

**'Back to Haunt the Peacemakers'?
Palestinian Refugees, Labeling and
the Failure of the Middle East Peace
Process**

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**Displacement in Gaza in Historical
Context**

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Imageless Palestine**

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in the West Bank and their Impact
on Displacement**

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Majed Al Zeer

From the Director

International Community Failure on the Question of Palestinian Refugees

Welcome to this new edition of the Journal of Palestinian Refugee Studies. This new issue highlights the plight of Palestinians in the Diaspora and attempts to draw a picture of what they encounter and present recommendations for remedial action. Since the establishment of the Palestinian Return Centre in 1996, our mission was very obvious in defending and protecting the Palestinian rights, thus, we have employed media, research, documentaries and academia tools for that purpose. All of which aim to serve our long term vision of envisaging an independent Palestinian state where all Palestinian refugees can return and settle in their homeland. JPRS is one of the finest high calibre tools we use for this purpose.

The Palestinian refugees are still suffering whether in the Diaspora or in the occupied Palestinian territories of the Gaza Strip and the West Bank. The International community has again failed in meeting its moral obligations to end the excessive suffering of millions of refugees.

The number of Palestinian refugees registered with the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) as of January 2014 increased to just over five million⁽¹⁾ and the conflict in Syria, which began in 2011, has significantly contributed to this. According to UNRWA more than half a million Palestinian refugees have been directly affected by the ongoing conflict in Syria.⁽²⁾ Of the 540,000 Palestinian refugees registered in Syria with UNRWA, over 70,000 have fled to other countries - mainly neighbouring countries of Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey⁽³⁾ UNRWA on its part is still enduring a lack of funds as the international community is limiting their contributions, leaving more and more refugees vulnerable.

The situation concerning Palestinian refugees has been further compounded by the recent Israeli bombardment of Gaza, which displaced over 485,000 people⁽⁴⁾ and generated 1.2 million refugees⁽⁵⁾. These events have created a new wave of Palestinian refugees, many of whom have been made refugees once again. However, this time they are risking their lives embarking on dangerous journeys further afield in search of a better future. As a result the Palestinian diaspora has grown and at the end of last year the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics reported that the Palestinian diaspora was now 11.8 million, which included 5.2 million living in Arab countries and around 665,000 living in foreign countries.⁽⁶⁾

The international community must make a concerted effort to address the humanitarian problems relating to migration; they must respond better to the protection needs of Palestinian migrants who already suffered prior to the Syrian conflict and Israeli bombardment of Gaza because of confusing and



conflicting interpretations of international law causing protection gaps⁽⁷⁾; and they must hold those who traffic migrants and mistreat them to account for their actions. As long as conflict and other factors exist Palestinians will continue to flee for their safety and to seek a better future for themselves and their families. Therefore ways must be created for migrants to seek refuge that do not endanger their lives. Governments and states must support peaceful development in migrants' home countries so that conditions are created where people are not forced to leave their homes. There also needs to be a coordinated response by transit and destination countries to respond to events at sea in order to prevent them from becoming tragedies. The European Union (EU) must revise its immigration policies and better its approach to border control and irregular immigration. The international community must also respond to pleas from neighbouring countries such as Lebanon and Turkey for support in dealing with these huge numbers of refugees.

In the Gaza Strip, the population continues to suffer due to a lack of urgent aid and shelter support that it desperately needs and the process of building and construction is slow due to the restrictions that Israel imposes. It is obvious that the people of Gaza are now confronting many challenges, which will intensify over the coming years in the absence of an enabling political environment. If immediate action isn't taken, the daily lives of Palestinians living in the Gaza Strip will become worse due to shortages in safe drinking water, housing, electricity and primary healthcare and the mounting number of poor, disadvantaged and food-insecure Gazans will have increased without humanitarian aid. According to the recently issued UN report "Gaza in 2020", to ensure that Gaza in 2020 will be "a liveable place", ongoing efforts by Palestinians and partners in sectors such as energy, health, water and sanitation, need to be accelerated and intensified in the face of all difficulties.

It is thus fundamental that the people of Gaza are able to have basic human rights to which they are entitled. They must live safe and secure lives free of the various forms of violence, which are having a dreadful impact. The Gaza population should enjoy access without restrictions to the world and they should have proper healthcare and housing to live a decent life in peace and harmony now and in the near future. The delay in meeting the basic demands of Palestinian populations in Gaza will only exacerbate the human suffering, which will contribute to the continuation of the conflict. An urgent intervention to secure the daily demands and freedom of movement for them should be coupled with a sustainable resolution to the Palestinian question that guarantees their rights notwithstanding the right of refugees to return to their homeland.

All in all, the international community has failed in finding a solution for the Palestinian refugee question let alone ending their daily humanitarian suffering. The failure of the EU, the US and other major parties indicates that the suffering of Palestinian refugees will continue for more years to come.

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Sophia Akram*

From the Editor

2014 has represented an important year – an important year for a state of Palestine, a devastating year for Gaza and a climacteric year for Israel. Amongst ongoing, unresolved and often forgotten issues in the occupied Palestinian territories (oPt) and host refugee nations, the year was marked with expectations.

It was the International Year of Solidarity with the Palestinian people but 2014 has been smeared with much more as thousands lost their lives in the third major conflict in the Gaza Strip. Israel launched Operation Protective Edge on 8 July 2014 after an escalation in violence after the murder of three teenage Israeli settlers. This conflict like those before it was signified by disproportionate force, controversial tactics and violations of international law – a significant bearing on Palestine and the issue of Palestinian refugees as so many lost their homes giving further rise to internal displacement within Gaza. This issue is therefore dedicated to the conflict of Gaza 2014 and several articles, by Manuel Langendorf, Fadi N.Skaik, Dr. Khaleel Isa and Lauriane Pfeffer, Rachel Humphris and Dr. Lamis Abuhaloob and the Palestinian Return Centre, will document the incidents that happened over the 50-day war and the implications for Palestinians and Palestinian refugees. These cover not just further displacement but an impact on their services, the capacity of UNRWA to deliver and dedicate its resources fully to the needs of Palestinian refugees and the long-term effect to the psyche of the Gazan people; in particular the trauma felt by children that have known nothing more than the conditions caused by protracted conflict and refugee status.

This prolonged situation and impasse has been cultivating many significant problems for the oPts and while the world catches its breath to recount the tragedies of the Gaza conflict, the largest land grab by Israel in three decades took place, which saw 1,000 acres of land near Bethlehem seized for the development of new illegal settlements – all while attention was shifting to the resumption of peace talks. Both of these issues have been occupying the hearts, minds and agendas of the Palestinian people and international community, so two practitioners on the issues of refugees, Sahdya Darr and Jessica Anderson, bring us accounts of the development of settlers in the West Bank and the Peace Process and their relation to Palestinian Refugees.

Palestinian refugees have often been synonymised with Muslim Arabs and the plight of Palestine often equated with a preoccupation of the Islamic World. Contrarily the statistics for displacement and discrimination of



indigenous Palestinians of Christian dissent is alarming. Ahmad Daman provides us with a context of what Christians experience within Israel and the root causes for discrimination against the Christian community of the region.

The region, in tandem, is still enduring the Syrian war, which is steadily impacting upon the Palestinian refugees who bear the effect of further displacement and as a consequence further discrimination and social and economic impacts notwithstanding the civil and political. This edition, with the collaboration of the Action Group for Syrians in Palestine, Ibrahim Al-Ali, Leah Thomas and Kareem Shaheen, brings to light some of these impacts that have been felt due to the Syrian conflict and their journey onwards to third host countries including Lebanon, where questions are raised about support for the Palestinian Right of Return.

The Right of Return, engrained in the international legal framework, must be brought to the forefront of international dialogue. A visit into history is often required to understand how the biggest and longest refugee crisis emerged. This year also represented the 100th anniversary of the First World War, which has led many to review and commemorate it. Often referred to as the Great War, its impact was no less on Palestine and the Palestinian Return Centre along with the Al Jazeera Centre for Studies convened a conference to discuss this as the turning point for the future of Palestine. The November 2014 edition of the Journal for Palestinian Refugee Studies concludes with a summary of the two-day event held in London.

What is experienced today is the ongoing tension between the State of Israel and continuous war, overshadowing a fundamental principle to return all Palestinian refugees to the historical lands of Palestine. Instead of facilitating this process and discussing the mechanisms and conventions to enable this right and that enshrine this right in law and moral obligation, we must instead return to documenting the horrors and abuses of another summer of devastation: condemning the conflict, calling for a cessation to the calamities and commissioning enquiries.





Jessica
Anderson*

'Back to Haunt the Peacemakers'?

Palestinian Refugees, Labeling and the Failure of the Middle East Peace Process

I. Introduction

In 1999, with Israeli and Palestinian leadership preparing for another round of final status negotiations, The Jerusalem Post published a piece by Isabel Kirshner describing events at a children's day camp in Deheishe Refugee Camp outside of Bethlehem. The article appeared under the headline 'Back to Haunt the Peacemakers.'⁽¹⁾ As graffiti in the Deheishe schoolyard attested, Palestinian refugees had by then spent "fifty years under the tent." If they were 'back' from anywhere, it could only be from their marginalisation in the minds of negotiators, which was allowed by the very design of the Middle East Peace Process (MEPP) at that time.

During the Oslo I negotiations, former Israeli Ambassador to the United States (US), Zalman Shoval, claimed, "The Palestinians have never made a secret of their intention to try to bring down the Jewish state by flooding it with hundreds of thousands of Arabs from abroad."⁽²⁾ During the most recent Kerry negotiations, Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas reportedly responded to "common Israeli fears declaring that he did not intend 'to drown Israel with millions of refugees.'⁽³⁾ Refugee studies scholars have examined in depth the topic of labeling and its effects.⁽⁴⁾ Fear mongering on the subject of refugees has a long history among powerful states, with dehumanising words such as 'flood' and 'drown' reinforcing technologies of denial.

This paper attempts to deconstruct discourses of denial and fear within the MEPP by presenting a refugee-centred narrative. I suggest that it is the labels ascribed to Palestinian refugees - and the technologies of power those labels reinforce - that haunt peacemakers and burden the process of reconciliation. Through the MEPP, labeling is now carried out not only by Israelis and their supporters, but also by Palestinian leaders, who must debate not just when or how peace will happen, but also for which of their constituents. Since this is a question that poses a unique problem for Palestinian leadership, it illustrates how Israeli and Palestinian negotiators remain on starkly unequal footing.

Finally, there is a critical need to disaggregate the stereotypical figure of the Palestinian refugee within the MEPP. Today, we can point to many examples of diverse expressions of Palestinian identity, and refugees'

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varying interpretations of how their political claims might be fulfilled. Recognising this opens up possibilities for a just peace that speaks to experiences of displacement.

II. 'Empty Land' and 'Transfer': Labels of Displacement

The displacement of Palestinians is ongoing. In 2013, there was a rise in the number of Palestinians displaced by home demolitions in East Jerusalem and the West Bank.⁽⁵⁾ Israel's 2013 Prawer Plan threatened to dispossess up to 70,000 Arab Bedouin citizens of Israel.⁽⁶⁾ Over 110,000 Gazans remain displaced after Operation Protective Edge (OPE) of July 2014.⁽⁷⁾

Underpinning Palestinian displacement is a pattern of the dehistoricisation of Palestinian land and identity. For early Zionists, Israel was 'yesterday's tomorrow', the 'old new land'.⁽⁸⁾ This vision bridged a biblical story with a secular, European sense of modernity, leaving out a gulf of history. The need to reject and replace colonialist 'knowledge' about Palestine became glaringly obvious in a post-colonial era, and numerous contemporary scholars have already taken up this task.⁽⁹⁾

Beyond the myth of Palestine's emptiness, however, Israeli leaders clearly recognised the presence of the Palestinian population and supported its removal. Israeli historian Ilan Pappé characterises such practices as ethnic cleansing,⁽¹⁰⁾ but they appear in Israeli discourse as 'population transfer', 'population exchange', 'Arab return to Arabia', and 'Arab rehabilitation'.⁽¹¹⁾ Measures such as the Absentees' Property Law (1950) created labels for Palestinians that allowed for their dispossession. An 'absentee' was any 'Palestinian citizen' who left their normal residence for any period of time between November 1947 and September 1948. Absentee property could be legally confiscated, and "the status of the Custodian (Israel) shall be the same as was that of the owner of the property."⁽¹²⁾ For Palestinians that did not flee Israel as refugees, absence for any reason or period of time merited the application of the same law by way of the oxymoronic label 'present absentee'.

Refugees attempting to return to Israel to recover property were deemed 'infiltrators'; the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF), police, and civilians along Israel's borders killed an estimated five thousand Palestinian refugee 'infiltrators' between 1949 and 1956, most of whom were unarmed.⁽¹³⁾ Both the 'empty land' and 'transfer' concepts also remained instrumental in justifying policies of settlement building and occupation after 1967. Despite these policies, one of Israel's key assertions about Palestinian refugees is that their situation was created "by war, not by design."⁽¹⁴⁾ Denial of responsibility was a stopping point in many early conversations addressing Palestinian displacement.

III. Challenging Labels: The Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) and the First Intifada

From its founding in the 1960s to its arrival at the negotiating table in the 1990s, the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) took a number of steps to position itself as a diplomatic partner to Israel. The PLO's initial doctrine of armed resistance resulted in its expulsion from Jordan during Black September and from Lebanon by Israel. By 1986, it found itself coordinating activities from Tunis. Shifting to a rights-based discourse quickly offered new opportunities.

Founded by the Arab League in 1964, the PLO was initially a series of commando groups striving to liberate historic Palestine. The early ideology of the PLO called for the departure of all Jews from Palestine (except those that resided there before the 'Zionist invasion') and the restoration of its Arab cultural and demographic character.⁽¹⁵⁾ As a result, UN General Assembly Resolution 194, permitting a right of return for Palestinian refugees, did not feature in the initial PLO charter; the liberation of the land was seen as the de-facto vehicle for return.⁽¹⁶⁾ Palestinian refugees were even preemptively referred

to as 'returnees' in PLO publications.⁽¹⁷⁾ The goals and activities of the PLO during this period placed it outside the diplomatic process, labeled "not only as terrorists, but as the arch-terrorists of our time."⁽¹⁸⁾

In 1988, the PLO made two major adjustments to its doctrine. First, it officially recognised UN General Assembly Resolution 191 on the partition of Palestine and (UNGA) Resolution 242 calling for Israeli withdrawal from the territories occupied in 1967. This was a partial acknowledgement that a Jewish-Israeli entity would exist on approximately 80% of historic Palestine. Second, the PLO issued a statement of Palestinian self-determination, declaring Arafat the first president of an independent State of Palestine with Jerusalem as its capital. This move, while lacking legitimacy, catalysed support for the PLO within the Palestinian community.

As international law became the reference point for the PLO concept of liberation, the first Intifada was underway, jostling stereotypes about the Israeli need for security against Palestinian terrorist pathology. Between the new diplomatic identity of the PLO and the effectiveness of the Palestinian popular uprising in illustrating the need for justice, Palestinians were engaging in robust and varied expressions of agency and political identity. Israel, in turn, faced a narrative crisis. By the start of the next decade, Yitzhak Rabin, who was previously "written off by peace activists" due to his 'hawkish' leadership during the Intifada, ran on a platform promising a peace agreement within one year.⁽¹⁹⁾

IV. Emergence of the Modern MEPP: Entertaining Participation

Beginning with the 1991 Madrid Conference, a new framework for peace began to take shape, based on a series of direct, issue-by-issue negotiations between Israelis and Arab states with the US at the helm. At the Madrid conference, a Palestinian delegation from the West Bank and Gaza joined the Jordanian delegation; PLO members were not yet permitted direct involvement. In addition to bilateral talks between Israelis and Palestinians, the Madrid Conference set up five working groups; the Multilateral Working Group on Refugees (MWGR) was one.⁽²⁰⁾

Though it offered few conclusive success stories, the Madrid Conference was the first time refugees saw their interests discussed on the international stage. There was a high rate of support for the process among refugees, but after its conclusion, the Palestinian National Council (PNC) issued a memorandum noting issues of representation. Of the fifty Palestinian delegates to the conference, they noted, none came from a refugee camp. Also criticised was the lack of emphasis on Resolution 194.⁽²¹⁾ Unofficial meetings were subsequently held between PLO leaders, delegates to the peace conference, and refugees to experiment with democratic, participatory frameworks. These meetings were reportedly tense, but participants were aligned on the goal of setting parameters for refugee participation.⁽²²⁾

V. The Oslo I Accord: Re-emergence of Denial

For the first time, the Oslo I negotiations brought a refugee-led body (the PLO) and the Israeli government face to face as peacemakers. Talks began in 1993 in an atmosphere of optimism, fueled by significant compromises. The PLO explicitly recognised the state of Israel, denounced its claim to the entirety of historic Palestine and renounced tactics of armed struggle. In response, Israel recognised the PLO as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people.

Secrecy and lack of transparency quickly led to discontent with the process. Mahmoud Abbas, a senior negotiator at the time, attempted to assuage concerns by arguing removing negotiators

from the pressure of the public eye served refugee interests.⁽²³⁾ Yet fears were confirmed with the signing of the Declaration of Principles (DOP), which shifted the centre of Palestinian politics and decision making away from the diaspora, while leaving the majority of refugees behind for the 'final status' phase of negotiations.⁽²⁴⁾

Resolution 194 received no mention within the DOP. PLO negotiators endorsed UNGA Resolution 242 calling for a "just settlement for the refugee problem." However, this language is extremely ambiguous. The language of the DOP is even more vague, simply establishing an 'understanding' that the refugee question would eventually be discussed. In a sense, the refugee became a 'present absentee' again within the MEPP - present as an issue and obstacle, absent as an agent and stakeholder.

In response to Oslo, a utopic discourse emerged within Israeli society. Activities that brought together Israelis and Palestinians proliferated, operating on contact theory; merely gathering was considered enough to advance the causes of peace and coexistence. These forums endorsed a return to dehistoricised and non-reflexive narratives on peace, which denied the ongoing subjugation of Palestinians in Israel, Gaza, and the West Bank, as well as the alienation of Palestinians in protracted displacement outside.⁽²⁵⁾

The legacy of Oslo I is the cooptation of a newly recognised Palestinian leadership from a representative of the Palestinian people, including refugees, to a representative of only a portion of Palestinians. As Doumani notes, "the formation of a Palestinian state...has become the vehicle for preempting, rather than delivering, self-determination for the Palestinian people."⁽²⁶⁾ Meanwhile, Dov Weisglas, advisor to Israeli Prime Minister, Ariel Sharon, stated, "We educated the world to understand that there is no one to talk to."⁽²⁷⁾ According to this narrative, just as Arabs did not exist on the 'empty land' of Palestine, credible Palestinian negotiators do not exist in the landscape of peace.

VI. After Oslo: Refugee Identity and Claims

The final status discourse contributed to the creation of new lines of social cohesion and fragmentation within the Palestine refugee community. Seventy percent of refugees in camps inside the Occupied Territories reported general support for the MEPP and optimism regarding the future in 1998, after the celebratory spirit of Oslo had faded.⁽²⁸⁾ Self-determination for these refugees now focused on sovereignty and freedom from occupation. Refugees were an integral part of state building projects launched in accordance with the 1995 Israeli-Palestinian Interim Agreement, and could build a sense of belonging to the land, institutions, and structures of governance that were gaining some recognition as the foundational elements of the future Palestinian state.⁽²⁹⁾ However, a clientelist network of VIP Palestinian leadership emerged in the West Bank "from the womb of the peace process," composed of elites willing to cooperate with Israeli policies.⁽³⁰⁾ Thus, Palestinians faced "the severely partial and limited character of self-representation...given the insertion of the PA within the structure of occupation."⁽³¹⁾

Outside of the West Bank and Gaza, three fourths of refugees characterised their relationship with the PLO as 'bad' after Oslo and reported that the PLO was acting "independently of the wishes of the Palestinian people."⁽³²⁾ Criticism was directed at Arafat from refugee camps as well as in Palestinian academic circles. Edward Said declared the negotiations between Israel and the PLO "an instrument of Palestinian surrender, a Palestinian Versailles,"⁽³³⁾ while other critics called Arafat a 'Palestinian Buthulezi', referring to the complicity of the KwaZulu leader with apartheid-era South African policies.⁽³⁴⁾

'Outsider' refugees were experiencing a secondary loss, displaced from their homeland and then marginalised from their own national movement. In 1977, Fawaz Turki wrote, "I want to return, therefore I am," eloquently capturing the sacredness of the concept.⁽³⁵⁾ Thirty years later, Samir El-Youssef wrote from a Lebanese refugee camp that the right of return is an 'illusion'.⁽³⁶⁾ Through ethnographic work in the West Bank, Lebanon, and Jordan, it is clear that the practical meaning and strategies Palestinian refugees in the diaspora offer for the fulfillment of their rights are diverse.⁽³⁷⁾ Many refugees do not express a desire to physically return, either to their places of origin within Israel, or to the Occupied Palestinian Territories, yet wish to see their collective experiences and grievances recognised on the international stage.⁽³⁸⁾ Emerging return-oriented advocacy groups such as al-Awda and Alidoun focus on nurturing solidarity between Palestinian communities. The nuance of refugees' views is beyond the scope of this paper, but preeminent scholars such as Rosemary Sayigh have compiled decades of insight on this topic, and it continues to be an active area of inquiry today.⁽³⁹⁾

VII. Conclusion: Shifting the Framework

Rashid Khalidi says that history, for Palestinians, is an iron cage built of ironies.⁽⁴⁰⁾ Since 1948, Palestinian refugees have been labeled 'absentees', 'present absentees', 'infiltrators', 'terrorists', 'peacemakers', 'rejectionist', and 'a final status issue.' Their agency has been denied by claims that they do not physically exist on the land of Palestine, that they are not credible as partners in peace, that their claims are 'unrealistic', and that their protracted displacement is not linked to Israeli policies. These labels and discourses are enablers for systems of power and occupation. The MEPP is one such system. The irony, then, is that the realisation of refugee self-determination hinges on a framework that has already institutionalised their denial.

At the Bethlehem Conference after Oslo, hosted in the Dheisheh refugee camp, participants called "to remove the refugee question from the bi-lateral Oslo framework and restore it to the halls of the United Nations (UN)."⁽⁴¹⁾ The 2011 leak of the Palestine Papers gave this direction a push. The Guardian described the papers as "the longest suicide note in history." Palestinian leadership appeared 'weak', 'craven', and 'eager'⁽⁴²⁾, and the papers exposed labels commonly applied to Israeli negotiators ('generous') versus Palestinian negotiators ('rejectionist').⁽⁴³⁾

In September of 2011, the Palestinian Authority appealed to the UN Security Council for statehood, a move the US promised to veto. A month later, Palestine gained full membership in the UN Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) by popular vote. The US position is to oppose the 'unilateral' actions of Palestinians in moving toward the UN. Ironically, it is the US veto that more accurately represents a form of unilateral denial. Referring to a different institutional process and discourse -that of the UN- brings forward different labels, systems of knowledge, and power dynamics. These developments suggest a divestment from the current framework for peace offered by the MEPP, with the UN representing an alternative source for the pursuit of refugee rights and self-determination.

Academic scholarship is another context where conversations about refugee participation and peace should continue to take place. The Civitas Project, which aimed to develop a framework for wide participation by refugees in the MEPP, stressed that refugee representation was a crucial precondition for peace.⁽⁴⁴⁾ The project received wide criticism in the region, however, in part due to its links to Western funding and interests. This illustrates that future attempts to contribute to this conversation through academia must demonstrate explicit awareness of the power dynamics and struggles over representation that emerge through academic inquiry.

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Displacement in Gaza in Historical Context

The third major conflict has exacerbated internal displacement within Gaza compounded by unresolved human security conditions of preceding wars and a blockade that shows no signs of being lifted.

The Gaza Strip, one of the most densely populated areas⁽¹⁾ in the world that is home to 1.8 million people, has witnessed several waves of refugees and wars over the last few decades. The most recent assault on Gaza had devastating effects. The 50-day Israeli military offensive - Operation Protective Edge - which started on 8 July 2014, led to the deaths of approximately 2,150 Palestinians⁽²⁾ and 73 Israelis, including six civilians and a Thai labourer. Thousands of Palestinians were injured throughout the air, land and sea campaign, while severe damage was done to residential buildings and Gaza's infrastructure. The United Nations (UN) estimated that Palestinian civilian casualties stood at approximately 69%⁽³⁾. More than 110,000 Gazans were displaced⁽⁴⁾ as a result of the war, which ended on 26 August 2014, as part of an open-ended truce.

The recent military campaign against Gaza is only the latest episode of decades of (internal) displacement for Palestinians. In order to understand their plight, and what is required to alleviate their suffering, the recent wave of displacement and destruction needs to be put in its historical context. While this article does not aim to be a comprehensive study of the last 66 years, the goal is to point out key historical trajectories and events to contextualize the current situation. In the case of Gaza, we can speak of several stages of displacement in many cases reaching as far back as 1948. Due to the ongoing blockade of the Strip by Israel and Egypt, Gazans must be seen as "internally stuck persons"⁽⁵⁾. Many of the territory's inhabitants are refugees or descendants of refugees as a result of the 1948 and 1967 wars.

1) Historical Dimension of Displacement

1.1. 1948 and build-up as starting point to major displacement in Mandate Palestine

In order to fully understand the situation of Gazans - once called the "forgotten man of the Middle East"⁽⁶⁾ - and their personal trajectories, it is vital to go back to the 1948 Arab-Israeli War, the conflict that eventually

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led to the establishment of the State of Israel on 14 May 1948. Vast volumes have been written on the topic and, to this day, there are competing narratives about what caused the exodus of approximately 700,000 Palestinians. However, despite claims of Palestine having been “a land without a people for a people without a land”⁽⁷⁾, many historians have shown that there was a large Arab population native to the region, which preceded several waves of Jewish migration. Israeli historian Avi Shlaim writes that at the time of the Balfour Declaration in 1917, Palestine’s population was 91% Arab and 9% Jewish⁽⁸⁾. Crucial for this article is the fact that during the course of the 1948-49 hostilities - which have been declared as two separate wars⁽⁹⁾ - approximately 700,000 Palestinians became refugees. Many of them were forcibly removed from their land by Jewish paramilitary forces, as documented by historians such as Ilan Pappé⁽¹⁰⁾ and Benny Morris⁽¹¹⁾.

Large parts of the population fled and “thousands of Palestinians from some 144 cities, towns and villages came to Gaza”⁽¹²⁾. Whereas numbers ranged between 83,000 in September 1948 and 250,000 in December 1948, a census in December 1949 established the total number of Gazan refugees at 202,606. Other sources speak of a total influx of 250,000 refugees in Gaza⁽¹³⁾. Sara Roy notes a tripling of the Strip’s population within days, while others point to a several months-long process. In 1995, 70% of Gazans were refugees of the 1948 war and their descendants. According to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), Gaza is now home to 1.2 million Palestinian refugees, which amounts to two-thirds of the total population. The latter is defined as: “Persons whose normal place of residence was Palestine during the period 1 June 1946 to 15 May 1948, and who lost both home and means of livelihood as a result of the 1948 conflict”⁽¹⁴⁾. Eight refugee camps were established in response to the mass displacement. However, many families were forced to live in temporary shelters or tents after the 1948 conflict⁽¹⁵⁾. Consequently, due to the newly emergent surplus of labour and shortage of jobs, Gaza’s economy went into decline and became dependent on imports within months⁽¹⁶⁾.

A key document regarding the right of return is UN General Assembly Resolution 194 of December 1948, which states: “[R]efugees 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”⁽¹⁷⁾.

1.2. Effect of the 1967 War

The 1948 exodus has been the subject of more study than the impact of the 1967 war on the displacement of Palestinians. This is connected to the debate about the exact causes of Palestinian displacement before and after Israel’s establishment, and the greater overall number of displaced persons. Despite this, the Six-Day War of 1967 - fought between Egypt, Jordan and Syria against Israel - led to the displacement of several hundred thousand Palestinians. As a result of the conflict, Israel took control of Gaza, the West Bank, East Jerusalem, the Golan Heights and the Sinai.

Before the war broke out, approximately half of the “post-1948 population of Gaza consisted of Palestinian families who had been driven there from other parts of Palestine during the 1947-49 hostilities”⁽¹⁸⁾. The 1967 war displaced an alarming 300,000-350,000 Palestinians. According to Janet Abu-Lughod, this included 25,000-40,000 from Gaza, “including those who had been temporarily [...] abroad when the war began and were unable to return after hostilities ended”⁽¹⁹⁾. A study by William Harris estimated that Gaza’s population loss between June and December 1967 stood at 70,000⁽²⁰⁾. These numbers include many people who became refugees for the second time⁽²¹⁾. The fact that Gaza had a lower population loss was partly due to the fact that it was “furthest from any potential sanctuary”⁽²²⁾, which underlines the people’s dire situation.

Israel's war gains opened a new chapter in Zionist discussions about territorial ambitions, and sparked an ongoing period of land confiscation and settlement-building in the Occupied Palestinian Territories. The idea of transferring those living in the newly occupied territories to Arab countries increasingly became part of Israeli mainstream politics⁽²³⁾. In summer 1967, Israel made attempts to “thin out” the teeming population of Gaza⁽²⁴⁾ and drove people to Jordan or into the Sinai. Gaza resident Abu Hassan described this as “a programme of forced deportation”⁽²⁵⁾.

In this context, it is worth stressing that according to the UN Charter, there can “lawfully be no territorial gains from war, even by a state acting in self-defense”⁽²⁶⁾. Furthermore, as observed by John Quigley, in contrast to Israeli claims that Jordan and Egypt did not have a good title to the West Bank and Gaza, “Palestine Arabs as a collectivity had a sound claim to the Gaza Strip and West Bank on the basis of their right of self-determination”⁽²⁷⁾. This means the imperative stipulated in the Geneva Convention to “not bring its own people into the territory” (Geneva Convention) applies and that Israel's displacement and settlement policy is in violation of international law.

To put the subsequent decades into perspective, up to 655,000 Palestinians were “forced from the West Bank and Gaza between June 1967 and December 1986, with an annual average of 33,000”⁽²⁸⁾.

1.3. Displacement During Operations Cast Lead and Pillar of Defense

Operation Cast Lead was the first of three major operations by the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) against the Hamas-controlled Gaza Strip over the course of six years, which perpetuated the cycle of protracted displacement. All three operations, including Protective Edge, were conducted after the erection of a border fence to Israel and the ongoing blockade of Gaza, which was enforced in 2007. In this context, Gazans became “internally stuck persons”⁽²⁹⁾.

Operation Cast Lead, which lasted from 27 December 2008 until 18 January 2009, included an air, naval and ground campaign that led to the death of more than 1,400 Palestinians - among them hundreds of civilians and children. According to data by the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC), Operation Cast Lead saw the displacement of approximately 120,000 people, with up to 17,000 Palestinians remaining displaced due to the destruction of their homes⁽³⁰⁾.

Operation Pillar of Defense, conducted between 14-21 November 2012, saw the continuous bombardment of Gaza. According to the IDF, 1,500 air strikes were carried out in addition to seven strikes by the navy and 360 mortar shells. Palestinian armed groups “fired 765 homemade rockets, 741 long-range Grad rockets, and 135 mortar shells at Israel”⁽³¹⁾. Areas particularly targeted by the IDF were those close to the fence, for example, in the “northern Gaza Strip, including Beit Lahia and Beit Hanoun”⁽³²⁾, where many residences were destroyed or severely damaged. The fact that the IDF urged Gazans to move to the Gaza City centre triggered a large-scale temporary displacement. Almost 12,000 people were staying in UNRWA schools by 21 November, but returned after the announcement of a ceasefire. OCHA figures indicated that 14,920 people from all Gaza governorates were internally displaced due to the fighting, with reports that there were 100% displacement rates in certain communities⁽³³⁾.

2) Current Displacement and Obstacles to Reconstruction and Humanitarian Efforts

2.1. Operation Protective Edge

The latest military assault on Gaza started on 8 July 2014. After the failure of various attempts to reach a lasting truce, an open-ended ceasefire came into effect after 50 days of fighting on 26 August. While details of the build-up to this latest war are beyond the scope of this article, the stated goal of Protective Edge was to end Palestinian rocket fire against Israel and the destruction of all

“terror tunnels”. The air, land and sea campaign was preceded by the abduction of three Israeli teenagers - for which Israeli authorities blamed Hamas without presenting evidence⁽³⁴⁾ - large-scale raids in the West Bank and the resumption of rocket fire from Gaza.

In total, 2,150 Palestinians were killed and thousands injured⁽³⁵⁾; the UN⁽³⁶⁾ estimates that as many as 69% of casualties were civilians and that hundreds of children and women were victims of the operation. On the Israeli side, 66 soldiers, six civilians and a Thai labourer were killed. The military campaign led to the destruction or severe damaging of an estimated 18,000 homes⁽³⁷⁾. According to IDMC data, approximately 110,000 people⁽³⁸⁾ were displaced as a result of Operation Protective Edge. A UNRWA situation report⁽³⁹⁾ from 24 September stated that 19 UNRWA school buildings were still being used as collective centres for 57,775 internally displaced persons (IDP). The IDMC put the number of those staying with host families at around 50,000. Considering that homes of more than 100,000 IDPs were severely damaged or destroyed and that restrictions remain on importing construction material, “a large part of this displacement is expected to become protracted”⁽⁴⁰⁾. Additionally, Gaza’s authorities also carried out evictions of families living on “state land” over the last years, according to the IDMC.

The UN highlighted that the recent conflict “left 258 schools and kindergartens damaged, including 26 schools that are beyond repair”⁽⁴¹⁾. This meant the start of the school year was delayed by three weeks.

The high number of remaining IDPs and destroyed or severely damaged homes, including UNRWA schools, highlight the need for concerted humanitarian efforts in close cooperation with authorities in Gaza, Egypt and Israel.

2.2. Needed and current humanitarian, economic and political efforts and obstacles

The aspect that continues to affect IDPs the most is the destruction of homes and civilian infrastructure. As aforementioned, 18,000 housing units were either destroyed or severely damaged, “leaving approximately 108,000 people homeless”⁽⁴²⁾. In the context of continued attacks on Gaza, UNRWA Spokesperson Christopher Gunness stated that even before Operation Protective Edge, “71,000 homes needed repair or rebuilding”⁽⁴³⁾. The destruction of Gaza’s only power plant on 29 July 2014 had far-reaching humanitarian consequences beyond power outages, affecting hospitals, the availability of water and food production⁽⁴⁴⁾. News reports⁽⁴⁵⁾ that the power plant is able to resume working soon are a positive sign in this regard, but can only be one step towards reducing Gaza’s energy dependence on Israel. If found guilty of the attack on the power station, the Israeli government must be held accountable and pay full reparations.

The Palestinian leadership has estimated the cost of reconstruction efforts to be at \$7.8 billion, a sum that would require significant fundraising by the international community. Given that there are many cases of protracted displacement, it is vital for Gaza’s inhabitants, in particular IDPs, that reconstruction is carried out in the most efficient manner and without delay.

Another key point related to the relief of Gazans is dealing with the psychological trauma caused by the effects of war, which has especially affected children. The UNRWA has established a new three-phase approach in its schools, with the first focusing on “psychosocial support and recreational activities”⁽⁴⁶⁾. The second involves a transitional phase on active and alternative learning, and lastly a return to the normal curriculum. According to initial estimates, \$30 million is needed until the end of 2014 to “address the impact of the conflict on school infrastructure”⁽⁴⁷⁾. Gunness spoke of 375,000 children being in deep trauma⁽⁴⁸⁾, which highlights the urgent need for increased efforts in this realm. The key point in any future relief effort is a negotiated end to the blockade of Gaza. Without this, Gazans will remain as “internally stuck persons”. Only an end to the siege and the lifting of

restrictions on the movement of people and the import and export of goods will give Gazans a chance to ease their plight of protracted displacement and heighten the chances of peace. Israeli Defence Minister Moshe Ya'alon stated that Israel was working on stabilising the situation "by increasing the (Gaza) fishing zone to 6 miles and allowing more trucks through the Kerem Shalom crossing, from an average of 250 a day to an average of 380 a day"⁽⁴⁹⁾. Such steps would not only be crucial for reconstruction efforts, but also for the overall economic situation.

Gaza's economy went into recession before the start of the latest war. A World Bank report on the Palestinian economy from September 2014 identified "recurring conflicts and the ongoing blockade on exports and imports"⁽⁵⁰⁾ as the main restrictions hindering economic growth. It also noted that the productivity of Gaza's labour force was lower than in the West Bank and East Jerusalem, "mainly because firms in Gaza are able to invest less in capital goods or have had their capital destroyed in the repeated conflicts". Almost 50% of Gazans are unemployed. Roy argued that the relationship between Gaza and Israel is one of de-development, which she describes as "the deliberate, systematic deconstruction of an indigenous economy by a dominant power"⁽⁵¹⁾. The World Bank sees several points as vital to building a sustainable economy in Gaza: substantial funding from the international community; "allowing access in and out of Gaza, while protecting legitimate security concerns of neighbouring governments; and the PA [Palestinian Authority] establishing a strong governance framework under the consensus government"⁽⁵²⁾. This means allowing Gaza to be re-connected to export and import markets, including ending the economic divide with the West Bank. The abolishment of buffer zones, which currently restrict Palestinian economic activity, and the expansion of the territory's fishing zone are crucial. Such efforts have to be accompanied by building a legal and regulatory business environment that is less fragmented, and allows private sector investment and subsequent growth in all Palestinian Territories.

Achieving such measures, which have the potential to significantly reduce the likelihood of recurring violence, is mainly - but not only - dependent on Israel and Egypt's policies. Palestinian unity, under a government that represents all Palestinian Territories, presents a crucial factor for various reasons. In an agreement⁽⁵³⁾ on the reconstruction of Gaza between Israel, the Palestinian Authority (PA) and the UN, the PA is attributed a leading role in monitoring the transport of material into Gaza. Therefore, allowing the Palestinian unity government to start its work in Gaza and directing reconstruction efforts are important for the stability of the work. At the time of writing, negotiations between Fatah and Hamas led to an understanding⁽⁵⁴⁾ that the unity government, headed by PA President Mahmoud Abbas, would take control of Gaza. The understanding comes after tension⁽⁵⁵⁾ between both sides.

Building upon this agreement will be pivotal for future negotiations with Israel and for the donor conference, scheduled for 12 October 2014 in Egypt. Donors are more likely to commit money when there is a prospect of lasting peace deal between Palestinians and Israelis. Given Israel's refusal to negotiate with Hamas, the unity government plays a vital role regarding the potential to lift the blockade.

There appear to be rifts⁽⁵⁶⁾ in the Netanyahu government regarding the outcome and impact of the recent war and future. In this context, it is significant that the ceasefire agreement calls for an opening of border crossings, but does not deal with the issue of disarming Hamas⁽⁵⁷⁾, a crucial aim of the Israeli government. As a result, Foreign Minister, Avigdor Lieberman, and Economy Minister Naftali Bennett are likely to put pressure on Israeli Prime Minister, Benjamin Netanyahu.

3) Outlook

Palestinians in Gaza have endured various phases of displacement, often caused by armed conflict, the establishment of buffer zones and human rights violations. Despite the challenges to track

displacement, Gaza is home to a very large number of Palestine refugees - 1.2 million, according to the UNRWA. Displacement in the Palestinian Territories "is both protracted and ongoing"⁽⁵⁸⁾.

The key to easing the plight of Gazans as a whole, in particular those displaced by Operation Protective Edge, is to end the blockade. This would not only give Palestinians from Gaza their freedom of movement and end collective punishment, but also increase the chances of reviving the economy. The World Bank report cited above projected that Gaza has the potential to grow by 11% in 2015 - a number that would still not lift up economic activity to above the pre-conflict level - if the international community provides funds for reconstruction, and if Israel allowed for an enhanced freedom of movement of goods and people. An upcoming donor conference to be held in Egypt will shed more light on the prospects of this, with Saudi Arabia having donated⁽⁵⁹⁾ \$500 million for reconstruction efforts and pledges⁽⁶⁰⁾ from Qatar to soon follow suit.

Both internal Palestinian and Israeli dynamics will have a major impact on the chances to reach a lasting peace and remove or significantly ease the blockade. Additionally, any efforts to ease the blockade are likely to be reversed, in case one of the parties perceives the other to be violating the fragile ceasefire.

The current situation presents many opportunities for reconstruction efforts with international support and even to end the blockade of Gaza, which would be the only measure to reverse decades of systematic de-development in the territory. However, there are significant challenges that remain in the political and humanitarian realm. With winter approaching, the situation is increasingly urgent.

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Sophia Akram

UNRWA Under Fire

The summer of 2014 along the Gaza Strip endured one of the worst bouts of military action since the withdrawal of Israel in 2005. While aggression is not anomalous to the small enclave, the launch of Operation Protective Edge on the 8 July 2014, the third major conflict in Gaza, saw the death toll rise to 1,823 Palestinians and 66 Israeli⁽¹⁾ until an open-ended ceasefire was announced on 27 August 2014 between Israel and Hamas, the governing political party in the territory. Among the damage and fatalities, an unprecedented number of buildings, property of the United Nations (UN) Relief and Works Agency (RWA), were damaged or destroyed, some the result of direct kinetic attacks. This is a concerning course of events, firstly for its violation of international humanitarian law (IHL) – those buildings being prolifically used for the shelter of civilians – and secondly for its implications of how this war is being fought, with UNRWA being systematically targeted in the past as a strategic attempt to shut its operation down to pursue the economic and social rights for Palestinian refugees in the Near East. The incidents over Operation Cast Lead, history and future of UNRWA are worth consideration.

UNRWA was founded in December 1949 in UN General Assembly (UNGA) Resolution 302, prior to the UN High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR), which was created in 1951. It grew from a recommendation of the UN Economic Survey Mission for the Middle East (also known as the Clapp Commission), which saw the Palestinian refugees as the paramount political issue and considered methods to relieve their conditions. The pre-dating of UNRWA explains its exclusion from the 1951 Refugee Convention, which restricts UNHCR's mandate from covering Palestinian refugees outside of UNRWA's areas of operation, while they are still in existence. UNRWA's role, therefore, is to provide relief protection i.e the provision of services that guarantee basic economic, social, and cultural rights⁽²⁾ in Palestine, Syria, Jordan and Lebanon, specifically to Palestinian displaced persons⁽³⁾, which makes it unique to any other UN agency as it focuses on one group of refugees.

UNRWA's human development and humanitarian services encompass primary and vocational education, primary health care, relief and social services, infrastructure and camp improvement, microfinance and emergency response, including in situations of armed conflict.⁽⁴⁾ It does this through over 200 installations throughout the Gaza Strip⁽⁵⁾. Many of these served as shelters for civilians during the 2014

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conflict, however, 118 installations were damaged or partially destroyed, of which 83 were schools and 10 were health centres⁽⁶⁾ plus three others. Five of those installations endured a total of seven direct kinetic hits.⁽⁷⁾ One of those schools was struck on two occasions; three of the five schools were funded by the United States of America (USA), and a fourth by the European Commission.⁽⁸⁾ The implications of seven direct hits on UN buildings that are protected under IHL are grave. The circumstances around the incidents are inconclusive and investigations are underway. A closer look at the facts around each incident is as follows:

1. Maghazi Preparatory Girls A/B School (21-22 July 2014)⁽⁹⁾

On 21 July 2014, a school in Maghazi was struck by explosive ordnance believed to have been fired by Israel, which injured one 'internally displaced person' (IDP).⁽¹⁰⁾ The school sheltered 1,000 IDPs and operated as a designated emergency shelter. UNRWA officials proceeded to investigate this incident the next morning but further shelling ensued. Pierre Krähenbühl, commissioner-general of UNRWA, declared, "This is a serious violation of United Nations' premises that could have had far-reaching human consequences."

2. Deir Al-Balah Preparatory School (23 July 2014)⁽¹¹⁾

Shortly after the Maghazi preparatory school was hit, an UNRWA school in Deir Al-Balah was struck on 23 July 2014 at 7.45am. The school, finished in 2013 and funded by the USA⁽¹²⁾, was sheltering approximately 1,500 IDP and five were wounded. UNRWA spokesman, Chris Gunness, declared, "This is the second time in three days that an UNRWA school has taken a direct hit from Israeli shelling and we again condemn this in the strongest possible terms."⁽¹³⁾

3. Beit Hanoun Elementary School A & D (24 July 2014)

The Beit Hanoun Elementary School A&D was an UNRWA school operating as a designated emergency shelter. It was hit by explosive projectiles causing multiple injuries and fatalities to IDPs taking refuge there on 24 July 2014. Prior to the strike, UNRWA had attempted to negotiate a pause to the fighting, as the security situation in Beit Hanoun was deteriorating and officials wished to relocate staff and IDPs to a safer location but approval never arrived.⁽¹⁴⁾ 11 people were killed (conflicting accounts⁽¹⁵⁾), including seven children⁽¹⁶⁾ and one UN worker⁽¹⁷⁾, while 110 were wounded, including 55 children and 31 women⁽¹⁸⁾.

4. ZAITOUN PREPARATORY GIRLS SCHOOL B

Eight were wounded in an attack on the Zaitoun Preparatory Girls School B that sheltered approximately 2,200 IDP.⁽¹⁹⁾ Little facts are currently known regarding this incident.

5. Jabalia Elementary Girls School (29 July 2014)

The UNRWA Elementary Girls school was shelled on the morning of the 29 July 2014.⁽²⁰⁾ The school sheltered 3,200 IDPs⁽²¹⁾, people died⁽²²⁾ (HRW state that 20 people died⁽²³⁾, including three children⁽²⁴⁾ and more than 100 were wounded⁽²⁵⁾). Five tank shells hit the school, fired by the IDF in response to mortar fire from its vicinity (HRW say that at least 10 Israeli munitions hit in and around the school⁽²⁶⁾). Inspection and evidence of the damage suggest 155mm artillery rounds were fired by the damage, including smoke, illumination, and standard high explosive shells, the last of which produces

extensive blast and fragmentation damage.⁽²⁷⁾ While the IDF say they responded to fire from militants in the area, investigations found that there was no evidence of close clashes or that Palestinian fighters were operating in the area.^{(28) (29)} UNRWA also informed the IDF 17 times of the shelter's location so as to avoid it.⁽³⁰⁾

As well as five direct hits, an attack on 3 August in the vicinity of an UNRWA school acting, as a shelter for approximately 3,000 IDPs in Rafah was responsible for killing nine people, including five children⁽³¹⁾ and one UN worker⁽³²⁾. The attack happened while people were in line for food⁽³³⁾ by IDF forces using a Spike missile, which hit the shelter's front gate while aiming at three Islamic Jihadists on motorcycles near the school, although this should not have happened so close to the shelter⁽³⁴⁾.

The IDF have stated they are looking into the facts of all of these cases, with action initiated in the case of the school in Beit Hanoun. Initially the IDF denied their involvement and said that this had been caused by Hamas⁽³⁵⁾, however, in a Human Rights Watch investigation, 'witnesses described at least four shells striking in and around the compound within a few minutes – a precision that would be extremely unlikely for errant Palestinian munitions. And there were no reports of Israeli troops near the school that might have led the Palestinians to fire mortar rounds there.'⁽³⁶⁾ The IDF Military Advocate General (MAG) consequently opened criminal investigations up and found grounds for a 'reasonable suspicion that the incident involved a deviation from IDF regulations' and as such has ordered a criminal investigation.⁽³⁷⁾ In addition to the MAG's inquiries, the UN will be responsible for a number of inquiries, including UNRWA's own board of inquiry and the Secretary General's. The Human Rights Council in Geneva has launched an independent, international commission of inquiry as outlined in Human Rights Council Resolution A/HRC/S-21/L.1⁽³⁸⁾, requested all the thematic rapporteurs (water, housing, indigenous people etc) to conduct investigations into the conflict and called on the Swiss government to convene a meeting of the High Contracting Parties of the Geneva Conventions.⁽³⁹⁾

The implications of these attacks are crimes under IHL, which states that all sides in a conflict must distinguish between military targets and civilians and civilian structures. Deliberate attacks that are made on the latter, such as homes, medical facilities, schools and government buildings, are considered war crimes..⁽⁴⁰⁾ In addition, attacks on UN buildings in particular are a crime in international law, enshrined in the Convention on the Safety of United Nations and Associated Personnel⁽⁴¹⁾, Article 7.

Under fire over the course of the conflict, UNRWA have reiterated the obligations of all parties under IHL and claimed the attacks on their installations contravene these obligations. Israel has criticised UNRWA for making declarations on international law, claiming this politicizes the conflict. However, Chris Gunness, UNRWA spokesperson, says 'the full protection of the human rights is one of the strategic objectives in our current medium term strategy, signed off on all our stakeholders and it is likely to be a key objective in our next five year plan. The protection of human rights is a humanitarian issue, for us, not a political one.' He also states that 'many of the human rights abuses that affect our beneficiaries would not be occurring if the political actors such as the US and the EU, those who can bring influence, were to take appropriate political action. Being non political, it is not for UNRWA to specify what that action would be. But clearly, those responsible have failed to take appropriate political action and human impact on the ground has been devastating.'⁽⁴²⁾

The impact on the ground has indeed been blighting for all of Gaza and UNRWA. UNRWA launched a flash appeal, which increased from \$22 million⁽⁴³⁾ to \$295.4 million⁽⁴⁴⁾ over the course of the two-month conflict, and \$1.56 million⁽⁴⁵⁾ was earmarked for repairs to UNRWA installations. At the time of writing UNRWA had achieved US\$237,713,843 of the total. The purpose of UNRWA is a mechanism for Palestinian refugees and displaced persons to achieve their economic and social rights and this mechanism is currently functioning and meeting the needs of the people of Gaza.

However, as Guinness states, 'this is no substitute for lifting the blockade for exports as well as imports'. The siege on Gaza needs to end, not least so UNRWA can function to its entirety but it is also 'an illegal collective punishment of 1.8 million people most of whom are children, it's humanitarian impact is devastating and it must end.'⁽⁴⁶⁾

Direct assaults on UNRWA installations, particularly those used as shelters, are not unique to the 2014 Gaza conflict, and also occurred in 2012 and 2008/09 by Israel. These have also been preceded by usually false claims by Israeli authorities that UNRWA has been harbouring weapons in these installations. The incident in 2014 was the first incident where weapons were found and these were reported immediately to the relevant parties to ensure that UNRWA's neutrality was not compromised. However, in 2012, Israel claimed that rockets were fired from UNRWA schools in Gaza but they were found to be false, and officially retracted by Israel.⁽⁴⁷⁾ In 2009, around 3:30pm on Tuesday, 6 January 2009, the Israeli artillery attacked the al-Fakhora School in Jabalia refugee camp in Gaza, killing over 42 people, including 14 children. Again, Israel claimed that Hamas militants had fired mortars from the location but this was not proven and the act violates the Fourth Geneva Convention and is therefore a war crime with individual criminal responsibility. This incident also made clear what crippling impact the blockade was having on the health sector and its capacity in times of conflict and many injured resulted in casualties because of this.⁽⁴⁸⁾

Another notable incident during the 2008/09 conflict occurred on 15 January 2009, when an UNRWA Field Office Compound was also targeted and burnt down with white phosphorous. The Secretary General convened a Board of Inquiry and concluded that 'on the basis of the information it received and in the absence of any credible refuting evidence that Israeli armed forces violated the customary international law requirement to take all feasible precautions in the choice of means and method of attack with a view to avoiding and in any event minimising incidental loss of civilian life, injury to civilians and damage to civilian objects as reflected in article 57 (2) (a) (ii) of Additional Protocol I to the Geneva Conventions'.⁽⁴⁹⁾ This resulted in the Government of Israel paying out a compensation of US\$10.5 million.⁽⁵⁰⁾

Why or if UNRWA has been deliberately targeted cannot be said without the fulfillment of the investigations that have been launched and the disclosure of their findings. Israel has been critical of the role of UNRWA in the past and it's role in the peace process as Palestinian refugees are not resettled through the UNHCR, claiming that no other refugee would be afforded such status after such a long term in history.⁽⁵¹⁾ Israel have asked the UN to close down UNRWA and the US Congress have been cyclically discussing the defunding of the Agency; Canada also withdrew their assistance in 2010.⁽⁵²⁾ These parties often claim that this is because they provide relief to those who do not need it and this boils down to the disagreement over the definition that UNRWA adopts for the term refugee, opposing the idea that a refugee can be deemed as such since 1948 and include the descendents of those displaced since such time frame. Palestinian refugees in other host nations, often enjoy the same rights and privileges as the citizens of those nations. In the Israeli view, those refugees should resettle in those countries and promote the cessation of the refugee status.⁽⁵³⁾ UNRWA's mandate, however, recognises the right of return for Palestinian refugees, therefore, resettlement is not the focus for these groups of people. They assert that this principle is not unique to the Palestinians and repatriation is the most favourable solution in any protracted refugee crisis. In fact if the mandate over Palestinian refugees in the near East were passed to UNHCR, this would not change as the principle is an aged recognised principle embedded in many UN and international law documentation. Therefore, UNRWA does not exist so as to enable a perceived agenda aimed at destabilising Israel due to mass re-settlement. However, the claims that allude to such theories are abundant and many believe that UNRWA conspire with Hamas in this regard.⁽⁵⁴⁾ Israeli media is rife with assertions that UNRWA is a tool of war for Hamas and evidentially weak claims that they harbour weapons in their installations.^{(55) (56)}

Despite this relentless discountenance of UNRWA, its continued existence is due to the political impasse of Israel's rejection of UNGA resolution 194 (III), which calls for the right of return of all Palestinian refugees, which would negate the need for UNRWA's services. Recipients of the agency have increased from 750,000 in the 1950s to circa 5 million today, which includes the descendents of refugees but only those registered and under its mandate; the Palestinian refugee population is even larger with numbers estimated at approximately seven million Palestinian refugees and 450,000 IDPs, 70% of the global Palestinian population. These numbers are growing day by day and are the direct result of Israeli policies.⁽⁵⁷⁾

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Dr. Khaleel Isa & Lauriane Pfeffer*

The Plight of Imagination – Imageless Palestine

Introduction

Reflections on the 2014 military operation Protective Edge conjure up many words of consternation and iniquity. Once again residents of the Gaza Strip endured rounds of war crime brutality, as the Israeli offensive forces have bombarded indiscriminately the densely packed residents of the Gaza enclave with Rocket attacks, cluster bombs and military fire. Though the immediate 2,100 human losses (including 500 children), 11,000 injuries and more than 108,000 homeless persons⁽¹⁾ from the Israeli bombings appear to be the most immediate horror, as the living Palestinians gasp for air to breath and to seek a place of safe refugee within the diminishing 25 mile Gaza Strip. The long lasting effects of this man-made war may impose a long term enduring psychological price onto the community members of Gaza.

Context

To contextualize it, the Gaza Strip is an oblique environment that Gaza residents have borne and must live in with little promising future. Entire communities have been wiped out akin to the aftermath of nuclear war. Children of seven to twelve years of age have seen and been exposed to three different wars, unable to view other outside experiences except images of abject poverty, ongoing war, religious martyrdom and an “enemy boogie man” (Israeli drones and warplanes) that can come to take the life of the family at any moment of their conscious existence⁽²⁾.

In the West Bank as well, Palestinian children and their families are chronically exposed to a variety of contextual and political stressors. If in Gaza the violence and the unpredictability of airstrikes and war make tremendous damages on the psychological state of the population by its intensity and brutality, inhabitants of the West Bank have to suffer from the monstrous and pervert shadow of the daily occupation⁽³⁾: they live among settlers and thousands of soldiers, exposing them on a daily basis to violence, injustice, humiliation, segregation and aggressions. In a context

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of political instability (both regarding the occupation situation and the young and sometimes hectic Palestinian authorities), Palestinian population have to cope every single day with military incursions, arrests, home demolitions and displacements inflicted by the Israeli army and settlers.

The stolen lands, the inability to move freely in the territories drastically increased the unemployment rates, creating therefore real economical issues, not to say poverty⁽⁴⁾. If obviously some traumatogenic factors are involved, like the war in Gaza, we'll also see that the trauma results from a construction process, and that this very specific context in Palestine led to base a complex societal functioning.

Definition of trauma

Historically the Israeli imposed illegal occupation has been the experience of the Palestinian people for over 65 years and continuing. As the economic and social devastating hardships increase both within the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, so have the heightened vacuum of psychological problems. The traumatic related stressors which are inflicted on the Palestinian people have developed into a diverse spectrum of inter-related psychological symptoms. Through the years as a psychologist in the field, people asked us recurrently if we treated a lot of traumatised people in our centre which we did⁽⁵⁾. But most importantly, what's noticeable is the whole net of psychological disorders encountered due to weakened family structures, damaged by decades of conflicts. As a result, children and adolescents present various mental health and developmental issues, temporary or more pervasive, from mild to severe disorders. Among those, we can count behavioral disorders (aggressiveness, opposition, motor instability and attention disorders), functional disorders (enuresis, non-organic sleep disorders, speech delay or psychomotor retardation), mood disorders (depression, relational withdraw, inhibition), mental retardation. Heavy pathologies are also encountered such as the pervasive developmental disorders (autism and child psychosis), that require specific skills and attention.

Trying to understand and identify the Palestinian symptoms which are related to their trauma, however, can be very difficult if one does not examine the severity and persistence of these related stressors. This is why it is crucial that before deepening oneself into what how trauma related symptoms impact the Palestinian people unconscious psyche, we must first define the meaning of trauma that is being shown. According to trauma expert Raija-Leena Punamäki⁽⁶⁾, trauma can be described as:

- a. The fluctuating nature of acute and/or grief reactions that can lead to complex characterological adaptations.
- b. A disturbed regulation of affective arousal that can ward off emotions, somatic sensations and alternating intrusion and numbing feelings about the catastrophic stress and event.
- c. The impaired capacity for cognitive integration of experience (dissociation).
- d. The impairment in the capacity to differentiate relevant from irrelevant information.

Clinical psychologists found the people who had the highest rate of Trauma related symptoms (PTSD, somatisation, dissociation, affect deregulation, anxiety and depression), were the ones who experienced both significant direct threats to their lives, witnessing horrifying exposure to mutilating injuries, grotesque death, and pervasive external trauma reminders⁽⁷⁾. One must only imagine how weathering the recent Gaza war this past summer of 2014, has had notable psychological depletion on the individuals and collective psychological development and imaginative thought process.

Specificity of the Palestinian trauma

Throughout the years, many clinical psychologists have specifically examined and researched how perpetrated violence creates a prevalence of comorbid stress reactions and depressive

symptomatology within the Gaza Palestinian child experience⁽⁸⁾. Psychologists often look at how psychological damage makes it difficult to function, to be successful in school, to have relationships with friends and family, to take care of oneself and at a more profound and deeper level to deal with stress reactions and depressive symptoms as a part of their daily reality.

Behind those numbers, we can also highlight specificities in the Palestinian situation, beyond the statement of labeling people with PTSD, which is a short-cut used way too much. The impact of repeated conflicts on the mental health of the population has way deeper consequences, in the structures of families and society itself.

One must remember that when the war happened this summer in Gaza (Operation Protective Edge), the previous one (Pillars of Defense, November 2012) had not been digested, nor the one before that (Cast Lead, January 2009). In order to go over a traumatic experience, a mentalisation of the experience must be done, meaning that the experience of dying has to be passed and requires the ability to build safe internal representations: I didn't die. I won't die. The ultimate question is how to build a future or the representation of a future where I'm alive when an entire society lives in constant fear of death legitimately reactivated on a regular basis? This accumulation of traumatic experiences (as mentioned, some children as young as 10 have already survived three wars in the Gaza strip) doesn't allow those safe internal zones when the social structure is regulated by burials and arrests. What future is that? The uncertainty of security issues and precariousness of the living conditions do not gather the conditions to rebuild a solid psychological state.

Another factor doesn't ease this reconstruction: the multigenerational dimension of trauma and its transmission. One must keep in mind that children experiencing difficult situations and/or traumatic experience are raised by parents that are facing and have faced the very same things repetitively, as did their parents before them. Therefore one ponders the effects of repetitive trauma has on the entire family structure and shared unconscious. How does the family support their children well-being, offer hope for a better future, when it's difficult for the parents to seek the psychological support that they need themselves? Acute levels of stress and insecurity are then observed both on children and their caregivers. We can think of the work of Torok and Abraham as they conceptualised the transmission of trauma from one generation to another⁽⁹⁾. without any other possibility to consciously elaborate around an inadmissible experience. The unspeakable remains as such and creates a poisoning psychic enclave, burying the hope of a smooth healing process. How can we possibly imagine a healthy recovery when traumatic daily exposure goes on for 70 years? In the daily life as well, how can a depressed or prostrated parent possibly transmit the idea of a sure and safe psychic space for his child? As a result, what we see in the clinical work is not an endless list of PTSD children, but a whole new generation who relies on an unconscious fragile family and societal structure, hampered by a lack of consistency for a healthy known.

However, all the Palestinian children are not dysfunctional; on the contrary, they've developed an impressive panel of resilience mechanisms that allow them to cope in daily life. They grow, play, laugh, learn, love, fight, despite the situation. But what we also notice is the creation of a pattern of normality in the narrative of the trauma: the Palestinian wound participates in the creation of a unity, an identity in the collectiveness that holds the entire society.

Imagination and trauma

People are also keen to pay attention to Gaza and do research when bombs are being dropped, wondering how to rebuild the very essence of one's life which has been destroyed repeatedly. Yet to this date there are only very few studies conducted on the Israeli policy of the destruction of children's imaginations. Palestinian deaths are not only immanent through food shortages and indiscriminate killings, but also through a policy of destroying the subjective hope to unconsciously and consciously imagine. This is called "The plight of the imagination".

The plight of the imagination is rarely spoken of. This article's desire is to begin to explore the construction and deconstruction of the imaginative thought as a process and the effect of the extermination of peoples' images of archived memories. The geopolitical imposition on the Palestinian Society has created a forced fragmented thought process, in mirror of the Apartheid Wall: what is happening in the "Palestinian Archipelago" finds its echo in the psyche of its population.

For instance, observing Palestinian children while they play is quite interesting: games are more of a mimic of what is seen in their life, rather than a creation of the mind, where fantasies and dreams can blossom. Children replay the resistance, the intifada, the arrests, and the burials. Although this form of symbolical coping and working through their mourning and grieving process is called resilience, this mechanism to cope comes with a price hampering the imagination. While assessing the situation in the field of child detention⁽¹⁰⁾ and interviewing ex-detainees as young as 12 years old, it was quite striking to figure out how poor their capacity to project themselves in the future was. The complex issues that those (mainly) boys have to face (traumatic arrest, terror and feeling of total helplessness of the families, mistreatment and sometimes torture during interrogation and detention) made their return into the "normal" life an almost impassable challenge. Caught into a vicious circle (they are now the proud image of the resistance, they fought bravely for the freedom of their country, but at the same time stigmatised by society), the innocence of their childhood has been destroyed. The simple and normally easy ability of abstraction, of imagining what their dreams and their future could just be, simply disappear. They are caught in between anger and prostration, making it challenging to have the freedom of imagination.

One should also celebrate how the imagination can psychologically tolerate the life inside a large open prison confinement space; the yearning for more than two hours of electricity per day, dental caries inducing consumption of unsanitary water (that is incidentally producing a potential health epidemic (WHO 2013); experiencing the loss and death of many loved ones causing the mind to numb to anything except expecting loss of life; and waking up every night fearful of the sounds that rise over homes, uncertain if it is their time to die in their sleep while saying goodbye to their children for they are not sure if they will see them again after they close their eyes.

The questions that arise include whether the systemic forcible removal of the Palestinians from their land creates a constructed psychological traumatic rift that the attachment to a healthy Palestinian imagination became a desired hope versus a healing archived reality. Could an aggressive ideology such as the Zionist Movement (land without of people for a people without a land) be constructed to form a trauma narrative, which its goal is to develop catastrophic repercussions to the Palestinian imagination and hope? Could a new constructed narrative be used to help create an ideological defense mechanism when dealing with unspeakable traumas and major losses?

The connection also needs to be made between the impact of the 2014 war crimes in Gaza and concurrent wars (Operation Cast Lead 2008, Operation Pillar of Defense in 2012) and subsequent injustices. After the third major offensive in less than ten years it is worth exploring how this would impact the imagination and thought process of the children and people in Gaza in order to create a new climate of resiliency and urgency of reclaiming their ancestral identity and memories.

To explore this, one would need to examine and interpret the imagination and how it creates a space to hold and bridge the world we all live and want to build a life on. Whether imagination can be constructed and deconstructed by forces greater than oneself and the possibility that the brain of the unborn child still in the womb can become overly stimulated by negative emotions and violent images threatening imaginative thought processes.

These questions are posed to the outside thinker when trying to understand the 60 plus years of occupation that displaced Palestinians to become subjugated objects. Displaced Gazan children have often experienced little beyond images of loved ones falling victim to drones and airplane missiles,

the destruction of one's safe playground space and the ongoing fear of expected death to develop a sense of loving self in a world of constructed nepotism. And yet, the ongoing stories that arise by so many living there talk about the resilience and the will to love life and hope that GOD and the People of Gaza will reconstruct a safe space for the new generations to come.

The just narrative of Palestine can only be fully reconstructed when the end of the story finishes with freedom for an empowered people who have been subjugated to live under the images that Israeli Military narratives have constructed onto their daily lives. Until the refugees are able to see beyond the military zones, the destructed daily images within their communities, the possibility for healing the wounded children and their physical pains, the narrative stories will still be focused on loving life and resembling pieces of life together in times of horror and crimes against humanity. As a psychologist and humanist would say, one cannot expect any true interventions for the pained soul until the soul is given the choice for their own destiny and free will. Until this happens the imagination of the blinded caged refugee will never truly get a chance to choose but have imposing symbols placed by outside choices that are not of their own free intentions.

Endnotes:

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- (4) The World Health Organisation has examined how Palestinian children in Gaza are on what the Israeli military leadership has called a starvation diet. According to their reports, 80% of Palestinian children live on less than \$1 a day. They are at levels of which one calls poverty and extreme poverty, with extensive food insecurity and their average birth height and weight are below what is considered basic international norm values for children the same age.
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Leah Morrison*

Discrimination and the Abuse of Human Rights Characterises the Current Plight of Palestinian Refugees from Syria

The Syrian conflict is now nearing its fourth year anniversary, which has seen over three million people forced to seek refuge in neighbouring countries. In addition to its citizens, some 270,000⁽¹⁾ - over half of Syrian's Palestinian population - have been displaced, either within or outside the country. Without a doubt, the conflict has affected all people from Syria, regardless of their religion or ethnicity, however Palestinians from Syria have been severely and disproportionately affected, which is visible through the reception they have received by different host states.

It is estimated that there currently exists nearly seven million Palestinian refugees around the world⁽²⁾. Their status is complex and characterised by the continuous interplay of legal, humanitarian, political and socio-economic factors. Palestinian refugees have lived under a variety of national jurisdictions, and thus experienced different treatment depending on the national and regional mechanisms outlining their status and applicable rights.

Prior to the Syria conflict, in both law and practice, Palestinian refugees in Syria were treated on a par with Syrian citizens. They were provided with the full range of socio-economic rights enjoyed by Syrian nationals bar citizenship and political rights. Their legal status is codified in Law 260⁽³⁾ of 1956, which states:

Palestinians residing in Syria as from the date of publication of this law are to be considered as originally Syrian in all things covered by the law and legally valid regulations connected with the right to employment, commerce and national service, while preserving their original nationality.

Through the provision of rights on par with Syrian citizens, Palestinians successfully settled and integrated into society. Palestinians in Syria had the same privileges and responsibilities as Syrian nationals, did not require work permits and had the right to attend Syrian secondary schools. Due to their economic stability, 70% of Palestinian refugees in Syria acquired the means to move out of refugee camps and establish residence as self-settled refugees.⁽⁴⁾ In addition to these rights, Palestinians were also permitted to move freely within Syria and were provided with full access to government services. Syria is the only UNRWA host country to have done so.⁽⁵⁾

The Syrian conflict has now had a devastating impact on the Palestinian community. Once again Palestinians have found themselves uprooted by

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war, without the provisions for, or respect of, basic human rights. The effects of the conflict are compounded by their inherent vulnerability and inadequate international and regional protection mechanisms. Having fled Syria, the Palestinian community have become refugees again; and the problems associated with their uniquely vulnerable status in international law is evident in the abuses committed by the surrounding Arab states and the discrimination they endure. The forcible removal of Palestinians from their territories means that Arab states have contravened the principles of non-refoulement, which prohibits countries from sending back to his or her country, a person who has a reasonable fear of persecution.

Moreover, the United Nations Relief and Work Agency for Palestinian Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), the sole UN agency permitted to assist Palestinian refugees in its host states, is in chronic deficit, while the UN High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) benefits from international funding. As a result, Syrian refugees are receiving much higher levels of protection and assistance.

The current legal framework for the protection of Palestinian refugees has fallen short of providing a heightened protection scheme. The effects of this shortfall have been seen throughout history since the creation of the state of Israel in 1948; the plight of PRS is the most recent example of this. This article will specifically focus on the reception received by PRS in Jordan, Lebanon and Egypt; countries which have received the vast majority of Palestinians fleeing the Syrian conflict.⁽⁶⁾

Lebanon

As of April 2014, over 53,000 PRS were seeking refuge from the Syrian conflict in Lebanon. They join approximately 450,000 Palestinians already living in Lebanon, suffering from poverty, unemployment and overcrowding.⁽⁷⁾

Poverty and unemployment is endemic in the Palestinian refugee community and can only worsen with the added burden of increasing numbers of those entering from Syria. With the right to work severely restricted, PRS are often unable to support themselves or their families. As a result, more than half of the Palestinian population in Lebanon lives in poverty.⁽⁸⁾ Lebanese economics play a role in the obstacles faced by Palestinians as Lebanon enjoys a higher GDP than Syria, translating into a higher cost of living. Lebanon's free-market economy lacks many of the social welfare benefits for those beneath the poverty line resulting in many PRS entering cramped and over-populated refugee camps, which contain inadequate sanitation facilities and where access to health, education and livelihood opportunities are dismal.⁽⁹⁾ In Lebanon, Palestinian refugee camps have not been integrated into the economy of the surrounding areas and are thus 'closed off' from Lebanese society and the opportunities therein.⁽¹⁰⁾

The imposition of strict rules against modifications, extensions or improvements of the conditions of the camps has meant that refugees live in even extremere population density in already overcrowded camps. In light of the restrictions, there is no choice but to extend upwards, most often on top of unstable foundations and infrastructure.⁽¹¹⁾

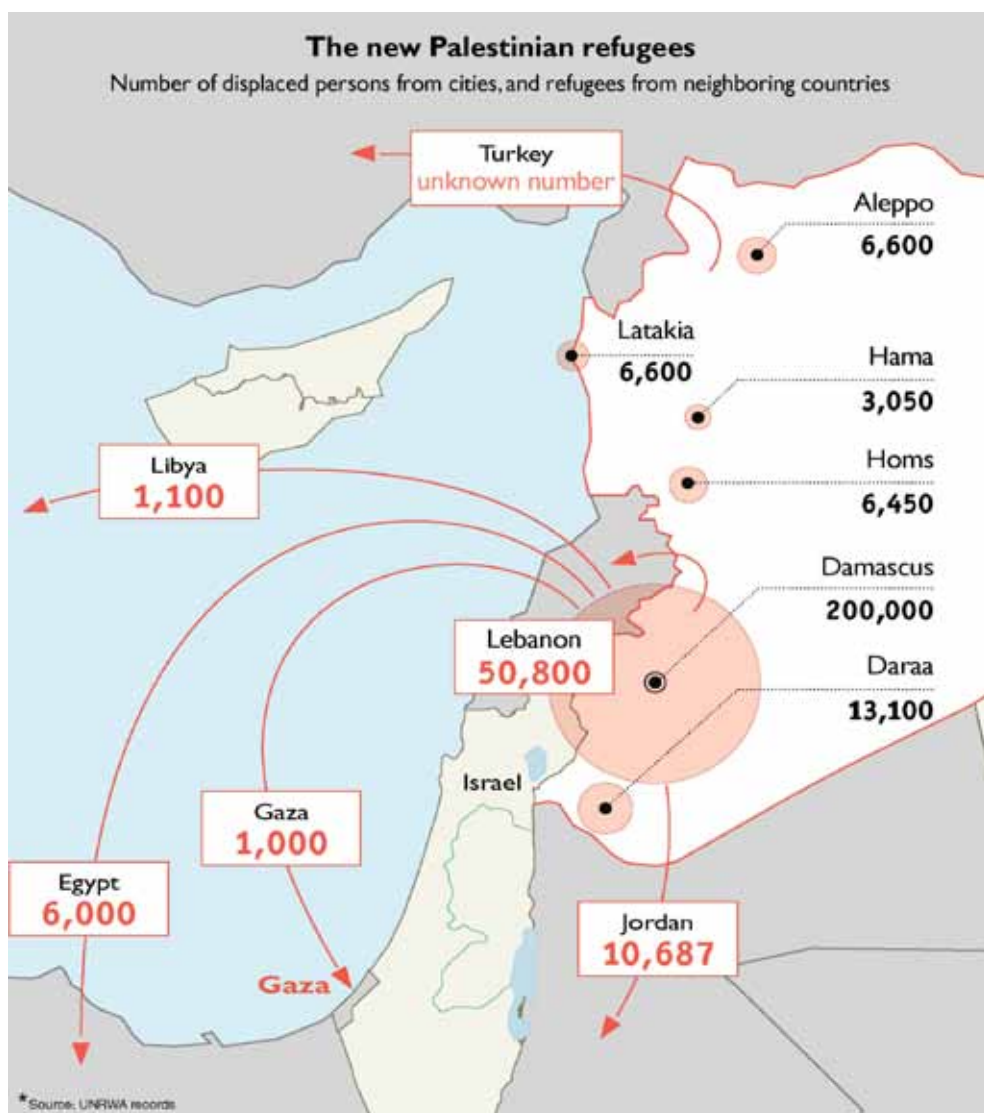
Lebanon is becoming an increasingly desperate option, in light of the hardship and discrimination encountered by PRS when they enter the country. Initially, PRS had to pay higher entrance fees than their Syrian national counterparts,⁽¹²⁾ and subsequently encountered horrific and deteriorating conditions. Competition for the few odd jobs available to Palestinians in Lebanon intensified, undercutting already abysmal wages, driving up housing costs, and aggravating tensions in camps.⁽¹³⁾

A Human Rights Watch report in 2010 stated that Palestinians have long been treated as second-class residents who live in "appalling social and economic conditions."⁽¹⁴⁾ Both Syrian nationals and PRS fled Syria due to conflict, but their experience in Lebanon has been disparate. International response to the particular needs of PRS' has been markedly less than for the general

Syrian population, according to a recent report by American Near East Refugee Aid (ANERA).⁽¹⁵⁾ As of May 2014, under new government restrictions imposed by the Ministry of Interior, PRS must demonstrate that they meet strict criteria including an entry permit approved by the General Security, a residency of one to three years, or a Lebanese exit and return permit. If they do not meet these criteria, they must show that they are merely transiting through the country. Such restrictions do not apply to Syrians.

More recently, Amnesty International reported on evidence found, which pointed to a strict policy to deny PRS entry into the country. The evidence was discovered in a leaked document from security services instructing airlines that were using the main Beirut airport not to transport PRS, regardless of their documentation.

The labyrinth of discrimination and segregation known to the existing Palestinian population in Lebanon has resulted in many of the PRS feeling that Syria, despite the violence, offers a more dignified lifestyle and the ability to live within their means.



Jordan

Historically, Jordan has been a country of destination for many refugees fleeing persecution in the Near and Middle East and the Syrian conflict has been no different. Since the beginning of the conflict, Jordan has opened its doors to over 560,000 Syrian refugees to seek refuge and move freely around the country.⁽¹⁶⁾ Of those, as of April 2014, nearly 14,000 PRS had fled to Jordan and sought assistance from UNRWA.⁽¹⁷⁾ But despite the invariable circumstances for their flight from Syria, PRS are treated differently in Jordan as well.

The outset of the Syrian conflict has witnessed detention of all refugees seeking asylum in Jordan; if they had not passed through an official border or are without identity documents. These refugees were immediately taken to Cyber City. Cyber City is a holding centre, located in a walled complex near the town of Irbid, where residents are not permitted to leave the immediate vicinity: reports estimate the complex to be a mere 30 meters. Currently, any Palestinian fleeing Syria, regardless of documentation, is taken to Cyber City.⁽¹⁸⁾

Syrian refugees who have not crossed into Jordan through an official border are also sent to Cyber City on arrival. However, once Syrian nationals can establish identity, pass a security clearance and obtain a Jordanian guarantor, they are permitted to leave and move freely within Jordan.⁽¹⁹⁾ This 'bail-out' procedure, as it is known, was available to PRS at the beginning of the conflict but was subsequently revoked.⁽²⁰⁾

The UNHCR Guidelines on the Detention of Asylum Seekers⁽²¹⁾ defines detention as confinement within a narrowly bounded or restricted location, including prisons, closed camps, detention facilities or airport transit zones, where freedom of movement is substantially curtailed. The confinement of PRS in Cyber City amounts to detention under the UNHCR definition. Similarly, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), to which Jordan is signatory, strictly prohibits arbitrary detention and states that no one should be deprived of their liberty except in exceptional cases, which must only be permitted through legally established grounds. Furthermore, the legality of the detention must be reviewable by the court. Neither the legal grounds for this type of detention nor the possibility of the detention to be reviewed by the court exists regarding PRS detainment in Cyber City.

Officially, Jordan allows entry to PRS who hold Jordanian citizenship. However in practice Jordan has denied entry to those whose documents have expired. According to Human Rights Watch⁽²²⁾ Jordanian authorities have detained and arbitrarily revoked the Jordanian citizenship of ten PRS and forcibly returned them to Syria. Jordanian security services have detained and forcibly returned over 100 Palestinians to Syria since the beginning of 2013, according to the Syria Needs Analysis Project (SNAP).⁽²³⁾ This is in clear violation of the international principle of non-refoulement.

In early 2013, the Government of Jordan announced its restriction policy on the entry of Palestinians fleeing the Syrian conflict, which substantially stemmed the flow of Palestinian refugees from Syria into Jordan.⁽²⁴⁾ In a statement made by Prime Minister, Abdullah Ensour, he stated, 'Jordan has made a clear and explicit sovereign decision to not allow the crossing to Jordan of our Palestinian brethren who hold Syrian documents.'⁽²⁵⁾ As a result of the Jordanian government's policy, many PRS lack proper residency papers in Jordan, rendering them vulnerable to exploitation, arrest, and deportation. PRS cannot legally live in the official refugee camps that have been established for Syrians, but also cannot legally work to earn money to rent housing outside the camps. Due to Jordan's no-entry policy towards Palestinians, those who have managed to enter Jordan, whether irregularly or at the beginning of the conflict when Jordan allowed Palestinians to enter, live in constant fear of being forced back to Syria.⁽²⁶⁾

Jordan's non-refoulement obligation applies to its territories as well as its borders. In October 2004,

UNHCR ExCom issued Conclusion 99, which calls for States to ensure full respect for the fundamental principle of non-refoulement, including non-rejection at frontiers without access to fair and effective procedures for determining status and protection needs.

The situation of PRS in Jordan demonstrates that in times of crisis, the status of Palestinians in international law allows for them to be among the first groups to be denied protection, assistance or basic human rights. The ICCPR prohibits discrimination based on nationality and the Jordanian government is in clear violation of the covenant through affording a different set of rules to PRS and Syrian nationals.

Egypt

UNRWA estimates that approximately 4,000 PRS have fled to Egypt since the beginning of the Syrian conflict.⁽²⁷⁾ Exact numbers are impossible to obtain as registering Palestinian refugees in Egypt is complicated, primarily as a result of the government's incorrect application of Article 1(D) of the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees (1951 Convention).

Egyptian authorities have placed restrictions on UNHCR registering Palestinian refugees in their territory, asserting that it is the responsibility of UNRWA, which retains only a liaison office in Cairo⁽²⁸⁾ Egypt is not one of UNRWA's 'operational areas', therefore Palestinian refugees (including those recently arriving from Syria) are entitled, as a matter of International Law, to the benefits of the 1951 Convention and come under the mandate of UNHCR. UNHCR had begun to register PRS when the Egyptian government had ordered the Agency to stop. The Egyptian authorities only permit UNHCR to advise and assist Palestinian refugees but not register them, which essentially would open up the possibility for third country resettlement and enable PRS to receive access to critical services such as subsidised healthcare. Egypt has continued to incorrectly interpret Article 1(D) of the 1951 Convention, resulting in the extreme vulnerability of PRS and a lack of protection and assistance from either UNHCR or UNRWA.

Until the coup against former President Morsi in July 2013, PRS found Egypt to be more hospitable than other countries surrounding Syria.⁽²⁹⁾ Nevertheless, refugees in Egypt are severely affected by the country's ever changing political dynamics and after the coup, a growing culture of xenophobic sentiments increased the harassment towards refugees from Syria, both Syrian and Palestinian. Rumors began that refugees from Syria had supported the former President and the Muslim Brotherhood, which led to a change in the attitude towards refugees from Syria at both the local and national level.⁽³⁰⁾

These increasingly desperate conditions for PRS in Egypt have forced many to risk their lives by fleeing to Europe in hopes of a better life. Recent boat sinking incidents have demonstrated the extremely poor conditions and treatment afforded to refugees who have fled from Syria, including the event on 11 October 2013 when an over-crowded boat heading for the small Italian island of Lampedusa, which sank killing approximately 12 people.⁽³¹⁾ The Egyptian Law of Entry, Article 2 and 3 prohibits the departure of foreigners by entering or leaving Egypt without valid documentation or at an official border crossing. Egyptian authorities have detained over 1,500 refugees from Syria while either at sea, in harbour or in some cases merely near to the coast, on suspicion that they are preparing to illegally leave Egypt. These refugees, most of who have since been released, were held on charges of violating these laws.

Egypt has also been forcibly returning PRS back to Syria through coercion, advising them that the only way to exit detention is to return to Syria. However, they have also been pressuring detained refugees into signing declarations stating that they are leaving Egypt voluntarily.⁽³²⁾

Human Rights Watch⁽³³⁾ reports that since August 2013, Egyptian authorities have detained over 250

Syrian and PRS children. They have been kept in overcrowded and unsanitary conditions without provisions for their basic needs. Detaining children solely based on immigration status (or that of their parents) violates the Convention on the Rights of the Child to which Egypt is a party. Unaccompanied children are also being detained despite having family nearby and are held with unrelated adults, not adequately considering what is in the best interest of the child.⁽³⁴⁾

PRS and Syrian refugees both suffer from the consequences of the created xenophobic atmosphere in Egypt, through discrimination, acts of violence and heightened suspicion towards refugees. Arbitrary arrests have resulted in Syrian refugees and PRS being kept in overcrowded and unsanitary prison facilities with no provisions to meet their basic needs. For both Syrian refugees and PRS, occurrences of violence, indefinite detention, and forced return continue to be a daily threat.

Conclusion

The Syrian crisis is truly tragic, having consumed Syria for nearly four years and with no end in sight. Among the nearly three million Syrians that have fled the country since 2011, there are approximately 270,000 Palestinians (half of the Palestinian population who used to live in Syria) that are now refugees for a second or third time. The struggles of PRS have attracted far less media attention, but their fate is much worse. Those who fled to Lebanon, Jordan and Egypt have found non-existent or extremely little support and cannot return to Syria since two-thirds of Palestinian camps have been destroyed or caught up in the conflict.

The treatment, protection and assistance provided to Palestinian refugees in the Arab states surrounding Syria has thus far, been inadequate, discriminatory and very often in blatant violation of International law. Instances of discriminatory treatment, forced return, indefinite detention, border closures, detention of minors, violence and xenophobic attitudes characterises the current treatment of PRS in the Near and Middle East. Having been instrumental in excluding Palestinian refugees from the ambit of the 1951 Convention and mandate of UNHCR, Arab states vowed to protect, assist and treat Palestinian refugees on par with their own citizens. However, these commitments made in the Casablanca Protocol have proved empty and the Palestinian community continues to struggle on a daily basis for survival and basic human rights.

Despite commendable efforts in providing for the increasing number of refugees arriving at their borders, Jordan, Lebanon and Egypt must provide asylum, treatment and status without discrimination and in line with international humanitarian principles.

For Syrian refugees, a possibility exists that in the future they will be able to return to their country, yet the return of the Palestinian community to Syria is much more complex. The Syrian conflict has caused a rapid deterioration of the once independent Palestinian community in Syria. Palestinian refugees face additional threats in post-conflict Syria that the Syrian population does not; such as the possible inability to reintegrate back into society. Syria's capacity to absorb Palestinian refugees initially stemmed from favourable economic conditions at the time and the relatively small numbers that sought refuge in the country over 60 years ago.

The economic situation in Syria is extremely detrimental to Palestinians as on return to Syria they may be faced with limited work opportunities and discrimination. The initial attempts by the Assad regime to label the Palestinian community in Syria as "foreigners", demonstrates the xenophobic shift that has already begun to take place and the likelihood of further marginalisation in post-conflict Syria. In addition, the number of Palestinian refugees in Syria requiring assistance from UNRWA has increased dramatically from six percent prior to the conflict, to currently over 90%. The once partially independent Palestinian community in Syria has now crumbled leaving them largely reliant on UNRWA and funding from the international community.

The UN, bearing partial responsibility for the Palestinian exodus through acknowledgment of the state of Israel and subsequently passing Resolution 194, engraining the right to return and continued refugee status of Palestinians, must ensure the harmonisation of protection and services across both UNRWA and UNHCR, ensuring that all refugees in need receive the same protection and assistance.

The international community must share the refugee burden through increasing the funding to refugee receiving countries and UNRWA in order to equip these entities with the ability to provide for the refugee population. The international community must also provide and increase the amount of spaces available for resettlement. Due to the proximity of the Syrian conflict to Europe, the European Union (EU) must continue to explore and further implement procedures providing safe entry into the EU in order to minimise irregular entry and its subsequent effects.

The Syrian conflict demonstrates what will continue to happen to the Palestinian community under the current regional and international legal framework surrounding the protection of Palestinian refugees. While Syrian nationals may eventually return to their home country, for Palestinians from Syria their future is increasingly uncertain and they are forced to live with their inherent vulnerability until circumstances surrounding their status change.

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Ibrahim Al-Ali*

The Siege of Yarmouk Camp

The two year and counting conflict in Syria has had a profound effect on its people including the Palestinian refugees that have been hosted by the State of Syria in various camps throughout the country. Ibrahim Al-Ali, a researcher with the Action Group for Palestinians of Syria, prepared a report documenting the impact the conflict had had on Palestinian refugees during the first half of 2014, spanning a number of camps throughout Europe and the Middle East and North Africa region. Al Yarmouk camp was one such camp, within Syria itself, which was documented and has endured a frightful ordeal and siege while the fighting plays out amongst it. The following represents excerpts from the report on Al Yarmouk camp during the period between January and August 2014.

The Field and Humanitarian Reality of the Palestinian Camps and Compounds in Syria

Palestinian refugee camps have not witnessed any improvement in Syria during the first half of 2014 and events experienced by them varied depending on their location. The Jaramana area witnessed a serious escalation of violence as a result of its proximity to Maliha town, which has been considered a point of constant struggle for nearly three months. The camps that are located in the city of Aleppo (Alnairab and Handarat) also witnessed military action and has been bombed by missiles and explosive barrels.

Meanwhile a relative calm in shelling and clashes has been recorded in the Yarmouk refugee camp in light of the continued blockade, due to an improvement in humanitarian aid and getting out the hard and existing critical cases and students. Nevertheless, this calm dissipated after the failure of efforts to neutralise the camp and the implementation of the suggested initiative to resolve the crisis. In Khan Al Sheih refugee camp the pace of the bombing with explosive barrels was increased on the camp and the surrounding farms. Khan Dannoun refugee camp as well witnessed clashes between the Free Army and members of General Command - PFLP. In Daraa camp, suffering continued as well as it did in towns, where Palestinian refugees and displaced persons are residing e.g. Muzeireeb, Yadodeh and others.

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Residents of the besieged Palestinian camp of Yarmouk, queuing to receive food supplies, in Damascus, AP

The Yarmouk Camp

The Yarmouk camp is still subject to the siege imposed on it since mid-July 2013 by the Regular Army and security committees loyal to it from the members of PFLP-General Command and the forces of "National Defense." The first half of 2014 has witnessed the fall of more victims because of the imposed blockade, the number of victims that have suffered from hunger as a result of the siege during January 2014, is 61 people in addition to others who died because of shelling and hostilities. This brings the total number of those who were killed in Yarmouk to 926 as documented by the Action Group since the beginning of the crisis until the first of May 2014. However, documented statistics insured that the number of victims during the first half of the year reached 461 and 219 of them are from the Yarmouk refugee camp.

UNRWA's spokesperson, Chris Gunness, called on all parties to the conflict to stop hostilities and immediately allow the resumption of aid distribution; he also expressed the agency's deep concern about the dire humanitarian situation in the camp, including the frequent use of armed force which hindered efforts to ease the plight of civilians.

He repeated UNRWA's strong demand for all parties to resolve disputes through peaceful means and urged all concerned to allow and facilitate the immediate resumption of food distribution to civilians inside Yarmouk.

Repeated appeals have been made by Syrian State medical Organisation, the Organisation of the Syrian Red Crescent, to address urgent solutions to health problems. However, the camp still suffers from a significant shortage of medical staff, an acute shortage of drugs and increased dehydration.

In the same context, the UN warned of a humanitarian catastrophe, where UNRWA confirmed that more than 20,000 civilians are at risk of starvation, after the collapse of a fragile agreement between the parties of the Syrian conflict to allow the introduction of food. Chris Gunness told the

Independent newspaper that “the situation in the Yarmouk camp was already miserable, and now it has become more than miserable.”

In terms of education, relief agencies and institutions in the Yarmouk refugee camp have announced that during the blockade, the teaching process will stop due to the spread of disease among the students, such as anemia and hepatitis.

Breaking the Siege Agreements between Activation and Deactivation

There is an air of pessimism among the people of the camp as the parties to the conflict in Syria have failed to resolve/ find the will to resolve the Yarmouk crisis – accusations over the responsibility to do so, exchanging hands.

1. This inaction has caused official and popular mobility to break the siege on the Yarmouk refugee camp and the implementation of provisions of the suggested initiative during the past year “in cooperation with the official authorities to settle the situation of the militants and the withdrawal of all armed groups from the camp to ensure that it is free of weapons and insurgents and the return of the camp to what it was previously safe area”⁽¹⁾.

The PLO delegation headed by Dr. Zakaria Agha, held a series of meetings with Syrian and Palestinian officials, in the framework of neutralising the Palestinian camps of enagement in the ongoing crisis. The meetings called for positive neutrality in dealing with the political crisis and its repercussions. The delegation promised that they would not leave Damascus until resolving this crisis but then suddenly withdrew without achieving any positive steps on the ground.

On 2 January 2014, the National Civil Palestinian Commission announced the basic principles of the agreement on the initiative to resolve the Yarmouk camp crisis and neutralise it in the Syrian war, which stated that:

1. Militants leave the camp and do not return.
2. Redeployment of Palestinian militants in the vicinity of the Yarmouk refugee camp and this joint positioning will be in the first and second row of buildings starting from the west of the Court until Street 30.
3. The Entry of the popular Palestinian and Syrian Commission from residents of the camp, made up of 50 people to make sure that the Yarmouk camp is free of arms and militants.
4. While the popular Committee is doing its task, a technical committee (engineering units) will detect explosives in the Yarmouk camp.
5. Groups of Palestinian factions, who agree to the initiative, spread through the vicinity of the Yarmouk camp to prevent the entry of weapons and militants from outside the camp and cooperate with the joint protection of the camp and neutralised it.
6. The bulldozers open the necessary and required roads for relief and entry of civilians.
7. The committee will count Yarmouk camp residents and register nominal lists to make the food basket distribution easy.
8. All roads leading to the Yarmouk camp are closed to prevent any vehicles carrying militants or weapons from entering the camp.
9. No militants in the camp vicinity are allowed to roam with his weapon in the camp.
10. The militant groups in the Yarmouk camp should be from the supporters of the neutralisation agreement in order to make it succeed.

11. Admission of food items and medical material to the Yarmouk camp and distribution of receipts according to available records, once the camp is empty of militants and weapons, and are redeployed in the vicinity of the camp and open roads leading to the camp are closed.
12. Phase two will be directly implemented in the Palestinian area.⁽²⁾

On 11 January 2014, the Palestinian national faction groups in Syria held a meeting to discuss developments in the Yarmouk refugee camp as well as other Palestinian camps due to the aggravated living conditions. The factions emphasised their strict adherence to the Palestinian initiative, which expressed that the Palestinian national assent and their intension to resume efforts to relieve the people of the camp. They also agreed on a number of concrete practical procedures, as they called on all armed groups to withdraw and clear the camp out of arms and the return of its residents.

The factions negotiated with those parties to the conflict and called for an open and safe road in order for UNRWA to deliver food and medical supplies to the camp and remove the injured who were in critical condition or physically disabled in order for them to receive better treatment.

They also demanded that the entry of the follow-up committee in charge of the factions be facilitated. This was in order for a dialogue to be facilitated with both those armed groups required to evacuate the camp but also with institutions, civil society and community organisations with the objective of alleviating the suffering of the remaining families inside and outside the camp; and also to work with the official Syrian authorities to give amnesty to the gunmen wanting to exit the camp and continue efforts with official authorities for the release of detainees, innocent and found inculpable of the militant activity in question..

Meanwhile, the camp witnessed the implementation of the initiative's first steps: the distribution of food; the extraction of those in need of urgent care; university and school students, who's education had been interrupted, were also evacuated; and the joint Palestinian force was spread throughout the vicinity of the camp. On 10 February 2014, the Secretary of the Palestinian Committee for National Dialogue in Yarmouk, Rateb Shehab, announced that the armed strangers started to withdraw from the main crossings outside the administrative borders of the Yarmouk refugee camp, which marked the beginning of the practical implementation of the initiative of the Palestinian national agreement in the camp. Mr. Shehab added that it has been decided to bring the Palestinian committee dialogue back to the camp immediately to put the necessary arrangements and take the necessary actions that will bring life back to the camp and to return it to what it was before 17 December 2012, in preparation for the return of hundreds of thousands of displaced Palestinians and the Syrians to their homes.

On 1 March 2014, gunmen were redeployed inside the camp with the pretext that implementation of the initiative would slowdown.

On 3 March 2014, the factions condemned the new aggression on the Yarmouk refugee camp and its impact the security and safety of the camp, and they demanded them to leave.

On 15 March 2014, the delegation of the PLO met with the 14 Palestinian factions at the Palestinian National Council headquarters in Damascus. After meetings with the political and security Syrian leadership, the delegation stressed the resumption of working on the implementation of the national initiative from the point that it had stopped; re-form of the negotiating team, so that it contained balanced contingent to reflect the Palestinian national agreement and the unified agenda of coalition parties, PLO and Palestinian Embassy; immediate contact with active armed groups in the Yarmouk refugee camp to work on the withdrawal of armed militants from the camp and the redeployment of the Palestinian joint force on the outskirts of the camp and the closure of roads leading to it except the main entrance (the bridge). The Yarmouk police station was to be to enable policemen to police

and secure the camp, and to record the of the Palestinian armed members and others to surrender their weapons and to regularise their status.

Bakeries were prepared for the return of workers after flour and fuel were secured. Committees for social humanitarian and relief work and a coalition was formed and they along with the independents, a joint field committee of the state that was appointed and 14 factions, to audit the implementation of the agreed steps.

A timeframe was also determined for implementing the terms of the agreement in three phases:

- Phase 1: the entry of the joint force and redeployment on the sides of the camp and the entry of policemen to the police station (during three days starting from the next day).
- Phase2: the Return of the various services to the camp.
- Phase 3: the return of residents to the camp.

This was to be implemented within a specified period of time, no more then two weeks to start two days after the introduction of food aid in accordance with the children vaccination campaign, implemented in partnership with the Palestinian Red Crescent and the Ministry of Health through the Ministry of Social Affairs.

On 22 March 2014, the PFLP - General Command announced, by its official media spokesperson, Anwar Raja "the failure of all initiatives and no soon peaceful solution for the Yarmouk camp crisis," and accused the armed group for being responsible for that.

On 5 May 2014, a delegation of the PFLP met with the 14 factions, as the delegation member "Bilal Qasem" said that "Things are still moving slowly". The most important component to be agreed upon is the continuation of humanitarian aid: food and medicine, to be allowed in the camp and the evacuation of critical medical cases and students. In relation to the detainees, communication with the Syrian state have resulted in serious discussion and the need to release all detainees or charge them. Mr. Bilal Qasem also emphasised the hard work that has been involved making dialogue with the militants to reach a radical solution with them about the necessity of getting them out of the camp and returning the residents.

On 20 June 2014, an agreement was signed between the representatives of UNRWA, the popular and the military movement, relief agencies in the Yarmouk refugee camp and representatives of the Syrian government and the Palestinian Authority.

The agreement, which was signed at the municipality of the Yarmouk headquarter inside the camp, provides a number of points, most notably:

- To create central points around the borders of the camp, to prevent any armed men or groups from entering the camp.
- Agreement to form a joint military committee.
- A security force would maintain the security situation inside the camp and prevent the entry of any person charged recently with murder, until the completion of the civil reconciliation.

It also stipulated that all former militants who want to return to the camp are allowed to enter as civilians, and to ensure that no heavy weapons are allowed inside the camp or to be exposed to any military action. The agreement also provides the opening of the main entrances at Yarmouk Street and Palestine Street and processing infrastructure to prevent militants from the vicinity to enter the camp, and to settle the situation of detainees and an immediate cease-fire.

All these initiatives have failed to break the siege on the camp, however, and broke down at implementation, as the camp is still exposed to shelling and crossfire between the parties of the conflict. The suffering party is the Palestinian refugees who still pay the price of this unjust blockade imposed on the Yarmouk refugee camp for nearly a year.

Endnotes:

(1) Factions that signed on the initiative:

1. PFLP-General Command.
2. Fateh movement.
3. Popular Struggle Front.
4. Vanguard of popular liberation war - SS.
5. Islamic Jihad Movement in Palestine. .
6. PLF.
7. Palestinian People's Party.
8. Palestinian National Liberation Movement - Fateh.
- 9 - the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine.
- 10 - Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine.

(2) The names of armed brigades and the persons who signed the agreement , the gunmen:

- 1 - Abu Saleh Fitian.
- 2 - Abu Hashim Zgmot.
- 3 - Colonel Khalid Hassan.
- 4 - for relief institutions in Yarmouk (Khalil Abu Salma).
- 5 - Yarmouk free.
- 6 - coordinated network support camps.
- 7 - for the popular movement (Ismail Ahmed).
- 8 - for dependents (Abu Hani)
- 9 - Abu Tamam.
- 10 - for the second team (Abu Tawfiq Al Sour).





Action Group
for Palestinians
in Syria

Victims of Torture and Enforced Disappearance Part Two

The Action group for Palestinians in Syria have been active in documenting the impact upon by the Palestinian refugee population in Syria since the start of the conflict, which commenced in December 2012. This has included grave human rights abuses by Syrian authorities, not least the arbitrary arrest and enforced disappearance of many refugees, particularly those residing in camps in Syria. Detained, often without the knowledge of their family members, they undergo torture and for some death is their ultimate fate. The incidents and trends of this harrowing practice has been reported in the Action Group's first report "Victims of Torture and Enforced Disappearance" up to September 2013 and the second report "Victims of Torture and Enforced Disappearance 2" continues their account up to October 2014. Their full report can be found below.

Introduction:

The ongoing events in Syria led to the entry of Palestinian refugees to the various records of the Syrian Revolution Diary and acts of protest that occurred in most of the Syrian territories. The Action Group for Palestiians of Syria ("the Action Group") have been following these events and have documented the human security conditions and deterioration of such conditions.

This report is a continuation of the Action Group's report "Victims of Torture and Enforced Disappearance"⁽¹⁾ records the arrest, enforced disappearance and subsequent loss of life of all victims including the 105 that have died due to torture, both within the prisons of the Syrian regime or with the Syrian opposition during the period between August 2012 and September 2013. This continuation, "Victims of Torture and Forced Disappearances 2", offers new information of victims inside prisons and detention centers, the number of which has doubled to 252.

The Repercussions of the Syrian Crisis on the Palestinian Refugees in Syria:

The long-ranging war in Syria has produced many victims amongst Palestinian refugees inside and outside the camps of Syria. The start of the conflict until August 2014, the number of casualties has reached 2,467. Death has resulted from bombing, sniper attacks, detention, the siege amongst other reasons. As well as these casusalties 250 have gone missing and 735 have been kidnapped and detained. This latter number of individuals have been documented by the monitoring team of the Action Group.



Victims of torture to death:

Detainees in prisons and detention centers of the Syrian regime experienced the toughest forms of torture, humiliation and abasement, which often resulted in physical and psychological sequelae including death. The Action Group has documented 147 Palestinian refugee victims in Syria in the prisons of the Syrian regime from October 2013 until the end of August 2014, an increase of about 40 victims for the same period of August 2012 to September 2013.

The circumstances of the torture victims arrest share the following points:

- **Detention at Checkpoints or in Areas Controlled by the Syrian Regime:**

The checkpoints stationed at the entrances of the camps, compounds and major cities formed an obsession with the Syrian street because they are places that give those who crossed them hope of life again. There are lists at the checkpoints with the names of those wanted on charges, of participating in acts of protests and carrying out relief, humanitarian or medical activities inside the besieged areas.

The names are often handwritten with incomplete names,, which places many at risk of false arrest due to the similarity of their names or malicious reports.

Many arrests have taken place simply for being present in the areas under the control of the regime. One case, involving Radwan Shehadeh Jabasini, saw the victim killed by torture in the prisons of the Syrian regime after being arrested and imprisoned for more than nine months. He was arrested inside the Al Ashmar mosque in the depths of old Damascus, with informatics engineer, Waseim Abu Zeina. Waseim was also killed after his arrest from the campus of informatics Engineering College of Damascus.

- **Detention during attempts to get out of the besieged areas:**

The Action Group has documented many of the victims who were arrested while trying to get out of the besieged Yarmouk refugee camp over the year. The two brothers, Raafat and Nawras Abdel Aal, along with the two brothers, Ali and Hassan Abu Enen, were killed inside jails after their arrest at Hjeira checkpoint in Damascus. They were trying to exit the Yarmouk refugee camp to escape the total blockade of the camp since July 2013.

- **Detention during receipt of aid:**

Many arrests and detainment occurred while receiving aid in the Yarmouk refugee camp. 50 year old, Mohammed Sersawi, a resident of the Yarmouk refugee camp was killed inside the prisons of the Syrian regime after he was arrested in Sbeneh area near Al Kablat checkpoint on his way to receive aid. Mahmoud Hassan Zgmot was killed on 7 October 2014 from torture in the Syrian security prisons; he was arrested during the distribution of aid at the entrance of the Yarmouk refugee camp.

- **Announcement of death several months after death:**

Most cases of death in the Syrian prisons was documented with different dates, as happened with the victim Ala Al Naji, they announced his death on 7 August 2014, while the real date of death was 31 August 2013, which leaves the door open for extortion of detainee families by powerful officials.

- **Non-Receipt of Corpses**

Where death has been caused by torture, it is very rare for the families of the deceased to receive the

bodies. The family is informed that the prisoner has died due to reasons such as heart failure so as to give some sort of legitimacy to the death, in order for identity papers to be received and statements of death to be signed.

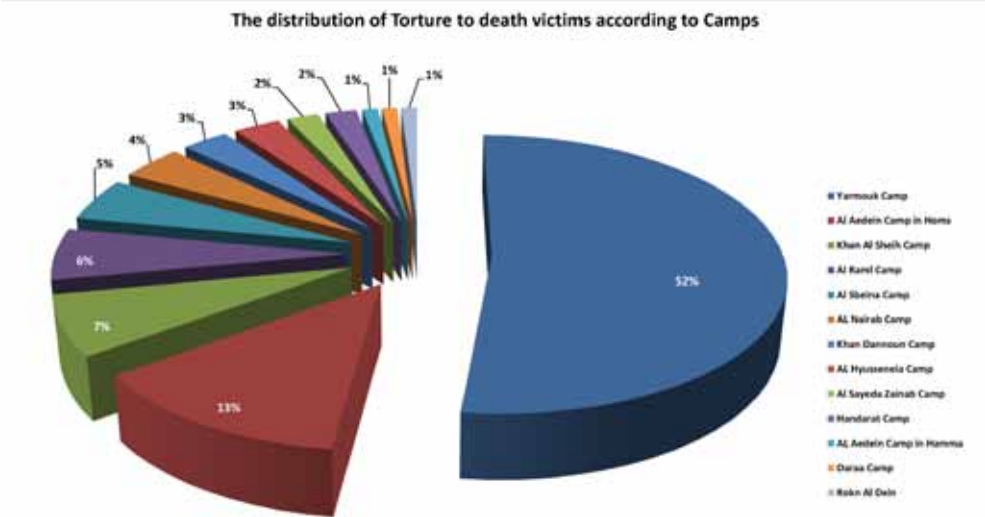
The Distribution of Torture Victims according to Place and Time

• The Distribution of Torture Victims According to Place:

164 Palestinian refugees residing in camps have died in Syria. The highest proportion were in Yarmouk camp: the Action Group documented 86 Palestinian refugees killed due to torture after arrest, an average of 52.44% of the total victims in and 34.14% of the total number of victims overall. The second highest percentage of victims has been from Al Aeidein camp in Homs, where 21 refugee victims were documented, after which Khan Eshieh Camp, where 11 refugees were killed. See the following table.

The Distribution of Torture to Death Victims According to Camps

Place of Death	Number	Percentage
Yarmouk Camp	86	52.44%
AL Aeidein Camp in Homs	21	12.80%
Khan Eshieh Camp	11	6.71%
Al Raml Camp	9	5.49%
AL Sbeina Camp	8	4.88%
AL Nairab Camp	7	4.27%
Khan Dannoun Camp	5	3.05%
AL Husseinia Camp	5	3.05%
AL Sayeda ZAINab Camp	3	1.83%
Handarat Camp	3	1.83%
Al Aeidein Camp in Hamma	2	1.22%
Daraa Camp	2	1.22%
Rokn Al Dein	2	1.22%
Total	164	100.00%



The Arresting Place of Victim

Place of Event	Number	Percentage
Yarmouk Camp	86	34.13%
Unknown	36	14.29%
Al Aedein Camp in Homs	21	8.33%
Khan Al Seih Camp	11	4.37%
Dommar	10	3.97%
Al Raml Camp	9	3.57%
Al Sbeina Camp	8	3.17%
Al Nairab Camp	7	2.78%
Artouz	6	2.38%
Khan Dannoun Camp	5	1.98%
Al Husseneia Camp	5	1.98%
Artouz Area	4	1.59%
Al Sayeda Zainab Camp	3	1.19%
Al Maadameia	3	1.19%
Al Hajar Al Aswad	3	1.19%
Handarat Camp	3	1.19%
Zmlka	3	1.19%
Al Zahera	3	1.19%
Al Aedein Camp	2	0.79%
Dara'a Camp	2	0.79%
Qudseia	2	0.79%
Al Fahama	2	0.79%
AL Mza	2	0.79%
Sehnaya	2	0.79%
Rokn Al Dein	2	0.79%
Al Shajara	1	0.40%
Yelda	1	0.40%
Doma	1	0.40%
Al Mazraa	1	0.40%
Housh Blas	1	0.40%
Al Amein Street	1	0.40%
Koakab	1	0.40%
Jouber	1	0.40%
Mashroa Damar	1	0.40%
Hjeira	1	0.40%
Mesiاف Road	1	0.40%
Damascus Homs International Road	1	0.40%
Total	252	100.00%

There have been 252 Palestinian refugee victims since the beginning of the Syrian conflict until the end of August 2014. This number reached their peak over August 2014 as 31 families were informed to review security branches to receive their sons' personal stuff after they died in prisons. In comparison to the number over August 2013 (6) and 2012 (1), the statistics have extrapolated by five times.

See the Chart and Table below:

Journal of Palestinian Refugee Studies

1	August2012-	11	January2014-
9	September2012-	8	February2014-
4	October2012-	9	March2014-
10	November2012-	28	April2014-
4	December2012-	9	May2014-
6	January2013-	15	June2014-
12	March2013-	10	July2014-
3	April2013-	31	August2014-
		2	Unknown
Total		252	

Results and recommendations

The Syrian regime violated all international and regional conventions and even national conventions that prohibit torture⁽¹⁾ and practiced every taboo against its people and those who are subject to its jurisdiction and laws. These violations led to a rise in the number of victims'detainees from Palestinian refugees inside prisons, which raises concern about the fate of the 624 remaining detainees who have been documented by the Action Group.

The Action Group calls for the imposition of, formal and informal moves to compel the government of Syria to immediately declare their fate and allow them fair trials and fair elections in line with the provisions of the Constitution. It also calls for the immediate release of all Palestinian prisoners who were arrested without legal basis in prisons and detention centres in Syria; to stop the practice of arbitrary detention; to follow up on unresolved cases involving Palestinian refugees; respect for fundamental human rights including the right to live; and dignity of the Palestinians on the land of Syria.

No.	Name	Date of Arrest	Place of Arrest	City	Date of Death	Address	Destination
1	Natheer Hujayer		Aedein Camp	Homs	24/04/2011	Homs- the camp	Syrian Regime
2	Nedal Omar		Yarmouk Camp	Damascus	22/05/2011	Yarmouk Camp	Syrian Regime
3	Ismile Jameel Zarteet			Latakia	17/08/2011	Latakia	Syrian Regime
4	Naeem Sabe' Alail			Latakia	18/08/2011	Latakia	Syrian Regime
5	Khamis Al Hariri		Raml camp	Latakia	25/08/2011	Raml camp	Syrian Regime
6	Yahiya Salman	20/11/2011	Raml camp	Latakia	23/01/2012	Raml camp	Syrian Regime
7	Shafeeq Saed Awad		Aedein Camp	Homs	13/02/2012	Homs – the Camp	Syrian Regime
8	Ghassan Ghazzawi		Raml camp	Latakia	04/04/2012	Raml camp	Syrian Regime
9	Ra'd Nedal Sad Foura			Daraa	24/04/2012	Daraa	Syrian Regime
10	Ahmed Bader Al Subi			Latakia	09/05/2012	Latakia	Syrian Regime
11	Mohammed Samer Abu Jomaa			Latakia	09/05/2012	Latakia	Syrian Regime
12	Mahmoud Fahd Khalil		Raml camp	Latakia	23/05/2012	Raml camp	Syrian Regime



13	Mohammed Al Masri		Al Shajara	Daraa	12/07/2012	Daraa - Al Muzaireib	Syrian Regime
14	Fawzi Sharif Alnbwani			Aleppo	13/07/2012	Aleppo	Syrian Regime
15	Esam Mahmoud Jafar		Doma	Damascus	14/07/2012	Doma	Syrian Regime
16	Wael Mohammed Majdalawi		Yarmouk Camp	Damascus	12/08/2012	Yarmouk Camp	Syrian Regime
17	Zeyyad Al Bughdadi		Al Sbeina Camp	Damascus	September	Syria	Syrian Regime
18	Mutee Mohammed Darweesh		Damascus Homs Road	Homs	03/09/2012	Yarmouk Camp	Syrian Regime
19	Maher Ahmed Al Rbdawi		Yarmouk Camp	Damascus	09/09/2012	Yarmouk Camp	Syrian Regime
20	Ahmed Mohammed Mjdalawi		Yarmouk Camp	Damascus	13/09/2012	Yarmouk Camp	Syrian Regime
21	Adel Ibrahim Edrees		Mesiaaf Road	Hamma	17/09/2012	Homs- the Camp	Syrian Regime
22	Husine Saleh Ahmed	One Month	Al Sbeina Camp	Damascus	24/09/2012	Sbeina	Syrian Regime
23	Ehsan Al Shoura	One Month	Zmlka	Damascus	29/09/2012	Unknown	Syrian Regime
24	Ala' Al Shoura	One Month	Zmlka	Damascus	29/09/2012	Unknown	Syrian Regime
25	Mahmoud Hamad		Zmlka	Damascus	29/09/2012	Unknown	Syrian Regime
26	Rashed Abu Rashed		Al Maadameia	Damascus	17/10/2012	Yarmouk Camp	Syrian Regime
27	Abdullah Zayatna		Joubar	Damascus	19/10/2012	Joubar	Syrian Regime
28	Mahmoud Tayfour		Housh Blas	Damascus	24/10/2012	Sbeina	Syrian Regime
29	Anas Meshmesh	A Month and a half		Hamma	24/10/2012	Hamma	Syrian Regime
30	MAzen Ahmed Al Emla		Artouz Area	Damascus	02/11/2012	Artouz Area	Syrian Regime
31	Hasan Ali Yaqoub		Al Sbeina Camp	Damascus	04/11/2012	Sbeina	Syrian Regime
32	Mari Yaqoub		Al Sbeina Camp	Damascus	04/11/2012	Sbeina	Syrian Regime
33	Ahmed Mari Yaqoub		Al Sbeina Camp	Damascus	04/11/2012	Sbeina	Syrian Regime
34	Mohammed Mari Yaqoub		Al Sbeina Camp	Damascus	04/11/2012	Sbeina	Syrian Regime
35	Mahmoud Hasan Hasan		Al Sbeina Camp	Damascus	04/11/2012	Sbeina	Syrian Regime
36	Emad Mohamed Ibrahim Alyousif		Sehnaya	Damascus	06/11/2012	Yarmouk Camp	Syrian Regime
37	Sameh Al Khayal		Yarmouk Camp	Damascus	10/11/2012	Yarmouk Camp	Syrian Regime
38	Ahmed Al Ashqar		Yarmouk Camp	Damascus	11/11/2012	Yarmouk Camp	Syrian Regime
39	Firas Murad		AL Hajar AL Aswad	Damascus	27/11/2012	AL-Hajar aL-Aswad	Syrian Regime
40	Shadi Mohammed Mahmoud		Al Hussainiya Camp	Damascus	29/11/2012	Al Hussainiya	Syrian Regime
41	Mohamed Abdullah Al Abed	One Month	Aedein Camp	Homs	26/12/2012	Homs- the Camp	Syrian Regime
42	Taha Husine		Yarmouk Camp	Damascus	31/12/2012	Yarmouk Camp	Syrian Regime
43	Omar Al Hareth	Four Months	Yarmouk Camp	Damascus	31/12/2012	Yarmouk Camp	Syrian Regime
44	Ahmed Mohammed Amoura		Dommar	Damascus	05/01/2013	Dommar	Syrian Regime

45	Samer Othman Othman		Yarmouk Camp	Damascus	07/01/2013	Yarmouk Camp	Syrian Regime
46	Eyyad Mawed		Yarmouk Camp	Damascus	12/01/2013	Yarmouk Camp	Syrian Regime
47	Ahmed Najdat Thaher	Three Weeks	Yarmouk Camp	Damascus	18/01/2013	Yarmouk Camp	Syrian Regime
48	Nadeem Khalid Al Ghaneem		Yarmouk Camp	Damascus	23/01/2013	Yarmouk Camp	Syrian Regime
49	Bashir Sabeeha	One Week	Aedein Camp	Homs	27/01/2013	Homs- the Camp	Syrian Regime
50	Mohammed Nour Al Masri		Al Hussainiya Camp	Damascus	08/03/2013	Al Hussainiya	Syrian Regime
51	Mohammed Bashir Naqla	Six Months	Yarmouk Camp	Damascus	09/03/2013	Yarmouk Camp	Syrian Regime
52	Salem Zuhair Bayya'a	One Month	Al Fahamma	Damascus	20/03/2013	Al Fahamma	Syrian Regime
53	Sameer Zuhair Bayya'a	One Month	Al Fahamma	Damascus	20/03/2013	Al Fahamma	Syrian Regime
54	Basel Aboud		Yarmouk Camp	Damascus	20/03/2013	Yarmouk Camp	Free Army
55	Hassan Muhye Al Din Mattar		Aedein Camp	Homs	20/03/2013	Homs- the Camp	Syrian Regime
56	Khalid Al Thaher		Artouz	Damascus	26/03/2013	Artouz	Syrian Regime
57	Basem Al Thaher		Artouz	Damascus	26/03/2013	Artouz	Syrian Regime
58	Basel Al Thaher		Artouz	Damascus	26/03/2013	Artouz	Syrian Regime
59	Nazeeh Al Thaher		Artouz	Damascus	26/03/2013	Artouz	Syrian Regime
60	Loay Al Thaher		Artouz	Damascus	26/03/2013	Artouz	Syrian Regime
61	Mohammed Al Thaher		Artouz	Damascus	26/03/2013	Artouz	Syrian Regime
62	Ahmed Hussine Al Khatib Al Aamer				01/04/2013	Syria	Syrian Regime
63	Hussine Ghassab Mefleh Al Rashid	Nine Months	Artouz Area	Damascus	29/04/2013	Artouz Area	Syrian Regime
64	Mohammed Darweesh		Aedein Camp	Homs	30/04/2013	Homs- the Camp	Syrian Regime
65	Hussine Doula		Sehnaya	Damascus	01/05/2013	Raml camp	Syrian Regime
66	Khaild Jihad Al Sadi		Aedein Camp	Homs	01/05/2013	Homs- the Camp	Syrian Regime
67	Saleem Al Shabati		Aedein Camp	Homs	06/05/2013	Homs- the Camp	Syrian Regime
68	Nedal Sadeyya		Yarmouk Camp	Damascus	14/05/2013	Yarmouk Camp	Syrian Regime
69	Yamen Sadeyya		Yarmouk Camp	Damascus	14/05/2013	Yarmouk Camp	Syrian Regime
70	Ala' Bakkar		Yarmouk Camp	Damascus	19/05/2013	Yarmouk Camp	Syrian Regime
71	Saed Azzoz		Yarmouk Camp	Damascus	19/05/2013	Yarmouk Camp	Syrian Regime
72	Mohammed Atwa	Six Months	Al Sayeda Zainab Camp	Damascus	20/05/2013	Al-Sayeda Zeinab	Syrian Regime
73	Ibrahim Abdulhafeez	12/01/2013	Dommar	Damascus	23/05/2013	Dommar	Syrian Regime
74	Nebras Adnan Hwasli		Yarmouk Camp	Damascus	28/05/2013	Yarmouk Camp	Syrian Regime
75	Mohammed Ahmed Edrees		Aedein Camp	Homs	30/05/2013	Homs- the Camp	Syrian Regime

76	Husam Khayyat		Khan Eshieh Camp	Damascus	04/06/2013	Khan Eshieh Camp	Syrian Regime
77	Ahmed Easa Al Sehli	One Month	Al Mza	Damascus	11/06/2013	Al-Mazza	Syrian Regime
78	Ashraf Sarhan	Ten Days	Aedein Camp	Homs	13/06/2013	Homs- the Camp	Syrian Regime
79	Subhi Al Natour		Al Amein Street	Damascus	14/06/2013	Al-Amin Street	Syrian Regime
80	Hasan Abu Tayyoun		Dommar	Damascus	16/06/2013	Dommar	Syrian Regime
81	Mohammed Abu Tayyoun		Dommar	Damascus	16/06/2013	Dommar	Syrian Regime
82	Firas Zaidan Al Sehli				20/06/2013	Syria	Syrian Regime
83	Aamer Abu Zaid		Yelda	Damascus	27/06/2013	Yelda	Syrian Regime
84	Ameer Abu Zaid		Yarmouk Camp	Damascus	28/06/2013	Yarmouk Camp	Syrian Regime
85	Ragheb Al Jashi		Aedein Camp	Homs	06/07/2013	Homs- the Camp	Syrian Regime
86	Basel Mustafa Sweed	Three Months	Artouz Area	Damascus	10/07/2013	Artouz Area	Syrian Regime
87	Abdullah Shukri Ahmed		Yarmouk Camp	Damascus	12/07/2013	Yarmouk Camp	Syrian Regime
88	Eyyad Mohammed Sweed		Artouz Area	Damascus	12/07/2013	Artouz Area	Syrian Regime
89	Muneer Mohammed Abu Nasser	08/05/2013	Al Sbeina Camp	Damascus	13/07/2013	Sbeina	Syrian Regime
90	Abdullaheem Mohammed Mawed	One Week	Yarmouk Camp	Damascus	06/08/2013	Yarmouk Camp	Syrian Regime
91	Hesham Qablawi		Al Hussainiya Camp	Damascus	06/08/2013	Al Hussainiya	Syrian Regime
92	Osama Al Khadra'	25/07/2013			08/08/2013	Syria	Syrian Regime
93	Amjad Khalil Al Sayyed		Aedein Camp	Homs	16/08/2013	Homs- the Camp	Syrian Regime
94	Mawed Saed Mawed	Three Months	Yarmouk Camp	Damascus	25/08/2013	Yarmouk Camp	Syrian Regime
95	Ammar Faris	Two Months	Raml camp	Latakia	29/08/2013	Raml camp	Syrian Regime
96	Mohammed Al Shaikh Taha		Handarat Camp	Aleppo	01/09/2013	Handar taCamp	Syrian Regime
97	Mohammed Ahmed Al Sadi			Hamma	08/09/2013	Yarmouk Camp	Syrian Regime
98	Yasser Ibrahim Al Jouda	Ten Months	Yarmouk Camp	Damascus	08/09/2013	Yarmouk Camp	Syrian Regime
99	Khalid Mohammed Bakrawi		Yarmouk Camp	Damascus	11/09/2013	Yarmouk Camp	Syrian Regime
100	Wesam Saed Rashdan	Several Months	Yarmouk Camp	Damascus	11/09/2013	Yarmouk Camp	Syrian Regime
101	Samer Abu Al Quttn	Ten Months	Yarmouk Camp	Damascus	12/09/2013	Yarmouk Camp	Syrian Regime
102	Samer Saed Amreen		Qudseia	Damascus	12/09/2013	Damascus- Qudseia	Syrian Regime
103	Ahmed Al Hajj Younis		Yarmouk Camp	Damascus	17/09/2013	Yarmouk Camp	Syrian Regime
104	Ahmed Hussine Khamis		Khan Eshieh Camp	Damascus	22/09/2013	Khan Eshieh Camp	Syrian Regime
105	Omar Abdul Salam Saleh		Khan Eshieh Camp	Damascus	22/09/2013	Khan Eshieh Camp	Syrian Regime

106	Thayer Al Khatib		Khan Eshieh Camp	Damascus	22/09/2013	Khan Eshieh Camp	Syrian Regime
107	Omar Khalid Abu Hamda		Khan Eshieh Camp	Damascus	25/09/2013	Khan Eshieh Camp	Syrian Regime
108	Ahmed Hussine Thaher		Khan Eshieh Camp	Damascus	01/10/2013	Khan Eshieh Camp	Syrian Regime
109	Samer Theeb Barthougha		Khan Eshieh Camp	Damascus	04/10/2013	Khan Eshieh Camp	Syrian Regime
110	Adnan Yousif Al Shehabi	Three Months	Yarmouk Camp	Damascus	13/10/2013	Yarmouk Camp	Syrian Regime
111	Hamza Mohammed	Two Months	Khan Dannoun Camp	Damascus	23/10/2013	Dannoun Camp	Syrian Regime
112	Ahmed Mohamed Nayyef	Two Months	Khan Dannoun Camp	Damascus	23/10/2013	Dannoun Camp	Syrian Regime
113	Mohammed Qassem Omar		Khan Dannoun Camp	Damascus	04/11/2013	Dannoun Camp	Syrian Regime
114	Ghayyath Qasem Omar		Khan Dannoun Camp	Damascus	04/11/2013	Dannoun Camp	Syrian Regime
115	Bahjat Yaqoub		Khan Dannoun Camp	Damascus	04/11/2013	Dannoun Camp	Syrian Regime
116	Maheer Ahmed Al Nassar	Nine Months	Yarmouk Camp	Damascus	11/11/2013	Yarmouk Camp	Syrian Regime
117	Abdullatif Saeed				23/11/2013	Syria	Syrian Regime
118	Ahmed Mahmoud Al Buhaisy	A Month and a half		Homs	27/11/2013	Latakia	Syrian Regime
119	Ayham Othman	Two Months	Dommar	Damascus	01/12/2013	Damascus - Rokan al Dein	Syrian Regime
120	Abdul Razzaq Khalaf	18/06/2013	Yarmouk Camp	Damascus	05/12/2013	Yarmouk Camp	Syrian Regime
121	Reyad Qassem	Several Months	Koukab	Damascus	06/12/2013	Damascus-Koukab	Syrian Regime
122	Emad Abu Azzam				12/12/2013	Syria	Syrian Regime
123	Ismile Hasan Aboud	Six Months	Yarmouk Camp	Damascus	14/12/2013	Yarmouk Camp	Syrian Regime
124	Hassan Hassan		Yarmouk Camp	Damascus	17/12/2013	Yarmouk Camp	Syrian Regime
125	Ahmed Abu Rayya	Five Months	Aedein Camp	Homs	19/12/2013	Homs- the Camp	Syrian Regime
126	Sameer Walweel		Yarmouk Camp	Damascus	19/12/2013	Yarmouk Camp	Syrian Regime
127	Shadi Ibrahim Al Jebali		Yarmouk Camp	Damascus	23/12/2013	Yarmouk Camp	Syrian Regime
128	Fadi Dawoud Al Jebali		Yarmouk Camp	Damascus	23/12/2013	Yarmouk Camp	Syrian Regime
129	Bahhar Naseef	Several Months	Raml camp	Latakia	24/12/2013	Raml camp	Syrian Regime
130	Muntaser Ahmed Ghanayem	Five Months	Dommar	Damascus	25/12/2013	Yarmouk Camp	Syrian Regime
131	Ahmed Mansour	Five Months	Yarmouk Camp	Damascus	07/01/2014	Yarmouk Camp	Syrian Regime
132	Nemer Ali Hussine		Hujaira	Damascus	12/01/2014	Damascus-Hujaira	Syrian Regime
133	Shaker Rustom	One Month	Handarat Camp	Aleppo	12/01/2014	Handar taCamp	Syrian Regime
134	Mohammed Ibrahim Thaher		Khan Eshieh Camp	Damascus	13/01/2014	Khan Eshieh Camp	Syrian Regime

135	Rabee Abdulqader Alloua		Yarmouk Camp	Damascus	18/01/2014	Yarmouk Camp	Syrian Regime
136	Mohammed Abdulhafeez		Dommar	Damascus	22/01/2014	Dommar	Syrian Regime
137	Mahmoud Abdulhafeez		Dommar	Damascus	22/01/2014	Dommar	Syrian Regime
138	Osama Omar Abu Hashim	Two Months		Aleppo	23/01/2014	Aleppo	Syrian Regime
139	Abdulhadi Mahmoud Hammad	Two Months	Aedein Camp	Homs	24/01/2014	Homs- the Camp	Syrian Regime
140	Husam Mussa Al Naddaf	Two Months	Yarmouk Camp	Damascus	28/01/2014	Yarmouk Camp	Syrian Regime
141	Mohammed Hmeed	Five Months	Al Mazraa	Damascus	29/01/2014	Damascus- Al Mazraa	Syrian Regime
142	Maher Mohammed Al Sayyad	Nine Months	Yarmouk Camp	Damascus	02/02/2014	Yarmouk Camp	Syrian Regime
143	Maen Ghbar				05/02/2014	Syria	Syrian Regime
144	Mohammed Amjad Abu Madi	09/06/2013			13/02/2014	UAE	Syrian Regime
145	Atif Easa Ta'mri	A Year	Raml camp	Latakia	13/02/2014	Raml camp	Syrian Regime
146	Mahmoud Mohammed Mawed	Five Months	Al Mza	Damascus	17/02/2014	Al-Mazza	Syrian Regime
147	Mohammed Ali Abu Shala		Daraa	Daraa	21/02/2014	Daraa- the Camp	Syrian Regime
148	Mohammed Ameen Bahtiti	A Year	Yarmouk Camp	Damascus	21/02/2014	Yarmouk Camp	Syrian Regime
149	Mohammed Hamad Mawed		Yarmouk Camp	Damascus	27/02/2014	Yarmouk Camp	Syrian Regime
150	Saeed Hussine Mawed		Yarmouk Camp	Damascus	27/02/2014	Yarmouk Camp	Syrian Regime
151	Abdulaheem Mohammed Mawed		Al Zahira	Damascus	06/03/2014	Yarmouk Camp	Syrian Regime
152	Husam Al Namiri	Six Months			11/03/2014	Syria	Syrian Regime
153	Faris Balsha	Five Months	Yarmouk Camp	Damascus	12/03/2014	Yarmouk Camp	Syrian Regime
154	Mohammed Faris	Five Months	Yarmouk Camp	Damascus	12/03/2014	Yarmouk Camp	Syrian Regime
155	Ateyya Mussa				12/03/2014	Syria	Syrian Regime
156	Bassam Abdulrawouf Al Shafi	14/10/2012		Homs	15/03/2014	Homs	Syrian Regime
157	Mustafa Abdulkareem Al Aydi		Yarmouk Camp	Damascus	19/03/2014	Yarmouk Camp	Syrian Regime
158	Ahmed Jameel Salah		Yarmouk Camp	Damascus	22/03/2014	Yarmouk Camp	Syrian Regime
159	Abdullah Mohammed Khair Al Sad	A Year and A Half	Yarmouk Camp	Damascus	29/03/2014	Yarmouk Camp	Syrian Regime
160	Jamal Ibrahim		Rokn Al Dein	Damascus	01/04/2014	Damascus - Rokan al Dein	Syrian Regime
161	Ashraf Hajj Omar				03/04/2014	Syria	Syrian Regime
162	Mahmoud Majed Jablout		Yarmouk Camp	Damascus	06/04/2014	Yarmouk Camp	Syrian Regime

163	Mahmoud Hasan Abu Jomaa		Raml camp	Latakia	06/04/2014	Raml camp	Syrian Regime
164	Ashraf Atif Omar		Dommar	Damascus	08/04/2014	Dommar	Syrian Regime
165	Naser Sakhnini		Yarmouk Camp	Damascus	08/04/2014	Yarmouk Camp	Syrian Regime
166	Husam Sakhnini		Yarmouk Camp	Damascus	08/04/2014	Yarmouk Camp	Syrian Regime
167	Waseem Abu Zaina		Yarmouk Camp	Damascus	10/04/2014	Yarmouk Camp	Syrian Regime
168	Ahmed Taha	02/02/2014	Yarmouk Camp	Damascus	10/04/2014	Yarmouk Camp	Syrian Regime
169	Ahmed Yousif Abu Azeema	A Year	Yarmouk Camp	Damascus	11/04/2014	Yarmouk Camp	Syrian Regime
170	Basel Yousif Azeema	A Year	Yarmouk Camp	Damascus	11/04/2014	Yarmouk Camp	Syrian Regime
171	Mohammed Mansour		Yarmouk Camp	Damascus	13/04/2014	Yarmouk Camp	Syrian Regime
172	Ali Yaqoub	Eight Months		Damascus	14/04/2014	Sbeina	Syrian Regime
173	Mohammed Waleed Al Shehabi	Nine Months	Yarmouk Camp	Damascus	21/04/2014	Yarmouk Camp	Syrian Regime
174	Redwan Shehada Jabaseni		Al Zahira	Damascus	23/04/2014	Yarmouk Camp	Syrian Regime
175	Bassam Ali Shaheen	09/11/2012	Aedein Camp	Homs	23/04/2014	Homs- the Camp	Syrian Regime
176	Rajab Al Aswad		Al Nairab Camp	Aleppo	23/04/2014	Al Naibar Camp	Syrian Regime
177	Mohammed Fayyez Saleh		Khan Eshieh Camp	Damascus	24/04/2014	Khan Eshieh Camp	Syrian Regime
178	Basel Nabeel Al Kharma	A Year and Two Months	Yarmouk Camp	Damascus	27/04/2014	Yarmouk Camp	Syrian Regime
179	Mohammed Sameer Abdullah		Yarmouk Camp	Damascus	28/04/2014	Yarmouk Camp	Syrian Regime
180	Ahmed Sameer Abdullah		Yarmouk Camp	Damascus	28/04/2014	Yarmouk Camp	Syrian Regime
181	Belal Sanad Shehada	05/01/2014	Al Sayeda Zainab Camp	Damascus	28/04/2014	Al-Sayeda Zeinab	Syrian Regime
182	Omar		Yarmouk Camp	Damascus	29/04/2014	Yarmouk Camp	Syrian Regime
183	Sameer		Yarmouk Camp	Damascus	29/04/2014	Yarmouk Camp	Syrian Regime
184	Aamer		Yarmouk Camp	Damascus	29/04/2014	Yarmouk Camp	Syrian Regime
185	Hussine Hamdan		Yarmouk Camp	Damascus	29/04/2014	Yarmouk Camp	Syrian Regime
186	Ammar Ahmed Abu Rashid	09/06/2013	Mashroa Dommar	Damascus	29/04/2014	Yarmouk Camp	Syrian Regime
187	Abdullah Suliman Zatout	A Year	Yarmouk Camp	Damascus	30/04/2014	Yarmouk Camp	Syrian Regime
188	Belal Ahmed Belal	14/09/2011	Al Maadameia	Damascus	03/05/2014	Damascus - Al Maadameia	Syrian Regime
189	Ahmed Zaki Khairat	Eight Months	Al Nairab Camp	Aleppo	07/05/2014	Al Naibar Camp	Syrian Regime
190	Emad Waleed Hourani		Yarmouk Camp	Damascus	09/05/2014	Yarmouk Camp	Syrian Regime
191	Foad Omar	Three Months	Yarmouk Camp	Damascus	10/05/2014	Yarmouk Camp	Syrian Regime
192	Mohammed Ahmed Bader	Several Months	Al Maadameia	Damascus	13/05/2014	Al Hussainiya	Syrian Regime
193	Mustafa Meyari	Eight Months	Al Nairab Camp	Aleppo	18/05/2014	Al Naibar Camp	Syrian Regime

194	Mussa Abu Easa	Several Months	Yarmouk Camp	Damascus	25/05/2014	Yarmouk Camp	Syrian Regime
195	Mahmoud Mohammed Allahham		Raml camp	Latakia	26/05/2014	Raml camp	Syrian Regime
196	Baha' Ibrahim				31/05/2014	Syria	Syrian Regime
197	Mohammed Ali Farhoud				01/06/2014	Syria	Syrian Regime
198	Ashraf Abdulnaser	Three Months			06/06/2014	Syria	Syrian Regime
199	Ghassan Salayma				07/06/2014	Syria	Syrian Regime
200	Osama Hefawi				08/06/2014	Syria	Syrian Regime
201	Haytham Subh				11/06/2014	Syria	Syrian Regime
202	Lawrence Al Shafi		Al Hussainiya Camp	Damascus	13/06/2014	Al Hussainiya	Syrian Regime
203	Hammam Al Shafi		Al Hussainiya Camp	Damascus	13/06/2014	Al Hussainiya	Syrian Regime
204	Husam Al Abu Zamel				15/06/2014	Syria	Syrian Regime
205	Mohammed Jameel Suliman		AL Hajar AL Aswad	Damascus	16/06/2014	AL-Hajar aL-Aswad	Syrian Regime
206	Rami Suliman Al Sehi		Yarmouk Camp	Damascus	18/06/2014	Yarmouk Camp	Syrian Regime
207	Mohannad Aref Shtewi		Khan Eshieh Camp	Damascus	19/06/2014	Khan Eshieh Camp	Syrian Regime
208	Mohammed Shaker Al Shaikh Taha		Handarat Camp	Aleppo	20/06/2014	Handarat Camp	Syrian Regime
209	Ramzi Hasan Ewemer		Daraa Camp	Daraa	20/06/2014	Daraa – the camp	Syrian Regime
210	Mohammed Easa Abu Hassan	Five Months			23/06/2014	Syria	Syrian Regime
211	Ibrahim Mohammed Al Hajj		Al Nairab Camp	Aleppo	24/06/2014	Al Naibar Camp	Syrian Regime
212	Mohammed Khalid Al Mahmoud	Several Months	Aedein Camp	Hamma	03/07/2014	Hamma -the camp	Syrian Regime
213	Natheer Mohammed Abdulmuti		Yarmouk Camp	Damascus	10/07/2014	Yarmouk Camp	Syrian Regime
214	Ahmed Hadayed		Yarmouk Camp	Damascus	10/07/2014	Yarmouk Camp	Syrian Regime
215	Mahmoud Hasan Zaghmout		Yarmouk Camp	Damascus	10/07/2014	Yarmouk Camp	Syrian Regime
216	Adel Saleh Awwad	Six Months	Al Nairab Camp	Aleppo	12/07/2014	Al Naibar Camp	Syrian Regime
217	Adel Kamal Burbar		Aedein Camp	Hamma	13/07/2014	Hamma- the camp	Syrian Regime
218	Ayman Mohammed Sabeha		Aedein Camp	Homs	20/07/2014	Homs- the Camp	Syrian Regime
219	Salah Rashdan				22/07/2014	Syria	Syrian Regime
220	Marwan Al Betari	One Month		Daraa	24/07/2014	Daraa	Syrian Regime
221	Mohammed Al Saghair				24/07/2014	Syria	Syrian Regime
222	Saeed Rashdan		Yarmouk Camp	Damascus	04/08/2014	Yarmouk Camp	Syrian Regime
223	Mohammed Al Sersawi	Several Months	Yarmouk Camp	Damascus	05/08/2014	Yarmouk Camp	Syrian Regime

224	Maher Nehad Fawzi Hmeed	Several Months	Yarmouk Camp	Damascus	05/08/2014	Yarmouk Camp	Syrian Regime
225	Ala' Al Naji	A Year	Dommar	Damascus	07/08/2014	Dommar	Syrian Regime
226	Mwaffaq Ahmed Ali	A Year	AL Hajar AL Aswad	Damascus	09/08/2014	AL-Hajar aL-Aswad	Syrian Regime
227	Shaher Fadeel Shehada		Yarmouk Camp	Damascus	10/08/2014	Yarmouk Camp	Syrian Regime
228	Tayseer Fadeel Shehada		Yarmouk Camp	Damascus	10/08/2014	Yarmouk Camp	Syrian Regime
229	Mohammed Mahmoud Sammour	Five Months	Aedein Camp	Homs	10/08/2014	Homs- the Camp	Syrian Regime
230	Amjad Saeed Al Subihi	A Year		Damascus	11/08/2014	Daraa - Al Muzaireib	Syrian Regime
231	Omar Ahmed Falah Al Shalamuni		Al Sayeda Zainab Camp	Damascus	12/08/2014	Al-Sayeda Zeinab	Syrian Regime
232	Maheer Amreen		Qudseia	Damascus	12/08/2014	Damascus-Qudseia	Syrian Regime
233	Mahmoud Al Aswad	A Year	Al Nairab Camp	Aleppo	14/08/2014	Al Naibar Camp	Syrian Regime
234	Jamal Abu Hashesh		Yarmouk Camp	Damascus	17/08/2014	Yarmouk Camp	Syrian Regime
235	Zeyyad Ibrahim Al Sayyed	14/06/2013	Aedein Camp	Homs	17/08/2014	Homs- the Camp	Syrian Regime
236	Osama Majed Faour	Four Months	Khan Eshieh Camp	Damascus	19/08/2014	Khan Eshhei Camp	Syrian Regime
237	Ahmed Sammour		Aedein Camp	Homs	19/08/2014	Homs- the Camp	Syrian Regime
238	Mohamemd Ali Al Badawi				19/08/2014	Syria	Syrian Regime
239	Rafat Abdulaal		Yarmouk Camp	Damascus	20/08/2014	Yarmouk Camp	Syrian Regime
240	Nawras Abdulaal		Yarmouk Camp	Damascus	20/08/2014	Yarmouk Camp	Syrian Regime
241	Ali Abu Al Enin		Yarmouk Camp	Damascus	21/08/2014	Yarmouk Camp	Syrian Regime
242	Hasan Abu Al Enin		Yarmouk Camp	Damascus	21/08/2014	Yarmouk Camp	Syrian Regime
243	Tareq Yasser Rashdan		Yarmouk Camp	Damascus	21/08/2014	Yarmouk Camp	Syrian Regime
244	Firas Al Daeeef		Aedein Camp	Homs	21/08/2014	Homs- the Camp	Syrian Regime
245	Anas Al Khatib	Six Months	Yarmouk Camp	Damascus	23/08/2014	Yarmouk Camp	Syrian Regime
246	Salah Al Din Hamoud	18 Days	Rokn Al Dein	Damascus	23/08/2014	Damascus - Rokan al Dein	Syrian Regime
247	Mahmoud Hamarna		Yarmouk Camp	Damascus	24/08/2014	Yarmouk Camp	Syrian Regime
248	Suliman Ahmed Tameem				24/08/2014	Syria	Syrian Regime
249	Eyyad Haninu	A Year	Al Nairab Camp	Aleppo	26/08/2014	Al Naibar Camp	Syrian Regime
250	Adham Khattab	Four Months	Al Zahira	Damascus	26/08/2014	Yarmouk Camp	Syrian Regime
251	Amjad Mahmoud Darweesh	A year	Aedein Camp	Homs	28/08/2014	Homs- The Camp	Syrian Regime
252	Shadi Ali Deyyab	A year	Yarmouk Camp	Damascus	30/08/2014	Yarmouk Camp	Syrian Regime

Endnotes:

(1) Found at <http://ufree-p.net/arabic/uploads/1382958765.pdf>





Kareem
Shaheen*

The Lebanese Security Quagmire

The finger has often been pointed at the Palestinian community in Lebanon following recent security incidents linked to the crisis in Syria. The powerful Lebanese group Hezbollah has intervened in support of the regime of President Bashar al Assad, a move that brought in its wake a series of attacks and suicide bombings on Lebanese soil by militant groups who cite the intervention as the primary cause for their attacks⁽¹⁾.

Officials say there are several reasons why the Palestinian camps are accused of being what they describe as “security quagmires” or “bo’ar amneya”. The allegations have spanned the spectrum, including that radical Salafists have taken refuge in Ain al Hilweh refugee camp,⁽²⁾; that car bombs were being prepared there for use in areas where Hezbollah enjoys broad popular support⁽³⁾; and that the Palestinians were building tunnels in Beirut from the Burj al Barajneh camp and into the southern suburbs of Beirut, an area dominated by Hezbollah⁽⁴⁾.

The security of the camps also came under the microscope in recent months following a series of attacks and assassinations that seemed to have more to do with internal Palestinian political dynamics in Lebanon than the broader regional context, although these have been largely localised events that have not spilled into the surrounding towns and neighbourhoods.⁽⁵⁾

Ain al Hilweh was only embroiled once recently in the tensions that have gripped Lebanon as the war in Syria worsened, when a neighbourhood at the camp’s outskirts, the Taamir, briefly took part in fighting in Sidon between the Lebanese Army and fighters loyal to the Salafist preacher Ahmad al Assir in June 2013.⁽⁶⁾

The Palestinians have generally taken a neutral stance towards internal Lebanese disputes, a position that follows from a directive by Palestinian Authority (PA) President Mahmoud Abbas during a visit last year to Lebanon⁽⁷⁾. The directive has meant that the security of the camps has become a red line for local Palestinian officials, who are training the local popular and security committees to maintain law and order in the camps.⁽⁸⁾

But Palestinians say they are the target of instigation from both sides of the Lebanese political aisle – those with the March 2014 coalition see them as closer to the “resistance” mentality of Hezbollah, while Hezbollah’s allies tend to lump them with Sunni coreligionists in the March 2014 bloc.⁽⁹⁾

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As a consequence, Lebanon's generally partisan media often reports rumours of Palestinian complicity in security incidents, and subsequently incite against the Palestinians, the officials in Lebanon say, despite their clearly stated neutrality and the fact that vastly more Lebanese and Syrian individuals are complicit in violent crime in Lebanon than Palestinians.⁽¹⁰⁾

The implication that the Palestinians are a security threat is reinforcing the myriad of challenges facing the community in the Levant in particular. Tens of thousands of Palestinians living in Syria have fled the war there into Lebanon, reaching a peak of over 80,000, but their presence has overcrowded camps that were already too small for their residents⁽¹¹⁾. Palestinian officials estimate the population of the largest refugee camp of Ain al Hilweh at about 100,000 Palestinians, in addition to another 12,500 refugees who fled Syria. The Palestinian camp in Baalbek, one of the closest Palestinian communities to the border with Syria, now has more refugees who fled Syria than Palestinians from Lebanon.⁽¹²⁾

In addition to competing for jobs, Palestinians from Syria are faced with the civil rights restrictions that apply to all Palestinians in Lebanon: being barred from land ownership and some 70 professions in the country, contributing to unemployment among the youth population and exploitation by employers who use their position to embezzle them out of already low wages.⁽¹³⁾

"Practically they are barred from most professions," said Qassem 'Abu Jihad' Abbasi, the head of the official Palestinian committee in Lebanon that follows up on the affairs of refugees coming from Syria. Abbasi is himself a former resident of the Damascus camp of Yarmouk, and left there during a general exodus in December 2012 as the camp became a battleground for militants and the regime.⁽¹⁴⁾

Organisations like the United Nations (UN) Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA), which are dedicated to assisting Palestinian refugees, are already under-resourced and cannot cater to the influx, leading them to cutting Palestinian families from Syria out of their assistance list. Moreover, UNRWA's assistance to Syrians themselves isn't sufficient at about US \$30 monthly for food per individual and US \$100 rent subsidy for families receiving assistance, which is much lower than rental prices even in an impoverished neighbourhood in Beirut.⁽¹⁵⁾

The result has been that the number of Palestinians from Syria has dwindled from its peak to about 44,000 now, with some choosing to return to their homes in the country despite the ongoing war. Others have resorted to fleeing on illegal migrant boats leaving Lebanon to Europe and other countries on the Mediterranean. A minority have managed to secure legal refuge in Western Europe.⁽¹⁶⁾

"This is a threat against the right of return," said Fathi Aboul Ardat, the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) and Fatah representative in Lebanon.⁽¹⁷⁾

It is not just Palestinians from Syria who are leaving – the Palestinian embassy estimates that the real number of Palestinians who continue to live in Lebanon is fewer than 300,000.⁽¹⁸⁾ This is a huge disparity compared with the official number of Palestinian refugees in the country as reported by UNRWA, which is circa 455,000.⁽¹⁹⁾ Perhaps this is a consequence of decades of internal strife, Israeli aggression, lack of opportunity and now the Syrian crisis.

The repeated mistreatment and recriminations of the Palestinians in Syria and Lebanon, has prompted counter allegations. Palestinian officials, refugees and camp residents have asserted that there is an orchestrated campaign to drive Palestinians out of the region and into the West, as a way of erasing the "right of return" to Palestine. This right is seen as both a non-negotiable right and a deal-breaking obstacle to final status negotiations with Israel because of its significant effect on the demographic reality.

The desire to leave has not been tempered by assistance from the PLO. Palestinians are offered a small amount of monetary assistance for families, payment toward medical bills, low-interest loans for those wishing to start small businesses, and payment toward university tuition fees for some 5,000 students has been made. This is in addition to the assistance offered by UNRWA.⁽²⁰⁾

Tuition fees will not help fresh graduates in medicine or engineering when they find themselves with no prospects for work in Lebanon, however.

The combination of lack of civil rights and the hardship, incitement, displacement and mistrust facing the Palestinians in the Levant, has left the diaspora here at a historic dilemma. Their plight is that they face an emotional struggle pitting the desire to one day return to Palestine against a competing desire to leave the region en masse in frustration.

Palestinian officials generally accept the rationale and desire of young members of the community who want to leave in search of jobs. However, they oppose calls for mass migration, which was a demand in a summer protest in the Burj al Barajneh refugee camp in Beirut. A common refrain among both camp and Palestinian officials is that refugees who leave for the West are crucial because most retain a sense of activism and affinity to the Palestinian cause. The “resistance environment” is a feature of the refugee camps in Lebanon, signified with artwork and posters strewn throughout the camps, proclaiming the righteousness of the Palestinian struggle and playing a role in organising mass support and activism for the cause.⁽²¹⁾

“When people leave the camps they might assimilate in other societies but they will remain wanting a homeland,” said Aboul Ardat.⁽²²⁾

What officials protest to is the idea of a mass movement that departs the region en masse. They insist that the broader outlines of the Palestinian presence in the region ought to be preserved, including both UNRWA and the refugee camps.

“We have to preserve the camps as a Palestinian collective that serves as a reminder constantly that there is a Palestinian people that must return to their homes,” Aboul Ardat said.⁽²³⁾

Palestinian officials also say they are against what they describe as “tahjir”, or forced migration. Tahjir can take many forms, and one of them is the creation of an insecure environment in which incitement against Palestinians is a common feature of the media narrative.

The generally hostile environment faced by Palestinians in Lebanon is seen by some as an orchestrated attempt to drive them out and erase this right of return.

Abbasi said the Palestinians were being squeezed into a corner as “part of strengthening Israel’s security and removing the right of return from these Palestinians by causing them to lose hope and convincing them that life there is better.”⁽²⁴⁾

Abbasi said the general view of youth that he worked with is that “we are emigrating because we are disgusted with the regimes that killing us a slow death.”⁽²⁵⁾

But he said that mass migration would be “tantamount to a declaration of defeat” by the Palestinians in the struggle.⁽²⁶⁾

Others say the Palestinians are being scapegoated for the myriad security issues in Lebanon because they have the weakest political support and are therefore a weak link that can be blamed for the country’s ills without raising tensions between local communities in Lebanon. The sectarian division is therefore being translated into hostility against the Palestinians.

“Unfortunately the camps are always under the magnifying glass of security threats,” said Hosni Abo Taka, the chairman of the popular committee at the Burj al Barajneh camp.⁽²⁷⁾

Abo Taka said that media provocations, as in the rumors of the tunnel under Burj al Barajneh, are clearly aimed at ruining relations with the camps’ Lebanese neighbours – the Burj camp is bordered by Dahiyeh, the southern suburbs of Beirut, where Hezbollah enjoys broad popular support and where it generally maintains security.

He said that while security instigation is a contributing factor, it merely worsens the intolerable

situation of the lack of civil rights, which is the primary reason youth want to leave, seeing themselves as a “disability case” in the family, unemployed after years of education and unable to marry.

“Here is the conspiracy,” he said.

Still others say the protests demanding mass migration are part of an attempt by those opposed to the PA’s rule, including Islamists, to encourage discontent with the leadership.

Abbasi argued that Islamists, despite rhetoric supporting the right of return, are likely more capable of achieving a compromise with the Israelis, pointing to cordial relations between Israel and Egypt under the leadership of Muslim Brotherhood-backed President Mohammad Morsi.⁽³¹⁾

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Ahmad Damen*

The New Persecution Age in the Holy Land

In 2012 alone it was estimated that 1.18 million Christian pilgrims visited the Holy Land (historical Palestine) and the Israeli Ministry of Tourism announced that these figures almost doubled in 2013. Israel welcomes this trend for its huge financial benefits (pilgrims spend an average of US\$1483 on pilgrimage).⁽¹⁾ They are keen on keeping the image of Israel as the 'haven' for Christianity on earth and the place where "all faiths are protected throughout the land".⁽²⁾ This image is vital to ensure the continuous support of certain Evangelical churches, self-proclaimed 'Christian Zionists', which form a strong lobby in the United States and many western countries. They inherently believe that Israel was created "in fulfilment of God's promises" and should be supported using all means necessary.⁽³⁾

At the same time, these rising numbers of pilgrims are problematic for the Israeli claims of a democratic society that practices religious freedom. They, first of all, highlight the non-Jewish (Gentile) history of the land, which conflicts with the main goal of all concurrent Israeli governments; the need to be recognised as a 'Jewish State'. This is fundamental to create a common identity amongst Israel's incoherent society. The rising trends of non-Jewish pilgrimages and the constant visits by the Catholic Pope are frowned upon by the Israeli public, even its non-religious communities, because it is viewed as an identity threat.⁽⁴⁾

The second threat to this pretence is the fact that there are 175,000 Palestinian Christians living in historical Palestine (Israel, the West Bank and Gaza). They have been living since the creation of Israel (1948) under an inhumane system and their numbers are dwindling at unprecedented rates.⁽⁵⁾ The evidence for this is mounting and is gaining awareness from the international community.

This article presents the counter argument of Israel being a Christian 'haven' in the region. It points towards the rise of a new age of persecution directed towards Palestinian Christians in their historical land, targeting their unique identity and heritage.

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Methodology

The research on which the following findings and conclusions are based was conducted as part of the production of 'Forbidden Pilgrimage' (2014) a documentary produced by Al Arz Productions and broadcasted on Al Jazeera Network. The film has been officially selected in four international film festivals so far. The interviews conducted with top religious figures in Palestine, along with primary qualitative interviews and rare archives of actual events. All these factors come together to uncover and connect facts and observations on the ground.

Persecution and Historical Records

For the purposes of this article on persecution in the Holy Land, persecution could be defined as:

"[s]ustained or systematic violation of basic human rights demonstrative of a failure of state protection".⁽⁶⁾

It is beneficial to use a historical benchmark for comparison. One of the most recognised Christian persecutions was that of the Roman Empire at the hands of the state and the local Jews. This persecution lasted over three centuries, and went through several fluctuations. Persecution was generally on the rise during the reigns of Roman emperors such as Nero, Trajan, Domitian, Marcus Aurelius and Decius.⁽⁷⁾

During these episodes of persecution, Christians were killed in public, tortured, treated as second-class citizens and forced into slavery. They were driven out of their homes and natural habitats, were not allowed to practice their faith safely, and their holy sites were attacked and defiled.⁽⁸⁾

Despite the scarcity of historical records, one can judge that this was not the case of personal grudges held by certain Roman emperors against the Christian minority. For example, the reason Emperor Valerian was more lenient towards the Christian minority was not because of his respect for the Christian faith but because he was busy fighting the Persians for most of his reign, as one concludes from his correspondence with the Senate.⁽⁹⁾

A New Era — Priests are the target

Records show an exceptional rise in the events specifically directed towards Palestinian Christians during the past 14 years, but most pertinent has been that of Al-Nakba (or the Catastrophe of 1948). Many Christians were killed, fled for their lives and lost their finances and properties in the exodus process.⁽¹⁰⁾ A thriving society found itself suddenly forced to become a labour-force to serve the Israeli construction and agricultural sectors.⁽¹¹⁾ During the British mandate, the Palestinian leaders, both Muslims and Christians were being targeted by Zionist organisations. A notable event that directly affected the Palestinian Christians in the Holy Land was the mysterious killing of Archbishop Gregorios Hajjar in 1940 even before Al-Nakba.⁽¹²⁾ Archimandrite Germanos of the Qilt Valley monastery faced the same fate, using almost the same mysterious techniques, 60 years later.

There have been several verbal and physical assaults on Palestinian Christian priests walking the streets of Holy Jerusalem. These crimes are merely triggered by treading the holy city while wearing the cross or expressing their religious freedom. Both Archbishop Atallah Hanna and Archimandrite Milatios Basal talked about several incidents that did not make it to the final cut of the film.

One November day in 1979 Archimandrite Philoumenos was taking care of the Greek Orthodox monastery of Jacob's Well in Nablus that he was in charge of. He had to remove all the Christian symbols for fear of maltreatment by extreme Jews who claimed the area for themselves. He was not

able to elude memories of a recent fearsome incident when he threw an irregular circular object he found inside the church, out of the window. Upon impact the object exploded as it was consequently an explosive device planted with the purpose to assassinate Archimandrite Philoumenos. Unfortunately the removal of Christian symbols was not enough to escape his fate from a number of Jewish Israelis who were disappointed with his survival. They stormed the monastery while Archimandrite Philoumenos ascended the stairs inside and they hacked him to death with axes.

Attacks on Holy Places

A notable and obvious indicator of persecution is the targeting of Christian holy sites throughout historical Palestine. In the past fourteen years, starting with the year 2000, the number of attacks on monasteries and churches has been unprecedented. From the infamous siege of the Nativity Church by the Israeli army in April 2002, to the three Jews who tried to blow up the holiest part of the Catholic Basilica of the Annunciation in Nazareth in March 2006, to the failed attempt at burning the Latrun Monastery in 2012, accompanied by many smaller incidents, the list could go on and on. Even Christian cemeteries, especially those inside the 1948 borders, were not safe from these racist attacks.⁽¹³⁾

If we only take Jerusalem as a case study in 2012, we'd find an attack on a Baptist Church on 20th February, Latrun Monastery on 4 July and St. Francis Convent on 2 October. Just one city in Palestine in one year demonstrates a number of targeted attacks.

Sites are usually defiled with derogatory and hate speech, containing profanity directed towards Jesus and the Virgin Mary. But the 2012 attempt to burn the Latrun Monastery pushed the severity of these attacks into a totally new level. Before this incident the attacks were limited to writing hate speech on the walls, smashing windows and sabotaging parked cars. This time the attackers deliberately tried to burn the whole monastery and parts of the monastery are still affected to date.

The manner by which the Israeli authorities handle such incidents of vandalism and disrespect is paradoxical and contrary to the manner by which incidents against Jewish settlers, for example, are addressed. If a Jewish settler was attacked in Jerusalem, the culprit would be found and taken into custody within hours. Yet, if a monastery in the same place is attacked or vandalised, the culprits are never found. When the local people of Nazareth were able to surround the three Jewish attackers of the Basilica of Annunciation in 2006, the local police arrested immediately, not the Jewish attackers, but the local Palestinians who gathered to protect their church. The long awaited verdict by the convening Judge, regarding the three Jewish attackers concluded that they were 'mentally unstable'.

This excuse has been used over and over again by the Israeli authorities and media to give the impression that these are exceptional cases. This can be evident in cases like Eliran Golan, Eden Nathan-Zadeh and other Jewish terrorists who were also declared mentally ill or unstable and were consequently not tried.⁽¹⁴⁾

Access to Holy Sites

Palestinian Christians are faced with a lot of difficulty in getting to Jerusalem or any of their holy sites within the 1948 borders. The permissions granted infrequently to Christians to visit Jerusalem and the 1948 areas are useless because they are usually given only one or two of the family members; so families regrettably cannot make much use of them. Local Palestinians can only access the Baptism Site within the West Bank, during the Epiphany holiday in January each year.

Christians in Jerusalem and inside the 1948 borders face other kinds of difficulty throughout holy celebrations. During Easter for example, the Israeli authorities block most of the old town's roads with several checkpoints. Even priests are denied access to their churches under the excuse of security. Ironically, during the Jewish Passover celebrations, which take place after Easter celebrations, no checkpoints or blockages are introduced. This happens despite the fact that the Israelis are usually the most concerned side when it comes to security matters.

Foreign pilgrims also fall prey to these persecution practices. The Israelis do not favour any interaction between the foreign pilgrims and the local Christian community. In order to do this the tour guides, usually assigned by the Israeli tourism agencies, scare the pilgrims off from interacting with their local Christian peers. They give them very limited time to spend in and around the Nativity Church in Bethlehem and both Annunciation Churches in Nazareth, and exclude important locations relevant to several important landmarks and churches in the north of the West Bank. For example, the fourth oldest church in the world in Burqin near Jenin is almost empty of visitors for most of the year. This means that without their knowledge, or after being scared away with false security concerns, the foreign pilgrims do not have proper access to the local communities or holy sites during their spiritual visits.

A Land for Jews Only

According to Archimandrite Milatios Basal, Christians in Palestine are sent applications for immigration visas to some Western countries. These applications were already approved by the ambassador or consular. They just have to fill their names in and mail them back.

Almost all Palestinian Christians have relatives, children or siblings living permanently abroad particularly in the USA, Canada and Australia. There are many reasons for immigration including the lack of any economic or secure future. Especially in the Gaza strip, Christians can be easily lured out with hopes to break free of the blockage imposed on the strip and the constant Israeli onslaughts. In addition, there are many cases in which Christians and Muslims in Jerusalem who had their IDs automatically revoked by the Israeli authorities because they are studying or working abroad.⁽¹⁵⁾

The Establishment Role

The language and ideology held by extremist groups like 'Price Tag' is also held and shared publicly by Israeli ministers and public figures. These ministers do not condemn 'Price Tag' actions and may even support these actions in secret according to Archbishop Atallah Hanna.

The facts show that the reaction from the Israeli authorities in response to these racist attacks is always minimal. Even in the rare cases where the culprits are caught, they are likely to get the least legal punishment possible for their crimes. This means that the 'state' supports and welcomes the ideology of hatred and violence against Palestinian Christians, whether they live in the West Bank or within the 1948 borders.

Israel started a wild campaign last year to push Christians into joining its army to kill their fellow countrymen in the West Bank and Gaza.⁽¹⁶⁾ Even lately in 2014, they went further to try and separate them from their Palestinian Arab identity by creating an 'Aramean Identity' option on their legal documents.⁽¹⁷⁾ All these steps serve as a classic strategy of 'divide and rule' and will lead to further direct state persecution.

Local Efforts

Palestinians are trying their best to take action against the Israeli persecution through several non-violent means. It was the locals, both Muslims and Christians, who protected their Basilica in Nazareth in 2006. There have been several accounts of Palestinians taking the roles of civil guards of the holy places and priests.

Christian Palestinians are aware of the threats against their identities, creating social media groups to counter calls for joining the Israeli army. The local communities continue to hold regular masses and celebrations in the villages they were expelled from during Al-Nakba. Recently, Palestinian institutions and religious figures initiated the Kairos Palestine document⁽¹⁸⁾, which serves as a call to Christians around the world to help fight the Israeli occupation.

There is however a lack of awareness and analysis on the macro level. The persecuted Christians in Bethlehem are unaware of what is really happening in Jerusalem or Nazareth and vice-versa. This observation is caused by two factors: first, although the Israelis were not able to divide Palestinians based on a religious ideology they were able to internalise their territorial divisions of the West Bank, Gaza, Jerusalem and 1948 areas into our psyches. The apartheid wall and checkpoints led each local community to have limited interactions with its local counterparts all over historical Palestine. Second, there is an apparent lack of effective leadership both on the national Palestinian level and on the Christian religious level to pull the divided territorial groups together into one effective national force.

Conclusions

It is easy to spot numerous similarities between the Roman system of persecution and the Israeli one. Although the Roman persecution might be more severe on the physical side, the Israeli persecution is not necessarily lacking in violence and is equally terrorising on the psychological side. In terms of goals and results, the Israeli persecution looks more effective despite the short life span of the Zionist state.

International attention to the subject is important and so are documents like Kairos Palestine, but the Palestinian Christians have come to realise that real help is not likely to come from their fellow Christians worldwide. Archimandrite Milatios Basal puts it nicely: "Those protecting churches now are our countrymen".⁽¹⁹⁾

The risks posed by the persecution of any indigenous Christian is dismantling and threatening the prospects of any coherent Palestinian identity. Palestinian Christians and Muslims have lived together and formed this identity and way of life for hundreds of years. It's an identity of an Eastern society with several local religions that maintained certain spiritual values over the materialistic ones. Without this collective identity, there is no hope for the Palestinians to withstand the continued Israeli occupation and the evident Western interests in changing the shape of the region towards a capitalist system that lacks such spiritual values.

Persecution of Christians occur worldwide and cases of harsher and more atrocious maltreatment has been documented, particularly recently in Iraq where the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) have tortured and held captive numerous Christians. However, what is pertinent in the Israeli case is the genial assertion of Israel offering a 'haven' for Christianity and being a place where all faiths practice safely and freely; but conversely and shockingly, Christian persecution has been steadily ongoing for over 65 years. There have been rising trends of violence, with little attention from the international and local media and little interest in positive intervention from the Christian world.

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Fadi N. Skaik*

Gaza's Defenseless Population

The PRC produced the report Gaza's Defenseless Population providing an overview of the third conflict and preceding conflicts and the social and political currents that have affected them. The article is an abridged version of the report.

Operation Protective Edge was launched on 8 July 2014 by Israel on the Gaza Strip: an assault that resulted in some of the worst casualties in Gaza since the Sharon Disengagement Plan, when Israel withdrew from Gaza. The latest is the third of a series of aggressions launched by Israel, the others taking place in 2008/2009 and 2012. After the 2005 disengagement plan, Israel continued to control Gaza's territorial waters, border crossings and airspace, fully monitoring and blockading the coastal enclave. The siege of Gaza is a significant part of the protracted conflict between Palestine and Israel, a conflict that has been ongoing since 1948, 66 years, that has seen millions displaced and that has had no resolve through the International community. The assaults on Gaza since 2006 have exacerbated the conflict and have been declared as disproportionate by the United Nations (UN) and human rights groups; they have largely targeted civilians resulting in thousands wounded and killed plus the basic infrastructure of housing, water, power and sewage facilities being severely damaged if not destroyed. 'Gaza's Defenceless Population' depicts the conditions of the Gaza population over the past eight years with a special focus on Israel's Operation Protective Edge, which lasted for 51 days and came to an end on the 26th August 2014. The paper aims to focus attention on the effects and implications of current political and social trends and challenges affecting the Gaza Strip, and to raise awareness of them both locally and internationally.

2006-2014

The Gaza Strip, the most densely populated area in the world, makes up a small part of the lands of Palestine as occupied since 1967 by Israel. It was granted self-governance in 1994 pursuant to the Oslo Accords, one year preceding; but Israel has maintained control of its borders, territorial waters and airspace even after the Sharon Disengagement Plan of 2005. Part of the reason for this has been the victory of Hamas after the 2006 legislative

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A member of the Keferna family cries upon his return to the family house, left, that was destroyed by Israeli strikes in Beit Hanoun, northern Gaza Strip, July 26, 2014. (AP Photo/Letteris Pitarakis)

elections took place in Gaza, which has been deeply unpopular with Israel. While they initially formed a unity Government with Fatah, this union swiftly ended and Fatah formed a separate Government to rule over the West Bank, the only Government that was formerly recognised by key players in the region such as Saudi Arabia, Egypt and Jordan. Israel have not recognised Hamas and declared them an illegal entity, particularly due to their position as a resistance party and propensity for using homemade rockets against Israel. An unprecedented blockade has therefore, been imposed on the people of Gaza, with restrictions on the movement of goods across the border, embargos on business and fuel supplies being cut. These actions claimed the lives of many, particularly with the constraint on medicine and medical care moving into the strip and the participation of Egypt in these actions. Severe afflictions on economic and social rights have also been felt as a result of these actions, including high percentages of food insecurity, high unemployment and decline in growth amongst other hazardous and hostile conditions. The scourge felt on the Gaza Strip has not ended with the blockade, and three wars have been endured starting with Operation Cast Lead in 2008, Operation Pillar of Cloud in 2012 prior to the recent Operation Protective Edge, who's open ended cease-fire was declared on 26 August 2014. Controversial tactics and breaches of international humanitarian law (IHL) have marred both of the aforementioned conflicts; and both have been proceeded by the ongoing blockade that has spiraled the residents of Gaza downwards to perpetuated weak human security conditions.

Operation Protective Edge and its impact on civilians

After seven years of rivalry, reconciliation between Fatah and Hamas and a political unity government was formed on 2 June 2014 agreed by key international players. However, Israel still considered Hamas a terrorist organisation shunning any potential peace deals and seeking punitive measures against the Palestinian Authority.

On 12 June 2014, the kidnapping of three Israelis in the West Bank prompted the launch of Operation

Brother's Keeper. Precluding any evidence, Israel blamed Hamas for the kidnappings, which they denied. The operation that ensued saw ten Palestinians killed and 350-600 arrests. The missing Israelis were found on 30 June 2014 near Hebron, but a day after they were buried, a Palestinian teenager, Mohammed Abu Khudair, 17, was kidnapped and murdered in East Jerusalem.

On 8 July 2014, Israel launched Operation Protective Edge against the Gaza Strip in an attempt, as it claimed, to stop rocket attacks from Gaza in response to an Israeli crackdown on Hamas operatives in the West Bank. Many attempts for a ceasefire fell apart, before an Egyptian proposal for a 72-hour ceasefire was brokered on 10 August 2014. The escalation was the deadliest military operation in Gaza since the Second Intifada. To date, more than 2,130 civilians have been killed and 10,400 have been wounded (80% civilians) since the beginning of the military offensive, according to the Palestinian Ministry of Health.

As of 20 July 2014, Gaza's hospitals were ill-equipped and facing severe shortage in medical supplies and fuel. The only power station in the Gaza Strip was knocked down on 29 July 2014, which has immediately had an effect on the public health situation and reduced water and sanitation services. Moreover, 220 factories were targeted in various industrial zones, including a major carpentry enterprise, construction companies, dairy farms and livestock, a candy manufacturer, a major biscuit factory, and several TV stations. The damage of agriculture is estimated at over 'US'\$200 million. On 5 August 2014, an OCHA report stated that 520,000 Palestinians in the Gaza Strip (approximately 30% of Gaza's population) may have been displaced, of whom 273,000 were taking makeshift shelter in 90 UN-run schools, which have been hit by Israeli airstrikes on several occasions. 11,855 homes have been totally destroyed or severely damaged, and 5,595 homes have suffered major damage but are still inhabitable. More than 485,000 internally displaced persons are in need of emergency food assistance.

Israel's deliberate attacks on densely populated areas, shelters, journalists and media outlets continued throughout the offensive and included UN-run schools and markets with heavy footfall. 77 UNRWA facilities have been targeted and three Palestinian UNRWA employees have been killed: two in their homes and a third while walking home from his workplace. Moreover, the number of journalists who were killed in the assault rose to ten on 13 August 2014 when two Associated Press journalists were covering a bomb disposal team's efforts to defuse an unexploded Israeli artillery shell, which exploded while being moved and killed the three member team and two journalists. This incident is deemed as the first in which a foreign journalist was killed in the offensive.

The 2014 aggression on the Gaza Strip is one of the most severe attacks it has experienced for decades. The Israeli army employed its entire military arsenal on mostly innocent civilians as it had failed in targeting military objects. Many of the attacks were described as war crimes by UN officials. The Israeli army used heavy missiles launched (against civilian targets in Gaza) by F16s such as the famous Bunker buster bombs, which are used to pound military targets. Later, the Carpet Bombardment style was implemented: this is where artillery shells rain down entire civilian areas with hundreds of shells in minutes.

The Israeli army has intentionally targeted the schools of UNRWA where IDPs are located. More than seven UNRWA schools were bombarded by Israeli jets and artillery shells leaving more than 30 people dead.

The UN Human Rights Commissioner, Navi Pillay, stated at an emergency debate at the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva that Israel had committed war crimes. Kyung-wha Kang, the Assistant

Secretary General at UNOCHA, stated that Gaza civilians had no safe place to go “as 44% of the land has been declared a ‘no-go zone’ by the Israeli army... Families are taking the heart-wrenching decision to split to different locations - mother and son to one; father and daughter to another - hoping to maximise the chance one part of the family survives.”

Areas particularly hard hit included Al Shijaya on 20 July where more than 90 civilians were killed, 400 wounded and tens of thousands displaced, The attacks of the Israeli army targeted the eastern parts of Al Shijaya, especially Al Nazaz and Al Biltaji streets. The Israeli bombing according to the Israeli Defense minister was a cover to pull out some soldiers who were wounded and killed while trying to invade Gaza. After less than 20 days, Israeli artillery shells hit a busy market in Al Shijaya town and killed more than 18 civilians including journalists and paramedics. Scores of Palestinians were also killed in Al Zana and Khozaa towns in Khan Yonis city southern Gaza as Israel besieged these towns for days. Following the Israeli withdrawal on time of ceasefire, horrific images of mass killing of more than 20 people appeared. The towns were heavily bombarded by Israeli tank shelling. To the south of these two towns, the city of Rafah also witnessed heavy tank shelling. More than 100 people were killed in less than 24 hours when Israel violated the ceasefire pretending that one of its soldiers was kidnapped.

Witness Statements

The Palestinian Return Centre (PRC) field team in the Gaza Strip has been witnessing and documenting many of the horrible scenes perpetrated by the IOF. The centre has also documented many devastated families. More than 80 families were totally wiped out as Israel bombarded civilian homes randomly. Such actions, which were considered war crimes, have been deliberately used by Israel as its collective punishment strategy.

Examples are Al-Hajj family in Khanyounis where eight died; the Abu Jamee family in Khanyounis, which lost 26 people, including 19 children and five women in one air strike; the Anajjar family in Khanyounis which lost 20 people, including 12 children and six women; Siyam family in Rafah, which lost 11 members including a woman and four children; Ziyara family in Al-Bureij refugee camp where six died; Al-Batsh family in Gaza City where 18 died and Al-Qassas family in Gaza City where 10 died. For the purpose of this report, the PRC team in Gaza has documented the following incidents and massacres committed by the IOF: bombing of the apartment of the Palestinian footballer Ahed Zakout; shelling of the Al-Shujayea market; tragedy of the Bakr family's children, targeting of the Abu Jarad family in Beit Lahia and targeting of a UNRWA shelter.

The deliberate and random bombing of civilian areas by Israel, pushed hundreds of people to leave their houses, especially those who lived on the outskirts of the Gaza Strip. Mainly, in the northern parts of Gaza (Beit Lahia and Beit Hanon towns), eastern Gaza city, Jabalia, Toffah and Al Shijaya quarters, the eastern borders of Gaza strip in the middle areas, Khan Yonis city and Rafah. Those who were internally displaced took refuge in schools run by UNRWA, which turned into an emergency shelter. Some of the IDPs took refuge in the western parts of the Gaza strip, hosted by their friends or relatives.

The Israeli aggression on the Gaza Strip did not only target civilians but also attacked the basic infrastructure of the water and sewage systems. Israeli airstrikes bombed major water lines and the sewage plant, Al Shati camp, west of Gaza City on 9 July 2014, which provides water to tens of thousands of civilians and is regarded as the main water line for the camp.



Palestinians gather around the rubble of a building where at least 20 members of the Al Najar extended family were killed by an Israeli strike in Khan Younis, in the southern Gaza Strip, July 26, 2014. (AP Photo/Eyad Baba)

According to the Director of the Water Department in the Municipality of Gaza, Saad Eddin Al-Atbash, "Israeli aircraft targeted a sewage plant west of the city, which serves the areas of al-Shati Camp, Tel al-Hawa neighborhood, Sheikh Ajlin, and the western areas of Gaza City, which pumps 25,000 cubic meters of waste water daily to the public treatment plant." He continued, "While the city is working on improving the water supply systems for the citizens in Gaza, Israeli forces are working on the destruction of water wells in order to increase the suffering of the citizens during the summer."

The Israeli army also directly targeted two wells: Al-Maqwsi area and Al-Zaytoun quarters, used by more than 10,000 inhabitants. Meanwhile, the total number of civilians affected by damaged water lines reached more than 100,000 in Gaza city alone. Water Authority and Coastal Municipalities Water Utility (CMWU) stated that six of its workers had been killed during Israeli attacks while they were working. They also targeted water and wastewater facilities and networks, which led to serious damages. The vehicles and logistics were attacked by Israel. CMWU and PWA stated that the Gaza Strip is exposed to humanitarian and environmental disaster due to the deterioration of health and water conditions.

The organisation added that there is a dire need to secure protection for water and waste water technical staff in order to be able to maintain damages and keep providing water to the population, moreover providing CMWU with the necessary spare parts and fuel to maintain and operate water and waste water facilities, pump stations and water wells. They are also requested to duplicate efforts to secure the needed power to operate water and waste water facilities for securing humanitarian services to the affected residents of the Gaza Strip to ensure their right to water.

The 2014 War against Gaza damaged the local economy as huge losses hit the industrial, agricultural and other private sector businesses. The Israeli army destroyed more than 360 factories while thousands of acres of farmland, ruined by tanks shelling and strikes. The losses within the industrial sector exceeded US\$70m. The FAO stated that 42,000 acres of croplands suffered large damage and half of Gaza's poultry stock has been lost due to direct hits or lack of care as access to farmlands was not possible due to Israeli military attacks on border areas.

Israel has also bombarded the sole power plant in Gaza, which has cost the Palestinian economy

more losses as it is a key source for the Gaza population. More than 5,238 housing units have been totally damaged, 30,050 damaged partially and 4,374 units have become uninhabitable.

As the War comes to an end, the Gaza population continues to suffer due to a lack of urgent aid and shelter support that it desperately needs. The process of building and construction is slow due to the restrictions that Israel imposes. It is obvious that the people of Gaza are now confronting many challenges, which will intensify over the coming years in the absence of an enabling political environment. If immediate action isn't taken, the daily lives of Palestinians living in the Gaza Strip will become worse due to shortages in safe drinking water, housing, electricity and primary healthcare and the mounting number of poor, disadvantaged and food-insecure Gazans will have increased without humanitarian aid. According to the recently issued UN report "Gaza in 2020", to insure that Gaza in 2020 will be "a liveable place", ongoing efforts by Palestinians and partners in sectors such as energy, health, water and sanitation, need to be accelerated and intensified in the face of all difficulties. It is thus fundamental that the people of Gaza are able to have basic human rights to which they are entitled.

They must live safe and secure lives free of the various forms of violence, which are having a dreadful impact. The Gaza population should enjoy access without restrictions to the world and they should have proper healthcare and housing to live a decent life in peace and harmony now and in the near future. The delay in meeting the basic demands of Palestinian populations in Gaza will only exacerbate the human suffering, which will contribute to the continuation of the conflict. An urgent intervention to secure the daily demands and freedom of movement for them should be coupled with a sustainable resolution to the Palestinian question that guarantees their rights notwithstanding the right of refugees to return to their homeland.



Sahdya Darr*

The Expansion of Israeli Settlements in the West Bank and their Impact on Displacement

At the last two sessions of the United Nations (UN) Human Rights Council (HRC) in Geneva, the outgoing and incoming UN Human Rights Chief, Navi Pillay⁽¹⁾, and Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein⁽²⁾ respectively, expressed their concerns regarding the ongoing demolitions and forced evictions of Palestinians. These measures are almost a daily occurrence and relate to Israel's military occupation of the occupied Palestinian territory (oPt). They are generated by settlement establishment and expansion, an operation, which has been declared illegal under international law (IL), by international organisations such as the UN, the International Criminal Court (ICC), the International Court of Justice (ICJ)⁽³⁾ and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). Article 49 of the Fourth Geneva Convention, relative to the protection of civilian persons in time of war, states: "The occupying power shall not deport or transfer parts of its own population into the territories it occupies"⁽⁴⁾. In violation of this, Israel continues to expropriate land belonging to Palestinians for its illegal settlement enterprise, and encourage the migration of its citizens into the oPt. According to the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA), as of September 2014, there are 540,000 Israeli settlers living in West Bank settlements⁽⁵⁾.

This article will look at settlement expansion and the effect it has on the displacement of Palestinians. A historical overview of Israeli settlement policy since 1967 will be provided in order to see how it has evolved under each government. Sources of information will include data collected from the Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel (EAPPI), the only organisation to have 'Human Rights Observers' living and working in the oPt all year round. This will be combined with desk research drawing on information collected from other organisations such as B'Tselem and Diakonia as well as UNOCHA, which monitor the humanitarian consequences of Israeli measures.

What are settlements?

All settlements have been built on land occupied by Israel following the Six-Day War in 1967 and are homes for Israeli citizens⁽⁶⁾. Israel's Ministry of the Interior has described settlements as "communities"⁽⁷⁾ and indeed they are - thriving communities providing inhabitants with virtually all their

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needs including shopping malls, supermarkets, libraries, schools and synagogues. Some of the largest settlements have achieved city status, conferring no special rights but lending prestige. Ma'ale Adumim, located east of Jerusalem, is the largest and home to 40,000 Israelis⁽⁸⁾ with a large shopping mall, schools, recreation centre and mayor. Generally speaking, settlements can be categorised as follows: urban; block; outposts; and frontier villages. Most have been built on land in rural areas. The exception to this is the city of Al-Khalil (Hebron) in the southern West Bank where settlers live in the heart of the city, protected by the Israel Defense Forces (IDF). All settlements are off limits to Palestinians who require a permit to enter them. Palestinians living in those areas of the West Bank under full Israeli control are subject to Israeli military law whilst Israeli civil law applies to settlers (this is despite not being part of Israel's sovereign territory)⁽⁹⁾. Although the international community deems all types of settlements to be illegal Israel argues that only "outposts" are illegal. This claim is questionable as even though the government has not authorised the establishment of "outposts", they often provide support and assistance to settlers and settler organisations in helping them develop the "outposts" into settlements, eventually legalising them. It is also inconsequential because all settlements have been constructed upon land belonging to Palestinians; allowing the transfer of the occupying power's population into this territory contravenes international law.

Historical overview of Israeli settlement policy since 1967

Immediately after its war with Egypt in 1967, Israel embarked upon its settlement enterprise, building on the lands it had occupied in this war including Gaza, Sinai, the West Bank, East Jerusalem and the Golan Heights⁽¹⁰⁾. Just months after the war, Israel established its first settlement Kfar Etzion⁽¹¹⁾. The settlement project was initially driven by the Allon Plan⁽¹²⁾, which was devised by Yigal Allon a leading figure in Israel's Labour movement. The Labour government led by Levi Eshkol was the first government to implement the Allon Plan, which focused on the construction of settlements in East Jerusalem annexed by Israel in 1967. The objective behind Israeli settlement construction, was to maintain a presence in the territory it had occupied by establishing settlements and populating them with Israeli citizens. From the outset, the international community declared this practice illegal.

The Allon Plan was pursued until 1977 when Menachem Begin founder of the Likud Party came to power. Previously Israeli settlement policy had concentrated on the establishment of settlements in areas that were not densely populated by Palestinians. This changed with Begin who adopted the Drobles Plan⁽¹³⁾, which saw settlement construction expand to include those areas heavily populated by Palestinians and closer to the Green Line under the pretext of security.

Between 1972 and 1992 the primary method used by Israel to expropriate Palestinian land was to declare it as being essential to "military needs"⁽¹⁴⁾. From 1979 onwards other methods were employed when a decision by the Israeli High Court of Justice forced the Government of Israel to abandon using the justification of expropriating Palestinian land for "military needs". Israel moved to declaring land as "state land" using an interpretation of Ottoman land laws, declaring it as the absentee property of Palestinians not present in the oPt and expropriating land for public use⁽¹⁵⁾. In addition to Ottoman land laws other historical laws and agreements have enabled Israel to take Palestinian land. During this period, in 1979, Israel withdrew from the Sinai under the Israel-Egypt agreement and all settlements there were evacuated and destroyed. The following year Israel experienced a housing shortage, which presented the government with the opportunity to build more settlements in order to accommodate this housing crisis.

In 1992 the Rabin government announced a freeze on settlement construction but continued to expand settlements claiming that it was a necessary response to the natural growth of the settler population⁽¹⁶⁾. In 2003, Ariel Sharon declared that Israel would halt settlement establishment but again settlement expansion resumed. Since 2003 every Israeli government has declared a freeze on settlement construction and failed to stand by this declaration⁽¹⁷⁾. By the end of 2012, 250 Israeli settlements had been constructed in the West Bank - this included those built without Government authorisation⁽¹⁸⁾.

At present there are tensions within the coalition led by Benjamin Netanyahu over how Israel's settlement policy is being pursued that have led to a decline in support for Netanyahu. Those on the far right are pushing for a more aggressive settlement policy⁽¹⁹⁾.

What is evident from this historical overview of Israeli settlement policy since 1967 is that the settlement enterprise has continued under each government expanding and gathering pace. Israel's ongoing settlement construction and expansion, as well as the incentives it offers to its citizens to move to settlements and the significant proportion of its budget that it allocates to settlements at the expense of other areas in Israel, which need government attention; all indicates that Israel has no desire to end its military occupation and withdraw its population from the Palestinian territory.

Settlement Expansion: The Current Situation

East Jerusalem, in particular, has seen an increase in home demolitions and forced evictions; a part of Israel's plan to drive Palestinians out of the city in order to alter its demographics laid out in its 20/20 plan⁽²⁰⁾.

In the Jerusalem Periphery, also known as the E1 area, and the Jordan Valley nearly 70,000⁽²¹⁾ Bedouin are at high risk of being forcibly displaced and losing their culture and traditions as Israel pursues its policy of Bedouin urbanisation. Demolitions are taking place on an almost regular basis and act as a "push" factor to pressure the Bedouin to leave the area so that settlement establishment and expansion can take place.

The E1 area acts as a corridor linking West Bank settlements to Jerusalem and is where Israel is attempting to implement its E1 Plan to expand settlements in the area and build new housing and commercial units that will connect the settlement of Ma'ale Adumim to Jerusalem and divide the north of the West Bank from the south. In order to realise this plan Israel will forcibly displace the Bedouin. This plan will have severe implications, as fragmenting the West Bank into two will further disrupt the territorial contiguity of a viable future Palestinian state thus endangering the two-state solution.

In September of this year, the Israeli government seized 990 acres of Palestinian land in the West Bank, near Bethlehem, the largest expropriation of Palestinian land in 30 years⁽²²⁾. This was seen as a punitive measure for the kidnap and murder of three Israeli Jewish teens in the West Bank and was applauded by the Israeli Economics Minister Naftali Bennett. The international community in particular the US took an unusually strong stance and along with the UK government urged the Israeli government to reverse this decision. The land, which was expropriated by settlers is intended to be the site of a new city near Gvaot and will be used to expand near Gush Etzion creating a contiguous city that will link the settlement of Gvaot with the Green Line.

All of this creates irreversible facts on the ground destroying any chance of a two-state solution and causing mass displacement of Palestinians.

What role has the international community played in allowing Israel to continue constructing and expanding settlements?

Although the international community has repeatedly urged Israel to halt the construction of settlements and the UN Security Council has passed a number of resolutions condemning settlement construction in practice the international community has done very little to put an end to Israel's settlement policy. None of the resolutions passed have been enforced and the lack of political will to hold Israel to account regarding this issue has enabled Israel to continue with its settlement policy. The US, Israel's closest ally vetoed a Palestinian proposal to condemn settlement construction at the UN Security Council in 2011⁽²³⁾ preventing the UN Security Council from taking any action against Israel. When it hasn't used its veto power the US has chosen to abstain from voting on resolutions pertaining to settlements. Another enabling factor is the economic and financial assistance the US gives to Israel, which helps to sustain settlements⁽²⁴⁾.

By doing business with settlements the international community is helping to sustain settlements. The EU has taken moves to exert pressure on the Israeli Government to stop settlement construction and expansion but these have had little effect as settlement expansion has continued to grow with the help of multinational corporations.

What effect does settlement expansion have, if any, on peace talks?

The Palestinians have long argued that the construction and expansion of settlements is detrimental to any peace talks because it undermines the two-state solution, which Israel purports to support. As Israel continues to expropriate land for settlements the possibility of a viable Palestinian state diminishes precluding the right of the Palestinian to self-determination. Israel's repeated breaches of its commitments to freezing settlement establishment and construction during peace talks have led the Palestinians to pursue unilateral measures much to the annoyance of both the US and Israel.

Settlements are one of the core issues addressed in peace talks but each time Israel has been continuing with its settlement policy whilst they have taken place thus undermining them. Israel refutes the stance of the international community that all settlements are illegal under international law arguing that they are not built on occupied territory but territory that is administered by Israel. Nevertheless Israel is bound by its obligations as a party to the Geneva conventions, which it is violating. Furthermore Israel maintains that settlement expansion is necessary because of population growth.

What impact does settlement expansion have on Palestinians?

The humanitarian impact of settlement establishment and expansion on Palestinians is devastating. Both the methods employed by Israel to expropriate Palestinian land for its settlement enterprise and the very existence of settlements, negatively impact Palestinians, violating many of their basic human rights such as the right to housing, employment and freedom of movement⁽²⁵⁾.

Displacement

Forced displacement in the West Bank and East Jerusalem is ongoing. Thousands of Palestinians have been displaced or are at acute risk of being displaced. Many Palestinians have been displaced more than once losing their homes and livelihoods as a result. Displacement in the oPt is the result

of multiple factors that are connected but primarily it is driven by settlement establishment and expansion. For example, land expropriated for settlements leads to the displacement of Palestinians but settlements themselves also contribute to the displacement of Palestinians. In a recent analysis of Palestine Internal Displacement (IDP) figures, the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC) revealed that Jewish settlers in Hebron (IDMC 2014) reportedly displaced 6,692 Palestinians as a result of harassment⁽²⁶⁾. Palestinians living close to settlements often report harassment and violence by settlers and this can drive them from their homes. In addition the denial of their basic human rights to freedom of movement and access to services and resources can force them to leave.

The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA) reported that more people were displaced in 2013 than in 2011 and 2012 together⁽²⁷⁾. Already this year, UNOCHA figures show that 121 people have been displaced due to displacement and evictions in East Jerusalem whilst in Area C of the West Bank, 668 Palestinians have been displaced⁽²⁸⁾. In the West Bank it is the Bedouin communities that have been the most affected by demolitions. Israel's destruction of private property belonging to Palestinians in order to acquire land for settlement establishment and expansion contravenes international law, which only allows for the destruction of private property if it is absolutely necessary for military objectives⁽²⁹⁾.

This year the EAPPI reported that in 2013 Israel had demolished entire communities for the first time. All of the inhabitants of Bir Nabal, Tel al Adassa, Az Za'aym, Makhul and Ein Ayoub were displaced leaving 189 people without access to land⁽³⁰⁾.

The effects of forced displacement are both short and long-term and impact all members of the families involved. Children in particular suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder, depression, anxiety and their academic achievements falls⁽³¹⁾.

An additional burden, bore by Palestinian families, is having to pay the cost of having their home demolished. In a case study undertaken by UNOCHA on the financial cost of an eviction, a family in Sheikh Jarrah was asked to pay a fee of NIS 13,000 to cover the costs involved in evicting them from their home⁽³²⁾.

Resolve

For Palestinians whose land is expropriated by the Government of Israel, there is no way for them to effectively challenge the construction or expansion of a settlement. They have however sought redress through international mechanisms presenting a number of resolutions to the UN, which have been adopted. The Palestinian Authority (PA) is now saying that if Israel does not put an end to all settlement activity and withdraw from the oPt it will have no choice but to continue joining more treaties and conventions and the International Criminal Court (ICC). The UN General Assembly's recognition of the state of Palestine in 2012 created the possibility for Palestine to take the issue of Israel's illegal settlement building on occupied land to the ICC, however, Palestine is yet to do this⁽³³⁾ but if it did, this would be a significant move in holding Israel to account.

The political will to confront this issue seems to be gaining momentum with the US taking a tougher stance towards Israel's recent expropriation of land near Bethlehem, and the EU's announcement that it is exploring alternative ways in which it can apply pressure to Israel regarding the establishment and expansion of settlements. These new measures may include banning convicted Jewish settlers from entering the EU and a review of trade agreements between the EU and Israel, in particular the Association Agreement signed by the EU and Israel in 1995 to reinforce the fact that these

agreements are based upon respect for human rights⁽³⁴⁾. The EU is also progressing with its plan to ensure that all products made in settlements are labeled, rather than simply stating that they are from Israel. Although these steps send a strong message it is debatable whether or not they will have the desired effect. The application of trade sanctions would be more harmful to Israel and its economy but the EU remains apprehensive to pursue this route.

The Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) campaign, which began in 2005 and was initiated by Palestinian civil society organisations, calls for a boycott of goods and services coming from settlements in order to put pressure on Israel to comply with international law and recognise the rights of Palestinians. The campaign, which is endorsed internationally has achieved a number of important victories ranging from academic, cultural and sports boycotts as well as divestment and is gaining strength receiving support from left-wing Israelis too. Alan Dershowitz, a leading defender of Israel acknowledged that the campaign was gaining impetus and presented a very real threat to Israel when he said in June of this year that 'I think that a combination of factors – the occupation, the settlements – were the cause of it, but the BDS movement now questions the legitimacy of Israel's very existence,' and that "My great fear is that tomorrow, if Israel were to end most of the settlements and make peace, the BDS movement might be weakened a little bit in some parts of the United States"⁽³⁵⁾. The impact of the campaign on Israel was also felt earlier this year when Benjamin Netanyahu addressed the AIPAC committee and felt it necessary to publicly denounce BDS⁽³⁶⁾.

Conclusion

In conclusion, for any meaningful progress to be made towards a just and lasting peace Israel must cease its construction and expansion of settlements and put an end to demolitions and evictions of Palestinians. Israel's transfer of its population to the oPt presents a major obstacle to peace and the international community must muster the political will to make Israel comply with IL. The most effective way in which this could be achieved is by applying trade sanctions, which would hurt Israel's economy thus forcing it to abide by international law. The successes of BDS, the repercussions of which are being felt by the Government of Israel, are evidence that these measures work. The unilateral measures being taken by the PA and Palestinian civil society must be complimented by international action. In the short-term Israeli policies that discriminate against Palestinians and cause mass displacement must cease and the Israeli government should look at ways in which it can resolve this issue, for example, by issuing reparations.

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PALESTINIAN REFUGEES IN THE ARAB WORLD

REALITIES & PROSPECTS

This book, *Palestinian Refugees in the Arab World: Realities and Prospects* looks at the most significant aspects of the Palestinian refugee and explores the future possibilities of their plight through studies and papers presented by a group of experts and researchers. The papers were presented during a seminar organised by Al Jazeera Centre for Studies in cooperation with the Palestinian Return Centre on 14 and 15 April 2012 in the Qatari capital of Doha.

There are more than eight million Palestinian refugees in the world. The vast majority live in Arab countries, mainly neighbouring Palestine, with smaller numbers scattered in different parts of the world. They all live under extremely challenging conditions that differ according to the host country's socio-economic conditions and political climate; but include inadequate access to provisions, general treatment and attitudes and protection of human rights.

More than six decades have passed since the displacement of these refugees from their homes under Zionism. However they still continue to suffer and live under miserable conditions with no respite. So far, Arab and international efforts have failed to bring this suffering to an end due to Israel's intransigence compounded by American assistance to Israel and support for its occupation. Arab countries have also failed to address this historical injustice and take a balanced commensurate response to the severity of the refugee question, including the Palestinian cause in general.

This book, *Palestinian Refugees in the Arab World: Realities and Prospects* looks at the most significant aspects of the Palestinian refugee and explores the future possibilities of their plight through studies and papers presented by a group of experts and researchers.

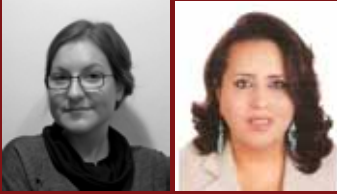
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Rachel Humphris & Dr Lamis Abuhaloob*

A Double Burden or Triple Burden for Palestinian Children Residing in Gaza Refugee Camps? Exploring the Role of Diet in Malnutrition, Obesity and Dental Caries

Introduction

In August 2014, Sherwood and Balousha wrote, 'In Gaza more than 2,100 people have been killed, most of them civilians, including about 500 children, in the past seven weeks. At least 11,000 people were injured and more than 17,000 homes destroyed or badly damaged. Around a third of Gaza's 1.8 million people have been displaced, many now living in United Nations shelters. Schools, hospitals, factories, farms, mosques and infrastructure such as power and water plants were hit. Reconstruction could take up to 10 years, say analysts.'⁽¹⁾

This latest war has further exacerbated the already serious deteriorations in the socio-economic status and psychosocial well-being of the Palestinian people in Gaza that occurred with the Al-Aqsa Intifada in 2000.⁽²⁾ People still reside in the harshest living conditions and together with long-term political instability, violence and uncertainty; this has caused an ever-increasing experience of ill health amongst Palestinian refugees, notably, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) in a third of Gaza adolescents.⁽³⁾ In response, financial expenditure of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine's (UNRWA) health programme increased from US\$ 553,000 to US\$ 753,000 in the period from 2009 to 2012 in Palestinian refugee camps.⁽⁴⁾ Despite these increases in the health budget, the UNRWA health programme has been unable to meet the health needs of Palestinian refugees⁽⁵⁾ – for instance the total necessary UNRWA budget for oral health, alone, has been estimated at US\$ 5,848,998⁽⁶⁾. Moreover, concerns have been raised with regard to diet since most Palestinian families are unable to afford healthy and nutritious foods.⁽⁷⁾ The recent war has already exacerbated an already impoverishing environment: increasing poverty, declining access to healthy and nutritious foods and producing a 'triple burden' of malnutrition, obesity and dental caries (dental cavities) for children residing in Gaza Strip refugee camps.

Health and diet in refugee situations

The importance of the health and diets of refugee children and families has moved centre stage not only in Middle East North Africa (MENA) countries⁽⁸⁾ but also globally. In 2014, the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) Report, War's Human Cost, showed that 86

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percent of the world's refugees are now living in developing countries and that 54 percent are trapped in long-term/protracted refugee circumstances.⁽⁹⁾ The current refugee situation is characterised by a worldwide trend towards fewer but longer-lasting conflicts. Long-lasting conflicts, as those existent in Palestine, together with protracted refugee situations, are known to have detrimental effects upon children's health before and after resettlement. It thus affects their health status throughout life. The need for health promotion is apparent, however, this is not a simple process. The World Food Programme (WFP) has identified this phenomenon and has begun a nutrition awareness pilot project, which targets women who receive WFP's food vouchers and are pregnant or have young children. The six-month-long session features interactive discussions and presentations on diet, hygiene, cooking, purchasing healthy food on a budget, and caring for infants.⁽¹⁰⁾ However, such community-based nutrition programmes, which require behavioural modification, may be difficult to achieve in the refugee environment and impossible during and after upsurges in violence due to the costs of a healthy and nutritious diet.⁽¹¹⁾

This has particular relevance for oral health with over 35 percent of the world's population having untreated decayed teeth.⁽¹²⁾ In Palestine, more than 75 percent of children have dental caries,⁽¹³⁾ with an average of 4.22 teeth affected⁽¹⁴⁾ and diet was once more implicated. It was of little surprise that the diet of Palestinian refugee children and adolescents was high in energy-dense foods (free sugars for example, being over 12 percent of the daily energy intake⁽¹⁵⁾ but low in fibre and micronutrients⁽¹⁶⁾. Since free sugars are implicated in dental caries, overweight and obesity⁽¹⁷⁾, the diet of Palestinian children remains alarming. The literature shows that the experience of under-nutrition in infancy and early childhood, followed by rapid weight gain in late childhood and adolescence has been associated with a high prevalence of childhood obesity.⁽¹⁸⁾ A careful examination of the available data suggests that a dichotomy exists for Palestinian adolescents since 17.9 percent are obese while 9.7 percent are stunted in their growth due to the effects of poor nutrition.⁽¹⁹⁾ Sawaya et al. have suggested that an association exists between childhood malnutrition and adult obesity due to compositional changes in the diet towards energy-dense foods, such as those containing free sugars.⁽²⁰⁾ Specifically highlighted are sugar-sweetened beverages, since a clinically significant association exists between childhood BMI and childhood dental caries.⁽²¹⁾ The suggestion by Sawaya et al. is supported by the epidemiological finds, which show that 58 percent of Palestinian adults are overweight and 27 percent are obese – it may be proposed that this prevalence of overweight and obesity is a consequence of the energy-dense quality of the diet of Palestinian children.

Therefore, this impoverished environment following violence and uncertainty, has hastened changes in dietary behaviours with the shift towards a more western-style diet. For instance, in Gaza refugee camps WFP reports that 3kgs of sugar are consumed by families on a weekly basis⁽²²⁾ together with a reduced intake of micronutrients⁽²³⁾. Abuhaloob found Palestinian refugees purchased carbonated drinks, cakes, potato crisps, chocolate and sweets, which were not part of traditional homemade foods or drinks.⁽²⁴⁾ The result of the above dietary changes is the 'double burden' of malnutrition and obesity among refugee child populations.⁽²⁵⁾ It is suggested, however, that 'triple burden' exists – a triple burden of malnutrition, obesity and dental caries, which is attributed to 'nutrition transition' that follows rapid economic change. The rapid economic change being characterised by rapid secular trends (e.g. violence, migration and urbanisation) leading to low levels of physical activity and a high consumption of cheap and easily obtainable, refined, energy-dense foods, in the absence of the full elimination of under-nutrition. Therefore, poor nutrition results in the coexistence of under-nutrition and obesity as well as dental caries, for displaced urban and rural.⁽²⁶⁾

The high prevalence of childhood dental caries in refugee groups is first, an indicator of ill health, affecting the children's overall health and dietary intake and secondly, affects their future health, as reflected in the prevalence of diet-related chronic diseases in Palestinian adults.⁽²⁷⁾ As Rahim et al.

have suggested the degree of unmet need could destabilise refugee health services and, therefore, significantly impact upon UNRWA work.⁽²⁸⁾ It is postulated, therefore, that childhood dental caries is a consequence of the adoption of a more western-style diet, which is high in free sugars⁽²⁹⁾ and fats⁽³⁰⁾, which impacts upon children's physical health as observed in the higher prevalence of child refugee malnutrition and obesity⁽³¹⁾.

Addressing the triple burden: is there a way forward?

There is a paucity of research undertaken within the refugee camp setting on previous health interventions in refugee camps although no formal evaluations have been published academically. The research that has been undertaken regarding obesity and malnutrition in protracted refugee situations was based on surveys with no new additional empirical data⁽³²⁾ or has been conducted with refugee children in resettlement or receiving societies⁽³³⁾. This work found that community prevention programmes could not close the oral health-health gap between immigrant and non-immigrant children.⁽³⁴⁾ Gaining healthy behaviours before resettlement is therefore, of central importance as it will impact on the health and well being of children following resettlement and have positive effects on health throughout life.

This proposition has particular relevance in Arab countries where health systems are oriented towards treatment with the focus being on tertiary level care rather than on preventive and health promotion services. Therefore, people tend to present late in the disease process, with 'long-term complications and disabilities'.⁽³⁵⁾ Consequently, UNRWA reports the highest workload (87.8 WLUs/hour) for Palestinian refugees residing in the Gaza strip camps compared with its workload in any other of its refugee localities. When this is coupled with the difficulties experienced by the UNRWA health programme and the acute presentation of non-communicable disease, UNRWA may be unable to meet the refugees' health needs.⁽³⁶⁾ A debate in the literature concerning refugees and those in the Palestinian Territories⁽³⁷⁾ has called for the need for participatory and collaborative working to permit the promotion of health in difficult physical and emotional circumstances⁽³⁸⁾. The requirement for a different, evidence-based approach to health interventions, has become urgent, since with ever-increasing health care needs, the complexity of the physical and emotional environment in which families and children reside, all impact upon the sustainability of health services to provide accessible, affordable and appropriate interventions to promote and maintain health. Community-led dietary programmes, such as 'Nutrition Works', which adopts an integrated approach from individual to expert, from community organisations to political coalitions, forges change, in the service of health promotion and health equity. Investing in such nutrition interventions while promoting oral health and bodily weight is also known to 'reduce poverty as well-nourished children are 33 percent more likely to escape poverty as adults'.⁽³⁹⁾

There is a need for the development of such evidence-based, community-led dietary interventions to address the 'triple burden' of malnutrition, obesity and dental caries for children and their families residing in Gaza refugee camps. Adopting a multi-sectorial approach, which permits the community capacity building from individual action, through community organisations to political action, has the potential to up-scale nutrition, reduce the triple burdens of malnutrition, obesity and tooth decay and to reduce poverty. Doing so will promote the health and well-being of Palestinian primary school-aged children residing in refugee camps in Gaza today and into adulthood.

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Field Report

World War One Impact on Palestine

Organised by

The Palestinian Return Centre and Al-Jazeera Centre for Studies
8-9 November 2014 Thistle-Marble Arch, London, United Kingdom

The Palestinian Return Centre and Al Jazeera Centre for Studies, recently convened a conference to mark the 100th anniversary of World War One, presenting an opportunity to revisit the War's lasting significance to Palestine and its plight to the present day. The conference took place over two days and visited the history pre, during and post World War One before turning attention to the current situation and future for a state of Palestine, including the role of the international community as social media/technology. Representatives active in diplomatic fields and civil society dedicated to resolving the issue of Palestine. All speakers spoke of the importance of the events surrounding World War One that cemented the betrayal that Palestine endured at the hands of the British and the need for that responsibility to be harboured by Britain today, to end the aggression propagated by Israel as well as bring to fruition the right of return.

Day one of the conference collated the accounts from a panel of three about Palestine before World War One. It began with an account of Turkey's alignment with this issue and the history of the Ottoman Empire in this region. Key points to note were the affable relation between the Ottomans and Palestinian Arabs to the extent that the indigenous Arabs saw themselves as Ottoman citizens. The Early Zionist movement approached the Ottomans directly but they refused to sell their subjects to the Zionists. However, the Zionists have still used the legacy of the Ottomans as Ottoman law is used and has impact to this day in order for Israel to expand its settlements. Surprisingly, the early Zionist movement prior to World War One was quite fractured in nature, both in relation to the international/ warring parties and also in their support for Palestine being adopted as the Jewish homeland, and a unified front was not apparent until issue of the Balfour Declaration. Despite the division in approach of the parties to the conflict – Russia and Germany, for example, of the anti-Jewish camp and Britain being pro-Jewish - the decision-making power they exhibited was decidedly Machiavellian and either advertently or inadvertently furthered the Zionist cause. Those that were anti-Jewish wanted to expel the Jews from Europe while those that were pro-Jewish supported the Zionist movement not only for religious reasons (a return of the Jews to a promised land), but also strategic reasons as placing them in the Near East where they could act as the foot soldiers of European powers, would have been of incredible strategic importance. Therefore, both sides saw benefit in utilising Palestine to these ends. Understanding this history of Palestine and the early Zionist movement should help to inform and effectively





From left to right: Mr. Majed Al Zeer, Chairman, Palestinian Return Centre, Palestinians in Europe Conference. HE Dr. Manuel Hassassian, Palestinian Ambassador to the UK, Dr. Ezzeddine Abdelmoula, Manager of Research at Al Jazeera Centre for Studies and Dr.Yasin Aktay, Professor of Applied Sociology and Deputy Chairman of the ruling Justice and Development (AK) Party

pursue activism. In present day, the Jewish community is strong and influences to a high degree one of the most powerful nations, the USA, and its internal administration. However, it is important to note that a shift can be seen again amongst the Jewish community and this will have a profound impact on Israel.

The self-serving nature of the actions being taken around this era was delved into as Palestine during the First World War was explored. Palestine was of extreme strategic importance – geographical and geo-political positioning steered the desire to place European Jews in that land. Although that ideological support was present, it was primarily a strategic decision. However, granting a Jewish homeland and selling the Palestinian Arabs out of their own land was a move that came with no warning and promises for independence were in actual fact, broken. None of the key documents, namely the Balfour declaration of 1917, the Sykes-Picot agreement, the McMahon-Hussein correspondence and an Anglo-French declaration, alluded to the fact that Palestinian land would be divided. A popular and poignant ambition was exposed during this discussion; perhaps 100 years after the Balfour Declaration that might see a 2017 declaration returning land back to Palestinians.

Proceeding World War One, from the British Mandate to the San Remo conference, further events cemented Palestine's future and future Israel's allies. Discreet meetings in the British Foreign Office culminated in the Balfour Declaration of 1917 and the San Remo Conference of 1920, a meeting of allied powers of World War One, which determined the League of Nations Mandates, which had the Zionist claims instilled in them. With the support of Britain and Churchill, the rural people of Palestine could have little chance of being a comparable adversary. Winston Churchill, the British Prime Minister of the time, and Jewish immigrants saw the Arabs that lived there as vagabonds. The coupling of increasing reports of Jewish persecution across Europe as well Churchill's mindset that the Arabs had done nothing with the land of Palestine except confine it to desert firmly committed Churchill to the fruition of a Jewish State. Much fighting ensued this period. The British Mandate

was an 'iron cage' for the Palestinians and empowered the Zionist project and has remained in the hearts and minds of the Palestinians. Comparisons can be drawn with what happened in history to the present day and while the British were a key party in creating the state of Israel, the USA are fundamentally sustaining Israel's occupation of Palestinian land. President Truman, the US President of the time became an ally in furthering the Zionist goal after the British signed over their Mandate.

The second half of the conference focused on the present day dilemmas that impact Palestine and future expectations including the internationalisation of the Palestinian question. While the Royal Peel Commission and the British Government made the decision to divide Palestine, the policy over the next 10 years were in favour of Israel as well. Concerns for the Palestinian people were kept at the table but it no longer remained a political issue, rather a humanitarian one. The international community's involvement in the Peace Process has allowed impunity of Israel to continue its expansion through settlements over Palestine and further deny Palestinians of their rights and land. Notwithstanding the legal issues that arose after the great world wars that highlight the exploitation of Palestinian land and the transparent ignorance of a number of facets of international law; the fact of ongoing conflict between Israel and Palestine is not the most significant issue of the Israel-Palestine conflict; but the most significant issue is the impasse that is apparent through various phases after the war and this was lead into by the refusal of the right of return. Acknowledgment of the right of return and the pursuit of self-determination is therefore fundamental to a just settlement. The present day can see a little of history repeating itself. If one can appreciate that the persecution and discrimination of Jews in Europe was instrumental in increasing numbers of migrants to Israel and in gaining the sympathy of the greater powers to Zionism and not the Balfour Declaration in isolation that provided the framework for a Jewish state initially; it is seen in present day that criticism of Israel's actions is met with accusations of anti-Semitism.

Internationally, the two state solution for the historical lands of Palestine, one Jewish state, and another for Palestine, is firmly engrained in diplomatic intentions, particularly where the British Government is concerned. Looking at party politics has generally been one-sided toward a pro-Israel stance. Taking the Labour party, the Labour friends of Israel forum is for example well over-attended in comparison to the Labour friends of Palestine forum. However, a shift, again, is being seen and there is growing pro-Palestinian sympathy throughout Parliament with some leaders perhaps deemed to carry forward a sympathetic Palestinian agenda in Britain. The USA, however, appears to have an inviolable relationship with overriding support in terms of aid and military finance. Suggestion was made that the USA should be excluded in any strategy of furthering the Palestinian cause through diplomacy and instead focus should be concentrated on regional players and 'Boycott, Divestment and Sanction' (BDS) campaigns. Amongst the mass public, it was noted that there is mobilisation, particularly with the emergence of electronic communication and social media enabling



information to be shared more openly and prolifically. With this theme in mind Al Jazeera Network have revealed their project (Palestine Remix) in utilising the current era's mechanism in sharing information, enabling Palestinian history, politics, legal issues, humanitarian plight and social contentions to be conveyed via articles, documentaries and pictures on multiple platforms. A project to bring to light those events of 'then' that impact on the now.

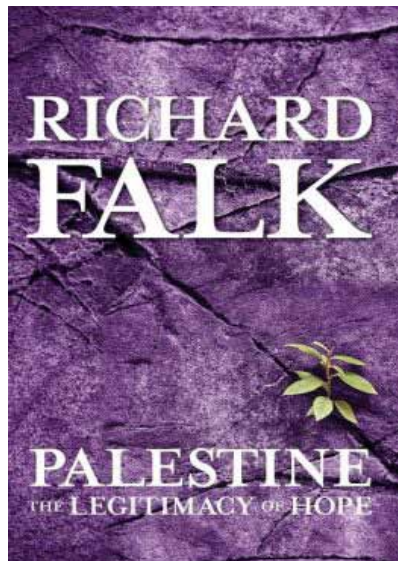
Conference Participants: HE Dr. Manuel Hassassian, Palestinian Ambassador to the UK, Dr. Yasin Aktay, Professor of Applied Sociology and Deputy Chairman of the ruling Justice and Development (AK) Party Dr. Ezzeddine Abdelmoula, Manager of Research at Al Jazeera Centre for Studies, Mr. Majed Al Zeer, Chairman, Palestinian Return Centre, Palestinians in Europe Conference. Dr. Roxane Farmanfarmanian, POLIS - University of Cambridge. Dr. Jafar Hadi Hassan, Academic in Semitic Languages and Jewish Studies. Dr. Mahmoud O. Haddad, Professor of Modern Arab & Islamic History at the University of Balamand. Dr. Basheer Nafi, Senior Researcher at Al Jazeera Centre for Studies. Mr. John Keay, Author of the 'Sowing the Wind: the Seeds of Conflict in the Middle East'. Mr. Karl Sabbagh, British-Palestinian academic and author. Dr Anthony Gorman, Senior lecturer in modern Middle Eastern history, University of Edinburgh. Dr. Ghada Karmi, Academic and author. Ms Lamis Andoni, Editor-In-Chief, Al-Araby Al Jadeed English. Dr. Peter A Shambrook, Independent Historian and Author. Ms. Anjum Layla Dean, Human rights activist, founder of Basic Human Rights. Dr. Malath Al Agha, PhD in EU-Russia foreign policy towards the Middle East and the Palestinian question – Exeter University. Jeff Handmaker, LL.M, PhD, senior lecturer in law, human rights and development, International Institute of Social Studies (ISS) of Erasmus University (EUR). Professor Gilbert Achcar, Professor of Development Studies and International Relations, SOAS. Ms. Shivani Jegarajah, International human rights expert and activist on the genocide of Tamils within Sri Lanka. Mr. Oliver Miles, Former British Ambassador to Libya, Middle East Expert. Mark McDonald, Barrister at Chambers of Michael Mansfield Q.C, and Labour Friends of Palestine co-founder. Dr. Salman Abu Sitta, Historian and Academic, Author of Palestine Atlas. Mr. Sameh Habeeb, Head of Media & Public Relation Department at the Palestinian Return Centre. Dr. Arafat Shoukri, Manager of Corporate Relations & Communications Aljazeera Media Network. Rawan Damen, Senior Producer and Director, Al Jazeera Network.



Palestine: The Legitimacy of Hope

Richard Falk (Author)

“Richard Falk writes that he has sought to be a “truthful observer.” He has succeeded admirably, and gone well beyond. The essays collected here are perceptive and informative, rich in insight and understanding, inspired by just sympathy for the oppressed and their legitimate struggles, above all by the determination of Palestinians to resist the dismal fate projected for them by criminal Israeli policies conducted with unremitting US support. It is an impressive record of Falk’s remarkable contributions during the difficult and fateful years of his dedicated and courageous service as UN Special Rapporteur for Palestine.” Noam Chomsky, Political theorist, media critic and linguistics scholar.



In May 2014, Richard Falk passed on his baton as United Nations (UN) Special Rapporteur for the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967, after a six-year session since 26 March 2008. His term was preceded and proceeded by an appointment on the UN Human Rights Inquiry Commission for the Palestinian territories and a career as a professor of international law at Princeton University. He has authored, co-authored and edited 40 texts but Palestine: The Legitimacy of Hope is his first major title.

“Professor Falk’s mandate as the UN Human Rights Council special rapporteur on Occupied Palestine has given him a front row seat in observing the tragic reality of the lives of the Palestinian people over recent years. This book comprising blogs that he issued over this period provides important and timely commentary into the multiple facets of the situation, as they arose. His often unconventional thoughts are expressed in a frank and fearless, frequently controversial manner. But what shines through is his belief in the ‘legitimacy struggle’ of the Palestinians and in the importance of non-traditional ways of seeking their objectives, notably in the actions from below, those of ordinary people. It is an important read for those who believe in the solidarity of global civil society and their wielding of soft power as instruments for social change.” Christine Chinkin, Member of the UN Fact-Finding Mission on the Conflict in Gaza, 2009.

The book is a collection of essays and blog posts Richard Falk penned over 2010 to 2014 with additional commentary and analysis. The book is divided into seven sections that pull together the key contentions and accords surrounding the Middle East crisis, such as resolving the conflict, Gaza, prisoners, global solidarity, international law etc. Falk illustrates how the struggle for rights has turned into a struggle for legitimacy, a struggle that lauded victory for many in the twentieth century while fighting colonialism.

"This book reflects an extraordinary lifetime of scholarship, political engagement, and intellectual brilliance. Richard Falk's blend of universal principle, forensic critique of power, and sensitive appreciation of the challenges faced by Palestinians makes him uniquely placed to advance a liberation strategy for Palestine. He does so here with his typical grace, intelligence and commitment. Always at the forefront of struggles for justice from Vietnam to Palestine, Palestine, the Legitimacy of Hope sets out a radical solution that is courageous, gentle, and full of humanity." Karma Nabulsi, University Lecturer in International Relations at Oxford University.

The legitimacy of hope, a coined phrase to emphasise that hope comes from gaining legitimacy through a political battle, not a military one. No anti-colonial struggle will have succeeded by simply being stronger militarily but by gaining the high ground in international law – a legitimacy war. There needs to be a change in the structure of power and not have that power absorbed by Israel or the United States. So far the Palestinian resistance movement, international law and institutions and global solidarity movements are playing their role in this struggle. There is growing disillusionment however, and this disillusionment is coinciding with growing feeling that the two –state solution will never work.

"Palestine: The Legitimacy of Hope is the writing of a great mind with a brave heart and a moral compass." Marwan Bashara, senior political analyst for Al Jazeera.

Falk describes the Palestinian national struggle as having gone through four phases. Firstly that the Arabs have tried to thwart the creation of the Israeli state, claiming it to be a European colonial solution to the 'Jewish problem'; leading to the failed wars of 1948, 1956, 1967 and 1973.

The second phase is the acceptance of the Palestinian Liberation Organisation, a supposed liberation movement, of the legitimacy of Israel as a state and for the Palestinian state to be based on the borders as defined in 1967. Palestinians then took ownership of their struggle for self-determination through armed resistance. However, the Palestinians and the PLO were cast as terrorists allowing Israel to claim the high ground of morality, portraying itself as the victim.

The third phase began with the intifada of 1987, initiating a shift from a government owned movement to a civil society-generated resistance. However, in tandem and antithetically, the Oslo accords of 1993, brokered by the US, Israel's ally, were signed by the PLO. This was seen as a gesture that signed away the Palestinians' rights to self-determination and excluded international law from the diplomatic process, which was the one place the Palestinians have the systematic advantage.

The final and decisive phase is the mobilisation of civil society that gained momentum with the two intifadas and grew to a global solidarity movement centered on the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions campaign, directly reflecting the will of the people.

"Professor Falk has an unbroken record of speaking forthrightly about Justice and in particular on Palestine. Both as a scholar and practitioner he has gathered an impressive understanding and detailed knowledge of the mechanisms of control and the exercise of power by the strong against the weak. He has used his high academic standing to seek justice and insist on the exercise of rights. He provides an important model for the engaged academic who is willing to suffer the harsh consequences of taking an unpopular position in his defense of principles he believes in.

In a world permeated and controlled by cynical powers pitting the strong against the weak, Falk's erudition and voice is an important one that gives hope by paving the way for a new kind of struggle for Justice." Raja Shehadeh, Founder of Al-Haq and author of Occupation Diaries

Falk concludes with his solutions for a sustainable and lasting peace. The relevant parties would do well to acknowledge what Falk has to say. However, hounded with criticism during his office, he

has been labeled an anti-semite for simply attending to his role and calling out the actions of Israel anathema to the values of the institution he represented: to uphold human rights in their universal and international understanding.

Reading Palestine: The Legitimacy of Hope will provide both the informed and uninformed student with a deeper appreciation of the Palestinian plight based on facts and law from a sincere narrative.

- **Paperback:** 238 pages
- **Publisher:** Just World Books (October 21, 2014)
- **Language:** English
- **ISBN-10:** 1935982427
- **ISBN-13:** 978-1935982425



THE PALESTINIAN RETURN CENTRE KEEPING THE ISSUE ALIVE



PRC was established in 1996, following the Oslo negotiations, which failed to address the plight of Palestinian refugees. Since its founding it has strived to defend the rights of Palestinian refugees, raise awareness of their plight and bring the issue of refugees back into the political agenda. It has also strived to preserve Palestinian identity and culture, especially across Europe. The work of PRC covers many arenas including academia, media and communications, consultancy, advocacy, lobbying and many more.

OUR GOALS

- 1 - Defend and Promote the Right of Return
- 2 - Raising Awareness
- 3 - Preserve Palestinian Identity
- 4 - Support Palestinian Refugees

OUR ACHIEVEMENTS

UN Accredited NGO

PRC has been granted the status of an accredited NGO by the United Nations. This entitles PRC to participate in any process or events at the UN in contributing to outcomes.

Supporting Palestinian refugees

The Palestinian refugees are diverse they face many different challenges. More recently 35,000 Palestinian refugees fled violence and persecution in Iraq. Many of them took refuge in camps on the borders between Syria and Iraq. PRC coordinated a cross party delegation from the UK and coordinated with UNRWA, UNHCR and Syrian government for temporary resettlement.

Putting Palestinian Refugees in the Political Agenda

PRC ensures that all relevant institutions are made aware of the plight of refugees. In addition to its accredited role in the UN, PRC guarantees that its message is delivered to the EU and other national parliaments.

PRC has sponsored seminars in the EU, lobbied MEPs in Brussels including former and current EU presidents. PRC lead a very high profile delegation to the European Parliament to meet the president at the time Javier Solano and the Turkish Prime Minister Tayyip Erdogan.

Nationally PRC holds public meetings in Westminster in partnership with mainstream political parties.



RAISING AWARENESS

There is a great deal of misinformation about Palestinian refugees, including the birth of their plight in 1948, their status under international law, their current composition and their position within national law and the political process. PRC seeks to rectify this and address the refugee issue in its proper historical context.

Conferences

PRC organises conferences every year to highlight different aspects of the refugee issue. Our conferences draw a wide range of people including academics, politicians, ministers, human rights organisations and activists.

Publications

The centre has conducted and sponsored a wide range of studies. Our publications include, books, documentary films, exhibitions, research papers and educational CDs, in both English and Arabic.

PRC Online

PRC's online work has grown over the years and now includes a website, Facebook, Twitter and Youtube. The PRC website contains up to date news, information and studies about refugees.

Conference of Palestinians in Europe

PRC founded the European Conference which is now in its eighth year. This conference held in major cities in Europe, brings together up to 10,000 people in order to preserve Palestinian identity and to show solidarity with the people in Palestine.

Advocacy and Public Relations

The centre has developed strong relationships with MPs in UK and in Europe. We regularly hold public seminars in the Houses of Parliament and the European Parliament. Our strong relationship has encouraged PRC to embark many joint initiatives with British and European MPs.

Exhibitions

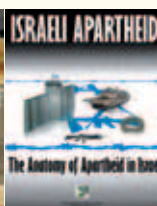
We have held a number of exhibitions, including on the issues of Gaza, prisoners, apartheid and the Nakba. Our exhibitions are held at universities, conferences, PRC events and also offered to other organisations.

Delegations

PRC successfully coordinated a number of delegations from Europe and the UK to Syria, Lebanon and Palestine. Its most high profile delegation was in 2011 when over 50 European parliamentarians visited Gaza.



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