of course, is not primarily centred against the PA, but against the Israeli settler-colonial project. Seeing and experiencing how the settler-colonial project proceeds in the West Bank on a daily basis, many refugees are convinced that a Palestinian resistance agenda must start with critiquing and dismantling the Zionist ethno-nationalist and settler-colonial project in Palestine. Often the camp and the distinct refugee political identity are represented as the last strongholds of Palestinian resistance.

Refugees unanimously demand the recognition of their Right of Return. Yet, when it comes to actual implementation, considerations such as discrimination by the PA, the need to improve life in the camp, feelings of belonging 'here' but also 'there' are mixed with uncertainties of how repatriation to their places of origin, more than sixty years after the Nakba, in

a state defined by an exclusionary construction of ethno-religious citizenship would work. While refugees are thus often seen as, and have to comply with their image as, the last guardians of the Right of Return, they do have different narratives as to *how* to implement that right. Such variations occur particularly across generations.

Three Generations

Generation is a primary marker in the Palestinian refugee community. Palestinian refugees themselves use generation to describe their own identity, often in relation to historical events. The generation of those who experienced the Nakba (as young adolescents or children) has broadly taken the name of *jeel al-nakba* (the Nakba generation), while the subsequent generation, given the prominent role of the PLO and the Resistance from the 60s to the 80s, is often referred to as *jeel al-thawra* (the generation of the Revolution), particularly in Lebanon. In the West Bank those who were active as youth and young adults in the First Intifada, are often called *jeel al-intifada* (the Intifada generation).[4] Each of these generations has lived through particular historical events, which have profoundly shaped their political cultures and strengthened their identification with their generational group, their *jeel*.

When studying political cultures through an intergenerational lens, one should, however, not directly and exclusively associate certain trends or characteristics with only one generation. Political cultures tend to come about as a result of and in response to certain historical or political events and thus are often predominantly found among particular age groups. But despite such trends, political cultures are, of course, cross-generational. In the following overview I present different political cultures on return according to the three generations in which they predominantly – but neither uniformly nor exclusively - are upheld.

The Nakba Generation – Longing to Return Home

When talking about returning to their village of origin, refugees older than 65 of age, i.e. those who fled during the Nakba, tend to take a romantic, homesick view, stressing their attachment to the (home-)land (*al-'ard*). For example, Amal in Aida refugee camp remembered Ajjour, her village of origin:

> In Ajjour we were farmers. We were planting everything and we were

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[4] These identifications by generation, of course, are not uniform. Sayigh (2011, 3) and Peteet (2005, 98) studying refugees in Lebanon, for example, further identify the usage of *jeel filasteen* (the generation of Palestine) for those a little older than the *jeel al-Nakba*.

> living from it. Everything [we needed] came from us. We had a lot of land, for farming, sesame, humus, everything was on our land, tomato, courgette, beans, etc. The land was fertile. Do you really think we can to return to our land? No, now I am too old. It is gone (Amal, Aida Camp 2010).

For this generation, the village of origin thus stands for a concrete place, their home and house, and encapsulates their identity as farmers in pre-48 Palestine. Although they have distinct memories of their villages and homes, their memories of the lost homeland are idealised. Members of the Nakba generation often present their lost homes and villages as a paradise: land was abundant and fertile, neighbours kind and supportive, and life stable and secure.

Nakba refugees narrate a romantic and idealised, but at the same time hopeless and disappointed feeling, mourning the loss of an identity, related rights and status. A recent survey (Al-Husseini and Bocco 2010, 282, ftn 83) found that while 2nd and 3rd generation refugees were chiefly concerned with daily problems of discrimination and poverty in the camps and in the host country, respondents from the Nakba generation cited "homesickness/ longing for return" as their main most important problem.

With their romanticised, strongly emotional collective memories of the past (often omitting social, political or economic stratifications and tensions) in pre-Nakba Palestine, refugees, however, mainly want to make a comment on the difficult situation they find themselves in now, as refugees in the camps. As Peteet (2005, 216) discussing the case of refugees in Lebanon) argues: "[i]ndeed, recovering the past is not always an object of desire. What the past does represent, however, is what has been denied – a safe location, recognition of rights, and a sense of belonging in one's own homeland, and a process of justice."

Ayed, a first generation refugee now residing in Deheishe, reflects this focus on justice in his narrative on his village of origin, al-Qabu:

> I was 13 years at the Nakba. I knew which land belongs to whom. We were thinking that we will return to our land. We taught this to our children…I do not see this [his residence in Deheishe camp] as my house. I consider myself a refugee [*laji'*] in the camp [*mukhayyam*]. This is not my house. In the UNRWA [regulations] it is written that this is not your land. It was build on the foundation that this is not our land ['ard]. The *watan* [homeland] is the one that we left behind (Ayed, Deheishe 2010).

The great majority of refugees who experienced the Nakba thus understand and envisage return as an actual physical and permanent return; they wish

to return to their village and home to resume their life as lived before the expulsion. Land (*al-'ard*) stands out as a major reference in the narratives of this generation. It symbolises not only production, subsistence, ownership and a specific socio-economic identity and lifestyle, but more importantly stands for the rights and status that living on one's own (home-)land, as citizens, offers.

The Middle Generation – Creating a Political Culture on the Right of Return

Second generation refugees do not have these concrete memories of the village of origin, and they often criticise the (perceived to be) apolitical, romantic view on the Right of Return as taken by their parents. Instead, they often approach the Right of Return chiefly from a rights-based political perspective.

Lama, a second generation refugee from Askar camp, Nablus, who now lives as a secretarial worker in Ramallah, for example, tells of her father, a refugee from Yaffa, that he keeps memorabilia of Yaffa everywhere in the house. "It's like something sacred for him," she (Lama, Ramallah 2010) says, and is sure that he would return immediately, if given the choice. Yet, she also scolds him for not being very practical with his claim to return. For him, she says, it was more important to get his daughters married (even to non-refugees, thus losing the refugee status for the children) than ensuring that they are mentioned on his UNRWA card so that the refugee status is passed on.[5] She thus criticises her father for being concerned more with "traditions" (i.e. marrying his daughters), than with refugees' political rights and legal status.

Instead, for her it is most important to educate the new generation about their rights, the Nakba, to tell them something very concrete, not romantic, about their village of origin. She herself has four boys, and says she wants to provide them not with memories, but with facts (for example, on whether their place of origin was destroyed, who lives there now, where exactly it is, etc.). She wants to inform them about their rights as refugees and about how their case has been appropriated by various political actors. In her view, her role as a mother is to educate her children about their political rights so that they are able to act.

This rights-based approach also functions as a counter to the PA's negotiation and two-state agenda. The second generation of refugees has lived through crucial political events: the First Intifada (1987-1993) encouraged widespread

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[5] UNRWA's "Palestine refugee" status is transmitted through the paternal line. This means that children born to a Palestine refugee mother and non-refugee father are not registered with UNRWA, do not hold the UNRWA card, and are not entitled to UNRWA's services. See Cervenak (1994) for a detailed discussion.

grassroots political participation; and – most importantly – the Oslo Accords (1993) established the two-state solution as the mainstream scenario for a future Palestinian state, leaving the refugee question unresolved, and in an even more precarious situation. The recent release of the Palestine papers provided final proof that the PA abandoned the refugees and their Right of Return in their negotiations. It revealed that PA negotiators were prepared to make major concessions on the refugee issue (see, for example, Al-Arian 2011 and Karmi 2011). The great majority of refugees whom we interviewed was critical of the PA's negotiation agenda and perceived the Accords as a sell-out of their Right of Return.

While many from this generation originally took up both popular (largely nonviolent) and armed resistance as a way to struggle for Palestine and the Right of Return, the post-Oslo period saw a dramatic decline of such broad-based political activism,[6] strengthening instead a political culture that prioritises and works on the basis of refugees' legal status, rights and self-representation. Many former activists, particularly from the left-wing political parties founded NGOs and awareness-raising groups. Samir, the founder and head of an NGO in Aida refugee camp near Bethlehem, put the aim of his organisation (and more generally, I would argue, of his generation) in the following words:

> After Oslo there was an emptiness here. We needed to work on the [political] culture of the refugees. Creating a [political] culture of Right of Return (*thaqafa-t-haqq al-'awda*) means educating the children about their villages of origin, about their rights - to keep something concrete/tangible (*malmus*) for them (Samir, Aida camp 2009).

Refugees of the second generation, like Lama and Samir, thus adopt and want to pass on to their children a political rights stance towards return. Abandoned by the leadership and without adequate representation, refugees, particularly from the 1990s onwards, increasingly prioritise their legal status and rights as refugees in their political narratives of self-identification, representation and claim-making (see also Peteet 2005, 209-211). Today's political culture of second generation refugees thus tends to seek support in international law and UN resolutions, particularly UNGAR 194.

In sum, this generation's legal rights-based approach with its focus on legal refugee status opposes not only their parents'' 'romantic' approach to return and the PLO's centralist liberationist stance, but also functions today as a counter to the PA's abandonment of the refugee question in their negotiation and two-state agenda.[7]

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[6] The detrimental impact of post-Oslo donor money on Palestinian civil society and institution building has been widely documented. See for example Jad 2004; Hammami 1995; Hanafi and Tabar 2005.

[7] Of course, this political narrative is not adopted unanimously among members of the second

The Younger Generation – Return to the Homeland, not (Necessarily) the Home

Young Palestinians make up a large percentage of the Palestinian refugee community. Studies that have explored the situation and political agency of young Palestinian refugees (Chatty 2009; Chatty and Hundt 2005; Bocco, et al 2007; Sayigh 2011) have argued that young Palestinian refugees express their political viewpoints clearly, demonstrating a high level of political agency and awareness. Youth narratives on return are often decidedly different from those of older generations.

The younger generation tends to highlight discrimination against them and their lack of property rights in the host country (see also Al-Husseini and Bocco 2010, 282, ftn 83) as among the major reasons why they would want to return:

> We are not going to stay here forever. This is land rented by the *wikala* [UNRWA] - it is not our land. […] If we talk of choice, there is nothing here that I can choose, it is not mine. Of course, in the villages of origin the houses are destroyed, [but] we will return, we will start from small and build things up. If they [the Israelis] want to stay, they have to bear. We are the owners of the land, so it is not up to them to decide whether to accept us or not. We are the owners of land so it is us who decide (Ali, Deheishe camp 2010).

Younger refugees, such as Ali, do not necessarily follow their grandparents' 'romantic' notions of home and belonging, nor do they confine their narratives to a legalist rights-based approach as their parents. For them, the Right of Return is first and foremost a political project: Return means choice, and regaining ownership and control of the land of Palestine, the homeland. In a discussion with Ali, Mohammad, also a refugee in his twenties from Deheishe camp, explained how he imagines the implementation of return:

> For me, my village of origin represents all of Palestine. When we get the right to return, it doesn't mean that I necessarily want to return to this village. It means that I can return to any place anywhere in the whole of Palestine (Mohammad, Deheishe 2010).

Similarly Maysoon, in another group discussion in Deheishe, said:

> We are not going to put on the *hatta* [Palestinian scarf] and look like peasants. I am the one who chooses. This is the important thing, that I can choose. If I want to stay here in the camp then I can. I can stay anywhere (Maysoon, Deheishe 2010).

generation. Differentiations exist particularly according to political party affiliation which is a dominant maker of political identity, particularly in this generation.

Younger refugees thus do not conceive the Right of Return as a return to their villages or towns of origin (i.e. to an actual place), nor do they understand it as a return to a specific identity (that of farmers, as lived by their grandparents). Rather for them the village of origin and the Right of Return constitute symbols of their collective political project: of demanding their right to return to and regain their homeland, historical Palestine. They want to be able to choose where in all of Palestine they would live.

The exact return scenarios articulated by this generation differ, however. In a focus group discussion in Aida Camp with young refugees three different scenarios were articulated. While Marwan was clear in that he "cannot accept to share the land with anyone. This land is mine" (Marwan, Aida camp 2010), Mustafa adopted a more nuanced perspective: "If [the Israelis] accept to live with us, on an equal basis, we [will] give them Palestinian citizenship […] the Israelis should become Palestinians citizens" (Mustafa, Aida camp 2010). Aisha added to Mustafa's proposal of equal citizenship a critique of Zionism: "We are not against the Jews but against the Zionists. They should accept us and we will accept them" (Aisha, Aida camp 2010).

While some (but few) from this younger generation are unwilling to share the land, others (such as Aisha and Mustafa) critique the Zionist settler-colonial project and the Jewish nature of the Israeli state, rather than the Israeli state itself. If granted equal citizenship rights, rather than being subjected to a construction of citizenship based on ethno-religious designations, these young politically-aware and politically-active refugees thus could imagine a joint future in one state.

Many of the respondents from this age group also stressed their need for mobility. They pointed to the restrictions they face on a daily basis as a result of Israeli spatial control and land grab policies, but also stressed the proximity to their villages of origin, which are often just a few kilometres away on the other side of the 1967 borders. Yazan, whose family is from Miska but who grew up and lives in Tulkarm refugee camp, for example, argued that if the Right of Return was granted to him he

> …could go and live there [in Miska, his village of origin] but always come back to Tulkarm. I do not have to go back to Miska. I could decide and live in Yaffa as well. I can go and decide to live wherever I want. I have no problem; I would live together with the Jews, but only as a religion. I would never accept to live under an Israeli government (Yazan, Tulkarm camp 2010).

Young refugees, like Yazan, who did not experience displacement first hand, who grew up predominantly in camps, and who mostly have not been to their families' places of origin, but have learned about them from

their grandparents' memories, have multiple, and sometimes contradictory references to 'here' and 'there.' Their villages of origin, 'there' have important symbolic value for them, but they are uncertain how to build a life in a place practically unknown to them, where they would be subjected to discriminatory state policies based on ethno-religious nationalism. 'Here', in the West Bank, they experience a sense of belonging and an identity as Palestinians. They participate in civil and political life in the Palestinian quasi-state (e.g. through participation in national elections), but at the same are marked by discrimination. While of course identifying themselves as Palestinians (see also Mi'ari 2012), refugees in the West Bank broadly reject the prospects of being assimilated as citizens in the 1967 borders. In order to uphold their refugee identity and related rights, they simultaneously stress their common identity as Palestinians, and their distinctiveness as refugees, which entails marked differences from West Bank citizens, the *muwatineen*.

Given the proximity to the villages of origin, their multiple and ambiguous ties to home-, and host country, increased transnational ties through e.g. internet communications, as well as their concrete experiences of Israeli occupation and settler-colonial policies, young Palestinian refugees in the West Bank thus often propose transnational forms of life which would allow them to maintain connections to both places. In their return scenarios issues such as mobility, equal citizenship rights, and justice are prioritised, to the extent that some can even imagine a one-state solution and/or transnational forms of life.

Conclusion

Palestinian refugees (and non-refugees) unanimously agree that the Right of Return is an inalienable right that must be recognised. Yet, actual political cultures on how to *implement* that right – and thus the meanings, imaginaries and exact scenarios of return as expressed by refugees themselves - differ. Studying these different political cultures on return is particularly pertinent now at a time of serious political, territorial and social fragmentation of the Palestinian community. It might, moreover, feed into future nation-state scenarios. Particularly interesting in this regard, are the return narratives and imaginaries of the younger generation of refugees.

For the younger generation the Right of Return is first and foremost a collective political project: references to the villages and towns of origin have little to do with (individually) returning to that concrete place, home our house (as upheld by the Nakba generation), nor do they aim at spreading historical and cultural awareness (as proposed by the second generation). Rather, for the younger generation the places of origin (and the Right of Return more broadly), stand for, and aim at consolidating, their collective political project to claim their right to *choose* where and how to return to their homeland, Palestine.

By proposing alternative return narratives and scenarios the young demarcate their identities, and challenge the older generations' hold on power. Young refugees are disillusioned with the big, but ultimately empty, slogans of the PA, PLO and political party elites. They have not experienced the hope that at least some Palestinians felt in 1993, but have only seen the failure of the peace process, the tightening of the occupation, and the corruption in the Oslo-installed PA. With their return narratives, they oppose both the PLO's nationalist liberationist stance, and the PA's post-Oslo stance on return, which often tries to combine the two-state solution with UNGAR 194, but remains vague on actual implementation scenarios

Moreover, youth political narratives on return highlight the restrictive and unequal nature of national borders, thus questioning the classic, exclusively territorially-based, nation-state model as upheld in classic political theory as well as by mainstream political actors, such as the PA (see also Hanafi 2011; Peteet 2005, 26). This generation grew up in an atmosphere of rising critiques against Zionism; they also witnessed and contributed to the strengthening of solidarity movements, and more recently saw the push for democratisation and equal rights in the Arab Spring. With their creative return narratives young refugees align themselves more closely to the political discourses of today's transnational global justice and solidarity movement, and scenarios such as the one-state solution. Many can imagine sharing the land under equal citizenship rights and, given their multiple belongings to the camp,

the West Bank and their homeland, historical Palestine, they also propose more transnational forms of life between 'here' and 'there', thus prioritising access to, over permanent settlement in, the homeland.

The return narratives and Palestine-projects proposed by young Palestinian refugees in the West Bank thus often advance both a more holistic approach, in which the Right of Return is framed within broader struggles of justice, democratisation, human rights and equality, and a more flexible, de-territorialised scenario for a future Palestinian nation-state. As such, their creative and innovative political imaginaries promise to breathe some fresh air into the often ideologically-tainted and deadlocked debate on the Right of Return.

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Chapter Three:

The Psychological and Spatial Dimensions of Palestinian Refugees

For a Paradigm Shift: A Psychoanalytical Approach to Palestinian Refugees' Memory and Spatial Practices

Khaldun Bshara

"Death does not pain the dead. It pains those who are alive"

Mahmoud Darwish (2006).

"It is enough for a person to go through the first experience of uprooting, to become uprooted forever"

Mourid Barghouti (2000).

"Why deny the obvious necessity for memory?"

Marguerite Duras (1961).

Introduction

In 1948, more than 700,000 Palestinians were forced out from their homes. Today, according to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), there are around five million registered refugees in the West Bank, Gaza Strip, Jordan, Syria, and Lebanon. Each of those refugees has memories of the events surrounding 1948. Some lived through the events themselves, and some remember *via* the memories of their parents and relatives. Throughout my research, I examined how Palestinian refugees attempt to keep alive ties to their spaces of origin. I focus on the practices that give material expression to memories threatened by the passage of time.

This essay is part of investigation and conceptualization of the on-the-ground memory and the spatial practices of the Palestinian diaspora. My work focuses on how Palestinian refugees remember their villages of origin, and how they use the space of the camp to solidify their claims to their villages of origin. In a sense, I explore the way the camp has been functioning as a memory device that reminds refugees of their dispossession and loss even while it helps them pursue their everyday life. I build on the ethnographic research that I carried out among the Palestinian refugees in the West Bank, Jordan, and Lebanon in the years 2009, 2010, and 2011. My research locates memory and

spatial practices in habitual and everyday life within broader socio-economic-political landscapes. While I use the analysis of memory and spatial practices in the camps to critique the politics of subjugation that refugees have been living, I, nevertheless, show these practices are a powerful means of meaning-making and articulation of world views in the process of the claiming of the lost self, and the decolonization of psychic space.

While refugee studies have focused on the formation of the refugee as a subject in humanitarian discourse, political violence, and exclusion, so far little attention has been paid to the refugees' psyche as the *milieu* of subjectification.[1] In this essay, I argue that the production of the refugee's identity *via* the memory and the spatial practices takes place in what I tentatively call, drawing on Kristeva (1989) and Oliver (2004), the "psychic space." Because I am concerned with social/collective memories rather than individual experiences and memories, I build on the growing body of literature that re-visits Freud's concepts of psychoanalysis and re-works them into a "psychic social theory."

My premise is that psychoanalytic theory can be helpful in investigating the "collective" innermost feelings of refugees, beyond their experience of the politics of colonization, dispossession, and loss. Through my fieldwork, I realized that the refugees' experiences have been overshadowed by the national and political discourse, which I believe does little justice to these experiences. In the context of Palestinian refugees, I argue for a paradigm shift that takes into account not only the conscious/experiential, but also the unconscious/affective. I found that Palestinian refugees' inability to forget has become a moral obligation, especially in the absence of social and political support of the refugees' cause. The territorial and political fragmentation, of the life of Palestinians in general and the refugees in particular, amplify this moral call for keeping the pre-Nakba era alive. I intend to shift this discourse from the political and colonial to what it means to be a subject of, and to experience, the political/colonial, by focusing on the changes that take place in the oppressed psyche. Only by understanding these experiences and the effects of these experiences on the refugees' own "psychic space" is it possible to illuminate their relation to space and to hidden codes of subjectivity.

The main premise of my argument is that the Palestinian refugees have been living "a melancholic existence" as a result of the traumatic event of the Nakba. I bridge the territorial space and the psychic space through theories of colonization, which suggest the conceptualization of the psyche as the

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[1] I use *milieu* the way it was used in the second half of the eighteenth century, when the term *milieu* "had evolved from a mechanical term—the medium through which action takes place at a distance—into a biological one [the body]" (Rabinow 1989, 31). Paul Rabinow notes that "the concepts of *milieu* in biology and *conditions de vie* or *modes de vie* in geography played central roles in the articulation of a conceptual field bringing space and society together into a historically situated relationship" (Rabinow 1989, 128).

locus of "debilitating alienation" á la Marx. I establish the relation between the psyche and the lost object (in this case, landed property in particular) as a "traumatic loss of honor" for Palestinian refugees. The traumatic rendering of the Nakba is what makes memory social, collective, and generational. To understand this "psycho-collective" memory, I turn to readings of melancholia as the absence of social support, and as a demand for self-possession by the oppressed. The intentional ignoring of the refugee problem and the continuous postponing of a resolution gives birth to the refugees' resilient spatial and memory work.

In the attempt to de-pathologize melancholia, I extend the work of authors who invest melancholia with the '*ethico-political*' attachments to loss that "enable" the refugees to "reengage in life." This shift will enable us to see the Palestinian refugees as active social actors, rather than as idle, humanitarian subjects, perceived as born into a world readymade to inhabit. My point is that memory and spatial practices are the result of the absence of a broad channeling system for the refugee dilemma. These practices do not only say something about who refugees are, but also what they want from a larger public.

Background: Melancholic Existence

> I cannot forget my land because it was stolen from us. You [the researcher] are different, you can forget, you can sell and buy your property, because you can go anywhere, and still, you can go back to your father's home, to your village.[2]

The effect of Nakba on the Palestinians was colossal. Ahmad Sa'di and Lila Abu-Lughod argue that the event "deflects Palestinians from the flow of social time into their own specific history and often into *a melancholic existence* [emphasis added]" (2007, 5). Julie Peteet (1991, 22) found that the abrupt displacement of the Palestinian population in 1948 was a traumatic event that resulted in depression and a melancholic-like situation, one that was translated into sadness and self-exclusion in the early days of exile.[3] Further, she (Peteet 1991, 24) found that there is a relation between the traumatic event of Nakba and how this event structured refugees' feelings:[4]

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[2] Interview with AN-FA (summer 2008), born in 1935 in Abu Shousheh village/Haifa and currently living in al-Far'a refugee camp.

[3] Peteet argues that "[e]xile and dispossession did create a cultural void—old institutions were now hardly functioning" (Peteet 1991, 22).

[4] Raymond Williams first used the concept of "structures of feeling" to characterize the lived experience of the quality of life at a particular time and place. It describes a common set of perceptions and values shared by a particular generation, and is most clearly articulated in particular and artistic forms and conventions (Payne, Michael ed. 1997. *Dictionary of Cultural and Critical Theory*. Blackwell Reference Online. www.blackwellreference.com, accessed April 28, 2010).

> …the refugees felt powerless in the wake of the sudden loss of control over their destiny and an intense frustration over the inability of any person, institution, or government to remedy their situation.

To be able to give an account of Palestinian refugees' memory and spatial practices, we need to understand the nature of their loss (as traumatic), and how this loss has been passed on from elder to younger generations through different processes (such as commemoration, narrative, kinship, and camp's construction). Certainly, literary works account for the trauma in rather powerful ways. For example, I opened this chapter with an epigraph from Darwish's *"Presence of Absence"* (2006), which suggests that loss is far more painful for those inherit the loss. Mourid Barghouti's autobiography, *I Saw Ramallah* (2000), points out that the "exiled" person is an altered person.[5] These, among many other works, exemplify this traumatic disruption of the Palestinian refugees that leaves them *melancholic*, forever.

The notion of a melancholic existence (the attachment to the loss, so one does not lose the self) is an entry point to the refugees' spatial and memory practices in exile. Palestinian refugees are evidently engaged in a continuous "quest" for the lost self in the absence of the "loving third," i.e., social support (Kristeva 1989, 23). This framework shifts the discourse of melancholia from the pathological to other notions of attachment, reengagement, and representation of the psyche. To grasp the mechanism that leads to such a *presence of absence* we need to understand the mechanism of colonization and how it works on the colonized/oppressed psyche. Frantz Fanon (1967) reads colonization as an interruption of the possibility of material/property/labor alienation. Colonization is *alienation from alienation,* or *double alienation.* Stripped from their "private property," and in particular landed property, the two most important conditions for alienation could not be fulfilled in the Palestinian refugees' context, that is, not only they do not have access to their private property, but also they find themselves selling their labor in the colonial labor market in order to make a living and "survive." In this sense, Palestinian refugees are always in multiple layers of alienation, "estranged" or "doubly alienated," which renders their loss traumatic. This trauma persists because the refugees continue to be born into a certain spatio-body-politics, the meaning of which was already established.

Alienation and dis-alienation: Because "alienation" is crucial for the

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[5] "Does Dar Ra'd [where I was born] reject my story about Dar Ra'd?
Are we the same at parting and at meeting?
Are you you? Am I me?
Does the stranger return to where he was?
Is he himself returning to a place?
   Our house?
And who will wipe the weariness off the other's brow?" (Barghouti 2000, 56).

"production of value," I argue that memory and spatial practices cannot be understood detached from the longing for landed property, that is crucial for opening up the potential for refugees to reflect on their lives and establish themselves, rather than inhabiting a world already established with its pre-existing values, meanings, and possibilities. As far as landed property is impossible for them, refugees substitute for this absence, consciously and unconsciously, with memory and spatial practices that strive to fulfill the desire for the impossible "real."

Theoretical Framework

Theoretically, this essay engages with the growing body of literature that uses psychoanalytical concepts to develop a psychic-social theory. By doing so, these theories not only illuminate the process of creating individual subjects but also show what it means to be an individual subject entangled in a web of social/cultural/political relations and in a colonial or a postcolonial discourse. I offer some working definitions, below, of some of the core concepts of this theoretical framework that will ground the analysis of refugees' "melancholic existence" to follow.

Melancholia: Freud's understanding of "loss" in his essay, "Mourning and Melancholia" (1917), is useful in rethinking Palestinian refugees' experiences of space and memory. According to Freud, the melancholic individual displays an extraordinary diminution in his/her self-regard, and an impoverishment of his/her ego (Freud 1917, 584). There exists a self-reproach emerging from a reproach directed against a loved object that has been shifted away from that object to one's own ego. In this process, the individual's free libido *was* not displaced onto (or cathected with) another object but withdrawn into the ego. There, it (the libido) serves to establish an *identification* of the ego with the lost object. In this way, "the object-loss is transformed into an ego-loss and the conflict between the ego and the loved [object] into a cleavage between the critical activity of the ego and the ego as altered by identification" (Freud 1917, 586). The narcissistic identification with the object then becomes a substitute for the erotic cathexis, the result of which is that "*in spite of the conflict with the loved person the love-relation need not be given up* [emphasis added]" (Freud 1917, 587).[6]

One of the most interesting readings of Freud's "Mourning and Melancholia" is Julia Kristeva's work, *Black Sun: Depression and Melancholia* (1989). Kristeva proposes a "loss theory" in the Freudian tradition, in which she argues that early psychic development results in a separation of the infant-mother dyad.

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[6] Freud adds, "If the love for object takes refuge in narcissistic identification, then the hate comes into operation on this substitutive object, making it suffer and deriving sadistic satisfaction from its suffering" (1917, 588).

She, nevertheless, identifies the sadness of depression with mourning for the lost other (the mother, in this case) given up at the time of weaning. Kristeva adopts Freud's theory of the "death wish" to introduce the notion of a form of depression that is "narcissistic." Therefore, in addition to being a form of mourning for the lost mother, *melancholia is mourning for the lost self*. Since in infancy, the lost object represents an unsymbolized item,[7] Kristeva proposes that only through literary and artistic expression (speech being the earliest form), can we approach such unsymbolized aspects of psychic life (Kristeva 1989, 21-2, 24-6; c.f., Radden 2000, 335). The most provocative and productive insights in Kristeva's work is in her stance that girls and boys experience the matricidal impulse and loss differently, because the "Thing" hated, as she calls it, and lost is the same sex as the girl herself.[8] Because of the "girl's spectacular identification with her mother" (Radden 2000, 336), the matricidal impulse is doubly inverted. This, according to Kristeva, complicates the course of a female's development and transforms the subsequent depressive states she experience (Radden 2000, 336).[9]

Kristeva's work on notions of melancholia was taken further to address marginal groups. In *The Colonization of Psychic Space* (2004), Kelly Oliver focuses mainly on the social aspects of alienation and the psychic aspects of oppression. She maintains that "depression among oppressed peoples can be seen as a form of social melancholy that results from the lack of the loving third, or social support, that leaves them *unable to complete a process of mourning for their own missing positive self-image* [emphasis added]" (Oliver 2002, 63).

Oliver rightly claims that less attention has been paid to the effects of colonization and oppression on the psychic dynamics of those marginalized within a dominant culture. Starting from Kristeva's notion of "the imaginary father,"[10] Oliver develops "a notion of social support inherent to psychic identity, what Kristeva calls *psychic space* [italic in the original]" (Oliver 2002, 49). In doing so, she expands the notion of psychic space and reformulates it in relation to social space, diagnosing "*oppression as the colonization of psychic space that results from a lack of social support* [emphasis added]" (Oliver 2002, 49). Like Kristeva, Oliver begins with Freud's essay "Mourning and Melancholia," which describes melancholia as *identification* with the

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[7] According to Kristeva (1989), "melancholia is a mourning for the lost self. This object, however, represents an undifferentiated, unsymbolized item at this early stage in the infant's conceptual development. The mourned self is ineffable, a "preobject" or "Thing" (Radden 2000, 335).

[8] Kristeva writes. "She is I? Consequently, the hatred I bear her is not originated toward the outside but locked up within myself" (Kristeva 1989, 29).

[9] Male development in a heterosexist culture reflects the easier adaptation; the boy replaces the mourned maternal object with an opposite sex (female) substitute. In the girl's case, such replacement would be a homosexual love choice (Radden 2000, 336).

[10] "Imaginary father," for Kristeva, is Freud's "father in individual prehistory," who guarantees primary identification (Kristeva 1989, 23).

loss,[11] and then takes Kristeva's theory (female sexuality as identification with the maternal body in order not to lose it, so it is melancholic) to develop a "social theory of oppression based on psychoanalysis." Oliver argues, "within a patriarchal culture where maternal affects are not valued, it is no surprise that we lack the social space in which these affects can be articulated" (Oliver 2002, 50-51). Oliver interprets Kristeva's descriptions of the 'imaginary father'—the loving paternal agency (Kristeva 1989, 23)—as the social support for *identity*. If there is no social support, or "loving third," then one is thrown into a narcissistic crisis having to identify with his/her own "meaninglessness."

Following Kristeva's claim that we can approach such an un-symbolized aspect of psychic life only through literary and artistic expression (Radden 2000, 335), Oliver argues that if women are less able to sublimate - that is, to articulate or represent their drives and affects -then they will be more depressed. Therefore, the loving third, as a conduit between drives/affects and words/symbols, is crucial for one's sense of belonging to the world of meaning (Oliver 2002, 53-55). In doing so, Oliver lends us the possibility of understanding marginal/oppressed cultures within dominant ones.

Alienation: Marx's notion of alienation presupposes the presence of private property or labor activity and the free will to engage in market exchange. Marx (quoted in Bernstein 1971, 70) distinguishes between "estrangement" and "alienation." His notion of *alienation* is predicated on the laborer's recognition of *his* existence through his "activity." Realizing the fact that his products and labor are being alienated from him is the moment of consciousness for the worker. Hence, for Marx, "human alienation is an *objective* social condition." Marx's notion of *estrangement,* however, addresses the alienation from the possibility of alienation in the sense of the distance necessary for self-reflection and meaning-making. Estrangement is, therefore, "a type of debilitating alienation through which the human capacity for meaning and reflection are undermined by a situation that reduces people to objects or commodities" (Oliver 2004, 9).

Mass psychology: Group psychology is relevant to the analysis of memory here, not only because my research deals with the collective memories, their social construction, and diffusion through collective practices, but also because it brings identity politics to the fore. The belief in a collective *ideal* is what makes a group. For Freud, and as confirmed by Judith Butler, this ideal could be a person, an idea, or an object. Freud asserts that "[a] *primary group of this kind…is a number of individuals who have put one and the same object*

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[11] These self-reproaches are against a loved object, which have been shifted away from it onto the patient's own ego. In the process, the free libido was not displaced on to another object but instead, was withdrawn into the ego. There, it serves to establish an *identification* of the ego with the abandoned object (Freud 1917, 586).

in the place of their ego ideal and have consequently identified themselves with one another in their ego [emphasis in the original]" (Freud 1921, 147), and in return this object "provides the mass with the experience of being loved, i.e. receive something as a result of this identification" (Rose 2007, 66-67).

While acknowledging the importance of working with individual patients in his seminal work, *Black Skin White Masks*, Fanon (1967[1952], 105) called attention to "the *socius*," which is under some circumstances more important than the individual. Later, in *The Wretched of the Earth*, Fanon (1963[1961]) went further to show how individual case studies could not (should not) be understood without the broader understanding of the colonial project. Butler in *The Psychic Life of Power*, finds melancholia illuminating for the foundation of a psychic social theory.[12] Oliver's project, in *The Colonization of Psychic Space*, is "to transform psychoanalytic concepts—alienation, melancholy, shame, sublimation, idealization, forgiveness, and affect, as the representative of drive—into *social concepts by developing a psychoanalytic theory based on a notion of the individual or psyche that is thoroughly social* [emphasis added]" (2004, xiii).

Subjects and subjectivity: Yannis Stavrakakis argues that it is possible to dispel the confusion which accompanies many discussions on the relation between psychoanalytic theory and socio-political analysis if we understand that the psyche, á la Lacan, as nothing other than the "pure substance-less" subject as lack (1999:36).[13] Such a psychoanalytic approach can be relevant to socio-political analysis because it offers a "socio-political" conception of subjectivity (Stavrakakis 1999, 38).[14] Therefore, the unit of investigation and the unit of analysis in the context of the Palestinian refugee camp should be shifted from the individuals towards what they lack. To be able to decolonize psychic space, we need to take the refugees' desires as the point of departure to understand what they are doing with their bodies (as individual agents) and what they are doing with their spaces (as representations of the **r**epressed). I argue that refugees as individual subjects are the product of broad and complex socio-cultural-economic-political processes. Through their resilient search for fulfilling their identity (the Lacanian impossible as it seeks to represent the non-represent-able, that is 'the lack'), they lend us insights into the cultural constructs, the modes of governance, and the socio-economic-political constrains that condition their everyday lives and possibilities.

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[12] Butler argues that "if the melancholic turn is the mechanism by which the distinction between internal and external worlds is instituted, then melancholia initiates a variable boundary between the psychic and the social, a boundary that distributes and regulates the psychic sphere in relation to prevailing norms" (Butler 1997, 171)

[13] "Representation is the representation of a real fullness which is always beyond our grasp" (Stavrakakis 1999, 38).

[14] "The subject is equivalent to the lack which stands at the root of human conditions" (Stavrakakis 1999, 38).

Trauma: While trauma, according to Kristeva, is what is excluded from law, authority, and the social order as unknowable or un-represent-able (Oliver 2002, 57), Freud argues that the concept of trauma "involves such a relationship to an otherwise efficacious barrier. Occurrences such as an external trauma will undoubtedly provoke a very extensive disturbance in the working of the energy of the organism, and will set in motion every kind of protective measure" (Freud 2006, 25). Therefore, the traumatic events are "both inscribed as an inassimilable memory and transformative of the material biology of the individual, that traumatic memory is a disease of *time* as well as an individual possession. That is, as an owned entity, trauma is that which disrupts the narrative flow of biographical time" (Young 1996, quoted in Han 2004, 170). Gabriele Schwab (2010, 14) writes:

> While victims of trauma live with the scars of memory so to speak—gaps, amnesia, distortion, revision, or even fugue states or intrusive flashbacks—the recipients of transgenerational trauma live with a "postmemory" that comes to them second hand.

According to Schwab's conception of postmemory as applied to the children of those experienced trauma, "children need to patch a history together they have never lived" (2010, 14). This cannot happen without opening the space up for "identity" work and "artistic expressions." The "social exclusion" from the realm of meaning-making happens because, as Oliver shows (following Fanon), the alienation produced by oppression is not analogous to the existential alienation of a subject thrown into a world not of his own making. Rather, the alienation of oppression is a double alienation, in which one (as a refugee) finds him/herself as one who has been denied the possibility of meaning-making and subjectivity altogether (Oliver 2002, 56). Fanon (1967) tells us that the colonized desires the colonial--not to act as the colonial,[15] but to be free and experience the prohibited.

"Stubborn" Memory Work

In their edited book, Nakba, Sa'di and Abu-Lughod (2007, 3) urge us to "look especially hard at how memories are produced, when people are silent and when collective memory proliferates, and what forms Palestinian memories of the cataclysmic events of 1948… take [emphasis added]". Sa'di and Abu-Lughod observe that "the special character of Palestinian memory lies in the key experiences of their radical and abrupt displacement from life in situ, the continuing violence and lack of resolution they must endure, and the political nature of the deliberate erasure of their story, which gives birth to the stubborn dissidence of their memory-work [emphasis added]"

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[15] Rosemary Sayigh notes that "older Palestinians had striven, through carefully correct speech and dress, to prove that they were as 'civilized' as Zionists" (1979, 7).

(2007, 5). The deliberate erasure (exclusion = trauma) is what sets off the defense mechanism to initiate processes that undermine 'the despotic' (or the perpetrator) intentions of silencing. In a way, the absence is brought to the fore by way of the proliferation of memory practices. Here, by way of illustration, I share some excerpts of my interviews with refugees from different generations.

> First generation: …If I'm permitted to return to Malha, I will take a blanket and return [to our village] immediately. I don't care about what I have achieved after Nakba…Here, I feel like a stranger, not because the neighbors don't accept us, but because I'm muhajjar [displaced] from my village. I always dream about it. Every night, I dream about al Malha, about my land and the trees. I dream that I am attending the olive trees.[16]

> Third generation: …In harvest time, I go with the family to pick olives. It is not about the olives. We wanted to go and see the land. I wanted to see asli (my origin)… Here, we will continue to be refugees, we will always be strangers.[17]

> First generation: …For me, these [houses and shops that we built in the camp] worth nothing; it is not equivalent to a tomb that I dig in al-Fallujah village, where my descendants and I would lay to rest.[18]

> Third generation: …We want to go back because we are mudtahadin (oppressed) here. We are treated as strangers. People accuse us of leaving our land. It is our dignity and honor that have been taken away from us. Honor and land are alike (al Ard zay al 'Ard).[19]

> Second generation: *Ardhi 'ardi* (my land is my honor). It was raped *(ughtisibat)*. You [the researcher] did not experience this loss/rape to know how it feels. What happened is that somebody who has no right came, took over your land, and continues to occupy. Further, he still follows you here reminding you of your loss. The grief continues from one generation to another. Parents leave *al tapu* (the land titles) to their sons while others leave their home's original heavy keys… The key is a piece of metal, but it is a symbol of the house, and the continuing *rape*. These symbols have become systems of inheritance.[20]

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[16] Interview with AI-BE, born in al Malha/Jerusalem, in 1928, currently lives in al Mawalih—a neighborhood named after the origin of its inhabitants, Summer 2008.

[17] Informal interview A-BE, AI-BE's grandson, in his twenties, currently lives in al Mawalih neighborhood, Summer 2008.

[18] Interview with AYR-F, born in Al-Faloujeh in 1920, living currently in Al-Fawwar refugee camp, established a life in the camp and had built, with his sons, several houses and shops, Summer 2008.

[19] Informal interview with AYR-F's grandson SYR-F, in his early twenties, living currently in Al-Fawwar refugee camp (summer 2008).

[20] Interview with AJS-T, born shortly after Nakba, currently living in Tulkarm and the founder of Qaqoun

Loss and shame: Honor is crucial to the understanding of the Palestinian 'melancholic existence.' Julie Peteet, who followed the Palestinian refugee women 'in crisis,' found that "*shame is not only a sexual matter or a matter of individual behavior. Communities can lose honor through collective shame*" [emphasis added] (1991, 186). Understandingly, in a community that equates land with honor, and honor with women's chastity, the refugees were subjected to collective shaming. Peteet found that "[when] Palestinians encountered Zionism, they were patently unable to respond to it in such a manner as to prevent their own ultimate dispossession. Refugees… recount *fleeing Palestine to ensure their women's honor* in face of potential Israeli violations [emphasis added]" (1991, 186; c.f. Khleif and Slyomovics 2008).[21] Furthermore, from the outset, the displaced Palestinians were held responsible for their displacement (Khalidi 1992, xxxiii; Said, in Aruri 2001, 3; Barghouti 2000, 41), and have been blamed for not standing firmly against the Zionists-like men,[22] which, according to Sayigh (1979, 125) produced a feeling of *loss and shame*:

> A major factor in the early social isolation of the refugees was *their own senses of loss and shame*, which made them turn inward, shunning contact with non-Palestinians who at best did not share their abnormality and at worst would taunt them with having sold their country or fled in cowardice. *And with the establishment of the camps, the 'otherness' of the Palestinians was concretized in a particularly humiliating way*. Now they were marked out as 'different' by a special identity (refugee), special areas of residence (camps), special restrictions on movement, special schools, and—most humiliating of all—U.N.R.W.A. rations [emphasis added].

"Even worse," (Sayigh 1979, 126; c.f., Malkki 1997) tells us that "the refugee was like a gypsy or bastard, or a person of no known social origin, and therefore of no respect, the lowest level of human being."[23] Barghouti (2000, 4) writes that "[the refugee] is despised for being a stranger, or sympathized with for being a stranger." These works and narratives show that the object lost has definitely come to mean more than the physical object itself; rather,

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Association, named after the village his father was displaced from (summer 2008).

[21] "Honor and shame are dominant idioms governing the behavior of Palestinian women and men. The honor, social standing, and prestige of the family are contingent upon their female (and male) member's publicly acknowledged [?] comportment, particularly in matters of sex and love. Families and men secure honor and lose face through the public actions of women kin. Shame is brought on not solely by the actions of women but by their becoming public knowledge" (Peteet 1991, 186).

[22] Sa'di and Abu-Lughod show that "[t]he body of place is also invoked imaginatively by Palestinians in metaphors such as the land of Palestine as a woman raped or violated,…or a beloved or mother in need of protection" (2007, 14).

[23] Liisa Malkki argues that refugees are usually considered as a "'categorical anomaly,' in the order of nations and as such represent a political and symbolic threat to that order" (quoted in Bisharat 1997, 215).

it is *the exclusion from the physical space coupled with the exclusion from the social space that rendered the loss traumatic.*

The traumatic event of the Nakba resulted in a "generational" reproduction of the Nakba through narratives and commemorations, which burdened the offspring of the Nakba generation with passing on to later generations the story of loss and dispossession. This is common in the aftermath of the traumatic events. Eric L. Santner (1990, 37; c.f., Schwab 2010) shows that holocaust survivors and the Nazis, as well as their younger generations, suffered intensely due to their parents' memories.

The refugees' 'melancholic existence,' to extend Freud's theory, is the-taking-into-the-ego the pre-Nakba era (which cannot be reduced to the physical space and the material world).[24] The Nakba as a traumatic event has inscribed as an inassimilable memory, transformative of the material biology of the individual, while engendering practices that aim at constituting the refugees' actions in a debilitating manner, rather than in the making and the reshaping of the world around them.

Scholarly works on refugees have already urged us to rethink the question of Palestinian refugee memory psychoanalytically.[25] Some scholars have explicitly utilized psychoanalytical concepts to examine certain phenomenon related to Palestinian collective memory.[26] However, these attempts fail to contemplate a theory of memory predicated on the inability to forget.[27] Further, I argue that this inability to forget serves as a medium for (and a mode of) "articulating," in which memory has become a way of moving on (to change and engage) and meaning-making in one's existence (through trying to achieve what the refugees believe worthy). This applies to poster production, writing of a poem, construction of an extended family's *'hosh'* (courtyard), construction of a veranda that is not usually utilized, or constructing huge memorial with a key. While memory is widely acknowledged to belong to the

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[24] Sa'di and Abu-Lughod (2007, 14) argue, "The remembered places are part of lived geographies, mundane naturalized fields of activity and bodied interaction. The smell of cucumber, the taste of a fig, the everyday objects used for living, the embodied sociality of life lived in particular places—all attest to the bodily presence critical to selfhood and memory."

[25] Sayigh (1979) points to the traumatic event of Nakba and its effect on Palestinian reproach of the self and the loss of face. Darwish (1982) alludes to the impossibility of forgetting (memory of forgetfulness). Peteet (1991) shows how the traumatic event of Nakba left its marks on the Palestinian refugees furnishing them sad and losing their control over their destiny. Sa'di and Abu-Lughod point more directly to the melancholic existence" the Palestinian refugees live (2007, 5).

[26] For example, Haim Bresheeth's work on Palestinian contemporary cinema, "The Continuity of Trauma and Struggle: Recent Cinematic Representations of the Nakba," in Sa'di and Abu-Lughod (2007, 161).

[27] Of course, one understands the justified reservations for abstaining from pursuing such a psychoanalytic approach as a method. Some question what counts as data in this methodology (e.g. what constitutes data). Others believe that psychoanalytic concepts are only appropriate for diagnostic/treatment of individual patients.

past and the present, it also contributes to future generations' imaginations of a distant past (by generational transference).

The colonization of psychic space: While scholars argue for a *return* to spatial practices to resolve complex topics of political and collective topics (Harvey 2006, 125), I argue that we also should not ignore the "psyche" as a space if we want to resolve the space/memory coupling in the Palestinian refugees' context. Fanon (1967; c.f., Mbembe 2011) argues that colonization does not only take place in space, but it also works on the psyche of the colonized, altering it in different ways.[28] I draw on this insight of Fanon's to consider the Palestinian refugees' current memory and spatial practices as not detached from the colonial situation and distant past. The memory and remembrance of the Palestinian refugees has evolved into a political project, in which the memories not only *refuse* "forgetfulness," but are also recounted as "part of an active past that helps form Palestinian identity" (Sa'di and Abu-Lughod 2007, 7).

Rethinking the implications of the politics of dispossession (in the colonial project) for physical and the psychic space contributes to a better understanding of the formation of the refugee camps in the current moment. Spatial and memory practices of Palestinian refugees are mediated through each other; that is, memories find their way to the space of the camp in terms of narration and testimonies, and the villages of origin are inscribed onto the body of the camp in terms of neighborhoods (*'harat*), courtyards (*a'hwash*), guest houses (*dawawin*), houses, businesses, and memorials. It is the "psyche" that crosscuts the two (space and memory) and helps us understand "what is really going on." By approaching the space of the camp as both physical and metaphorical, and by exploring the relations inherent between the two, one may explore not only how the refugees' everyday lives are shaped but also how memories are reconfigured anew.

Of course, we can (and should) point to the social, economic, and political outcomes of the Nakba, which have since that historical moment shaped "the everyday life" of Palestinian refugees. However, it is more productive, building on the work of Paolo Jedlowski,[29] to consider memory work as a

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[28] In "On the Postcolony," Achille Mbembe (2001, 175) argues that the colonial project is more than a spatial and economic project, it is a violent project in which violence insinuates itself into the economy, domestic life, language, and consciousness. It [this violence] does more than penetrate every space: it pursues the colonized even in sleep and dream. It produces a culture; it is a cultural praxis. In so doing, the colonial reduces the colonized to nothing, so that the colonized ask "*how to exist as a human being in a universe inhabited by what is not myself, is not in myself, and has no relation to myself* [emphasis in the original]" (Mbembe 2001, 191).

[29] Sa'di and Abu-Lughod (2007, 6) refer to Jedlowski's article (2001) "Memory and Sociology: Themes and Issues," *Time and Society* 10:1(29-44), to show the inherent relation between memory and the lived present. Jedlowski argues that "memory is not only what serves the identity of a group and its present interests, but also the depository of traces that may be valid *both in defetishizing the existing and in understanding the processes that have led to the present as it is now, and to the criticism of this very present in*

medium to criticize the present (*political*) conditions of the refugees that had been masked by long processes of silencing and deliberate erasure, "even if it means having to live with an open wound" (Schwab 2010, 182).

Memory politics: When remembering has become a political action,[30] I argue that understanding memory practices might help imagining a community to come whose memory coincides with the experience of the members of the community, and does not mask a present or circumscribe a future—something more experiential and less representational.

Doing and desiring! Oliver argues that melancholia (as identification with loss/emptiness) occurs only in a society that lacks systems of support. The lack of social support contributes to the inability to articulate meanings for one's own existence. Further, "social support prevents the individual from identifying with emptiness" (Oliver 2002, 58). Art, film, and linguistic activities are forms of therapy that can "open psychic space" for the creative activity that sustains it and gives life meaning (Oliver 2002, 60; c.f., Schwab 2010, 7).[31] In the Palestinian refugee context there has been little work--except for [on?] Palestinian cinematic productions--that has analyzed Palestinian refugees' memory practices, spatial practices, and their everyday lives to show their *creative faculty* and hence uncover the *expressive meaning* of these practices. National narratives and political discourse usually obscure these practices, and therefore attachment to loss as a creative process is masked.

My findings suggest that the fencing of a hidden garden in the camp, the construction of a courtyard, dancing, writing, painting, sculpting, marching, remembering… are modes of expression and creative meaning-making processes. These undertakings not only help refugees cope with their everyday life, but also invest everyday life with meanings and values that prevent refugees from identification with emptiness, and hence put refugees on the road to dis-alienation.

My point is that we can neither understand much of the refugees' work of commemoration nor understand their spatial practices if we overlook the *psychological inference* of these practices on the refugees' psychic space. For example, here is how a Palestinian refugee commented on the construction of the world's biggest memorial featuring a key at Aida refugee camp in 2008:

> The key symbolizes that after sixty years of exile, we are still insistent

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the name of forgotten desires, aspirations or traumas [emphasis added]" (Jedlowski 200, 36, quoted in Sa'di and Abu-Lughod 2007, 6)

[30] "…understanding of melancholic attachments to loss might depathologize those attachments, making visible not only their social bases but also their creative, unpredictable, political aspects" (Eng and Kazanjian 2003, 3).

[31] As Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub argue, "art inscribes (artistically bears witness to) what we do not yet know of our lived historical relation to events of our times" (quoted in Schwab 2010, 7).

on our right to return. I am thirty-six years old, and I live on the hope that a day will come that I go back to my village. I have my own individual right to return, and our leaders must realize that they do not have the right to abandon what this key symbolizes.[32]

In this interview, we observe, according to Lacan, an interplay between *the real, the imaginary*, *and the symbolic* which reveal a complex relation between the plural *we* and the singular *I*, between "the hope" and the "right," between the "genuine" village and the "symbolic" key. We cannot understand what it really means to be part of this collective, and what it really means to be an individual *inaugurated* by these incremental/cumulative/habituated collective practices without introducing the psychic component of space.[33] In the Palestinian refugee context, we need not ignore the possibility of these practices being driven by the unconscious, and informed by the traumatic 'ego split' in the process of defense.[34] The banal comment by an ordinary man reveals a repressed desire for a social body (as home) rather than a "physical" home per se. It also reveals the longing for the loving third (our leaders) who have abandoned the refugee's right to return, or so says the ordinary man.

In dealing with anthropological questions in the zones of suffering, exclusion, or abandonment, a methodological point of departure should be what the subjects do or do not say, not for the sake of documentation, but to reveal moments of conflict or ambivalence that inform how subjects are being formed and how subjectivity emerges in shattered communities. Understanding the memory and spatial practices in terms of "opening up psychic space," would highlight what desires are repressed, and therefore the meanings of the practices.[35]

From narcissistic identification to 'positive attachments to loss': Memory plays an undisputed role in identity formation. Memories that reject *forgetfulness* are particularly important in identification processes. The materiality of these memories is equally important for these processes. Freud's description of the melancholic (described earlier) emphasizes the fixity on the lost object, "a kind of madness with the mind always fixed on one object" (Samuel Johnson

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[32] Cited in "The world's biggest key," *Ma'an* , May 7, 2008. The Palestinian Return Centre (PRC). http://www.prc.org.uk, accessed February 2009.

[33] "The signifier," according to Bourdieu (1991, 207), "has the power to call into visible existence, by mobilizing it, the group that it signifies."

[34] Freud, in *An Outline of Psychoanalysis* (1940 [1938]), describes the splitting of the ego as "a universal characteristic of neuroses that there are present in the subject's mental life, as regards some particular behavior, two different attitudes, contrary to each other and independent of each other" (1940, 204).

[35] In *Suffering for Territory*, Donald Moore (2005, 2) argues for a spatial sensitivity to cultural politics, insisting that "micro-practices matter, that the outcome of cultural struggles remains crucially dependent on the diverse ways land comes to be inhabited, labored on, *idiomatically expressed*, and suffered for in specific moments and milieus."

1755, quoted in Radden 2000, 5).[36] The fixity on the object (melancholia) has become the social commitment to remember in a context (socio-economic-political) that denies not only the refugees' rights to their property but also the possibility of forgetfulness, or so AJS-T al-Qaqouni quoted earlier believes.[37] As Butler (1997, 195-6) argues, "while mourning is the affirmative incorporation of the 'other,' the survival is a matter of *avowing the trace of loss that inaugurates one's own emergence, his identity* [emphasis added]."[38] Understanding the cultural constructs of refugees and their relations to the host countries would invest the melancholic existence lived by Palestinian refugees with moral values that aim at making their loss visible.

David L. Eng and David Kazanjian (2003, 3) read Freud's melancholia in a rather positive way. They write, "Were one to understand melancholia better, Freud implies, *one would no longer insist on its pathological nature*. This spirit suggests that *a better understanding of melancholic attachments to loss might depathologize those attachments, making visible not only their social basis but also their creative, unpredictable, political aspects* [emphasis added].[39] Therefore, melancholia can be seen as an enabling rather than debilitating agent in the processes of the "reengagement in life," to use LaCapra's words. LaCapra (2001, 22) asserts:

> Those traumatized by extreme events, as well as those empathizing with them, may resist working through because of what might almost be termed a fidelity to trauma, a feeling that one must somehow keep faith with it. Part of this feeling may be melancholic sentiment that, in working through the past in a manner that enables survivals or reengagement in life, one is betraying those who were overwhelmed and consumed by the traumatic past.

Following Freudian *Group Psychology*, I have come to see the Nakba as the *ideal* with which the refugees identify. Although such an ideal is the devastating (as all identifying) event of the Nakba, it still unites refugees and gives them a sense of community.[40] While the Nakba is materially manifested in the camps

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[36] According to Freud, "Identification is a preliminary stage of object-choice, that it is the first way—and one that is expressed in an ambivalent fashion—in which the ego picks out an object. The ego wants to incorporate this object into itself, and, in accordance with the oral or cannibalistic phase of libidinal development in which it is, it wants to do so by devouring it [emphasis added]" (Freud 1917, 587).

[37] The colonized is reminded of the fact that he is colonized in the everyday life when he is required to confront the colonial measures. Fanon (1967) shows that colonization and decolonization are existential projects that are felt in every action and reaction.

[38] For Butler, "The 'other' may be an ideal, a country, a concept of liberty, in which the loss of such ideals is compensated by the interiorized ideality of conscience" (Butler 1997, 6).

[39] Melancholia it seems went through almost a full circle starting with the Greek understanding of melancholia as a creative positive force, through 'pathologizing' melancholia with the birth of psychiatry in the 19th century, to return to melancholia as positive attachments and social creative forces.

[40] According to the Lacanian concept of identification, "Since the objects of identification in adult life

and among dispossessed refugees, the camp and the refugee (the spatial and psychic representations of the Nakba), have become the space *par excellence* for the emerging Palestinian identity,[41] centered on the identification with loss, or lack, to use Lacan's concept. The identification with "the loss" has become an important component of what constitutes Palestinian refugees' identity, and to a larger extent, also what is Palestinian. The incorporation of the Nakba as the ego ideal is a "*social feeling* is based upon the reversal of what was first a hostile feeling into positively-toned tie in the nature of an identification [emphasis added]" (Freud 1921, 149, 152-3).[42]

Palestinian refugeehood is, therefore, an identity that was "informed by sources external to the community [repression and alienation] and those internal to it [the sense of collective loss and solidarity], for all camp Palestinians underwent similar experiences of uprooting, poverty, discrimination, and the feeling of loss of control over one's destiny" (Peteet 1991, 27). In this sense, the historical event of the Nakba that led to the displacement of the Palestinian population was in an essence what brought their distinctive identity to light. This identity is not an end by itself; rather, it is a *call and a frame for collective action and organization*.[43] Oliver's work bridges politics and the ethics by working through the concepts of "subject positions" and "subjectivity."[44] A psychoanalytic theory of oppression, á la Oliver (2004, xvi), must consider the role of subject position in subject formation—the relationships between subject position and subjectivity. One of the key claims Oliver (2004, xix) makes is that "oppression and domination undermine the ability to *sublimate* by withholding the possibility of articulating, and thereby discharging bodily drives and affects", which is almost a prerequisite for constituting the self through "resisting domination."[45]

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include political ideologies and other socially constructed objects, the process of identification is revealed as constitutive of socio-political life. It is not identity politics we should speak of identification politics" (cited in Stavrakakis 1999, 30)

[41] Julie Peteet (1991, 27) argues that the refugee camp has become "the locus of the reproduction of Palestinian social life and the forging of national identity." For her, "It is not unusual for a community such as the Palestinians to respond to repression and exploitation by emphasizing the bounded nature of their national community and their cultural distinctiveness" (Peteet 1991, 31).

[42] Kristeva explains melancholic ambivalence that emerges when "the object that has caused me pain is not only hated but also loved and thus identified with me: "I" am this detestable other, "I" hate myself in his/her place, that is why he/she incites my depression, which sometimes goes as far as suicide" (2000 [1996], 47).

[43] Peteet argues that "the "Palestinianism" that developed in the pre-Resistance period was not yet expressed in an organizational format, but was eventually to form the basis of collective action" (1991, 27).

[44] While Oliver takes "subject position" as our relations to the finite world of human history and relations (the realm of politics), she takes "subjectivity" as the sense of agency and response-ability constituted in the infinite encounter with 'otherness' (the realm of ethics) (2004, xv).

[45] Sublimation for Oliver is the cornerstone of psychoanalytic social theory, for "[sublimation] makes idealization possible, without which we can neither conceptualize our experience nor set goals for ourselves; without the ability to idealize, we cannot imagine our situation otherwise, and hence we

Building on these insights, and the understanding of Palestinian refugees as a "psychological group," sheds light on individual practices implicated and enmeshed within the refugee community. It also reveals collective practices focuses on a multitude of political actions and activism; these practices are more than structured social practices (**á la** Bourdieu 1977) and also more than social production of space (á la Lefebvre 1991). Rather, these practices are partially informed by the unconscious, defensive measures that are triggered by the traumatic event of the Nakba, and the subsequent harsh life in exile. Palestinian refugees "do what they do" because it helps them "do what their fathers and grandfathers did," which gives them a sense of community and enables them to articulate or express a view of the world they inhabit.

Conclusion

Dishonored by the inability to defend their land or honor, the Nakba was traumatic for refugees because it led to the massive displacement of the Palestinian population from their familiar social and physical landscapes. Because this also entailed the loss of private property—land in particular--the loss was inherently psychological in a society that equates land with honor, and honor with women's chastity, and therefore, I have argued that these refugees have been living a melancholic existence. However, within the conditions of possibility allowed in the post-Oslo Accords era, Palestinian refugees protest their continuous exile and the deliberate erasure of their cause. They do so through direct memory work (commemoration of the Nakba, for instance) and indirectly, by using the space of the refugee camp as a memory device that 'polymerizes'[46] a fragmented community and solidifies their claims to the spaces of origin. Keeping alive the social and the spatial traditions of the pre-Nakba era and injecting them with new meanings and symbols to convey certain aesthetics (of contemporaneous and modernism) are some expressions of subjectivity that emerge from the positive attachment to loss.[47]

As we have seen from ethnographies and literary works on the Palestinian

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cannot resist domination" (Oliver 2004, xx).

[46] I use "polymers" as a metaphor to note the process of making a complex, solid whole—a compound—that consists of large molecules made of many chemically bonded, smaller, identical molecules. To "polymerize" is the chemical reaction in which a compound is made into a polymer by the addition or condensation of smaller molecules. In the refugee camp, the molecules are the refugees, and the compensating element is memory.

[47] Caulfield argues that cultures of resistance are built upon "expressions of ethnic identity and group solidarity … retained in part from pre-colonial traditions, but they are also reshaped, altered, and created a new" and involve "a long process of redefinition of cultural identity, widening in scope from narrower village … to larger and larger groups, coupled with a growing awareness of the commonality of exploitative situations and of solidarity in the face of oppression" (Caulfield 1974, quoted in Peteet 1991, 31).

exile, the Palestinian refugees have been continuously deterritorialized, in Deleuze and Guattari's sense of the word.[48] To reverse "the colonial situation," not only as an epistemology, but also in the space and the psyche, we need to develop a progressive political/conceptual/ethical infrastructure that makes it possible to discern the Palestinian refugee on the road to dis-alienation, to paraphrase Fanon (1967, 184).[49]

The body and the psyche: In the Fanonian analytical framework, the oppressed is not just a body but also a psyche. This is what has been colonized, and this is what needs decolonization. My fieldwork shows that as long as the Palestinian refugees have to endure the traumatic loss of Nakba, and suffer the harsh living conditions in the Diaspora, there will be no conciliation within "the self," let alone reconciliation with the 'Other.'

Because oppression operates through a debilitating alienation based on estrangement from the production of value, and this special kind of alienation is the result of being thrown into a world of preexisting meanings (Oliver 2004, 13, 15), we need to rethink how the third and the fourth generations of refugees born in exile feel. How does it feel to be a refugee (with all its limitations) born as an *excess* to the stable norms, into a world with its already predefined meanings[50]

According to Freud, melancholia at first appears to be an aberrant form of mourning, in which one denies the loss of an object (an ideal) and refuses the task of grief, being understood as breaking attachment to the lost. Yet, "the account of melancholy [could be considered as] an account of *how psychic and social domains are produced in relation to one another…* [and] offers potential insight into how the boundaries of the social are instituted and maintained, not only at the expense of psychic life, but through binding psychic life into forms of melancholic ambivalence [emphasis added]" (Butler 1997, 168). Melancholia initiates the doubling of the ego when it turns back upon itself, once love fails to find its object. The turn from the object to the ego *produces the ego*, which substitutes for the object's loss. This act of substitution institutes the ego as a necessary response to or 'defense' against loss (Butler 1997, 168-169). In a way, the bond with the loss "may invest trauma with value and make its reliving a painful but necessary commemoration or memorial to which one remains dedicated or at least bound [emphasis added]" (LaCapra 2001, 22). "Working through trauma," LaCapra (2001, 42) insists, "involves the effort to articulate or rearticulate

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[48] In a way, "the colonized, within racist colonialism, is reduced to his being, and denied the lack or confrontation with nothingness for self-consciousness or humanity" (Oliver 2004,13).

[49] See George W. Stocking, Jr. (ed.) 1991. Colonial situations: essays on the contextualization of ethnographic knowledge. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press.

[50] Darwish writes, "Their births were surplus. They have no identity" (1995 [1982],14).

affect and representation in a manner that may never transcend, but may to some extent counteract, a reenactment, or acting out, of the disabling dissociation."

The memory and spatial practices of Palestinian refugees cannot be seen as the letting go of the dead, but as an active creation of *living reminders of the dead*. This makes the refugees' life meaningful, makes the refugees' life possible.

I will end this essay with Barghouti's autobiography and his narrative about "a fig tree" to show the effects of the Nakba on the Palestinian psyche which have been contributing to stubborn, trans-generational "remembering." While in exile, (Barghouti 2000, 55) remembers,

> A huge fig tree with a massive trunk and spreading branches dominated both house and courtyard. This tree fed our grandfathers and our fathers—there was not one person in the village who had not tasted its delicious fruit.

He returns after Oslo to his home in the village of Deir Ghassanah, and writes:

> I crossed the threshold. I embraced my aunt, Umm Talal, and over her right shoulder I saw the fig tree—solid in my memory—absent from its place (Barghouti 2000, 55).

Then, his aunt, Umm Talal tells him:

> I've grown old and weak. People have emigrated and people have died. To whom should I feed the figs, my son? No one to pick the fruit and no one to eat. The figs stay on the tree till they dry and litter the whole yard. It wearied me and I cut it down (Barghouti 2000, 56).

He notes: "[The people in the village] think you were not that upset about the cutting down of the fig tree" (Barghouti 2000, 85).

Then, he reflects,

> Umm Talal is more attached to the fig tree than I am. Cutting it down must have been necessary at a particular moment that I do not recognize because I was there and she was here. It is that simple. Perhaps if it was I who had carried on living here I would have knocked down or built, or planted or cut down trees with my own hands. Who knows? They lived their time here and I lived my time there. Can the two times be patched together? (Barghouti 2000, 85).

Barghouti's problem becomes how to tell his son, Tamim, born in exile, that the fig tree had been cut down a long time ago,

> [Tamim] knows all the stories of Deir Ghassanah, the stories of the

guesthouse, and the news of the old men and women. He tells them in their peasant dialect exactly as though he had been born in Dar Ra'd. His sorrowful anger at the cutting down of the fig tree was more than the anger of the whole family. He will not forgive my uncle's poor wife what she did to a tree that he had never seen with his own eyes nor eaten the fruit of, but he cannot imagine Dar Ra'd without it (Barghouti 2000, 136).

This ending anticipates a traumatic situation, even after the return. It implies that we need to know how psyche and memory are configured and altered in the absence of the object, when there is "no continuity in psychic life." *How can we deal with a 'humanitarian' catastrophe without losing the focus of the very core of the catastrophe, the human?*[51] Equally important is posing the questions anew, and searching for creative ways out of the impasse, even if questions and answers are equally painful. Schwab writes in the closing paragraph of her book *Haunting Legacies* (2010, 182), "Every instance of fighting for peace, justice, and dignity is a victory over the perpetrator. Every creative act, every moment of joy, is a victory even as we learn to live again with our own open or hidden wounds."

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[51] Fayez Sayegh argued in his book, *The Palestine Refugee,* that, "the refugee does not want charity. He is entitled to his human dignity. He is entitled to effective assistance in order to regain his lost property and to re-attain his seriously interrupted normality… Relief is not the solution for the problem: relief is at best a transitory measure and at worst a suspension of the solution" (1952, 48).

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Spatializing Identity: The Changing Landscape of Palestinian Refugee Camps

Nell Gabiam

According to UNRWA (United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East), Neirab Camp "suffers from the most abysmal living conditions of all the Palestine refugees camps in Syria" (UNRWA 2007, 4). Situated about thirteen kilometers south-east of Syria's northern city of Aleppo, Neirab originally consisted of 94 zinc-covered barracks that were used to house allied troops during World War II (UNRWA 2003, 7). In the aftermath of the 1948 Arab–Israeli war, Neirab was turned into a refugee camp to accommodate some of the Palestinian refugees who had ended up in Syria. Over time, and as the population grew, some refugees moved out of the barracks and built their own houses nearby, within the limits of the land allotted by the Syrian government for the establishment of the camp.

In 2000, Neirab became the target of the Neirab Rehabilitation Project,[1] a development project sponsored by UNRWA and funded by international donors, most prominent among them, the governments of Canada, Switzerland, the United States, and the United Arab Emirates. UNRWA adopted a "participatory" approach with regard to the project, organizing regular community meetings to discuss the project's planning and implementation with Palestinian refugees living in Neirab, and recruiting some of these refugees as volunteers to help with the project's implementation. A major aspect of the Neirab Rehabilitation Project consists of plans to improve the infrastructure of Neirab by destroying the zinc-covered former World War II army barracks that originally were in Neirab and rebuilding that part of the camp.

The Neirab Rehabilitation Project, including plans to rebuild Neirab's barracks, proved to be a sensitive issue among Neirab's inhabitants, generating suspicions about UNRWA's real intentions in promoting socio-economic development in the camp and discussions about how far UNRWA should go in making changes to the camp. There were lengthy debates among Palestinian residents of Neirab at UNRWA-organized community meetings about whether UNRWA should simply renovate existing shelters in the barracks or do away entirely with the barracks and rebuild the area where the barracks were located from scratch. A particularly sensitive issue with regard to these debates was UNRWA's proposal to replace the barracks with apartment buildings, a proposal that had some Neirab residents worried that if that were the case, Neirab would no longer look like "a camp."

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[1] The Palestinian refugee camp of Ein el Tal was also a target of the Neirab Rehabilitation Project although I do not discuss it in this piece.

In this article, I argue that the debates surrounding UNRWA's plans to rebuild Neirab's barracks point, on the one hand, to the continued relevance of the landscape of the camp to the sense of identity of Palestinian refugees living in camps; on the other hand, these debates reveal the existence of competing understandings among refugees about the meaning of the camp as a refugee space. These competing understandings transcend the notion of the camp as a physical space, relying instead on more abstract or flexible conceptions of what makes Neirab a Palestinian refugee camp. I show that those who attempted to disarticulate refugee identity from the physical landscape of the camp were contesting the notion of the camp as a space of suffering and victimhood, a notion that continues to hold sway among Palestinians living in camps. These contestations, when analyzed within a broader context, seem to point to a process through which an increasing number of Palestinian refugees living in camps are departing from an assumed link between refugeehood and material suffering.

The Barracks as Witness

In October 2010, while in Lebanon for a conference, I took a side trip to neighboring Syria. I spent five days in the Aleppo area where the Palestinian refugee camp of Neirab is located. Some years earlier from 2005 to 2006, I had conducted fieldwork in Neirab, the site of the ongoing Neirab Rehabilitation Project. On the last evening of my October 2010 visit, I met in Aleppo with Mona, Ibrahim, and Mahmoud, three acquaintances from Neirab Camp, in their late thirties, late twenties and early twenties, respectively.[2] All three had been involved as volunteers with the Neirab Rehabilitation Project during the project's early stages. As we sat in one of the many outdoor cafés facing the Aleppo Citadel, the conversation turned to the project's latest phase during which UNRWA had begun implementing its plan to rebuild the area of the camp where the barracks are located. Commenting on the barracks, several of which had already been reduced to rubble, Mona suddenly asserted that "if the barracks stayed, it would be better." Referring to them as "a witness to the *Nakba*," she explained that the barracks "help us remember our cause (*qadiyatna*), the presence of Palestinians in the camp, our life of poverty, our martyrs." She ended by pointing out that "when the [World Trade Center] towers fell, the United States erected a memorial; we need to have our barracks."

Whether or not such a comparison is warranted, by linking the *Nakba* to the events of 9/11, Mona was trying to underscore the importance that people attribute to memorializing events in their history that they perceive as particularly traumatic. As Mona made clear, the barracks are a testament

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[2] I have changed the names of the people I interviewed to protect their identity.

to the events of 1948, during which around 700,000 Palestinians lost their homes, livelihoods, and possessions and became refugees (Morris 2004). With the barracks gone, what would be left to testify to the loss, desolation, and years of hardship Palestinians had endured since their forced displacement, especially if these barracks were replaced with modern apartment buildings? In order to understand the real and symbolic role played by the barracks in testifying to Palestinian suffering, it bears revisiting the events that led to the existence of Neirab Camp.

The approximately four thousand Palestinians who ended up in Neirab Camp in the aftermath of the 1948 war came from towns and villages in northern Palestine and had initially fled to Lebanon, ending up in the port city of Tyre (*Sur* in Arabic). There, local authorities put them on a train normally used for transporting cattle along with other Palestinian refugees (UNRWA 2003). Refugees were gradually dropped off at various locations within Lebanon and Syria. Several of them died during the journey. Neirab Camp's future inhabitants disembarked in northern Syria in the Aleppo area and were then taken by Syrian authorities to the zinc-covered barracks left over from World War II.

One of Neirab's older and well-respected residents, Abu Hosam, who was involved in the Neirab Rehabilitation Project as an intermediary between UNRWA and the Neirab community, was able to give me a first-hand account of how Neirab Camp came into being. Abu Hosam is from the Palestinian village of Jesh, a place that according to him is "very famous for its figs, the most delicious figs in the world." In 1948, when he was just nine years old, he and his family fled the village in a bid to find shelter from Israeli air raids:

People left their houses to neighboring fields in order to avoid bombs. After sunset some artillery began against the houses and villages. We spent that night in the fields and we thought that, especially my mother, thought that our leaving was only temporary so she didn't take anything of the furniture or blankets except for one blanket to cover us.

Within a few days, Jesh fell to Israeli forces who then occupied it causing some of its inhabitants to decide to continue their flight. Abu Hosam and his family crossed into Lebanon and eventually ended up in the port city of Tyre where Lebanese authorities made them board "a large cargo train":

We boarded the train and we began our long journey knowing nothing about our destination. The train began to stop in some cities. It stopped in Beirut. Some families got off; we don't know how… Others in Homs in Syria, in Hama, we don't know how… Until we arrived in Aleppo City at the main station. There, a large pick-up truck stopped in front of each wagon and we boarded these trucks to Neirab Camp. In Neirab Camp we were sheltered in the barracks which each accommodated 16 families.

In order to accommodate newly arrived refugees, each one of Neirab's zinc-covered barracks was divided into housing units, initially separated from one another by sheets. Each family was housed in one of these units, regardless of family size (UNRWA 2003). While telling his story, Abu Hosam recalled with a chuckle instances of individuals rolling over into a neighboring unit while sleeping at night. Such funny occurrences aside, the barracks were "draughty and squalid to the extreme" and newly arrived refugees were exposed to the freezing winter and to insect and rodent infestations (Azzam 2005; UNRWA 2003, 2007, 7).

According to Abu Hosam, for many years, Neirab's refugees used public toilets and baths. Women, however, bathed inside the barracks using large basins. In the mid-1950s, UNRWA erected concrete walls between the housing units in the barracks and built corridors to separate every barrack into two halves, each half consisting of a row of rooms with doors opening to the outside. UNRWA also put wooden ceilings under the zinc roofs to mitigate the effect of extreme winter and summer temperatures. By the 1970s, refugees themselves had started making changes to their housing. Those who had the means to, moved out of their room in the barracks and built new accommodations for themselves on surrounding land donated by the Syrian government. There were no strict criteria as to how the space of the camp at large was to be subdivided, so people appropriated whatever space they could afford to build on, a situation that contributed to giving Neirab Camp its maze-like and irregular character.

Most of those who stayed in the barracks were able to enlarge their one-room dwelling by appropriating the space between stretches of barracks to build tiny kitchens as well as showers and bathrooms. If the space was too small to accommodate a shower, some people would bathe in the kitchen area, using the kitchen drains to evacuate the water (this situation continued to exist in some of the barrack housing even at the time of my fieldwork in 2005). Finally, a few of the more affluent barrack inhabitants bought additional rooms within the barracks from people who were moving out, enabling them to enlarge their dwellings and, sometimes, even build an additional story.[3]

At the beginning of the Neirab Rehabilitation Project in 2000, fifty-two years after Palestinian refugees had moved into them, the barracks still existed and continued to provide shelter for some 6,000 Palestinian refugees out of a total population of 18,000 (UNRWA 2003). While insect and rodent infestations seemed to no longer be a problem, barrack inhabitants continued to experience flooding and leaking and extreme summer and

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[3] Most of this information was collected from conversations with Abu Hosam, one of the first inhabitants of Neirab Camp.

winter temperatures in their housing. Additionally, residents complained about the overcrowding, the lack of sunlight and ventilation, and the humidity that left holes and cracks in their walls. Overcrowding is an issue that affects Neirab Camp as a whole: finite space, coupled with demographic increase, has resulted in a cramped camp, with a maze of narrow alleys and hardly any public space.

Despite space constraints, Neirab is bustling with activity. Close to the area occupied by the barracks is "*Shar'a al-Souq*" a commercial street where camp inhabitants buy their daily supplies of meat, fruit, and vegetables. *Shar'a al-Souq*, as well as the main streets that border the official limits of the camp, are lined with stores selling everything from pharmaceutical products to shoes and jewelry. Along those streets are also a few *shawarma* (skewered beef and chicken sandwiches), roasted chicken, and *falafel* stands. The walls of the camp are filled with posters and images of Palestinian political parties, political activists, prisoners, and martyrs fallen for the Palestinian cause. About half of the men in Neirab have jobs involving some type of skilled or unskilled manual work such as construction, blacksmithing or carpentry; about sixteen percent work as teachers (UNRWA and TANGO 2006). About thirty percent of the women in Neirab are employed, the majority working as teachers (UNRWA and TANGO 2006).

It was a member of the Neirab community working for the General Authority for Palestinian Arab Refugees (GAPAR), the Syrian government body that oversees Palestinian refugee camps, who first brought to UNRWA's attention the harsh living conditions of the barracks in the 1990s.[4] During my fieldwork, I also heard criticism about conditions in the barracks from Palestinians inside and outside Neirab. Younes, a Neirab resident in his early twenties and Neirab Rehabilitation Project volunteer, compared the barracks to "coffins," arguing that their residents lived "a life of death" (*hayat al-mawt*). The current Palestinian director of GAPAR made a similar observation at a conference organized by UNRWA in October 2010 to discuss the agency's new developmental approach in Palestinian refugee camps.[5] He, too, compared the barracks to "coffins," asserting that barracks residents never saw the sun (he was presumably alluding to the effects of cramped living conditions coupled with irregular building extensions on top of existing barracks).

Residents of the Neirab barracks, during interviews, talked about how "in the summer it's like the house is on fire" or how they wished they could "open

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[4] This was noted on two occasions during conversations with UNRWA employees involved in the Neirab Rehabilitation Project.

[5] The Conference was titled, "From Relief and Works to Human Development: UNRWA Sixty Years Later" and was held at the Issam Fares Institute for Public Policy and International Affairs, American University of Beirut (October 8–9, 2010).

a window to breath." "Just wait for winter; come visit us in the winter and see the suffering we go through," Mohamad, a middle-aged father of three, told me. Why, then, did UNRWA's plans to do away with the barracks and the proposal to replace them with apartment buildings, which would do much to alleviate the overcrowding and help solve problems of sunlight, ventilation, and humidity, prove to be so controversial? The answer lies primarily in Palestinian refugees' refusal to forget the suffering of the past. In his work comparing memories of partition in India and Palestine, Jonathan Greenberg notes that "to remember the traumatic past is, at least to some extent, to experience the suffering caused by the original wound" (Greenberg 2005, 93). Thus he argues that "partition's contested borders serve as an ongoing reminder of loss and pain, humiliation and failure, experienced more than a half century ago" (Greenberg 2005, 93). In the same vein, it can be said that Neirab's dilapidated barracks and the hardship associated with them serve as a reminder of the displacement and dispossession Palestinian refugees experienced more than half a century ago.

Randa Farah (1999, 193) notes that zinc-covered barracks were a defining feature of many early Palestinian camps:

These *numar al-zinco*, or the zinc housing units, symbolize the refugee experience in Palestinian culture. What holds the zinco sheets in place are mainly stones and old car tires. The 'zinco' appears in many if not most life histories: The 'sound of rain' in the winter as it hit the metal, leakage through cracks and crevices and unbearable scathing heat in the summer. These romanticized images are reproduced when describing 'innocent' childhood memories, where despite the unbearable cold and heat, their lives had more meaning and the relations of people in the camp were closer.

Abu Hosam certainly captured the ambiguous way in which some camp residents remember life in the barracks when recalling his life as an early resident of Neirab Camp. In an article that was published in the Neirab Rehabilitation Project newsletter, Abu Hosam recalled the harsh winters in the barrack during which "the rain froze before it reached the ground to form candles of ice hanging down on the edge of the zinc sheets" and how "some children and old people died from the severe cold." At the same time Abu Hosam noted that "childhood doesn't know pain, but always hope. So as a child, I didn't think of life as the young and old did. What concerned me at the time was that I had to find a place to play, which was available around the barracks. The most common games at that time were marbles, football and leap-frog . . ." (Azzam 2005).

During my fieldwork in Syria, I noticed that despite the hardship encountered by refugees living in the barracks, most of them were deeply attached to their lives in Neirab, praising most of all the camp's strong

social interconnectedness which worked as a safety net and contributed to giving them a sense of community and belonging. The first phase of the Neirab Rehabilitation Project entailed moving 300 families out of the Neirab barracks to UNRWA-built houses in the neighboring Palestinian refugee camp of Ein el Tal. UNRWA was soon to find out that convincing refugees to move from their dingy one or two-room, zinc-covered barrack housing to brand new concrete houses with yards would be an arduous task. A 2003 UNRWA survey showed that only 21 percent of refugees living in the barracks were initially interested in moving to brand new houses in Ein el Tal (UNRWA 2003). Refugees who were reluctant to move out of the barracks often praised their strong social ties to their neighbors and family, the feeling of security they felt in their surroundings, and the knowledge that they could depend on neighbors in times of need (Gabiam 2005). Neirab Camp's crowded and cramped barracks paradoxically contributed to creating an atmosphere that encouraged these valuable social assets (also see Chakaki 2006). Finally, while both camp residents and outsiders often used harsh language to describe conditions in the barracks, I found during my fieldwork that the barracks were nevertheless cheerful places where neighbors were constantly mingling with one another.

In addition to symbolizing the hardship of camp life, the zinc-covered barracks came to symbolize the temporariness of Palestinian refugees' stay in these camps. This explains why in the early years of exile it was not unusual for refugees to refuse "to use anything but the zinc roofs, since they believed they would return and anything more durable would look like they acquiesced to re-settlement" (Farah 1999, 195). The impending destruction of the barracks, as a result of the Neirab Rehabilitation Project, brought to the fore yet another role that the barracks have assumed: witness to Palestinian refugees' painful past, a past whose traces they embody. Neirab's barracks were erected during World War II, around the time that Palestinians became refugees; as wartime military barracks, they were built to serve as temporary shelters. Despite their temporary function, they bear the traces of a refugee return delayed time and time again and their cracks, holes, uneven floors, and draughty zinc roofs testify to the hardship refugees have had to face in exile.

The barracks speak to the lived, sensory, non-signifiable aspects of Palestinian refugees' collective memory (Nora 1989; Tugal 2007). It is only when the crumbling barracks of Neirab Camp became threatened with disappearance that their importance as an embodiment of Palestinian suffering and as a witness to the Palestinian history of forced exile became a matter of public consciousness. Most refugees in Neirab would agree that living conditions in the barracks needed to be improved. However, as the barracks became threatened with disappearance, refugees had to contend with the fact that along with keys, flags, land deeds, cemeteries, monuments, photographs,

and artistic representations, zinc-covered barracks are part of the material landscape of Palestinian memory (Feldman 2008; Khalili 2005). In this sense, the impending destruction of the barracks forced Palestinian refugees in Neirab to reevaluate the significance of the camp's landscape to Palestinian refugee identity and political claims.

Despite the political role of the barracks as a witness to Palestinian suffering, it would seem that a growing number of Palestinian refugees are questioning the notion that harsh living conditions are a sacrifice necessary to Palestinian refugees' resolve not to forget the past. Mona's comments that the barracks should not have been destroyed during our get-together at the Aleppo citadel, set off a debate between herself, Mahmoud and Ibrahim, with the latter two downplaying the role of the physical structure of the camp as a witness to the *Nakba* and trying to emphasize other ways of keeping alive the memory of Palestinian displacement and dispossession.

Responding to Mona, Mahmoud argued that "what is important is that that this area (Neirab) should be called 'Neirab Camp.'" For Mahmoud, the name "camp" irrespective of whether it is made up of "buildings, barracks, or high buildings, refers to the fact that we are still refugees, we have our rights, and the most important right is the Right of Return." "The name camp means our stay is temporary," he concluded. "Leave one barrack to be a witness to the *Nakba*" Mona retorted. "The barracks are gone. There is nothing left to show how people used to live." At this point, Ibrahim joined the conversation and countered Mona's claim by arguing that "the biggest witness to the *Nakba* is [resolution] 194 which protects the Right of Return . . . Barracks are not the only witness [to the *Nakba*], international law is a witness, the presence of UNRWA is a witness."

Agreeing with Ibrahim, Mahmoud then asked, "How long should people have to live in barracks?" "It is not difficult to be Palestinian; man even in agony, [living] in bad conditions can love life," he continued. Here, Mahmoud was criticizing the notion that material suffering builds political consciousness and encourages political resistance, the idea being that those who do not have much to lose materially, and thus do not "enjoy" life anyway will be more inclined toward political resistance. This idea continues to be a potent one among Palestinian refugees in Ein el Tal and Neirab, and a potent one also in terms of how Palestinian refugees in general conceive of life in the camps (Agier 2008; Parminter 1994; Farah 1999; Khalili 2005).

Turning to Mona, Mahmoud asked her if she thought children would be negatively affected by growing up in "modern houses." "No… They won't forget," replied Mona. She was pointing to the argument that was circulating among refugees in Neirab that refugees would "forget" about Palestine and about the Right of Return once they started living the comfortable lives

promised by UNRWA's Neirab Rehabilitation Project. Mona, who apparently did not agree with this view, explained she wanted at least one barrack to remain, "so that people from outside see how we live, witness our suffering." To this Ibrahim replied that "It is not necessary to live in barracks, to stay poor, to remain committed to Palestine. The Palestinian land remains in our heart, our accent is Palestinian, our (cultural) heritage…"

Conclusion

On the one hand, the debate that took place among Mona, Mahmoud, and Ibrahim the day of my departure from Aleppo is a testament to the continued relevance of the physical space of the refugee camp as a signifier of Palestinian refugee identity and political claims. On the other hand, this debate reflects competing understandings among Palestinian refugees about what makes the camp a meaningful space. As the years have passed with the refugee issue remaining unresolved and the camps having become de facto permanent spaces, it has become more tenuous for Palestinian refugees to resist changes to the landscape of their camps in the name of preserving refugees' history of forced displacement, their visibility, and their political claims. One way for Palestinian refugees to reconcile changes to the landscape of their camps with their political claims is to interpret the space of the camp in a more flexible and abstract manner, for example by emphasizing the affective, linguistic and temporal boundaries of Palestinian refugee identity and de-linking refugees' material conditions from their refugee identity. Mahmoud and Ibrahim's statements certainly point in that direction.

Recent scholarship also points to examples of Palestinian refugees de-linking their material conditions from their refugee identity; in her research based on fieldwork in the Palestinian refugee camp of Shatila, Diana Allan notes that younger Palestinian refugees are increasingly resisting an understanding of the refugee experience that focuses solely on the *Nakba* and the traces it has left in the present. Allan argues that these refugees are concerned primarily about their future in Lebanon and overcoming their "everyday experiences of suffering linked to poverty and social and political exclusion" (Allan 2007, 274). They are part of the growing number of Palestinian refugees living in camps who differentiate between their current living conditions and the imperative not to forget the past. Farah (2009, 89), in her research in Palestinian refugee camps in Jordan, points out that contrary to their parents and grandparents, "younger generations of refugees differentiate between their efforts to improve their livelihood and their political standing--unlike their elders, who refused even to renovate their shelters lest this be misunderstood as acquiescence to resettlement." Farah notes that it has

become much more common for Palestinian refugees, especially younger ones, to make drastic improvements to their shelters in the camps. Similarly, Jalal Al-Husseini (2010, 17) argues that "[Palestinian] refugees no longer see the sustainable improvement of their living conditions as unalterably incompatible with the Right of Return."

It is not only the younger generations of refugees who are making the distinction between material conditions and the resolve not to forget the past, even if they perhaps are more likely to do so (Allan 2007; Farah 1999). Even those who belong to the first generation of refugees, people like Abu Hosam--who grew up in Palestine and experienced the *Nakba* firsthand-- have distanced themselves from the notion that material suffering is central to refugee identity and memory. Abu Hosam, now in his seventies, considers himself "one of the Palestinians who always thinks about Palestine or for whom going back is the main goal." Referring to his childhood in Jesh, he says in the Neirab Rehabilitation Project newsletter that he cannot "forget past times when I used to go to the field with my parents and play with my cousins on the soft brownish soil under the big green olive trees" (Azzam 2005); at the same time, he believes that it is important for refugees to aspire to a better future within their current environment. For Abu Hosam, the Neirab Rehabilitation Project is about helping refugees in Neirab acquire skills that will "enable them to walk through life without any dependence on the other" and to "think freely about the future." With regard to the infrastructural component of the project, Abu Hosam hopes that families benefitting from these changes "will be happy to see their children live in decent houses which they lacked for more than 55 years," later adding that "living in good conditions does not mean forgetting the homeland."

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Conclusion

Palestinian Refugee Studies: Divergence, Convergence and Change

Rana Barakat

The concept of Palestinian refugee studies, although routinely treated in a unidimensional fashion (although the specific mix of academic and political ingredients may vary), may best presented as practical, theoretical and multifaceted. This is the approach adopted from the start by the Forced Migration and Refugee Unit (FMRU) of the Ibrahim Abu-Lughod Institute of International Studies (IALIIS) at Birzeit University in its research, its workshops and its conferences, most recently those held during the 2011-2012 academic year. In arriving at the end of the present volume, the reader, whether an experienced scholar or an interested, generalist citizen, will have noted that the papers selected reflect a kind of quest for unity between theory and practice, system and advocacy, science and pedagogy.

In particular, and underlying the variety of cases and disciplines represented, the authors have treated the vast problematic of Palestinian refugee studies' commonality/specificity, and in their provision of answers to questions raised in a given area, have spawned new sets of questions, as it were, serially. The objective has been, in part, to contextualize the universal in its Palestinian specificity. This has been from the start the stated *raison d'être* of the FMRU, whose research coincides with the academic objectives of the Refugee Studies concentration within the IALIIS's Masters program in international studies, thus potentially effecting the essential link between research and teaching and framing the activist-pedagogical fulcrum.

The attempt to draw general and analytically based conclusions from the movement of refugees goes back to the immediate aftermath of the Second World War, where enormous governmental and non-governmental, official and charitable efforts were made to deal with massive population displacements and evaluate them even as these movements and the resultant efforts interacted in the field. First the journalists, then the activists, then the academics and finally the refugees themselves came to speak in a broad variety of venues intended to provoke sympathy, support and funding for ongoing activities, in addition to prescriptions for the future and, finally, explanatory paradigms. Palestinian refugee studies are not a stagnant set of claims set in many languages. Instead, they are framed by the shifting approaches of successively established disciplinary conventions advanced by the social sciences and the humanities. They thus reflect the

dominant epistemologies of a given era, from ethno-nationalism through religious to social, legal and normative ones. Today a wide degree of diversity characterizes these studies, which have also come to include the post-modern vision of hybridity and virtuality and the potential this post-colonial framework can offer. Moreover, part of the potential of this project can be seen an attempt to deconstruct and, thus reveal, the dominant disciplinary hegemonies in the field of refugee studies and perhaps pave a different intellectual as well as political path.

The expulsion of Palestinians directly followed that first wave of "studied exoduses" within the hegemonic fields of intellectual production in Europe. Palestine, even within this context, was unique both in political and actual terms. Part of the unique situation was the forces behind the brutal expulsions, the settler-colonial Zionist movement and its European rooted ideology and practice. But here a new dimension was also added: a constant, persistent and prevalent resistance to this colonial power among the Palestinian population as well as its various political strategies. Moreover, while the great European migrations of 1945 were almost entirely directed in one direction: the West, the *Nakba* gave rise to a veritable multidirectional explosion, the hundreds of thousands of expelled or deported people heading for all cardinal points from the Palestinian center. This multidirectional flow, with its multiple geo-cultural outcomes and analytical points of entry, became part of the particularity of Palestinian refugee studies from that time on. Added to it has been the insistence on of the Right of Return. This particularity within the universality of refugee studies is refracted in the present book: the geographical expanse of refugee locations, cultures and studies, and the unremitting insistence upon that principle which the Palestinians have proclaimed as the legal, ethical, political and humanitarian touchstone of their cause: return.

Palestinian refugeehood therefore coincides historically with a broader post-1945 global phenomenon, but its particularities have marked Palestinian refugee studies and defined them as a subfield whose parameters are shifting along with the fate of the millions of people concerned, the plans of politicians of all stripes and nationalities, and the general movement of Palestinian studies more generally. This movement is clearly articulated in the pieces of this collection, which point to the need to rethink, reorganize and even rediscover an essential field of knowledge exemplified by the close unity between theory and practice.

The pieces of this volume combine research by some of the most accomplished and widely read scholars in the field, with that of new and young activist scholars. Both ethnographic and theoretical in nature, this volume fits snugly into the Institute's edited works. Although answers are

provided to the specific questions raised by the authors, a number of new questions immediately arise, all bound to motivate and inspire further development.

Rosemary Sayigh, whose anthropological inquiries have come to epitomize Palestinian refugee studies, offers her wealth of experience and her own expanding vision in the chapter entitled "Palestinian Refugee Identity/ies; Generation, Class, Region." Her ethnographies explore the history of a more complicated construction of identity among Palestinian refugees in Lebanon. Sameness and difference among Palestinians generally, while not in the forefront of her argument here, are always the overarching background theme. Beginning with an attempt to distinguish conceptualizations of identity, Sayigh explores gaps emerging within the shared sense of "Palestinianness." A recurring theme among contributions to this book generally, working to capture refugee specificities, is surely an unavoidable and necessary element in the historical construction of contemporary Palestinian society, in its full transnational reality. Ever present in this quest is the precarious and evolving relationship to a core component of modern national identity – the land. Palestinian identity, for Sayigh, has gone through phases, the two major ones being the time of resistance (1968-1982) and the subsequent "aftermath" phase (1982 through Oslo to the present). She thus links this rupture (and its epistemological consequences) directly to the PLO and its "rise and fall" in the contemporary period, and also to the dialectic between populations of the center (Palestine) and the diaspora. Continuing with her pioneer work in the (geographic) field, Sayigh returns to the Palestinian refugee community in Lebanon, tracing the specificity of their evolving sense social selves. She identifies a generational divide, as between members of the first and oldest set – the *generation of Palestine*, followed by their offspring – the *generation of the Revolution*. One might suggest that the subsequent generation, to which she does not refer here, may be titled, within her political paradigm, as the *generation of defeat* and their offspring, the *generation of Oslo*. Sayigh does trace the successive generational markers of identity, first social, then political, then winding back once again, after the "defeat of the revolution" to more familial and social factors. Sayigh also begins to construct a vision of a broader diasporic identity, exploring Palestinians born and raised in Europe and the United States and their relation to the "center," here seen more broadly as that space which combines Lebanon and Palestine. And she discovers the ominous link between time and space, noting that among more recent generations, Sayigh "political stagnation is generating negative feelings between people of different diasporic regions" (Sayigh 2011, 9). The current rather dire political circumstances in a post-Oslo era, various contributors point out, have thus dangerously bruised certain basic and foundational identitarian notions.

Although such observations are inevitably troublesome, Sayigh remains

ever the optimist in her reading of the current "identity crisis," noting that far from being primordial in nature, members of the current generation have knowingly selected original political and social strategies, while giving nothing up beyond formal attributes such as party affiliation. The current Palestinian Youth Movement (PYM), for example, includes Palestinians from all parts of the dispersed population (including, for once, 1948 Palestinians and those from the broadest diaspora) and refuses to affiliate to or subject itself to the whims and will of the PLO. In a real sense then, Palestinians have collectively grown up, and no longer require the symbolic unifying factor which at one point the umbrella organization provided. National identity then, is not *assumed* but rather *developed* through various concrete programs and organized events where Palestinians come together to work collectively in a manner which largely transcends previous generations' ties to a specific reading of cultural authenticity. In Sayigh's words, "their capacity for citizenship in a still incomplete nation needs to recognized and encouraged through mutually constructed educational, cultural, history and civics programmes circulated through the whole diaspora" (Sayigh 2011, 14). A new and broader understanding of the refugee thus develops, that is historical in its very break from the heavy weight and constraints of history. While she did not discuss this, the political forces behind the PYM might be a bit more complicated and related to the past more than serve as a break from it. The PLO is in fact still a significant component, but there a novel vision of the organization, in addition to an (as it were post modern) attempt to break from an identity based on land and location, that is to say, in sheer spatiality. While the Palestinian Authority (PA) claims control over the West Bank, the PYM by definition undermines such claims and somewhat marginalizes the populations of the West Bank and Gaza.

Clearly building on the wealth of literature that Sayigh has provided, Leonardo Schiocchet in his piece, "Palestinian *Sumud*: Steadfastness, Ritual and Time Among Palestinian Refugees," takes three communities, Al-Jalil and *Dbaye* refugee camps, and a group of 110 Palestinian refugees who were moved from Iraq to Brazil in 2007 in his own investigation of the refugees' specific 'Palestinianness." He develops this term based on the work of previous ethnographic and anthropological studies which he uses in his interrogation of Palestinian subjects and practices to compare and contrast subsets, finally building an identity thesis within the overall Palestinian condition. What it means to be a Palestinian, a Palestinian refugee in particular, is an intellectual exercise fraught with problematic hypotheses and conclusions. Shifting between a critical reading of historicization and the stereotypical reading of passive and active modes of resistance and suffering as the basis for various levels of Palestinianness, this piece represents the thread that connects more traditional Palestinian refugee analysis and the new literature

which sees (and speaks to) multi-generations of refugees while reading the historical and political context of social lives more critically that was previously possible. At times problematic in his generalizations as well as in his reluctant objectification of "the Palestine subject," Schiocchet manages to complexify the Palestinian refugee narrative, in particular that of Lebanon, by including not only a reading of the space of the refugee camp, but also the political and social contestations involved in that space (or lack thereof for the Palestinians in Brazil).

In her chapter, "Return Narrative of Palestinian Refugees in the West Bank: A Generational Perspective," Sophie Richter-Devroe explores similar questions but within a divergent political discourse focusing on refugees in the West Bank, taking these findings back to the "center" of Palestine to those that she describes as finding themselves in the "paradoxical situation of living as Palestinian refugees within the Palestinian quasi-state under Israeli occupation" (Richter Devroe 2011, 3). Adopting an increasingly classic multi-generational ethnographical approach, Richter-Devroe challenges traditional dicta regarding the Right of Return, and proposes a new reading of the discourse based on her analysis of the younger generation's political consciousness. Like other authors of this collection, she approaches her subjects with a two-fold inquiry that includes their understanding of "return" as well as ways in which they might "envisage" this potential return. She also addresses the notion of "Palestinianness" within the argument of the multi-faceted nature of political cultures (including that of 'return') in the Palestinian dynamic that add onto the political, that is to say, "struggles for identity, for legitimacy, support and power" (Richter-Devroe 2011, 2). Richter-Devroe argues that her ethnographic data from among the younger generation of refugees shows that, "the Right of Return…is no longer framed only within a nationalist narrative, but is increasingly merged, treated within, and linked by local actors to international or global rights discourse" (Richter-Devroe 2011, 2). Particularly focusing on Palestinian refugees in the occupied West Bank, she frames her analysis within a colonial reading of both the Oslo Accords and the ensuing Palestinian Authority (PA).

Richter-Devroe likewise expands on the idea of "citizenship," finding that the concept, within a broader and decidedly transnational context best describes the politics of youth. Though a common theme in the post-Arab "spring," democracy and representation as well as human-rights based discourses are certainly not new to a discussion on Palestine. Her claims, however, might be a result of cherry-picking her subjects to a certain extent, as well as a lack of analysis regarding the complicated structures of the PA as well as the post-Oslo colonial and neo-liberal condition of Palestine. While a useful attempt at challenging the rhetorical traditions in the "Right of Return discourse industry," this piece may fall into the similar trap of a dominant discourse.

Representation and democracy are equally risk-laden discursive tools that have produced their own industries in Palestine and Palestine studies, as well as Palestinian refugee studies. Nevertheless, even asking about return narratives is a new and potentially useful approach to refugee studies, by breaking away from a static reading of the "past" and turning to a historically contextualized attempt to incorporate actual return narratives into the Right of Return industry.

In her article, "Pity versus Rights' Recognition: Rejection of the Victim Label by Palestinian Refugees," Kristine Beckerle employs a similar method, using the voices of those she interviews as the means for making her argument in favor of international legal protection for Palestinian refugees. Embedding her discussion within the language of unachieved justice, Beckerle dutifully explains the various international agencies as well as international juridical precedents that have failed to protect or provide the proper means or methods of advocacy for Palestinians. Beckerle does an excellent job in presenting her evidence to prove this colossal failure, but then uses this same evidence to advocate for the attribution of a greater role for the agencies involved. This is a rather precarious argument that is quite common and points up the paradoxes of international human rights law. Beckerle argues the strengthening of UNRWA in the pursuit of rights for Palestinian refugees. In this context, the ideas of justice and reparations conflate, in spite of her best rhetorical efforts to do otherwise. Beckerle's arguments are important for they represent a particular kind of understanding of the potential utility of international agencies. At the same time, this particular line of thinking is presented as an implicit alternative for the lack of national institutions which should be the indigenous advocates for Palestinian rights. In the aftermath of Oslo, this search for spaces for substantial advocacy is common, but it nonetheless elides the role of national institutions and movements that might be free of the paradoxes embedded within international agencies and their policies. The ubiquitous questions that hang over this sort of argument remain. Can these international organizations be given the means to be advocates or provide the space for true advocacy? Where can Palestinian agency find a place in this imagined space? Can human rights as a juridical notion be salvaged from the colonial and imperial practices of both international law and regional power imbalances?

In a similar analysis of the international agencies that serve Palestinian refugees and their changing mandates, Ilana Feldman in her piece, "Palestinian Refugee Experience in a Changing Humanitarian Order," explores the history of the system. As is well known, the UNHCR and UNRWA are the two principal topics under discussion in terms of Palestinian refugees and the UN over the "exceptional" nature of the Palestinian situation. This offers a rich debate in refugee studies, and Feldman places the discussion

under the rubric of the post World War II "humanitarian order." Referring to Giorgio Agamben's notion of bare life, as many others (including some in this collection) have done, Feldman explores the protection nature of vulnerability that these agencies claim. In her discussion, the political consequences of humanitarian intervention are foremost. By providing a brief overview of the on-going debate, particularly involving anthropologists, over the theoretical categorization of the space of the camp, Feldman provides us with insight regarding directions taken by the scholarship of refugee studies. Bare life and its historical and political ramifications are here paramount. The question remains, where will this intellectual discussion lead with regard to the political trajectories of the Palestinian national movement and representation beyond (but still including) humanitarian needs? Has the humanitarian mandate of the international organizations so stripped refugees of political rights that they are forever divorced notions?

In her chapter on "Spatializing Identity: the Changing Landscape of Palestinian Refugee Camps," Nell Gabiam, like Feldman, explores the relations between the space and landscape of a refugee camp and the sense of identity of Palestinian refugees. This topic, Gabiam shows, has taken on a variety of forms including both economic and generational aspects in the contestation of political identity. Specifically referring to the Neirab Camp in Aleppo, Syria, she explains the particular specificities of this camp, a former military barracks and the object of a UNRWA-sponsored rehabilitation project in 2000. Though her conversations with camp residents seem limited in this piece, she does manage to place them within the larger conversation regarding the state of the camp (as a space) and the state of being (of refugees).

In his piece, "Palestinian Refugees and the Right of Return: towards an Extraterritorial Nation-State Solution in Light of Arab Uprising," Sari Hanafi directly confronts the questions that all of the previous pieces raise, that is: political agency and a political solution for Palestinian refugees. In this vain, Hanafi presents his notion of an extraterritorial nation-state. This is clearly an attempt to alleviate the inherent contradictions between the two state project and the Right of Return, and Hanafi tries to re-define a modern nation in the Palestinian state context. He assumes the failure of both the two-state solution represented by the Oslo process as well as the failure of a single democratic state on the land of historic Palestine as the backdrop for his analysis. While a precarious backdrop – in particular, the assumed failure of a national program based on the singular failure of Oslo is by no means an axiomatic proposition – it serves his purposes well. Hanafi, like others in this volume, uses the transnational practices of refugees to articulate a new road towards what he appears to envision as a possible liberation of the people divorced from liberation of the land. In performing this "divorce," Hanafi offers the notion of "social citizenship" in lieu of unobtainable

national citizenship. Given the vast geographical range of Palestinians (refugees in particular), he bases his argument on multi-citizenship as well as the necessity of multilateral agreement between the various states (of actual national citizenship) involved. This would require, by definition, the agreement of the Israeli state as well as other states of residency of Palestinians. Given the unrelenting nature of Israeli negotiation practices, this kind of agreement structure suffer the same demise as the Oslo non-state of Palestine. Hanafi assumes pressure (both regional and international) might protect the process in ways it has not others. Moreover, this may – in spite of the rights for Palestinians abroad that he rightfully focuses on – further alienate refugees from their return to their place within the geographic land of Palestine. Though he claims otherwise, "the solution of an extraterritorial nation-state will enable a Palestinian refugee in Egypt, for instance, to have Palestinian, Israeli, and Egyptian citizenship. … him/her to reside and work in any of these three countries" (Hanafi 2011, 3). Moreover, the extraterritorial nature of the state will, in Hanafi's words, fulfill Arab nationalist frameworks whereby a Palestinian, for example, is also a Syrian (in citizenship) and inherently connected to both spaces/lands. It will also allow the Israelis to alleviate the oppressive nature of their own state. This can only be seen as a possibly utopian, and more likely, pragmatic attempt to re-invent the notion of the nation given the frustrations and reverses suffered by Palestinians, Hanafi performs the impossible task of ignoring historical injustices in order to search for a just solution. He borrows from Amon-Roz's writings without paying proper attention to the basis of Roz's thinking – the great tragedy of the Nakba and the loss of Palestine. Furthermore, he argues that while his solution is related to the model of the two-state solution (which he rightfully states has created an apartheid situation due to the grave power imbalances involved), but he fails to describe how the extra-territorial nature of this proposal will be a solution to those power imbalances. Sovereignty and a solution to the refugee problem remain unclear in this analysis, though he does, like others, argue in favor of a human rights based approach to finding a solution. And like others, he fails to explain how international law might be made into a mechanism that finally and unexpectedly becomes the means for this human rights based approach. It remains unclear, based on the historical record, current dynamics, and the dimensions of ongoing obstacles, how international law can morph into this.

The great changes that began to show results in December 2010 with a massive popular uprising in Tunisia have sparked new vitality in the scholarship of the Arab world, including refugee studies. Hanafi explores this excitement as a potential spark for Palestinian political activity and agency. He boldly states that "it is no longer acceptable in the era of Arab revolutions to broadcast slogans about liberating Jerusalem, without liberating camps

from discrimination" (Hanafi 2011, 8). Like Sayigh, he sees Palestinian youth as the conduits for real change in what is a dire political and social situation. The presence of movement is clear; what is unclear, however, is where this movement will head. Moreover, emerging political identities are historically based: it is counterfactual to assume otherwise. Though Hanafi attempts to find a new relationship between territory and the nation, the territory of Palestine remains occupied. Moreover, given the revolutionary potential of the Arab world, more involved ideas of social citizenship are already taking actual form in political action, and yet the question remains: how will liberation be infused into this action?

Khaldun Bshara shares both Hanafi's and Beckerle's efforts to find a framework that can both capture the refugee experience and prescribe a more productive means of for understanding Palestinian refugee studies. His approach is psychoanalytic, as reflected in the chapter "For a Paradigm Shift: a Psychoanalytical Approach to the Palestinian Refugee's Memory and Spatial Practices." Here, he offers an interesting approach to what Edward Said called "beginnings," by placing the trauma of the Nakba at the center of his argument. Dwelling on the making of a Palestinian refugee, Bshara pleads in favor of a more robust understanding of the refugee experience. Often seen as unproductive baggage to the quest for a "solution" to the problem, the actual experience of dispossession has been sidelined in many social-scientific studies of the refugee phenomenon. Bshara directly challenges this as he goes through a complicated theoretical web to offer a distinct approach to understanding the experience of Palestinian refugees. Though a great deal of literature has been written about the Nakba, and an in-depth discussion regarding Palestinian refugees is virtually impossible without context, this argument contends that it is not only the beginning of the conversation, but well embedded in every phase and part of any discussion on Palestinian refugees. Julie Peteet once claimed that, "the core issue…is not the conditions of departure but denial of an internationally recognized Right of Return, as elaborated in United Nations General Assembly Resolution 194."[1] Turning that back to the beginning, Bshara through his exploration argues that the core issue was and remains the actual act of dispossession. This might seem like a vague or almost non-existent difference, but it is not. While many pieces in this collection rightfully lament the victim status of refugees, the focus remains on the post-trauma situation, divorcing the land from the identity or changing that fundamental relationship to focus exclusively on return or reparations.

Every article in this volume is both representative of Palestinian refugee studies as well as active striking out for new approaches to the field.

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[1]   Julie Peteet. "Problematizing a Palestinian Diaspora," *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 39 (2007), page 627.

Dwelling on questions of belonging, citizenship, identity, and return have been constants in the field, but infusing Palestinian agency as well as an attempt at creating new standards for moral agency represent a new kind of scholarship. As in all new attempts in research and exploration, many questions remain. This volume provides a wealth of original analyses, which collectively question the means and ends of old scholarship, advance new ideas, and provide a space in which to think through and break through the ever-recurring dilemmas at hand. Criticism is intrinsic to scientific progress: it sets standards and establishes parameters, and the renewal of scholarship is unthinkable without a critique of critique.

The Ibrahim Abu-Lughod Institute of International Studies and its various research components, notably the Forced Migration and Refugee Unit which has produced the present volume, has the potential through our place, our people, and our current time to seek the balance between a necessary criticism of the hegemonic debates in classical scholarship and forging ahead along new paths towards our own understanding, in this instance of refugee studies, but always in the quest for clarity, not in and of itself, but for the sake of equity and justice for Palestinians, without which there can be none for the region nor even the world at large.

Annex: Keynote address by Filippo Grandi, Commissioner-General, UNRWA

21 November 2011
Birzeit University Conference:
Palestinian refugees: Different Generations but One Identity

Mr. Vice President, Roger, Asem, Colleagues, and Friends,

I am truly honoured to have been invited to deliver the opening address in a conference about Palestine refugees, a community in whose history UNRWA has such a special place. And I am particularly happy to be back at this University, a citadel of Palestinian and Arab learning, and a little bit of home for UNRWA too. In this respect, I am pleased that, as announced, the Ibrahim Abu Lughod Institute of International Studies at Birzeit University and UNRWA will sign today a Memorandum of Understanding, aimed at strengthening our cooperation and furthering our shared objectives.

My sincere appreciation goes to you, distinguished scholars present here, for your dedication in bringing the power of academic research and scrutiny to our common quest to improve the well-being and protection of the refugees. This conference presents an opportunity to share UNRWA's assessment of the complex and often traumatic realities that refugees face, while reflecting on the indivisible rights to which they are entitled, now – wherever they reside – and in the context of a solution to their plight. That solution must be based on the fundamental principle of inclusive justice. Anything less – that is, any actions or initiatives that exclude or deny refugee rights, and fail to bring closure to their long suffering – can be neither just nor lasting.

Let me add here that I am happy so many students are on hand this morning to share in our discussion.

The plight of Palestine refugees is linked to the unresolved Israeli-Palestinian conflict, with which it shares an aura of intractability acquired over repeated wars and countless political crises, interspersed with numerous but - so far - vain attempts at finding solutions. The international community, having been unable to act as impartial broker between the parties, bears considerable responsibility in the grave political failure which the Middle East peace processes have displayed until now. This among other things has generated immense frustration among Palestinians. For Palestine refugees, in addition to the repeated disillusionment of failed peace attempts, a sense of exclusion from these efforts has further increased anger and anxiety about their future. I have heard very often refugees say that after more than 60 years of exile they feel forgotten and ignored.

True, Palestine refugees have enjoyed remarkable hospitality over the decades, especially in Jordan and Syria; and have received substantial international support, through UNRWA and in many other ways, though assistance - because of financial difficulties - has never been able to meet all of their needs. Refugees have also lived in ever-changing and often very threatening environments, shaped by local political, social and economic forces that constantly interact with powerful external actors. These changing contexts, in which at times their own displacement has

played a role, has not served their interests or brought them any closer to fulfilling their main aspiration for a just solution, even if they have made strides over the long-term in developing their potential and in making key contributions to the peaceful development of their communities and of the region. Sadly, since 1948, a significant feature of the refugee condition has been accumulating vulnerability, and being vulnerable and exposed has been a common experience, regrettably, for all refugees in the region.

The dispersion of refugees, principally within the areas in which UNRWA operates – Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, and the occupied Palestinian territory – has thrust them into the volatile fault lines of ethnicity and religion, making them susceptible to the insecurities of the communities in which they live. With each round of violence, new layers of pain have been added to an injured people, whose expulsion in 1948 had already stripped them of any fundamental sense of security and belonging.

Exposure to violence is the most obvious of refugee vulnerabilities, but other, different types of exclusion – political, social, legal, economic – have hemmed many refugees into lives of endemic poverty, with limited opportunities to develop themselves and their communities. Outside the occupied Palestinian territory this is especially acute in Lebanon, where refugees are barred from most formal sector employment, from legally owning property and from regular access to public education or health services besides those offered by UNRWA, or by Palestinian institutions such as the Palestine Red Crescent Society. To appreciate the end result of such policies, one need only stroll through one of the camps in the outskirts of Beirut – Burj al-Barajneh or Chatila, for example, where tens of thousands live in cramped and unsanitary conditions. The lively richness of social life in the camps – a source of resilience that sustains the refugees – cannot conceal or erase the squalor and sense of desperation that is evident in every alley.

Even where hosts have offered Palestine refugees an exemplary range of rights and freedoms, including access to socio-economic opportunities, there remains the spectre of insecurity and exclusion. In Jordan, so far the most stable of the host countries, there is nevertheless a refugee underclass – including among others 130,000 Palestinians who were displaced twice, first to Gaza in 1948, and again to Jordan in 1967 – that face barriers to entering the job market, owning property and accessing public services. Their poverty rate of 64% is far higher than the national average, but opportunities to work their way out of exclusion and marginality are limited.

Another, more urgent example of vulnerability is occurring in Syria. I must clarify that in spite of the onset of violent unrest in mid-March, Palestine refugees have not been direct targets of hostile action. However, there have been episodes where they have been seriously affected by the situation. In Yarmouk in June, Hama in July and Latakia in August, for example, the violence extended into areas inhabited by refugees, sometimes with tragic consequences. Our own assessment is that these were incidents - not a pattern. But while UNRWA hopes that refugees will continue to be spared the worst, events in Syria are proof that exposure to violence and other vulnerabilities are never far away in the lives of Palestine refugees in the Middle East.

But it is above all here, in the occupied Palestinian territory that Palestinians and Palestine refugees see their rights and their dignity subjected to the most severe violations. Almost every aspect of their social, economic and political life has been exposed to the Israeli occupation and its coercive structures of deprivation. Palestinians (including refugees, who account for 40% of the population), have had to contend with 44 years of military occupation.

In Gaza, the illegal blockade continues to corrode the lives of its one-and-a-half million residents, 70% of whom are refugees registered with UNRWA. To some observers, these effects are not immediately apparent as the inflow of commodities through the underground tunnels connecting Gaza with Egypt ensures that consumer goods are available, at least to those who can afford them. The partial but welcome easing of restrictions announced by Israel last year, moreover, has gradually allowed UNRWA and other United Nations agencies to begin rebuilding infrastructure destroyed or damaged during years of conflict, though cumbersome procedures, and the bottleneck effect of having to channel all goods through one crossing point with limited capacity, mean that reconstruction projects can only be implemented by international agencies at a pace which is vastly inadequate given the needs of the population.

Nobody should be misled by the absence of conspicuous starvation in Gaza or the outward appearance of bustling, crowded streets and shops: they are but a thin veil of normality concealing a profound wretchedness of human suffering, which affects every aspect of the lives of ordinary people in a large and developed urban environment - their household economy, the availability and quality of basic services, clean water and a regular supply of electricity among many others. Above all, Israel's blockade stifles the economy, especially because of the ban on exports to the traditional markets, Israel itself and the West Bank: Gaza is now importing goods that it once exported. The blockade has largely devastated the once-thriving private sector, its rich agricultural and fishing potential and (last but not least) its role as a force for peace and stability.

One should of course also mention the ability of people to move more freely in and out of the Gaza Strip, which Gazans must constantly fight for. This situation makes small concessions seem like major progress, though freedom of movement is a basic right which most people in the world take for granted. The severe limitations imposed by both Israel and more recently Egypt aggravate the deepest and perhaps most dramatic phenomenon of the blockade - the way in which it affects the human psyche by instilling a sense of profound and dramatic isolation. We observe this first-hand through the work of counselors in our mental health clinics (themselves at peril of being closed next year if urgent funding is not going to be provided by donors). These staff are busy giving psycho-social support to thousands of Gazans affected by the situation and by the deployment of heavy weaponry on targets in Gaza before and since the war in the winter of 2008. Every military incursion into the Strip renews the profound trauma and psychological stress which have become standard features of life in Gaza. Every threat of military escalation, as in recent weeks, sends waves of panic across communities in the Strip.

What these facts convey is that military means to address the conflict, including

punishing an entire population already suffering from the blockade, and including launching rockets, affect civilians and thus not only breach the laws of war but protract the diverse, profound and intolerable plight of the people of Gaza.

I am not suggesting that that there is a simple solution to the Gaza crisis, with its asymmetries of power and seemingly irreconcilable agendas. Nor by the way has the recent rift between the main Palestinian factions made the will to peace, or the means to achieve it, any easier. In this respect, let me echo here the United Nations Secretary-General's appreciation for reconciliation efforts, and his exhortation that they be conducted in a manner conducive to the pursuit of peace.

As you all know from daily experience, military occupation in the West Bank takes even more complex forms. Movement restrictions including the West Bank separation barrier are most invasive, ubiquitous and stifling, as Palestinian movement occurs only with the permission of the occupying authority. Without the liberty to move freely, Palestinians are systematically denied a prerequisite for a normal life.

Another manifestation of the occupation is the continuous cycle of home demolitions, evictions and building permit denials to which Palestinians – including the refugees – and their homes and properties are being subjected, especially in East Jerusalem. The rate and frequency of demolitions leave no doubt as to the systematic and deliberate nature of these practices.

At the same time Israeli settlements expand relentlessly on Palestinian land throughout the West Bank. Among many examples, let me mention the village of Walajeh, a refugee village in southern Jerusalem. Several visits there have left me with indelible images of settlements encroaching with steady progress on the community's land, fenced off from its rightful owners who are denied permits to build anything, and whose homes are methodically demolished without mercy. At every visit that I make, the situation of the local community has worsened.

The twin policies of demolishing Palestinian homes and expanding settlements raise political issues, and I am referring here to the viability of a durable and comprehensive solution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict that diminishes steadily with every brick laid in the settlements. These are, however, also issues with a dramatic human cost. It is estimated that three thousand demolition orders targeting Palestinian homes and properties are awaiting implementation in the coming months. This will cause acute, untold suffering to thousands of people. We at UNRWA are especially concerned by the situation of many of them - refugee families living for decades in exile - for whom this situation will mean further displacement to create space for the illegal settlement enterprise, especially in and around East Jerusalem. We should be under no illusion: unless decisive action is taken by the international community to stop this abuse, the worst is yet to come.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Given this discouraging picture, it is natural to ask about the real scope of UNRWA's role and impact in a refugee context adversely shaped by geopolitics and the conflicts that come with it. We are, after all, a humanitarian and human development

organization with no mandate to address the conflict itself.

In the absence of a just solution to the refugee question, as everybody knows, UNRWA's mandate is to promote the well-being of refugees and to protect them. Besides providing relief in conflict or other emergency situations, with the generous commitment of donors we have invested over $4 billion in the human development of refugees in the last 10 years alone, delivering tangible improvements in the social and economic life of refugee communities, and attempting to empower individuals, especially young people, to seize and create opportunities - opportunities that help them lead more secure and fulfilling lives.

When a refugee from Ein El-Hilweh, a graduate from our schools, studies in America and is drafted by NASA to assist in cutting-edge research, and is then awarded a full scholarship to pursue a PhD at one of the leading science schools, UNRWA is fulfilling its purpose.

When we provide loans to Umm Aysha, an informal-sector entrepreneur in Gaza with no other access to capital, helping her to generate income to support herself and 26 family members wholly dependent on her, we are delivering on our objective to create opportunity.

When, as happened in 2010, UNRWA partners with the UN family and the Government of Lebanon to legalize the rights of Palestinian refugees to work in a range of professions from which they are banned, resulting in an unprecedented amendment of labour legislation, we further strive to fulfill our purpose by ensuring that rights endowed become rights in practice, with the potential for long-suffering refugees in Lebanon to achieve basic human security.

I consider the creation of opportunities a crucially important aspect of UNRWA's work. It is at the heart of what we do, and must do further, to improve the quality of life of the refugees we serve. Let me therefore amplify, taking as a point of departure the situation of Palestine refugee youth in the occupied territory and where they and UNRWA face some of the most profound challenges.

Young people, 25 years of age and under, exceed 50% of the population. This means that a majority of Palestinians here have lived the entirety of their lives under Israeli military rule. It is their formative reality. Within this demographic, refugee youth are uniquely vulnerable. While the data is disturbing, to fully appreciate its shocking implications one must set it against the region as a whole.

At 23%, the Middle East and North Africa have the highest rate of youth unemployment of any region in the world, as recorded by the International Labor Organization in its comprehensive report released late last year. In the occupied Palestinian territory this rate approaches 50%. In Gaza it reaches 66%. When taking into account that these rates exceed those found in Tunisia and Egypt, where they contributed to igniting the Arab Spring, there can be no doubt about the severe conditions which Palestinian youth cope with on a daily basis.

Against this background of coerced deprivation, with its negative effects on refugee youth, the need to lay the foundation for human development and opportunity takes on special significance. Notwithstanding the many and shifting impediments on the refugees and

on UNRWA's ability to optimize its impact - including a constant shortage of resources - I believe that UNRWA must continue to work to empower refugee youth and to help them stake their claim to their future.

It is an effort which UNRWA is striving to conduct in all areas of its core work by innovating its programmes, from primary education (the most important contribution of UNRWA to the future of Palestine refugees), to technical and vocational training; from a reformed health programme which focuses on healthy lifestyles and on families and communities, to economic investments which are modest, but growing in both quantity and quality - through the microfinance programme and through efforts to modernize relief activities by establishing a proper social safety network targeting the poor and vulnerable.

Many of these efforts, for which the support of refugees and stakeholders continues to be crucial, are being conducted through comprehensive programmatic reforms whose impact is already tangible in some areas. Take for example our residential technical and vocational training centres, which enable students from remote low-income rural communities – including women – to earn diplomas and build careers. They also enable students from Gaza and the West Bank to study together, helping them bridge a problematic divide. We are striving to make skills learned more relevant to the labour-market, and incorporate cutting-edge technologies where resources allow, creating broader employment opportunities in a range of professions. In the West Bank, the most recent data show over 81% of our trainees found work, by comparison to less than 70% of the age group as a whole.

Or take microfinance - and I am glad the Director of our Microfinance Programme is with us today - through which in the past 20 years we have contributed to placing economic power in the hands of a range of vulnerable groups including women and, more recently, youth. In 2010 people between the ages of 18 and 30 obtained 4,000 loans valued at $5.7 million from UNRWA's microfinance programme. Overall, since 1991 when it was established, the programme has invested almost $300 million in the region.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Palestine refugees remain, largely, in the locations to which they fled after the dispersion following the events of 1948 and 1949. Naturally, their numbers have grown – we now register 4.8 million, about six times more than the refugees in 1948. In spite of the passage of time refugees are no less determined to seek redress for the injustice they have suffered, to claim recognition for their plight and compensation for what was lost when they had to abandon their homes. Their numbers, the centrality of their history and the fragility of the contexts in which they live, make them an important - or dare I say a crucial - constituency not only in the dynamics of the search for peace but also in the geo-political balance of the Middle East.

The majority of refugees as you know are too young to have known the "home" which their parents or grandparents speak about. However, to refer to the title of this conference, refugee identity is indivisible when it comes to asserting the

fundamental right of refugees to seek a solution to their plight which not only is just and in accordance with international law and UN resolutions, but which also responds to their aspirations and demands. This is a basic entitlement which underpins the collective identity of refugees.

It could thus not be clearer that any process leading to a resolution of the conflict must include the refugees – engaged as a party with specific interests – and address the realization of this entitlement. Without them – a strategic constituency influencing the equilibrium of the region – justice will not be obtained, and peace cannot be durable.

In fact, there simply can be no peace in the Middle East until Palestine refugees are brought out of their 63-year state of dispossession and exile. UNRWA will continue to advocate that refugees must be engaged in the context of discussions between political actors, including the parties - discussions that must in turn be based on international law and UN resolutions and reflect the informed views and choices of the refugees.

We are not naive. We understand the complexity of the conflict, and of possible solutions thereof. We appreciate that political deals are hard deals, requiring compromises by the parties that are sometimes painful - and especially so when issues are deeply existential, as is the case for the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. We know that consulting refugees is a challenging exercise.

But many things that seemed wishful thinking only a few months ago in this region are profoundly, irreversibly changing as a result of the "Arab Spring". If the Egyptian, Libyan and Tunisian people have succeeded in ousting dictators and demanding - and partly obtaining - the establishment of political processes in which everybody will have a voice; if non-democratic regimes are being asked to respond to the demands of their people; it then stands to reason that Palestinians, too, have a right to be heard, and - of specific interest to us here - that Palestine refugees have a right to be represented in a fair manner in the processes that will decide on their own future. This will require - in different ways and from different perspectives - courage and commitment by refugee community leaders and the Palestinian leadership, by the State of Israel, by peace negotiators and by the international community at large. It will be a difficult effort, but one which could yield important results in terms of achieving and sustaining peace.

Palestine refugees hold a substantial stake in a just, stable future for the Middle East - a stake on which hangs theirs and their children's destiny. Given their numbers and propensity for high achievement, they constitute a substantial reservoir of human capital capable of contributing to the strength and stability of the region and to the future of their nation. It is incumbent on us, at long last, to heed their call for justice.