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Case Study: Shatila Camp 35 Years on from the Sabra and Shatila Massacre – what are the current conditions of Palestinian refugees?

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Contents

From the Director	3
Majed Al Zeer	
From the Editor	5
Sameh Habeeb	
Palestinian refugees and 'Lebanese exceptionalism': The place of UNRWA since 1950.....	9
Anne Irfan	
The right of return in focus: prospects and solutions.....	17
Ramona Wadi	
Crises and Futures: Temporal Experiences among the Palestinian Refugees from Syria in Lebanon.....	23
Wen-Yu Wu	
Education, De-Palestinisation, and the Lebanese Curricula: A Study in History and Civic Education.....	29
Maya Hammad	
Laws regulating the work of Palestinians in liberal professions in Lebanon and their most problematic issues	37
Mahmoud El Ali	
Civil Liberties and Discrimination in Lebanon: Palestinian Refugees from Syria Surviving in Lebanon as Twice Refugees.	43
Hannah Bowler	
Case Study: Shatila Camp 35 Years on from the Sabra and Shatila Massacre – what are the current conditions of Palestinian refugees?	49
Kristyna Steflova	





Majed Al Zeer

From the Director

This edition coincides with the centenary of the Balfour Declaration, an infamous statement which resulted in the bitter status quo experienced by the entire Palestinian nation. As of 2017, the Palestinians are displaced in the Diaspora, in miserable refugee camps across the Middle East and beyond. Numerous attempts to solve the Arab-Israeli conflict came to failure due to the absolute Israeli refusal to give any concessions to the Palestinians.

The international community has utterly failed in providing an effective solution to the Palestinian question. The attempts to settle the Palestinian question from the Madrid talks, to Oslo accords in addition to the various initiatives here and there did not provide any remedial and long-term solutions. The Madrid talks represented an initial road map to respond to the aspirations of the Palestinian people. Nothing practical was followed later on. Observers argued that Madrid talks were an attempt to relieve the Palestinian anger embodied in the first Palestinian Intifada.

As of 2017, we can provide a judgment and verdict on the only attempt to make peace for the Arab-Israeli conflict. Oslo agreement, the hope of many has become a burden, a failure and even a pretext for others. As we announce our refusal of the Balfour Declaration where we urge the British Government to apologize, we can notice how the international community seems to ignore the entire Palestinian question.

Meanwhile, the Oslo accord - which was the hope for many -exacerbated the situation in the occupied Palestinian territories and made it harder for achieving a long-lasting peaceful solution. A sector of the Palestinian fabric was jubilant of the Oslo accord and the concept of future statehood. They were hopeful of achieving independence, self-determination and liberation. They renounced violence, laid the arms aside and dedicated their resources and time for the promising future. This would have never happened without the promises of the United States and the international community to the leadership of that sector, the Palestinian Authority. Yet, as time passed their hopes and dreams clashed with the reality of the occupation and Zionist settler project.

Another segment of Palestinians, saw Oslo as a disaster and a risk for their national aspirations. The Oslo agreement did not provide any answers for them on key questions such as the return of refugees, Jerusalem, the borders of future state as well as the sovereignty. Apparently, the argument of this group proved to be valid as of the last 2 decades. The Oslo accord was indeed not something they hoped for. Settlements expansion soared,

the number of Israeli settlements occupying the West Bank shapely risen. The occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip was boosted due to the Oslo accord which makes it look as “legal” and “agreed upon”. Indeed, one can argue that Oslo accord made the occupation look like a “dispute” where few issues must be solved.

Israel on its part, spared no moment or chance to undermine the Oslo accord. She has done its best to hold the Palestinian Authority responsible for an occupied nation, trying to escape its liability as an occupying power. Throughout the last two decades, Israel refused to show any real good intent for peace. The land grab, building settlement, judaisation of Jerusalem, stealing Palestinian water and resources were all part of Israeli policies. She has covered such policies with constant of pretext that there is no Palestinian partner seeking peace, or Palestinian teach hatred or violence, or Hamas refuses the existence of Israel and many more obstacles. As of the most recent pretext, Israel is calling Palestinians to accept the idea of a “Jewish State” meanwhile, Israel still refuses to accept the existence of Palestinians!

In conclusion, the failure of Oslo and other initiatives would have never happened without the biased US, UK and other European foreign policy in favour of Israel. The policies of this block has always been the factor which encourages Israel to violate international law and refuses any peaces attempts. As we come to the close of 2017, the Middle East, particularly Palestine will be far from stability and peace unless justice is granted to the Palestinian nation.





Sameh Habeeb

From the Editor

This is another introduction for a unique edition for the Journal of Palestinian Refugee Studies (JPRS). Our journal has been tackling many affairs concerning Palestinian refugees, whether at home or in their Diaspora. The thematic style of each edition provides rich information and insight into the conditions of Palestinian refugees with geopolitical concepts and reading of their wider environment.

This edition explored the living conditions of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon. A number of writers provide different perspectives on the most recent updates across the Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon, especially, in light of the influx of Syrian and Palestinian Syrian refugees who arrived to Lebanon in the last few years.

Anne Irfan, a PhD student at the London School of Economics and a researcher in the history of the Palestinian refugee camps in the Middle East, writes in this edition under the title, "Palestinian refugees and 'Lebanese exceptionalism': The place of UNRWA since 1950". Her article argues that neither the UNRWA nor Lebanon (as a government) are able to respond to the ever-growing funding challenges concerning the needs of Palestinian refugees, indicating the failure of international community and lack of responsibility.

Dr. Mahmoud Al Ali, assistant professor at the Institute of Social Sciences - Lebanese University, a former UNRWA employee, tackles the laws regulating the work of Palestinians in liberal professions in Lebanon and their most problematic issues. His article looks at restrictions imposed on Palestinian refugees' employment and its relation to International law and the especially of the Lebanese government.

Maya Hammad focuses on the educational sector and what she described as the "De-Palestinisation, and the Lebanese Curricula: A Study in History and Civic Education". She criticized the lack of Palestinian content taught to Palestinian refugees at schools where she illustrates there is a 'cultural genocide' against them. She added that such lack of Palestinian history at school books is an attempt of de-Palestinisation.

Ramona Wadi's article titled, "The right of return in focus: prospects and solutions" explores the history and the context of the Palestinian Nakba as well as the right of return in addition to touching on, identity and politics. She notes Israeli's attempts to control the narrative and alienate the issue of right of return.

Wen-Yu Wu, a research assistant at the Institute of Sociology, Academia Sinica in Taipei, Taiwan, wrote on "Crises and Futures: Temporal Experiences among the Palestinian Refugees from Syria (PRS) in Lebanon". She



discusses the plight of PRS and the challenges they have been experiencing over the past few years. She notes the lack of support and services given to them by the host country.

Kristyna Steflova a University of Sussex graduate with a first-class MA in 'Media Practice for Development and Social Change' remembers Sabra and Shatila Massacre and the current challenges facing Palestinian refugees in that camp.

Finally, Hannah Bowler a graduated from the University of Reading with a first-class BA in History and International Relations discusses the "Civil Liberties and Discrimination in Lebanon: Palestinian Refugees from Syria Surviving in Lebanon as Twice Refugees." She explores the constant displacement of Palestinian refugees from Syria and the prospect for the future.



ARTICLES







Anne Irfan*

Palestinian refugees and 'Lebanese exceptionalism': The place of UNRWA since 1950

Abstract:

The situation of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon reflects the country's broader exceptionalism in the Middle East. The Palestinian population of Lebanon can be distinguished from their counterparts elsewhere in both political and socio-economic terms, as they are generally poorer, less integrated and more disenfranchised. This article argues that UNRWA, the UN Agency for Palestinian refugees, is emblematic of the latter's exceptional situation in Lebanon, as it has taken on a distinctive role in the country. To explicate this, the article first looks at the factors that have fuelled and shaped the Palestinians' particular vulnerabilities in Lebanon. It then examines what this has meant for UNRWA, demonstrating how the Agency's work in Lebanon reflects the particularities of the Palestinians' situation there. Finally, the article concludes by considering the broader significance of this set-up for protracted refugee crises in the Middle East.

The state of Lebanon has long been exceptional in the Middle East. It is a weak state with a democratic political system, no official religion, and significant regional and communal variation. As the most religiously diverse country in the region, its state structures are defined by a confessional system that denotes political and economic power on the basis of sect. Like Jordan, Lebanon's population includes a significant proportion of refugees; unlike Jordan, it is a weak state that has been party to both external conflict and civil war in recent decades. Yet it has withstood these internal tensions and avoided the recent turmoil of many of its neighbours, thus combining insecurity with resilience.

This 'Lebanese exceptionalism' is reinforced by the country's particular significance within modern Palestinian history. Since the Nakba, the fates of Lebanon and the Palestinians have been closely interlinked. It was one of the primary Arab states to host a large Palestinian refugee population in the late 1940s, with the Palestinians quickly coming to comprise about one-tenth of the Lebanese population.¹ This was especially significant in a tiny fledgling state that had gained independence only five years before the Nakba. Along with Jordan and Syria, Lebanon has hosted the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA) since it began operations in 1950.² Yet in subsequent decades Lebanon arguably became more closely entwined with the Palestinian struggle than either of the other Arab host states.

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In particular, the weakness of the Lebanese central government meant that the country became a major base for the Palestinian nationalist movement during the thawra, or the revolution, of 1969–82. Indeed Shafiq al-Hout, a leading official in the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO), said specifically that they chose to base themselves there because the country was a ‘garden without a fence’.³ In 1969, the Lebanese government signed the Cairo Agreement, giving the PLO a unique and unprecedented degree of autonomy in the country’s refugee camps.⁴ Lebanon remained the headquarters of the PLO and the centre of the Palestinian thawra until the Israeli invasion routed the former from the country in 1982.⁵ Yet the ensuing establishment of Hizbollah meant that Lebanon remained a major field of conflict against Israel in the later 20th century and early 21st century.⁶ Finally, the last six years have seen Lebanon once again host a large influx of Palestinian refugees, this time fleeing the ongoing conflict in neighbouring Syria.⁷

All of this has lent a uniqueness to the situation of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon. In the years of the thawra, they enjoyed an unusual level of autonomy in their camps, as the structures of a Palestinian para-state were established. Since 1982, their situation has deteriorated drastically, as the camps have lost their once considerable power and the refugees have been left marginalised and vulnerable. The weak and fragmented nature of the Lebanese state, combined with the tensions of its confessional system and the recent impact of the Syrian crisis, serve to further destabilise the situation and jeopardise the place of the Palestinian refugees.⁸ As a result, UNRWA’s work has become increasingly important, perhaps more so in Lebanon than anywhere else in the region. Its function in the country is indicative of Lebanon’s aforementioned distinctiveness, both in general and with specific regard to the Palestinians.

Palestinian vulnerability in Lebanon

Numerous indicators point to the exceptionally difficult position of Palestinians in Lebanon today. Tellingly, it is the only host state where the majority of registered Palestinian refugees continue to live in camps.⁹ While many Palestinians elsewhere were able to improve their positions and move out of the camps in the later twentieth century, the situation in Lebanon was the opposite; the proportion of Palestinian refugees living in camps actually increased in the decades after the Nakba.¹⁰ The outcome can be observed today: in 2014 UNRWA reported that 53% of registered Palestinian refugees in Lebanon reside in camps, compared to around 25% in the West Bank, 18% in Jordan, and approximately 30% in pre-war Syria.¹¹ Such statistics indicate an unusually high level of deprivation, and indeed UNRWA has also reported that Lebanon is the site of the highest rate of abject poverty among Palestinian refugees – higher even than Gaza.¹²

What such indicators cannot tell us is why this is the case. It is on the surface inexplicable that the situation in Lebanon should be worse than that in Gaza, when the latter has been suffering under an Israeli blockade since 2007,¹³ and has been the target of three major military offensives in that time.¹⁴ By contrast, Lebanon, despite the major upheaval and turmoil of its fifteen-year civil war, has remained relatively calm over the last decade, certainly in comparison to many of its regional neighbours. How, then, is this high rate of Palestinian poverty to be explained?

The answer lies in Lebanese law. As it currently stands, Palestinians in the country are denied a number of basic civil rights. They are barred from owning property, accessing social services, and working in syndicated professions.¹⁵ The rationale for this is grounded in the principle of reciprocity – in 2001 for instance, the Lebanese parliament adopted an amendment prohibiting the acquisition of property by ‘any person not a citizen of a recognised state’.¹⁶ This automatically excluded the Palestinians on the grounds that they have no state in which they can reciprocally provide rights to Lebanese visitors. However, the full explanation for the existence of these laws is more complicated. They are driven by

the goal of maintaining and reinforcing the Palestinians' separateness, for fear that their integration and eventual naturalisation in Lebanon would fundamentally alter the country's delicately-balanced confessional system.¹⁷ The de jure discrimination is facilitated by general anti-Palestinian feeling in Lebanese society, where many blame the Palestinians for the outbreak of the civil war.¹⁸

Such prohibitions have resulted in a two-tiered system whereby Palestinians cannot easily participate in the structures of Lebanese society. This context is crucial for understanding their aforementioned poverty, which is the predictable outcome of such marginalisation. The refugees' professional exclusion has been particularly devastating, resulting in unemployment of more than 50% among the working-age Palestinian population.¹⁹ Such circumstances have in turn impacted the state of the refugee camps, home to more than half the country's Palestinian population. Conditions in the camps, considered among the worst in the region, are characterised by major overcrowding, inadequate sewage systems and decaying infrastructure that all cause serious health risks.²⁰ The resulting situation constitutes the most extreme manifestation of the Palestinian refugees' vulnerability.²¹ Unfortunately, the impact of the Syrian refugee crisis means that there is no sign of it improving in the near future.²²

The place of UNRWA

There is a considerable body of scholarship on the particular vulnerability of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon, and their historical trajectory there.²³ However, the implications of this set-up for UNRWA is the subject of far fewer studies. This dearth lies at odds with the Agency's long-term presence in the country, and its consistently important role among the Palestinian refugees. Its response to the distinctive Palestinian situation in Lebanon is thus worthy of greater examination.

Having been created the year after the Nakba, UNRWA has been entwined with the Palestinians' exile almost from the beginning. It provided relief services in the camps that developed into large-scale health and education programmes; it also issued formal documentation and identification to registered Palestinian refugees across its areas of operation. By providing such services, UNRWA became a quasi-government for the Palestinian refugees, whom it was exclusively mandated to serve. Nowhere was this more acute than in Lebanon, where the refugees' vulnerability was so extreme that UNRWA's quasi-governmental role became especially pronounced. As the Agency was compelled to take on additional responsibilities in Lebanon, its work became emblematic of the refugees' exceptional disadvantage there.

UNRWA's adaptation to Lebanon's specificities is not a new or recent development, but rather one with numerous historical precedents. When the Lebanese government signed the Cairo Agreement with the PLO in 1969, UNRWA was compelled to break from its usual arrangements with the host states and navigate the Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon as semi-autonomous spaces. The usual *modus operandi*, whereby UNRWA implemented its services in cooperation with the host state, thus became complicated by the rise of the PLO as an alternate *de facto* 'host government'. Thirteen years later, UNRWA had to adapt again when the PLO's power base collapsed, and the Agency was left as the closest thing the refugees had to a government and advocate.

The PLO's departure from Lebanon also precipitated a further adaptation of UNRWA's work, as it formally expanded its mandate for the first time. Since its early days, the Agency had provided services to those who had lived in Palestine from 1946-48, who had lost both home and livelihood during the Nakba, and who had sought refuge in one of UNRWA's fields of operation. Eligibility was also extended to patrilineal descendants.²⁴ This criteria caused considerable controversy, as it excluded significant numbers of people who still considered themselves Palestinian refugees²⁵ - something the Agency itself acknowledged.²⁶ Yet there was no move to change it until the Sabra-Shatila massacre of 1982, after which the UN General Assembly mandated UNRWA to expand its services for the first time

to unregistered Palestinian refugees in Lebanon.²⁷ That this change focussed on Lebanon is telling, as it constituted a formal recognition of the acute vulnerability of Palestinians there. Once again, the particularities of the Lebanese situation had brought about a shift in UNRWA's norms.

In recent years, much of UNRWA's work in Lebanon has been driven by the impact of intensified institutional discrimination against Palestinians, juxtaposed with the Lebanese state's detachment from both the refugees and their camps. This has created an authority vacuum in the camps, which are distinguished from the surrounding areas not only by checkpoints but also by political and socio-economic differentiation. Of all the host states, it is Lebanon where the Palestinian refugees are the least integrated, and the camps are most obviously demarcated as separate spaces – sociologist Sari Hanafi writes that the Palestinian camps in Lebanon are mostly 'closed', while those in Jordan and pre-war Syria tend to be 'open'.²⁸ This separateness has created a greater need for relief among Palestinians in Lebanon, which in turn places additional pressures on UNRWA.

Specifically, the withdrawal of the state, and the resulting absence of any social safety net for Palestinian refugees, means that the majority depend heavily on UNRWA for schooling, healthcare, shelter and sanitation.²⁹ UNRWA has responded by expanding some of its services in Lebanon, carrying out functions that would usually be the domain of the state. It provides four extra grades of education for Palestinian refugees in Lebanon, to compensate for their lack of access to state schools.³⁰ Its responsibility for the refugees' protection has also taken on a particular importance in Lebanon, in keeping with the aforementioned expansion of its mandate there in 1982.³¹ The fact that UNRWA has been compelled to take on additional responsibilities in Lebanon is demonstrative of the Palestinians' particular marginalisation and vulnerability there. One former UNRWA employee in Lebanon has spoken of an 'implicit consensus' within the Agency that it is the worst host state in which to be a Palestinian refugee.³²

However, UNRWA's limited resources, and the restrictions of its mandate, have meant that it cannot take on the role of the state in Lebanon entirely. It does not, for example, provide policing or security services in the camps.³³ Instead, internal security affairs are run by 'popular committees', first set up in the thawra period and comprised of various nationalist organisations.³⁴ To implement its services, UNRWA must navigate the complex internal relations of the popular committees, which administer the other elements of the state's role in the camps. Recent years have seen increasing popular dissatisfaction with the committees, as camp residents have taken to the streets to protest their corruption and incompetence.³⁵ UNRWA has sought to stay out of the internal dynamics, emphasising that it is not responsible for security in the camps, and does not 'own' or administer them as spaces.³⁶ Despite this, the refugees have also frequently protested against cuts in the Agency's services, seeing it as shirking its responsibilities.³⁷

The Palestinians' exceptional vulnerability in Lebanon has also had financial implications for UNRWA, fuelling its already-critical fiscal crisis. Entirely reliant on voluntary donations, UNRWA has been underfunded for decades, with its budget insufficient to meet the rising needs of the growing Palestinian refugee population.³⁸ The last decade has seen particular strain on its resources, as the Agency has struggled to meet the increased need generated by the impact of the Gaza blockade and the Syrian war.³⁹ The particular need for its programmes in Lebanon adds another factor to the crisis. As a result, Agency services have faced a demonstrative squeeze. UNRWA's education and healthcare programmes in Lebanon are now severely underfunded; its 74 schools in the country cannot meet the needs of the increasingly young Palestinian population there, while its health clinics are vastly underfunded and see one doctor treating an average of 117 patients a day.⁴⁰ In recent years, the influx of more than a million refugees from Syria has added further pressure to an already unsustainable situation, which is now near breaking point.⁴¹ Lebanon's Palestinian population is accordingly facing the impact of a regional emergency, alongside underlying structural disadvantage and deprivation.

Conclusion

Lebanon's unique circumstances have generated exceptional conditions for the Palestinian refugees who live there, and the UN Agency responsible for their welfare. While it is in many ways distinctive, this does not mean that the case of the Palestinians in Lebanon should be disregarded when considering responses to protracted refugee crises. Instead, their situation can provide some valuable lessons, which are especially pertinent as both the Middle East and the wider world face the biggest refugee crisis since the Second World War.⁴²

The vast majority of Palestinians who became refugees in 1948 thought that their exile would be temporary, and expected to return home quickly. Lebanon, like the other Arab host states, received them with this same understanding, and the camps were originally constructed on this basis. Of course, the reality has proven tragically different, as the Palestinians remain stateless and dispossessed 70 years later, with successive generations born in the camps. It is their long-term statelessness, and the denial of their right of return, that lie at the core of the Palestinians' plight today. The situation they face in Lebanon is in many ways demonstrative of the problems that arise when an exiled community is left in limbo and their plight remains unresolved, with supposedly temporary solutions stretching into decades.

Just as the Palestinian refugees initially expected their exile to be brief, so UNRWA was created with the assumption that its work would be short-lived. In fact it has retained an officially temporary status, with the UN renewing its mandate every 4-5 years.⁴³ The reasons for this paradoxically long-term temporary status are political and largely self-evident; making UNRWA's mandate permanent would deny the possibility that the Palestinian refugee crisis will ever be resolved. However, the temporary set-up is also problematic in its own right, meaning that UNRWA cannot make long-term plans, and is compelled to be consistently reactive rather than strategic. These problems are worsened by its reliance on voluntary donations, which has resulted in a serious long-term deficit and major service cuts. Indeed, the impossible financial situation that UNRWA now faces in Lebanon is indicative of the long-term unsustainability of its work.

The Palestinian refugee crisis is not the only one that has belied original expectations of being short-lived. However, as the Palestinians enter their 70th year of dispossession, their case remains the longest-lasting refugee crisis in modern history, with some of the worst consequences seen in Lebanon today. Yet the lessons to be taken from this are nothing if not complex. While it would be easy to place the blame for the Palestinians' plight in Lebanon at the feet of the Lebanese state and UNRWA, the reality is more complicated. UNRWA is entirely dependent on voluntary donations, meaning that it simply cannot provide the necessary services if its donors do not supply the required funding. Lebanon, meanwhile, is a post-war state currently hosting the largest number of refugees in the world, relative to its population. As it struggles to cope with a situation whereby 1 in 4 of its residents is now a refugee, the solution cannot be simply to call on Lebanon to do more.⁴⁴

The obvious conclusion is that neither Lebanon nor UNRWA are receiving the support they need to deal effectively with a large-scale protracted refugee crisis. Their current problems suggest that a more integrated and comprehensive international response to regional crises is badly needed, in order to ensure that the responsibility is evenly shared. As Lebanon and its regional neighbours continue to receive thousands of refugees from the ongoing Syrian conflict, it is undeniable that the historical and contemporary struggles of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon contain particularly important lessons for both the region and the world today.

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Ramona Wadi*

The right of return in focus: prospects and solutions

Abstract

One major flaw when discussing the Palestinian right of return is the elimination of the early colonisation process, including the Balfour Declaration, which paved the way for the perpetual displacement of Palestinians which continues to this day. In addition, recognition of the Palestinian right of return as enshrined in Resolution 194 is not tantamount to implementation, which means that the international community has, through the resolution, allowed the colonial narrative to manipulate the text. This leads to discrepancies in pursuing the right of return narrative due to Palestinian rights becoming further restricted and subject to international institutions such as the UNRWA which may also be seen as performing a contradictory role. It has defined Palestinian refugees while working within limitations that restrict Palestinian autonomy. Furthermore, there needs to be awareness of how issues such as identity and politics are impacting the Palestinian right of return. In diplomatic discourse, refugees are not given the prominence they deserve, leading to narratives being imposed upon Palestinian refugees which are discriminatory due to the different experiences and locations Palestinians have found themselves in. This generalisation, when combined with diplomacy particularly within the context of the two-state paradigm, has endangered the right of return by elevating symbolism in the place of rights. A comprehensive approach designed to find solutions should challenge the entire Israeli settler-colonial enterprise. This requires historical knowledge as well as recognition that Israel is repeating, in a refined manner, its displacement tactics through colonial expansion. It is therefore contradictory to discuss the Palestinian right of return as dissociated from the present, particularly due to the hegemony of settlers and the dwindling options for Palestinians.

Discrepancies in discussing the Palestinian right of return

There are two main frameworks which dominate discussion of the Palestinian right of return. The first is the UN General Assembly Resolution 194 (III) which, in part, merely recommends that “the refugees wishing to return to their homes and live at peace with their neighbours should be permitted to do so at the earliest practicable date.”¹ The second premise ties the Palestinian right of return to the Palestinians displaced in 1948

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and 1967. Stipulating dates to the Palestinian right of return is a limitation, particularly when considering the wider scenario. The Zionist settler-colonial project commenced in the 1880s² and the unfinished aspect of Israel's colonial project has created a perpetual cycle of refugees through forced displacement.

The incongruence in UNGA Resolution 194 and the dictating of dates associated with the Palestinian right of return are a result of earlier manipulation of Palestinian rights to land. The early settlers already exhibited traces of the ideology that would ultimately create the Israeli colonial entity in Palestine³. In addition, the incorporation of the Balfour Declaration in the British Mandate took precedence over the safeguarding of the indigenous Palestinian population's rights.

The letter's content, which called for the establishment of a national home for the Jewish people in Palestine, incorporates a great contradiction with severe, permanent repercussions for the Palestinian population. The recommendation, as enshrined in the letter, adds a clause stating that the establishment of a national home should not "prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine". Yet, the Zionist colonial ideology to expand over all of historic Palestine ran contrary to the purported attempt to safeguard the rights of the indigenous population. While the UN Partition Plan⁴ was an indication of international agreement to embark upon decades of contention and violence with regard to Palestinian rights to land, the 1948 Nakba, exposed the Zionist paramilitaries embarking upon the murder, displacement and ethnic cleansing of the Palestinian population. Two related repercussions emerged: the settler-colonial state of Israel was recognised by the international community and a permanent Palestinian refugee population was created. The on-going error is the insistence upon discussing the latter while dissociating the former, resulting in impunity for Israel. Persisting in this dissociation is a negation of what Israel stands for. As Masalha (2000) states, "Greater Israel is both a territorial concept and an ideology aimed at achieving maximum territorial expansion."⁵ For a settler-colonial state, territorial expansion can only be achieved through ethnic cleansing and forced displacement of the indigenous population.

To counter the dissociation inherent in discussing the Palestinian right of return, it is important that it is discussed within the earlier context of colonial history, the dispossession occurring in 1948 and 1967, with a thorough awareness of how Israel is ensuring that implementation will be rendered impossible due to colonial expansion. The refusal to analyse Palestinian dispossession within the entire historical and contemporary context has resulted in resolutions and negotiations that have transformed an inalienable right into an incongruous dream – evidence of this in UN rhetoric can be found in UNGA Resolution 194.

Resolution 194 is blatantly discriminative and since its inscription, the UN has ensured that Israel is allowed influential positions within the institution's committee that continue to jeopardise the Palestinian right of return, not only through resolutions but also its willingness to endorse Israeli violence by allowing representatives to influence support for human rights violations at the institution. Allowing Israel to be a vice-Chair on the Special Committee on Decolonisation is one such aberration. Danny Danon's appointment as vice-president of the UN General Assembly starting in September 2017 is another parody.⁶ In addition, the security narrative, alongside demography concerns, have permeated discussions pertaining to the Palestinian right of return, with the result that, apart from an assembled resolution already placing a burden upon Palestinians by refuting the right to anti-colonial struggle, also adds to the prevailing obsession of discussing Palestinian rights from an inferior position by adopting the Israeli narrative.

The UN has not opposed this trend, despite knowledge that the settler colonial state will not allow the indigenous population to return to its land. A press release⁷ issued by the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS) in 2016 shows that 66 per cent of Palestinians were expelled and displaced

during the 1948 Nakba. At Israel's annual Herzliya Conference this year, Israeli Defence Minister Avigdor Lieberman declared: "We will not agree to the return of a single refugee to within the '67 borders." ⁸ Needless to say, the statement was met with the usual complicit silence from all key players involved in the diplomatic negotiations.

Politics and semantics at the UN

An analysis of the language used in Resolution 194(11) shows that the burden of accountability has been forced upon Palestinians, in flagrant violation of universal rights and the right to armed struggle against Israeli colonialism. Return is conditioned by the UN – Palestinians are told they must "live in peace with their neighbours." Even in 1948, when evidence of settler-colonialism and colonial violence emerged, the UN ensured that Palestinians were deprived of the right to articulate their own history as victims of colonisation. This prelude led to the UN's recognition of Israel upon condition that it accepted the right of refugees to return to their homes. As can be seen, the UN is well versed in cycles of violence that have promoted the prolonged, and possibly permanent, refugee status of Palestinians. As compensation, the latter have been subjected to the dynamics of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA) – an organisation whose existence is deemed abhorrent by Israel and which, for Palestinians, offers an additional burden of contradictions rooted in forced dependency.

UNRWA's priorities⁹ are to "foster the development of Palestine refugees by helping them to: acquire knowledge and skills, lead long and healthy lives, achieve decent standards of living and enjoy human rights to the fullest possible extent." The limitations in the organisation's aims are evident – lack of autonomy is concealed behind phrases that can only guarantee a semblance of a free life. Its dependency upon funding from entities which support Israel's colonial presence, expansion and violence is in turn imparted to Palestinian refugees dependent upon the agency for basic necessities. Unless these necessities are permanently satisfied, the political progress of Palestinians regarding their right of return will continue to be jeopardised. Financial aid allocated to UNRWA is a fragment of what Israel is granted annually to continue its colonial project and the international community will not address the obvious imbalance as it would create a different political reality in which the Palestinian right of return can be formulated through ideology, identity and politics.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu this year called for the UNRWA to be dismantled, claiming it "perpetuated the plight of Palestinian refugees."¹⁰ In a similar manner to the UN, Netanyahu's feigned concern over the permanence of Palestinian refugee is a political ploy to perpetuate that same permanence away from public scrutiny. If the contradictory role which UNRWA performs is dictated by adherents of a colonial agenda affecting the organisation's work through inadequate finances, the challenge to avoid perpetuating the plight of Palestinian refugees and, as a result, distancing Palestinians from the right of return is one that will require the building of politics and identity away from the institution. For Palestinians to identify with UNRWA is a setback in pursuing their legitimate right of return. The restrictions inherent in the organisation will not allow a formulated approach.

Displacement of ideology, identity and politics

International shaping of discourse pertaining to the Palestinian right of return should be subjected to intense scrutiny within a space that allows Palestinians to articulate their concept of return. At an international level, the ethnic cleansing and displacement of Palestinians from Palestine has found its equivalent in rhetoric. The initial groundwork for this disappearance has been laid gradually:

Zionist colonialism urged the displacement of Palestinians from the diplomatic arena and the UN promptly responded by creating a multitude of non-binding resolutions which encouraged the pursuing of symbolism, rather than the assertion of rights. Symbolism has become the preferred option for recourse for the Palestinian Authority and the choice has facilitated international abandonment of the Palestinian right of return, turning Palestinian memory into a grotesque show of keys and slogans imprisoned within the confines of displacement. The absence of Palestinian refugees, when considering that almost the entire Palestinian population has become part of the refugee phenomenon due to ongoing settler-colonial expansion, should shame the internationally-recognised Palestinian leadership as well as the international community. This absence, fuelled by fragmentation due to different experiences of the diaspora, economics and political loss or gain, has resulted in displacement on several levels – notably those of ideology, identity and politics. Israeli and international appropriation of the necessary spaces for these three fundamental concepts to flourish and unite in a narrative that allows Palestinians to speak for themselves as a unified front has contributed to the alienation regarding the corrupted politics that have annihilated the Palestinian right of return.

Diplomatic erasure of the Palestinian right of return

Since the Oslo Accords and the promotion of the obsolete two-state paradigm, the diplomatic erasure of the Palestinian right of return seems to have neared completion. In 1992, PLO leader Yasser Arafat wrote: “We seek a fair and just solution to the plight of Palestinian refugees who for 54 years have not been permitted to return to their homes. We understand Israel’s demographic concerns and understand that the right of return of Palestinian refugees, a right guaranteed under international law and United Nations Resolution 194, must be implemented in a way that takes into account such concerns.”¹¹

The gradual acceptance, even by Palestinian leaders, of Israel’s demographic majority, played well into international diplomacy. An exception to this norm would be Hamas, which has insisted upon a full implementation of return and rejected the symbolic possibilities endorsed by the PA. However, this statement is diluted by the fact that the movement has yet to articulate a definite stance regarding the two-state paradigm. With Palestinian unity looking remote, the PA has availed itself of the opportunity to align itself diplomatically with international and Israeli interests, not to mention PA leader Mahmoud Abbas’s own forfeiting of his right of return¹². As a result, settler-colonial expansion is no longer an issue which the international community attempts to dilute – it has merely manufactured the impunity with regard to settler presence and violence. This acceptance, alongside UN vague reiterations of the right of return being an “inalienable right” elicits a major contradiction and one that is rarely addressed. The Palestinian right of return cannot be implemented within a settler-colonial state. Therefore, a discussion of return cannot be construed away from the violent hegemony of settler presence and violence. Israel’s presence is a violation which requires settlers to fulfil its ideology. It is here that the historical knowledge of early colonisation should be applied, along with an understanding of how the international community abandoned Palestinian history to the point that Israel has been able to promote its own fabricated narratives and have them endorsed by the UN.

This leads to important issues such as representation of Palestinian refugees, the political power wielded by organisations that can implement the Palestinian right of return and rethinking the role of UNRWA. As regards analysis, the peril lies in each issue being tackled separately and dissociated from the colonial history perpetuating the importance of implementing the Palestinian right of return, and also widening the gap between Palestinian collective memory and return. If any analysis occurs within these omissions, Israel will continue to dominate the agenda through its colonial narratives

and, as a result, further empower the settler-colonial population. This would bolster the international community's humanitarian depiction of the right of return which consolidates the association of symbolism due to the elimination of the political processes which have dehumanised Palestinians for decades.

Prospects for return tainted by the colonial enterprise

Discourse amalgamating the right of return with the two-state paradigm is precarious. The Clinton Parameters demanded the establishment of "a sovereign, viable Palestinian state that would accommodate Israel's security requirements and the demographic realities."¹³ This narrative has been extended through Israel's security rhetoric and, as expected, contributed to the setbacks suffered by Palestinians who have been coerced into giving up their entire existence on their own land.

Decades of negotiations have pushed a majority of analysts to frame a solution within the internationally-imposed paradigms. Shikaki (2014) writes that an ideal context to discuss refugee expectations would be one in which "the Palestinians are unified in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip and where the Palestinian state is established in both areas."¹⁴ The context, already mired in restrictions and contradictions due to the refusal to discuss the ramifications of ongoing settler-colonialism, now faces a death knell with the two-state paradigm having been declared obsolete.

Return, restitution and compensation will continue to fall short of justice if the Palestinian right of return is not discussed also in opposition to Israeli settler-colonialism. Historical references on their own have propagated humanitarian claims rather than rights under international law. As colonial expansion continues unhindered, the divide between the right of return and settler hegemony will continue to strengthen the latter. There is no lack of advocacy on return but rather a discrepancy in formulating a unified front to combat, also diplomatically, the settler-colonial state and its settler collaborators. Brynen and El-Rifai (2014) note that research that fails to adhere to demands stipulated in negotiations is discouraged.¹⁵ Negotiations do not advocate for decolonisation; hence no political credibility should be attributed to the prevailing political discourse regarding the Palestinian right of return.

Palestinian political unity based upon an assertion for rights, rather than subjugation to unrealistic demands set out by the international community, would contribute to a new framework that can challenge decades of capitulation to Israel. Involving Palestinian refugees and allowing the necessary space for the narratives to come together from within would challenge the impositions which analysts might, intentionally or inadvertently impose upon the Palestinian population. Working with, as opposed to working for, Palestinians, can contribute an important change. Finally, it should be made clear that Palestinians should not be forced to choose between their legitimate right to anti-colonial struggle and their legitimate right of return. Excluding anti-colonial struggle on the basis of a resolution that is corrupted and which has aided Israel to colonise further territory due to its ambiguity is detrimental to Palestinians and to the right of return. If "Greater Israel" is allowed, it stands to reason that Palestinians are not intimidated into a choice that yields further appropriation. Therefore, if so desired by Palestinians, rethinking the Palestinian right of return as an anti-colonial endeavour that is legitimate under international law can form the basis of a new approach – one that seeks to eliminate the previous impositions and which does not run contrary to international law.

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Wen-Yu Wu*

Crises and Futures: Temporal Experiences among the Palestinian Refugees from Syria (PRS) in Lebanon

Three generations of the Palestinian refugees have been going through countless political upheavals, conflicts, and foreign interventions, with many of the refugees being displaced for the second time or more. Most recently, since the Syrian civil war expanded to Syria's Palestinian camps in the winter of 2012, more than seventy percent of the refugees have been displaced inside Syria or in the neighboring countries, including Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan, and increasingly, Europe.¹ In 2015, the estimated 54,000 Palestinian refugees from Syria (PRS) had sought refuge in Lebanon.² Among them were my main interlocutors Nawra (21 at the time of my fieldwork during 2014-2015), her family, and friends from Sbeineh camp of Syria. They arrived in Lebanon during the year of 2013, and found accommodations in Shatila, a Palestinian refugee camp in the southern suburbs of Beirut.

Prior to the war in Syria, the rights for Palestinian refugees to receive education, have access to healthcare, enter labor markets and practice professions were equivalent to those of Syrian citizens.^{3,4,5} The majority of Palestinians in Lebanon, however, have been living in conditions of disenfranchisement. A variety of discriminative laws limit their eligibility to practice certain professions and their access to water and electricity.⁶ Such circumstances were what the PRS suddenly had to confront in Lebanon, in addition to the high cost of rents, lack of income and the legal restrictions imposed on them, including the denial of work permits and major hurdles for the renewal of residency permits.⁷ Like many Palestinians in Lebanon who took the dangerous routes of "illegal" migration to escape the extremely marginalized conditions,⁸ many PRS with means have also left. Today in 2017, the number of PRS in Lebanon has lessened to 31,000.¹ Among the 6 families, about 30 to 40 PRS I had interacted with, 12 individuals had left for Europe, while others stayed.

The social and political environment in Syria was where my interlocutors acquired their past experiences, and thus their habitus, their ways of being. Accordingly, it was also where their expectations for futures took place. Being forced to leave their lifeworlds in Syria, Nawra and other PRS had lost the futures that were foreseeable before the war spread to their neighborhoods. However, new futures emerged, with the refugees' tremendous efforts amidst the day-to-day uncertainty and harsh circumstances in Lebanon.⁹

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The distress of PRS was made known by media, NGO reports and UN agencies' calling for humanitarian attentions. However, the focus often fell into their basic and urgent needs of food, housing, and security. This article thus hopes to complicate the representation of this group of refugees as primarily passive victims in need of humanitarian relief. Through documenting their experiences of time, the article also wishes to forge a better understanding of the processes of forced migration and their dynamics and possibilities.¹⁰ What follows are two themes of ethnographic fragments attentive to the temporal experiences of my PRS interlocutors: the crises of losing a familiar world and of facing an uncertain future, and the hopes, generated through continuous efforts and patience, for distant futures.

Needing a Wardrobe, Second-hand

In the kitchen about four square meters, Nawra was preparing tea. As we were talking, she looked at the wall behind me and, out of blue, she said, "When I see the kitchen, I remember I'm a refugee." She gestured at the piled boxes, plastic bags and water bottles used for storing fresh water at the kitchen corner.¹¹ Back in Syria, Nawra and her family had a steady middle-class income. They owned two cars and a renovated, well-equipped house. After the loss of their surroundings, Nawra and her family's habits that had been cultivated in those surroundings suddenly could not find a world which corresponded to them. The messy kitchen that could barely hold three people had become a constant reminder of, in Nawra's words, being a refugee. While the clutters seemed to merge into the surroundings and become a usual site of the everyday, they were, from time to time, intrusive. The cardboard boxes at the side of the bedroom, which were mostly for storing clothes and beddings, were also a palpable mark of their unsettledness, manifesting the tracks of their moves from place to place. As Taalib, the younger brother of Nawra, once complaint, "Why all those boxes? What are we, homeless people?" Umm Youssef, the mother, explained to me, "You see we are using the karatiin (boxes). It's so messy. Every day I'm looking for my clothes. I want to buy a wardrobe, but it's so expensive."

While having to bear the poignancy of loss, the family, especially Umm Youssef, had made restless efforts to create or re-create comfort, convenience, and their own practices of living. Each week, when I walked into the house, I would notice something had been changed or added: The couch in the living room had been moved twice, to each of the three available sides of the wall; the TV shelf had been moved twice, to each of the two possible corners; the old, simple stove was replaced by a new one with three burners (LBP 60,000 [\$40]); a simple shelf about one arm in length was installed on the wall beside the stove, initially for spices and cans but later for placing large-sized pots and pans; in the beginning of the summer, a second-hand refrigerator (\$50) was added to the crowded kitchen, and a used fan was also bought for Nawra's room (LBP 10,000 [\$6.7]). After they purchased the refrigerator, they rearranged its place along with the stove, the washing machine, and other clutter in the kitchen more than three times; finally, a second-hand wardrobe (\$30) was added to the bedroom. On the day when the wardrobe was assembled, Umm Youssef borrowed a steel ladder from a neighbor, torn up all the remaining cardboard boxes, and put the winter blankets and other clutter up on top of the wardrobe. Standing on the rung of the ladder, she ordered her husband Abu Youssef and Nawra to hand her stuff and to move and remove things here and there.

The continuous rearrangements appeared to me to be efforts to re-create the comfortable and convenient surroundings which the family used to live in. As if, by those small efforts, they were able to reach closer to the comfort they used to enjoy in the past. These efforts also reflected, in a very practical sense, the necessity to make room for the needs of the present and the futures: the new wardrobe and the kitchen shelf reflected the spatial needs that were unavoidably generated over time. The bottles and containers of seasonings accumulated as various dishes were cooked and

as Umm Youssef's new recipes were tried out. When the cardboard boxes were torn apart, several pairs of sandals for Nawra and Abu Youssef from last summer were rediscovered. The clothes for five family members had been piled up over the two years in Lebanon and gradually became excessive for the small rooms. Creating extra spaces to organize and contain clothes became inescapable.

In Bourdieu's study on the rehoused Algerian families, he explained that the apartment is "a material object prepared for a certain use," thus "it announces its future and the future use."¹² In similar fashion, Nawra's family's actions of purchasing furniture and modifying surroundings not only responded to the present needs, the efforts also reflected a gradual formulation of futures. What unfolded, however, was a temporal horizon that remained uncertain and subject to more transitions. During the time of my fieldwork, Abu Youssef had been discussing plans with friends to emigrate, while Umm Youssef and Nawra being pessimistic about the possibility of leaving for a far-away country. Most of the house appliances the family had purchased were second-hand, workable but not satisfying. This was, of course, largely due to the constraints on financial means. But buying used furniture and appliances also delivered a message that these things could only work as substituting for lost possessions for the short-term, forthcoming needs. Writing on the everyday refugee existences in Shatila, Allan's work interpreted that the uncertainty is what people "engage rather than simply something they passively endure".⁸ I saw this pragmatism in the Palestinian refugees from Syria, the "newcomers" in Shatila, in their approaches to coping with loss and uncertainty, as the uncertainty of the camp life had become part of their everyday experiences.

Akram's Changing Plans

I met Akram (24) through Nawra early in the fieldwork period. He arrived in Lebanon during 2013. Living with his aunt in an apartment in Shatila, he shared the monthly rent of \$300 and expenses. When I met him, Akram had been working a \$400-a-month job at a social services NGO and was planning to enter a university in Lebanon: "Last summer, I prepared all my certificates and documents [to apply for the Lebanese University], but I was working and did not have enough money. I didn't register; I will try again this summer." However, in spring, the NGO suspended the program in which he and his PRS friends had been working. He then began working sparsely on installing and repairing electricity lines, a work he took over from his uncle, who had departed to Brazil.¹³ He also earned \$100 per month from UNRWA for a few months for assisting refugee families withdrawing monthly handouts from UNRWA at ATMs, a job he had found by chance. Akram was thus still able to sustain himself.

By the middle of my fieldwork, he had given up on the idea of going to college and had applied for a visa to go to Brazil, but when I asked if he would join his friend Salah who had gone to Sao Paulo, Akram told me that his destination would not be Brazil. He said he would "escape" into Turkey during the transit, and then he would find a way to Europe. After a month, he was confident about his trip - to Brazil, not Turkey, as another one of his friends had arrived in Brazil. (By then, Akram had two friends, including Salah, and an uncle in Brazil.) When Nawra and I were talking about the coming Ramadan, Akram told us, "I will be in Brazil then." He was at the same time applying for his Palestinian travel document from Syria, through his family's help.¹⁴ He told Nawra and I that he was once conned by a man who had claimed to help people get the travel document for \$700. "I don't know his name and where he lives and I couldn't report him to the General Security," Akram laughed at himself, "the law doesn't protect stupid people."

During our trip to the city of Tyre to visit other PRS families, he showed me the Brazilian visa process on his phone: after he logged into the website of the Brazilian Embassy, a timeline with four points (received, proceeding, authorized, ready to be collected) appeared on the screen. Akram said, "When

the red point reaches the last one, I can go get it,” before adding that his mother would come to visit him (for the first time) before his departure. In Tyre, we visited a couple with two children (one of the children was disabled and in need of affordable medical care) who had been to all European embassies for visas but in vain, and had finally applied for Brazilian visas. Akram shared with them what he had heard: “My uncle was telling me that he wanted to come back to Lebanon at first. The first few months would be difficult;” “There were many Arabic restaurants.” Akram gave them his number and later he told me, “They don’t know anyone there. I’m going first, so I will try to help them.”

Another month passed and Akram received his travel document from his family in Syria.¹⁵ I saw him showing it to his friends excitedly during a wedding I attended. However, there was no news about the Brazilian visa. Weeks later when I met him, he appeared to be pessimistic about the trip to Brazil as he told me about his friend’s experience there, “The Brazilian visa, I think they won’t give me, and I might not go. My friend who arrived there two weeks ago told me not to go. He was very tired. He lives with many other refugees. I have another friend who is in Serbia...” He continued to tell me about another possibility to travel to Serbia.

His mother paid a two-week visit to him before Ramadan and he took her to see different places in Lebanon. After she went back to Syria, I saw Akram again during a gathering in Ramadan, and he showed me his one-time entry Brazilian visa. He then told me about his latest plan: “During the transit in Turkey, I will have four hours. I will try to escape. If I fail, I will go to Brazil. My friend in Brazil told me he would try to go to Canada after Ramadan. If he succeeds, I will take the same route [which means going through the borders of the US - “I know it’s very difficult,” Akram added];” “I don’t want to go to Brazil, but this is my only chance.” I asked if he had enough money for the trip, he said that his previous savings from the NGO work could count some, and his father would also send him some money.

In her book *Life and Words*, Veena Das documented the temporal experiences of her interlocutor Manjit, a Punjabi woman who had been through the Partition of India and was living in a space of violence and devastation. Das found that time as an agent of delivering hope was referred to far more frequently than space as the agent. She noted, “[...] while one could leave the space one was in, one could not leave the time one was in - one could only arrange one’s life keeping into account the bad times or hope that these would pass.”¹⁶ I grasped the hope that lies in the passage of time in some of my interlocutors’ accounts. However, I had also come to realize how the idea of leaving one’s place becomes the only thinkable option that enables one to talk about the future. The marginalized socioeconomic status that my interlocutors experienced in Lebanon had made thinking of a long-term (if not permanent) stay simply unbearable. This reality was especially harsh for those whose previous expectations and preparations toward life in Syria had suddenly disappeared.

For Akram, hopeful futures could only be in the distant places which he had imagined. However, each plan entailed a period of waiting, in which Akram’s future became volatile. He swung between hope and despair with each piece of progress or the news from his friend abroad. While Akram seemed to have made his decision final, he had packed his bags and departed on a route that wasn’t any of what he had been planning.

Hope in the Passage of Time

Leaving Lebanon, of course, wasn’t feasible to all. It required, foremost, financial means, which were not available to many other PRS in Lebanon. My interlocutors who had left either gone alone as how they arrived in Lebanon, or departed with the rest of the family stayed, waiting for the reunion abroad.

Waiting, depositing hope in the passage of time, was the mean by which I saw those who had not been able to leave manage their aspirations. Others, who stayed, continued their lives of the everyday and of the events in the life course - marriage, becoming parents or grandparents - hoping that the bad times would pass, and that things might be better for the generation to come.

In my ethnography, the distant futures to which my interlocutors aspired very often presented themselves in the form of hope rather than despair. For those who believed, amidst such extreme limitation in choices, that the future could only be acquired by departure, their aspirations were enormous, and the actions that followed were unthinkably bold. The disjuncture of their lifeworld had created a gap in which they restlessly sought, or otherwise invented, the expected future that they had lost. For those who chose to or were forced to wait, their patience was equally courageous and tenacious - it was *sabr Ayub* (the patience of Ayub, who was renowned for his patience when tested by God).

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- 10 Cwerner in his paper "The Times of Migration" highlights the significance of including temporal dimensions in studies of migration. See Cwerner SB. The Times of Migration. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*. 2001;27(1):7-36.
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- 14 The “travel document” is Syrian issued laissez-passer for Palestinians refugees in Syria. The document allows its holders to return to Syria without a visa. See Al-Mawed HS. The Palestinian refugees in Syria: their past, present and future. International Development Research Centre; 1999. Available from: <http://prn.mcgill.ca/research/papers/al-mawed.pdf>. My interlocutors often referred to travel document as a “passport.” According to them, a new Palestinian travel document cost \$400 if applied in Syria, \$200 for renewal outside Syria. They could only pay in US dollars, in cash.
- 15 It was popular among my interlocutors to send/receive cash or presents through taxis which drive back and forth between Beirut and Shams (Damascus). It costs LBP 20,000 (\$13.30) per ride.
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Maya Hammad*

Education, De-Palestinisation, and the Lebanese Curricula: A Study in History and Civic Education

‘Education is always a field of political contestation’¹ which is why the main aims of education are to construct a common understanding of a ‘national identity’² and create the outlines of the nation as ‘an imaged political community.’³ Unfortunately for Palestinians, education fails to serve this purpose. As a nation shattered by settler colonialism and scattered across the world, ‘Palestinians are prohibited from imagining themselves as members of a political and economic community.’⁴ In fact, for Palestinian youth in different countries, ‘the division of school curriculum keeps [them] divided and weak.’⁵

It is an undeniable fact that with the Judaisation of East Jerusalem comes an inevitable de-Palestinisation of the education curricula provided for the Palestinian child. This article will show how de-Palestinisation, especially in the field of education has been a weapon wielded by more than just the Israeli occupying power. In fact, this article will demonstrate how and why governments prioritise specific forms of national-building that require a de-Palestinianised education. The case of Lebanon has been chosen, as the civil war adds an extra dynamic of complexity to the relationship between the refugee population and the host government, which in turn affects national building.

This article is divided into two main parts. The first tackles the United Nations Reliefs and Works Agency’s (UNRWA) education in general, and the system currently operating in East Jerusalem specifically. The second section looks at UNRWA education in Lebanon. This section of the study will begin by displaying the situation of refugees in Lebanon and enumerating the legal restrictions they face in terms of employment and education. It then moves on to discussing the quality of education in UNRWA schools. It then seeks to study the history and civic education curricula as main causes in de-Palestinianising the Palestine refugee population in Lebanon. A limitation to this study has been the unavailability of such textbooks to analyse directly, thus secondary resources were relied upon instead. The article will conclude with the notion that the curriculum in Lebanon is indeed a form of ‘education acculturation.’⁶ As it has embarked on a de-Palestinisation journey to ensure the construction of a specific unified yet utterly precarious national identity.

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UNRWA Education and De-Palestinisation in East Jerusalem

UNRWA was established in 1949, as a result of Res. 302 with the purpose of providing relief and work programmes for Palestinian refugees in Lebanon, Jordan, Syria, the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. Despite its restrictive mandate, UNRWA today has evolved and expanded to include a multitude of programmes involving the provision of education and healthcare services. In regards to education, initially UNRWA set up mostly primary schools in its operational areas, it later opened vocational training centres that allow for alternative forms of secondary education. In 1954 an agreement was made between UNRWA, UNESCO and the respective governments of its mandated-operation areas which stipulated that UNRWA schools would adopt the national curriculum of the host country they operate in, in order to make it easier for Palestinian refugee students to undertake the host governments' secondary examinations,⁷ which is a key component to accessing university education in the future.

In the West Bank, UNRWA applies a curriculum created by the Palestinian Authority in 1994 to replace the Jordanian one.⁸ In East Jerusalem children have the right to free public education in accordance with the Israeli 1949 Compulsory Education Law.⁹ However, the reality on the ground indicates that these children's right to education is heavily restricted because of systematic underfunding, denial of permits for the construction/ development of school facilities, and the lack of qualified teachers.¹⁰ More importantly, Israeli interference in the textbook curriculum such as the 2011 revisions, which included the removal of terminology relating to the occupation, Israeli settlements, and the Palestinian Intifada,¹¹ amplifies the extent to which Palestinians are restricted from their right to education, as a censored curriculum such as this 'undermines Palestinian students' cultural and national identities.'¹² Moreover, the Israeli policy of de-Palestinising education in East Jerusalem is a violation of both International Humanitarian Law and International Human Rights Law.¹³ Firstly, by imposing its own educational institutions, Israel is in violation of Article 47 of the Fourth Geneva Convention.¹⁴ Secondly, Israel's actions violate its obligations to respect, protect and fulfil certain human rights to the Palestinian population in the Occupied territory. For example, Israel violates the right of East Jerusalem children to education which is aimed at respecting their Palestinian cultural identity, language and national values and the full development of their personality¹⁵ as articulated in Article 29 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child¹⁶ and Article 13 of the International Covenant on Economic Social and Cultural Rights¹⁷ respectively. Thus, Israel's attempts at erasing the Palestinian identity by severely altering education, which is one of the major environments for its growth and development does not only rob Palestinians of their rights but also ensures the erosion of their already fractured nation, a strategy that may accurately be termed de-Palestinisation.

UNRWA Education in Lebanon

Situation of Refugees in Lebanon

In the wake of the 1948 Nakba, which included the destruction of 11 urban areas and 530 villages, approximately 750,000 Palestinians were displaced from their homes, and consequently sought refuge in neighbouring states.¹⁸ Lebanon received almost 100,000 Palestinians,¹⁹ and liaised with UNRWA to create a number of refugee camps. Only 12 of the refugee camps originally set-up in Lebanon remain, three of them including the Shatila camp were completely destroyed during the course of the Lebanese Civil War, a fourth one was also evacuated years ago.²⁰

The Lebanese Civil War was a multi-party conflict, which began in 1975 and lasted until 1989 with the signing of the Taef Accords. The colonially imposed confessional system that empowers the Maronite elites, the competing nationalist views about Lebanese identity and the Palestinian presence

in Lebanon following the Palestine Liberation Organisation's expulsion from Jordan exacerbated the fragility of the state and transformed the tensions into outright war. The Palestinian presence, which had a Sunni Muslim majority threatened and still, threatens the demographic stability of the delicate sectarian democracy.

The tenuous relationship between the Maronite government and the Palestine Liberation Organisation, and the horrors of the conflict that ensued has had lasting effects on the situation of Palestine refugees in Lebanon. It was claimed prior to the eruption of the Syrian conflict that 'Lebanon is the most hostile country to Palestinian refugees after Israel.'²¹ In order to maintain the delicate balance that will ensure the continuation of the current confessional political system, Palestine refugees in Lebanon unlike their counterparts in Jordan have not been granted citizenship. In addition to their lack of citizenship, Palestine refugees also face numerous restrictions in the areas of employment and education that have left a high percentage of them living in abject poverty.²² Firstly, Palestinian refugees cannot own any business enterprises unless there is a Lebanese partner and are restricted from 30 syndicated professions.²³ These restrictions on Palestinian refugees' economic opportunities discourage them from continuing their secondary education, and thereby increase drop out rates.²⁴ Secondly, Palestinian refugees are denied free access to public primary and secondary education as the Lebanese law of education; Law no. 686 of 1998 restricts public education to citizens only.^{25,26} As a result of this restriction, Palestinian children mostly attend one of the 68 UNRWA-run schools, which continuously struggle to meet the needs of the refugee population.²⁷ UNRWA in Lebanon runs its only secondary schools due to this restriction.²⁸

Background on Education in UNRWA Schools

UNRWA schools in Lebanon, despite their great number in such a small country suffer from underfunding, heavy overcrowding and double shifting. The average number of students per classroom is 30 making UNRWA schools the most crowded ones in Lebanon.²⁹ Additionally, the policies of corporal punishment, automatic promotion and grade repetition all reduce the quality of education available for Palestinian children.³⁰ Moreover, the application of the Lebanese curriculum which is offered only in French or English following the 6th Grade, has 'resulted in high dropout rates amongst the most disadvantaged groups in Lebanon who have limited and poor exposure to French or English ... [and] ... has exacerbated education inequalities... [and] doomed the education attainment of many children.'³¹ Poor quality education, and the application of a curriculum that disregards the reality of the refugee children's educational needs given their exceptional disadvantaged situation results in an ineffective educational experience that reduces chances of self-awareness and self-actualisation.

De-Palestinisation in History and Civic Education Textbooks

In addition to the lacking quality of education, and the mechanism through which this education is delivered, the material of the Lebanese curriculum itself is arguably a key tool in the Lebanese government's attempts at erasing the essence of the Palestinian refugee population. The education system seeks to replace the Palestinian identity with a specific Lebanese one, but simultaneously offers constant reminders of the Palestine refugees' lacking citizenship. This de-Palestinisation is most acutely represented in the Lebanese history and civic education curricula.

The responsibility of textbook and curricula production in Lebanon falls to the Centre for Educational Research and Development (CERD), public schools are obliged by law to use any textbooks published

by CERD, although in the subject of history, where there is no unified official textbook as a result of chronic disagreements with regards to writing Lebanon's own fraught history, schools may use privately published textbooks approved by CERD which cover specific topics.³² 'History teaching in Lebanon occupies a central position in the process of national integration... negative intergroup relationships are exacerbated by biases and omissions in history texts... and history is an important medium to transmit basic political values and inculcate a sense of national citizenship.'³³ Thus it comes at no surprise that the Palestine-Israel conflict is only taught in the 9th Grade for the duration of three lessons. The topics covered include the rise of Zionism, Palestine under the British Mandate, the Arab-Israeli wars, the Nakba, the 1956 war, and the 1967 war.³⁴ However, according to CERD teaching on Palestine has been suspended for the scholastic year of 2016/2017 as certain rewriting and editing is underway.³⁵ These three allocated lessons however, have been criticised as being highly insufficient to offer an overall understanding of the causes of Palestinian suffering,³⁶ as it does not include a proper retelling of Palestinian geography and history,³⁷ and instead results in an 'officially installed ignorance'³⁸ amongst the Palestinian population. For example, in a comparative study of history textbooks offered in Lebanese schools, it was found that only one textbook: 'The Complete History' broaches the subject of Zionist immigration into Palestine which is a precursor to the Nakba and the current plight of the Palestinian refugees.³⁹

As for the curriculum of National and Civic Education it was developed as a compulsory subject after the end of the civil war to be taught one hour per week in all public schools from Grades 1 to 12.⁴⁰ The purpose of this subject was to foster national identity and reinforce unity,⁴¹ at the expense of the Palestinian exilic identity. 'The civics and social studies textbooks do not at all address the issues of Palestinian refugees or even the rights of refugees'⁴² instead they focus on a particular kind of Lebanese identity that disregards refugees entirely. Moreover, Palestinian refugees who have been born in Lebanon are not described as citizens, a consequence of this is that students are left under the misapprehension that some of the rights outlined in the textbooks only apply to those who have the Lebanese nationality.⁴³

Nonetheless, despite the application of a curriculum that emphasises a unified Lebanese identity over all else, UNRWA schools do permit some activities that serve to remind students of their Palestinian heritage and homeland. For example, the use of certain Palestine-related symbols such as the national flag, the map of Palestine and keys to homes in Palestine, is encouraged.⁴⁴ Moreover, some schools are named after Palestinian villages where massacres occurred such as Deir Yassine. A naming tactic such as this ensures the commemoration of Palestinian suffering and inscribes the tragic past in the consciousness of young people.⁴⁵ Finally, beyond the school walls and within those of the refugee camp, there are numerous sources such as families, murals and television programmes through which children can gain an understanding of their history, identity as well as inherit and pass on their Palestinian-ness.⁴⁶

Conclusively, it seems that in the Lebanese case the government prioritised specific forms of national-building that required a de-Palestiniansed education by offering a history and civic education curricula that obliterate the existence of Palestinian refugees as members of the Lebanese nation. The purpose of such deliberate obliteration was for the Lebanese government, an attempt to reconstruct the war-torn country after fifteen years of infighting. Therefore, 'teaching the Lebanese curriculum that is constructed around a particular idea of the 'Lebanese' identity and citizenship whilst overlooking the identity and rights of the refugees – contributed to reproducing a logic of discrimination towards the 'others' who are the Palestine refugees... and contributes to a process of 'acculturation' of Palestinian youths in camps,'⁴⁷ thereby reducing the threat of a direct challenge posed by the Palestinian community against the government. This acculturation inevitably results in de-Palestinisation, for 'as far as the curriculum was concerned, the Palestinian, Arab though

he may be, became ipso facto ... Lebanese, he was to learn the facts of his social, cultural and political history and environment in terms of his 'country'.⁴⁸ It is thus nowhere more clear than in the Lebanese case, that the 'thrust of the educational system was to weaken Palestinianism',⁴⁹ to dilute, if not silence, knowledge of Palestinian history.⁵⁰ For UNRWA teachers, the absence of Palestine from the curriculum is a form of 'cultural genocide' that seeks to omit the 'Palestinian problem'.⁵¹ Lebanon is obligated under Article 29 (c) of the Convention on the Rights of the Child that the education of the child shall be directed to: 'the development of respect for the child's parents, his or her own cultural identity language and values for the national values of the country in which the child is living, the country from which he or she may originate and for civilisations different from his or her own.'⁵² One is left to ponder whether this right is truly respected for Palestinian children learning the Lebanese curriculum when it is accused of 'cultural genocide' and obvious attempts at de-Palestinisation.

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Mahmoud El Ali*

Laws regulating the work of Palestinians in liberal professions in Lebanon and their most problematic issues

The Palestinian refugees in Lebanon have been facing employment restrictions since the fifties, as their presence in general was still closely linked to the prospects of political changes the country has gone through. In this frame, the Lebanese policy has witnessed “fundamental changes throughout the presence of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon; the first years of refuge were more tolerant towards Palestinian’s employment, as Palestinians were allowed access to most labor sectors”¹ because the Lebanese authorities didn’t expect the Palestinian refugee issue to take long time for a settlement. However, this situation changed by the end of 1951 when the issue of Palestinians working in Lebanon was raised in the Lebanese Parliament, to be followed by a decision taken by the then minister of social affairs which enforced the Palestinians to stop working in several professions because they were working without work permits and competing with the Lebanese laborers. The same decision which has restricted the jobs formerly allowed for Palestinians, allowed them to occupy jobs that do not require work permits, such as construction projects in the cities, agriculture in the provinces, entry level administrative jobs, financial professions in banks and companies. This negative policy towards Palestinians was confirmed in 1964, when the Ministerial Decree No. 17561 passed by the Minister of Labor and Social Affairs to organize the participation of foreigners in the Lebanese labor market, was put into practice; the decree didn’t exclude the Palestinian refugees from its provisions. The labor situation of the Palestinians continued to be as such, until the appearance of Palestinian resistance in Lebanon, and getting to the so called Cairo Agreement in 1969 with the Lebanese authorities through which, the Palestinian refugees were allowed to work without any restrictions on all professions, except those linked directly to the governmental institutions like law practices. However, the Israeli invasion in 1982 led to a dramatic change in the Palestinian’s life on all levels in Lebanon. Following the 1982 invasion, Palestinians residing in Lebanon were subjected to various types discriminatory and demeaning measures including prohibiting them from working in entry level administrative jobs, and in business positions in banks and companies, in accordance with the article of the minister of labor and social affairs no 1/289 issued on 18-12-1982, in which the Palestinians were prohibited from working in 69 professions. Furthermore, they were not allowed to own commercial enterprises. Thus, the decision of the minister of labor brought the Palestinians back to the harsh situation of the pre Cairo agreement era.

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The status of the Palestinians stayed as such until today, where joint efforts are exerted to secure a positive resolution for Palestinian professionals and workers, and for disengaging this issue from that of resettlement (Tawteen) which was under major political focus by some Lebanese political influential parties, as a threat for the Lebanese sectarian structure, following the Oslo Accords in 1993. The efforts to improve the situation of the Palestinians have led to limited improvement of their work conditions from 1995, when the restrictions were slightly lifted with the introduction of a new clause to the ministerial decree, which exempted foreigners who were born in Lebanon, and who are born to Lebanese mothers or married to Lebanese women from these restrictions".² This shift was considered to be in favor of the Palestinian refugees who were considered and remain to be the main group of 'foreigners' who were born in Lebanon. Later on, the Minister of Labor Trad Hmadeh proceeded, within the authority granted to him by the labor law of 1964, to issue the memorandum no 1/67 in June 2005, that gave professional Palestinians access to physical and clerical jobs which were exclusive to Lebanese citizens, under certain conditions, most importantly, to be born in Lebanon and registered with the Directorate of Refugees Affairs at the Ministry of Interior. This positive step was followed by Lebanese and Palestinian civil society campaigns that contributed to convincing representatives of parliamentary blocs of the need to improve the conditions of the Palestinian's labor in Lebanon. In this framework, the Lebanese Parliament amended, during its session held in August 2010, the labor and social security laws, when issuing 128 and 129 laws respectively. Nonetheless, these laws did not generate considerable changes in the fundamentals of Palestinian labor conditions in Lebanon. The new laws were vague and failed to meet the minimum requirements for the Palestinians to work in around 36 professions. This is because the Lebanese Parliament laws exempted the Palestinian refugees partially from the reciprocity conditions and work permit fees. They were allowed to benefit from the end of the service fund, while banned them from the sickness and maternity funds benefits, as well as from family allowances, although they are under the obligation of paying the full fees. Moreover, the institutions which allow Palestinians to work are obliged to contribute with 23 percent of their fees to the governmental social safety net program; meanwhile the Lebanese contribution reaches only 8 percent of the salary. The amended laws generated "Article 59 of the Labor Law and Article 9 of the Social Security Law which resulted in waiving work permit fees for Palestine refugees born in Lebanon, and revoking the reciprocity of treatment policy for end-of-service and work-related injuries compensation; these amendments have not significantly affected the quality of employment for PRL"³ (Palestinian Refugees in Lebanon). The most important amendments to Article 59 of the Lebanese Labor Law and Article 9 of the Social Security Law included the following:

Work permits are free of charge;

Exemption from the reciprocity of treatment condition;

The establishment by the management administration of the National Social Security Fund (NSSF), a separate account for the contributions of Palestinian refugee workers, provided that the Treasury or the National Security Fund does not meet any financial obligation towards it;

Benefit from end of service indemnities and work emergencies.

However, problems remain for Palestinians living in Lebanon because "The reciprocity principle entitles foreign workers to obtain work permits and receive social security provided that their state grants the same benefits to Lebanese workers. However, the law did not take into account the fact that the Palestinian refugees have no state."⁴ "In addition, there are certain professions which are restricted by law to be occupied by Lebanese only, such as medicine or law because those professions

require, as mentioned in the relevant syndicate rules, possessing a Lebanese citizenship in order to be associated members in the syndicate. In fact, "there are only four countries that meet the required conditions: Britain, France, Belgium and Italy. Other countries do not meet these conditions ...and do not benefit from its remunerations"⁵, including the Palestinian refugees in Lebanon who are classified as stateless.

It is worth mentioning that there are conflicting interpretations of this subject. As there are provisions that rejected equalizing Palestinian workers to their Lebanese counter parts, and refused to grant them the rights stipulated in the Labor Law, citing the lack of reciprocity condition and the lack of proof of its availability, and depending on the fact that (their country) does not recognize the principle of equality of treatment for the Lebanese. The labor law imposed certain assets for the benefit of foreign workers from the provisions of the Labor Law and stipulated that foreign workers, when dismissed from service, enjoy the rights enjoyed by Lebanese workers on the condition of reciprocity. And so, the main problem for the Palestinians when they are discharged from service is that how to achieve the requirement of reciprocity.

Although "there are approved provisions for compensating Palestinians workers based on the provisions of the 63 Social Security Article and 54 and 56 articles of the Labor Law , but there are changes in some of the decisions on the Arbitral Labor Councils, when a decision was taken which notified that the reciprocity condition provided for in Article 59, paragraph 3 of work law is non-achievable for the condition of Palestinians residing legally in Lebanon, and who are characterized by a special status, because they cannot be linked to a state disputed existence, ...and therefore can benefit from the provisions of the labor law in terms of service's compensation, and providing a work permit is not obligatory (Resolution No. 1354/98, the Arbitral Labor Council in Beirut, 3rd Chamber the president Jadayel – unpublished)".⁶

However , as a result of inconsistencies in the jurisprudence, a review of the legal basis for the protection of Palestinian workers and the review of the relevant conventions, resolutions, and protocols in this regard, it emerges that it is legally recognized that the Palestinian state has been occupied so that the reciprocity treatment provided for in paragraph 3 of Article 59 of the Labor Law is not applicable because the Palestinian people became displaced and scattered all over Arab countries including Lebanon, and the Palestinian refugees were subject to special provisions stipulated in resolutions, agreements and protocols organized by the secretariat of the Arab League, which stressed on the Palestinian refugee rights. In addition, the Arab countries jointly ratified these rights, which have become a rule of the Arab League and an integral part of their legislation, including Lebanon.

Moreover, according to one of the experts, "the main obstacle of depriving the Palestinians from working in Lebanon is the absence of a recognized Palestinian state in accordance with international standards, so the principle of reciprocity can be applied automatically"⁷ Anyway, the discrimination in the field of work is incompatible with Lebanon's international agreements, including the Convention on Discrimination in Respect of Employment and Profession, ratified by Lebanon on 1 June 1977, which stipulates in (arts. 1 and 2) that equal opportunities and equal treatment in employment, with a view to eliminate any discrimination based on race, color, sex, religion, political opinion, national origin, social origin, etc. The measures relating to the employment of Palestinians in Lebanon are also incompatible with the international Convention on Employment Policy, mentioned in (Article C) among its points, the following:

Protection against unemployment.

Providing job opportunities for all those who are available to work and who seek it.

The freedom to choose the job, and the best opportunity to fill the job that suits the persons abilities and qualifications, regardless of race, color, sex, religion, political opinion, national origin or social origin.

However, it is important to note that the complications facing the Palestinians seeking to work in the liberal professions in Lebanon will remain because there is a series of issues which negatively affects the Lebanese situation in general, and the most prominent ones are as follows:

“The political and security situation of Lebanon.

Absence of a political administration that supports the entrenchment of the right to work and protection.

Addressing the right to work and social protection with negative approaches and linking it to the question of resettlement as well as political countermeasures.

Limited financial and human resources of the Lebanese state.

The administrative and financial status of the National Social Security Fund, and the documents required to be submitted for social security

Lack of clarity of laws and mechanisms for their implementation”⁸

At the end, and in the frame of the critical situation of the Palestinians working in liberal professions, it can be seen clearly from the Working Permit Report issued by the ministry of labor in 2016, that out of “77.205 permissions given for foreign laborers in Lebanon from different nationalities, only 104 Palestinians received work permits”⁹, whereas there are “610 Palestinian workers whom the ministry of labor extended their permit, out of 155.125 foreign workers”¹⁰. Finally, it is obvious that while the Palestinians face difficulties in finding jobs that commensurate with their potentials and experiences, they also face the suffering of losing Lebanese and Palestinian relevant actors, who are capable of fundamentally changing the way they are treated, with regard to rights they deserve especially in the domain related to their professions. A report issued by the common space initiative, two years ago shed the light on the view of the AUB hospital Administration on the nursery workers, stating that the Palestinian nurses are among the best professional employees. And they noted that in spite of that, the then labor Minister Sajjan Qazi didn't facilitate giving the Palestinians nurses work permit. Thus we can say that advocating for and raising awareness, in order to provide rights for Palestinian workers in liberal professions in Lebanon, consist a central part of the struggle for providing the basic civil rights for the Palestinian refugees in Lebanon , who are living in an extremely harsh situation, a situation that will not be resolved, unless they return to their homes and properties in occupied Palestine, which the international community failed to achieve after 69 years of issuing the 194 resolution; the resolution that confirmed the right of return for the Palestinian refugees to their homes, and properties in their National home land territory in Palestine.

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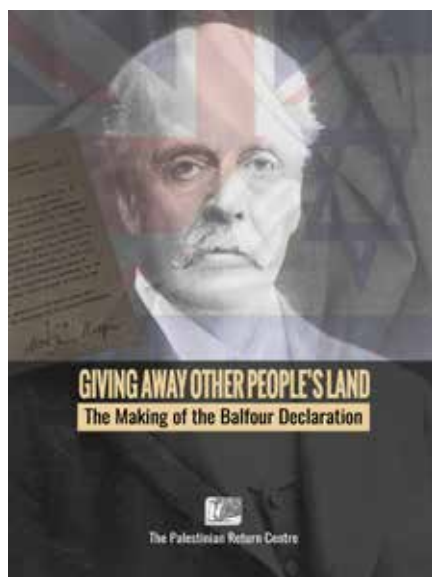
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GIVING AWAY OTHER PEOPLE'S LAND: THE MAKING OF THE BALFOUR DECLARATION

Editors: Sameh Habeeb and Pietro Stefanini

Research: Hannah Bowler

With the 1917 Balfour Declaration, Palestine became the victim of European colonialism, as Britain promised to establish a Jewish homeland in Palestine where the indigenous Palestinians amounted to over ninety percent of the total population. This report provides an in-depth analysis of the motivations and dynamics that culminated in the creation of the Balfour Declaration. The research is based primarily on archival documents from the National Archives in Kew Gardens, London. The reports begins with illustrating the objections to the Zionist project to settle in Palestine, strongly advocated by anti-Zionist British Jews. Contrary to the mainstream view that Britain had benevolent motivations in drafting the Declaration evidence in the archives proves that British government ministers used political Zionism to advance their own Imperial ambitions. The report also explores the accusation that the British ruling elite were anti-Semitic and thus driven by an age-long ambition to expel their Jewish communities. Lastly, this study argues that both the British government and the Zionist movement used Orientalist ideology to justify the dispossession of Palestinians from their lands.



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Hannah Bowler*

Civil Liberties and Discrimination in Lebanon: Palestinian Refugees from Syria Surviving in Lebanon as Twice Refugees.

Introduction

Since the Nakba in 1948 Lebanon has played reluctant host to a substantial proportion of the displaced Palestinian population. Instead of absorbing the refugees into their society they have contained them within refugee camps and institutionally excluded them from Lebanese life. Despite residing in the Levantine State for nearly 70 years Palestinians still have no protected legal rights and under Lebanese Law are stateless foreigners. The hostile treatment of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon is fairly unique in the region, the country being understood to be the worst for protecting their refugee community. Palestinian refugees living in Lebanon (PRL) have long been accustomed to this way of existence, but as Palestinian refugees from Syria (PRS) fleeing conflict cross the border into Lebanon they are faced with new discriminations alien to them. Since the onset of the devastating Syrian Civil War in 2011 Lebanon is once again host to another displaced population taking in an estimated 1.5 million Syrian refugees. A recent head count carried out by the UNRWA¹ finds that there are now around 32,000 registered PRS living in Lebanon. The already desperate situation of the PRS's was exacerbated when Jordan closed its borders to them in 2013 with Lebanon following suit in 2014. Palestinian Syrians who did make it to Lebanon are now twice refugees having sought salvation and refuge in Lebanon they have been met with a hard set of unfamiliar problems. Without any rights to work, education and access to healthcare a staggering 90% of these families have fallen beneath the poverty line.² For those 32,000 PRS who have found their way to Lebanon, there is a stark and shocking contrast between their lives in pre-war Syria and their new lives in the Lebanese camps.

The following essay attempts to explore the turbulent history of Palestinians in Lebanon, evaluating the circumstances that have created an institutionally hostile and discriminatory environment for Palestinian refugees. In light of the developing Syrian refugee crisis it will compare the Palestinian experience back in pre-war Syria against Lebanon and discuss the new challenges faced by Palestinian Syrians. The protracted plight of the Palestinian people is a part of the story of the Syrian crisis that is not being told and is now being incorporated into the Lebanese narrative.

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Historical Background to the Lebanese Experience

The three main host States to Palestinian refugees after the Nakba are Jordan, Syria and Lebanon. Each country has had a distinctively unique experience with their Palestinian population. As of 2014 there are an estimated 2.1 million Palestinian refugees living in Jordan³ and almost all have been given full citizenship, with the associated rights. This makes Jordan the only Arab country to fully attempt to assimilate their Palestinian population. In pre-war Syria the situation had been comparable, a 1957 law allowed PRS's the same rights and duties as Syrians, excluding nationality and voting rights.⁴ Palestinians in Syria have been integrated successfully into the fabric of the country⁵, they have the right to work and own their own businesses, and granted access to public education and healthcare. The opportunities afforded to the PRS community has facilitated the establishment of a thriving middle class Palestinian population who have since become an 'integral part of Syrian society'.⁶ The Lebanese experience however has been radically disparate. According to the UNRWA Lebanon is home to an estimated 450,000 Palestinian refugees, dispersed across 12 main camps.⁷ The camps which are deliberately restricted to the outskirts of Lebanon's state boundaries are home to the most vulnerable Palestinian refugees in the region.

Lebanon's turbulent history with their Palestinian population, their confrontation with the State of Israel and the country's secularization has shaped and consolidated their treatment of the victims of the Nakba. To understand and critically evaluate the evolution of Lebanon's institutional discrimination towards PRL's and now PRS's her historical context is needed to provide the framework. The Lebanese Civil War which raged from 1975 to 1990 has left an inalienable scar on Lebanese society. The Country is committed to the principle of sectarianism which is enshrined in its constitution: the president must be Christian, the Prime Minister Sunni Muslim and the Speaker of the House Shia Muslim.⁸ As the state attempted to balance multi sectarianism, the influx of mainly Sunni Muslims from Palestine following the Arab-Israeli war shifted the demographic in favour of the Muslim population. This created a conflict between the Christian population and the pan-Arab Palestinian force. The blame for the conflict and subsequent years of instability has been placed with the Palestinians, and this is the narrative which has then been used as the basis of Lebanese discrimination towards their Palestinian communities.

The rhetoric of Tawteen (naturalization) is crucial to the story of Palestinian discrimination in Lebanon. Tawteen is the idea that Palestinians should not be naturalized into the state as it contradicts the principle of the right to return. The justification asserts that if Palestinians become full citizens of Lebanon and surrender their refugee status then it eradicates their claim to Palestine and voids the right to return. The Lebanese ardently oppose naturalization and manipulate the principle of the right to return in order to legitimize their discrimination.⁹ Tawteen in Lebanese politics and popular culture is used to 'generate public phobia against according civil rights to Palestinians'.¹⁰ The joint study by UNRWA and the American University of Beirut develop this concept by demonstrating that Lebanese political groups accuse each other of promoting Tawteen¹¹ as a tactic of political denunciation and slander. The question of naturalizing refugees is the most contentious political issues that Lebanon faces. This narrative framework also now shapes policy towards Palestinians from Syria, as its feared the new arrivals – who are largely Sunni Muslim – will disrupt the balance once more.¹² The Lebanese authorities now view the influx of PRS in the camps to be a security threat and see it as imperative to deny their civil rights and prevent them from joining mainstream Lebanon. Here the civil war narrative and Tawteen discourse is incorporated into the public and political debate about its Palestinian Syrian population.

Civil Rights and Institutional Discrimination In Lebanon

The crux of the problem refugees face in Lebanon is that the government has abstained from signing a variety of international laws regarding refugees and therefore cannot be held accountable for many of its actions towards Palestinians. Lebanon was never a signatory to the 1951 UN Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees.¹³ This convention prohibits unlawful expulsion, enshrines the principle of freedom of movement and protects civil liberties. By not signing the convention it excepts Lebanon from giving Palestinians any civil liberties. The state also abstained from signing the 1965 Casablanca Protocol, this was an agreement between the Arab States which attempted to bilaterally safeguard the Palestinian existence.¹⁴ The Protocol requires Arab States to, while persevering Palestinian nationality, afford the same employment rights as its citizens and requires them to allow for Palestinians to enter and exit the country freely. Most recently in 1987 Lebanon repealed the 1969 Cairo Agreement which allowed for PRL's to obtain autonomy in the refugee camps¹⁵ entitling them for the first time a form of political enfranchisement. All three of these pieces of international law and convention were created as a solution to secure the civil and political rights of all Palestinians in the aftermath of the Nakba. Yet Lebanon is the only Arab State that has retained its sovereignty and has relative free rein to institutionally discriminate against its refugees. As a report from the Danish Institute finds that this problem has 'left the concept of refugee open to all manner of political quarrels'¹⁶

The Lebanese Governments systematic and institutional discrimination against its Palestinian communities starts with their exclusion from the labour market. Palestinians in Lebanon have, since their arrival in 1948 been prevented from acquiring work permits; barred for liberal and syndicated professions and excluded from the National Social Security fund¹⁷ - due to their legal status as stateless foreigners. It is clearly evident that employment legislation is deliberately aimed at Palestinians as Lebanon issues permits to hundreds and thousands of workers from the rest of Asia and Africa.¹⁸ However there is a case to say that there is progress regarding employment rights in Lebanon. An amended 1964 law was passed in 2010 which now gives PRL limited access to social security, has begun issuing work permits and has opened some liberal professions. Yet the amendment was created with inbuilt flaws. Work permits are now issued to Palestinians but on the prerequisite that there is an existing work contract. Which is a catch 22 as it is rare that employers will offer an employment contract without first the obtainment of a legal working permit. Encompassing Palestinians into a national social security scheme has also had a limited effect. Firstly, it is disconnected from the national scheme, and with so few people being able to obtain a legal employment contract and pay into the scheme it renders their inclusion irrelevant. Furthermore, despite claiming to relax the ban on liberal professions, Palestinians still find themselves banned from over 30 syndicated professions, including medicine and law. There is a history of the Lebanese State looking to offer new rights to the Palestinians while at the same time making it impossible still to gain access to them. The 2010 amendment being no exception. In Syria however, due to a lack of anti-Palestinian legislation the government grants full employment rights to PRS comparable to their own citizens. The repressive restrictions on obtaining a work permit in Lebanon means that less than 3.3% of PRL's have an official employment contract. This leaves the remaining PRL's without any entitlement to sick or holiday pay. The majority of PRL's and PRS's working in Lebanon do so on the black market which leaves them vulnerable, open to exploitation and cases of child labour are also rife.

Irfan establishes that a fundamental part of Palestinian empowerment throughout the diaspora has been their connection to education.¹⁹ For many Palestinians they see that education is paramount to their right to return. Through education Palestinian refugees have been described as one of the most educated populations in the Middle East.²⁰ The notion being understood that by elevating their social standing and providing a unique skill set they can debunk Israeli mythology that they lack the expertise to run and manage their own state. Back in Syria Palestinian refugees had full access to

the education system, being able to enrol in government schools, UNRWA institutions and training schemes as well as universities. While in Lebanon PRL's are banned from attending public schools and universities. Instead they are completely reliant on UNRWA schools, of which there are 68 spread across the country. The open prejudice towards Palestinians is truly defined in a decision by the Lebanese Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MEHE) who welcomed Syrian refugees into Lebanese public schools but have denied this to PRS.²¹ Discrimination lies deeper than just restricting access to government schools, but government laws prohibits some Palestinians from sitting certain exams and being able to obtain the same qualifications as Lebanese citizens. For the new PRS's due to lack of official documentation they are not allowed to get any Lebanese qualifications exacerbating the problem of unemployment even further. The denial of access to a decent education will create long and sustained problems in the future as an entire generation of Syrian Palestinians will now suffer from illiteracy and thus further employment.

Lebanon's principle policy towards the Palestinians has always been to prevent long term settlement within their boundaries, to retain the refugee's temporary status. Denying the right to own property is a key instrument which the Lebanese authorities have used to ensure that their refugee's stay temporary. Before 2001 PRL's did have some rights regarding the acquisition of property, they could obtain property up to a certain size, but in 2001 through amendment 296 to 11614 it forbade Palestinians from owning any real estate in Lebanon.²² It also banned Palestinians from inheriting property regardless as to whether the acquisition was pre-2001. Not only did this law overtly discriminate against Palestinians and further erode their already diminishing civil rights but it is a strategy which confines their refugee population to the camps. By containing Palestinians in refugee camps, it prohibits them from joining mainstream Lebanon. Hanafi and Long establish the comparison between the 'closed spaces' of the Lebanese camps with the 'open spaces' of Palestinian camps in the rest of the region.²³ They outline how camps in Syria for example constitute open spaces, these are managed and regulated by the government and are connected to the surrounding cities enabling satisfactory integration. Meanwhile in Lebanon the 'closed spaces' are literally walled off from the rest of the state, detached from civil society. Comparatively in Syria where property is afforded to PRS, limited to one apartment and one economic asset PRS can freely move around the country. This has enabled them to leave the camps and positively integrate themselves into Syrian communities. Those in Syria who remain in the camps, because of the right to own property, have been legally entitled to improve the quality of the structures. Before the outbreak of the civil war the camps resembled something more like a low-income neighbourhood instead of a temporary refugee camp. The standard of living was relatively high and overcrowding was limited. Pre-Syrian war the 12 camps in Lebanon were already suffering with high rates of poverty and overcrowding but now there are reports of families living up to 10 people in one room, while the average is 3.1 people per room.²⁴

Conclusion

Joe Stork, Deputy Director of HRW MENA division²⁵ attempts to draw attention from the international community to show that Palestinians are among the most vulnerable people in the Syrian conflict.²⁶ The PRS presence in Lebanon has been characterised by discriminatory policies, detentions, border closures and refolement.²⁷ There is a substantial fear that the detrimental impact of the discrimination faced by the Palestinians from Syria will lead them to leave Lebanon, as many have already done, and take a more treacherous migration. The UNRWA estimates showing the current trend towards a decrease of Palestinians in Lebanon it is clear that the situation there has become intolerable, already it is estimated that 7,250 Palestinians have died crossing into Europe.²⁸ Palestinians from Syria fled with their fellow Syrians across the border to salvation instead they were singled out.

Their lack of rights and socio-economic exclusion is undeniably tied to their harsh living conditions. The continual denial of civil rights to PRL's and now PRS's will ensure that Palestinians in Lebanon will remain in a perpetual cycle of social exclusion and impoverishment without any of the tools or means to elevate their situation. Only until legal and institutional discrimination has been eliminated then the general poverty and wellbeing levels among Palestinians can be alleviated.²⁹

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Kristyna
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Case Study: Shatila Camp

35 Years on from the Sabra and Shatila Massacre – what are the current conditions of Palestinian refugees?

Introduction

It has been thirty-five years since the 16th of September 1982, when over 1,300 Palestinian civilians were massacred at Israel's command by the Lebanese Phalange militia at the Sabra and Shatila refugee camps, south of the capital city Beirut. The horrors of the massacre have since become a national Palestinian symbol of collective memory, commemorated yearly across historic Palestine and the diaspora. However, while most commemorations simply celebrate or mourn past events, the Shatila camp remains as a growing presence despite the systematic use of violence aimed at displacing not only the physical presence of Palestinians, but also the collective memory of their homeland.

As the British government shamelessly celebrates the centenary of the 1917 Balfour Declaration this year, it is imperative to remember and recount the dark past of the Shatila camp, and pay attention to its current residents. There is a danger that this massacre could be forgotten, along with numerous other mass killings and assassinations that were forgotten due to the tide of 'forgiveness' that prevailed since the Taif Agreement, which effectively ended the Lebanese civil war. This article will thus focus on the Shatila camp and its historical transformation at the hands of Israel during the Sabra and Shatila massacre, along with a brief investigation of the current climate of its present-day residents that include, among others, both Palestinian and Syrian refugees.

Context of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon

Firstly, let us situate the Shatila camp in the context of Palestinian refugees living in Lebanon. According to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), there are 450,000 refugees registered in Lebanon, making up an estimated 10% of the total population. More than half of the refugee population lives in official camps (62%) while the remainder (38%) resides in gatherings, which are near the camps, but not part of the official settlements, or are dispersed throughout Lebanon.¹

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The Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon are considered the worst of the region's refugee camps in terms of poverty, health, education and living conditions.² Families are crowded into what was initially designed as 'temporary housing', surrounded by open channels of sewage and rotting garbage, which encourages the spreading of disease. Although thousands are born and raised in the country, they are denied political, economic and social rights.³ In fact, the Palestinian population in Lebanon should be more appropriately called 'protracted refugees'⁴, as they have been refugees for over 60 years.

Establishment of Shatila

Shatila, whose very name resonates as a symbol of Palestinian loss, was established in 1949 in southern Beirut by the International Committee of the Red Cross. The creation of the Palestinian refugee population in Lebanon, as well as in other countries, was a direct consequence of the establishment of the state of Israel in 1948⁵. Shatila was built to accommodate the hundreds of refugees who fled to the area from Amka, Majed al-Kroum, and al-Yajour area villages in northern Palestine following the 1948 exodus.⁶ Originally built to house 3,000 Palestine refugees, the camp covers an area of 0.4 km²⁷ and now faces serious issues of overcrowding with a reported population of over 23,000 people.⁸ Israel continues to deny those refugees their right to return to their homes, ignoring prescription to do so by UN General Assembly Resolution 194⁹, causing a series of regional crises pushing them from one region to another.

Sabra and Shatila Massacre

The 1982 attack on Sabra and Shatila has been officially acknowledged by the United Nations General Assembly as a massacre and an act of genocide.¹⁰ The camp was devastated during the 1982 Israeli invasion of Lebanon, along with the nearby gathering known as Sabra.¹¹ The camp was already shattered previously due to earlier bombardments by Israel, and many of the dwellings had just been built before 1982¹². It was also under attack frequently in the midst of the Lebanese civil war, namely during the 1985-1989 'War of the Camps', causing extensive destruction of property and displacement of residents, when pro-Syrian fighters besieged Shatila and two other camps in order to 'weed out' Palestinians from Lebanese strongholds.¹³

Political Context

The massacres marked the culmination of Israel's second invasion of Lebanon, launched by Ariel Sharon on 6 June 1982, nicknamed 'Operation Peace for Galilee'. The goals and scope of the operation expanded from protecting the Israeli citizens of northern Galilee into what Sharon called "ridding the world of the center of international terrorism"¹⁴, meaning the elimination of PLO headquarters and infrastructure in West Beirut.

In the first three months of the invasion, losses on the Arab side were shocking. 17,825 were killed throughout the occupied areas,¹⁵ while in West Beirut alone, 2,461 persons were killed in the systematic air strikes and naval gunfire directed at the city.¹⁶ By midsummer, the PLO engaged in negotiations led by U.S. envoy Philip Habib to end the siege, which was contingent on its own withdrawal. One of the key points in the negotiations was the PLO's fear for the fate of the thousands of Palestinian civilians who would remain in Lebanon's camps.¹⁷ By mid-August, an agreement was reached that involved the evacuation of more than 11,000 Palestinian fighters and PLO officials,

along with the dissolution of PLO offices and infrastructure supervised by an international force that would leave after 30 days of its arrival. The evacuation was complete by 1 September 1982. Most importantly, the agreement also involved written guarantees for the security of Palestinians in the camps, personally signed by Habib as representing the United States.¹⁸ Indeed, a survivor of the massacre; Ibrahim Musa, whose whole family was killed in the massacre, verbalizes this betrayed trust: “we did not imagine that the Israelis would enter the camp. There were guarantees by the Americans, Arabs, and Lebanese. We didn’t think they would enter.”¹⁹

Setting the stage

As Leila Shahid contends, aside from ending the PLO presence in Beirut, Israel’s invasion had a secondary goal of installing a Lebanese government friendly to Israel, willing to sign a peace treaty with it.²⁰ When Bashir Gemayel was elected president of Lebanon on 23 August, he represented Israel’s best hope for achieving these objectives in Lebanon.

On 10 September, Sharon had laid the foundation for a possible camp intervention when he announced without evidence that “2,000 armed terrorists” remain in the camps.²¹ The PLO was largely evacuated prior to the assassination of Gemayel, which happened on Tuesday 14 September in an explosion at the Phalange party headquarters in Beirut. Crucially, Sharon was quick to blame the Palestinians in a press statement that same evening in a declaration reported by Associated Press, stating that Gemayel’s execution “symbolizes the terrorist murderousness threatening all people of peace from the hands of PLO terrorist organizations and their supporters.”²² Gemayel’s followers were eager to listen to this perspective that the Palestinians in the camps had killed Bashir and should pay.²³

Following this, Sharon and Menachem Begin entered West Beirut without consulting the Israeli cabinet, and despite explicit commitments to the United States not to do so.²⁴ In explaining the decision to the Israeli cabinet on the evening of 16 September, Chief of Staff Eitan said that while the IDF would not enter the camps, the Phalangists would be sent in “with their own methods”.²⁵

The Invasion

Israel’s invasion of West Beirut began the morning of 15 September, barely twelve hours after Gemayel’s assassination, and well after the evacuation of PLO forces in Lebanon.²⁶ Sharon arrived at 9:00 AM to oversee operations, and by noon the IDF had completely surrounded the Sabra and Shatila camps, setting up checkpoints and roadblocks to control exits and entrances. The IDF also occupied several multistoried buildings as ‘observational posts’, some of which, according to Time magazine, enjoyed an “unobstructed and panoramic view” of the Shatila camp 200 meters away.²⁷

Fire and shelling began that afternoon, as official Israeli statements repeated that the army had to intervene in West Beirut “in order to forestall the danger of violence, bloodshed, and chaos”. By 12:30 PM, around 1,500 Phalangist militiamen began moving towards the camps in IDF-supplied jeeps. The first militiamen entered the camps on Thursday 16 September at sunset. The killing, raping, and torturing began almost immediately, with practically no resistance – throughout the forty hours of killing, there was only a handful of Phalangist casualties.²⁸

By 8:00 PM, 300 persons, including civilians, had been killed as reported by a Phalangist liaison officer to the Israeli officers. This report had been seen by at least twenty senior officers in the IDF headquarters in Beirut and Tel Aviv.²⁹ The next morning, Friday 17 September, despite Yaron’s orders

for the Phalangist commanders to advance no further, more reinforcements were sent in and the decision for the deplorable “mopping up” action to continue until 5:00 AM was made by the Chief of Staff Eitan.

A pattern of executing groups of residents and then bulldozing houses to bury the bodies under the rubble had emerged by then, while “truckloads of Palestinian men, women and children were seen leaving the camp – a Danish TV crew on Friday filmed groups being herded into trucks near Shatila.”³⁰

On Saturday, the militiamen did not retreat as agreed in the IDF-Phalange meeting. At 6 AM, loudspeakers called on survivors to come out and surrender.³¹ The hundreds – some reported thousands – of people who emerged were marched at gunpoint toward a camp exit, with some being executed while others were loaded onto trucks and taken away, not to be seen again.³²

At 10:00 AM on Saturday, the militiamen left the camp. But foreign journalists and diplomats began entering the camps as early as 9:00 AM, finding hundreds of mutilated bodies and hurriedly dug graves. By noon, news of the massacre spread world-wide, and the Security Council resolution condemned the massacre. Ronald Reagan declared “outrage and revulsion” and blamed the killings on the IDF, demanding their immediate withdrawal from West Beirut, which eventually began on 20 September.³³

The exact number of those killed is not certain, with bodies having been buried in the ruins, deposited in mass graves and carried from the site in truckloads. However, estimates of those massacred have ranged from roughly 300 to as many as 3000 people.”³⁴

In an overt attempt to rid Israel of any responsibility for the massacre, the Israeli Prime Minister at the time, Menachem Begin, was quoted as saying, “Goyim (non-Jews) are killing Goyim. Are we supposed to be hanged for that?”³⁵

Was anyone prosecuted?

Israeli efforts to entirely blame the Phalangists and to deny any responsibility – despite the fact that they had clearly provided logistical, operational support as well as food, water, ammunition, and supplies throughout the operation – failed.”³⁶ In 1983, the Kahan Commission of Inquiry into the events at the refugee camps in Beirut established by Israel to investigate the events, found Ariel Sharon “unfit for public office”.³⁷ As a result, Sharon lost his position as defense minister, although he remained in government without portfolio.³⁸ The Kahan Commission created two levels of responsibility – direct and indirect – muting Israel’s responsibility, based on the assumption that Israeli soldiers did not actually do the killing themselves.³⁹ But allowing revenge-seeking Lebanese Forces into the camps under the auspice of cleaning out “terrorists” suggests direct complicity and instigation.

Others implicated in the massacre included Eitan, IDF commanders, Foreign Minister Yitsak Shamir, and Prime Minister Begin. They were also demoted and found to bear ‘indirect responsibility’, although all very quickly regained positions of importance, and to date, no-one has been prosecuted for the war crimes that took place. In other circumstances, those responsible – whether directly or indirectly – would have more than likely been convicted of war crimes. But as Tomis Kapitan bitterly states; “Israel was the victor in the Lebanon war, and memories are often short.”⁴⁰ In fact, Ariel Sharon’s autobiography and 1984 New York Times article titled ‘It’s Past Time to Crush the Terrorist Monster’ shows no hints of remorse: “Four years after Israel’s war on terror organisations in Lebanon, many people have come to realize the compelling necessity of that operation”⁴¹. And in 2001, he was elected as Prime Minister of Israel.

Current conditions in Shatila

Let us divert our attention back to the current situation in the Shatila camp. Following the end of the civil war, the camp reportedly became a place of refuge for many non-Palestinians, including illegal migrants and domestic workers, as well as Iraqi and Syrian refugees.⁴² The growing population has reportedly increased the strain on the camp's already poor infrastructure. A 2016 UNHRC report⁴³ finds that residents live in extremely poor and cramped conditions, with frequent electricity and water cuts. The camp's extensive networks of criss-crossing electrical wires, which hang dangerously between the narrow alleyways, intertwine with water pipes. As a result, several deaths are reported yearly from electrocution.⁴⁴

The environmental health conditions in Shatila are dismal. In the camp, one doctor sees about 117 patients per day⁴⁵, and access to education is also severely limited. The UNRWA cites this as one of the major problems within the camp, along with overcrowding and damp.⁴⁶

It is difficult to understand the real extent of the overcrowding in Shatila, as its population is not accurately known. In February 2015, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies found that the camp's population had grown from 10,000 to 16,000 since the start of the Syrian war in 2011.⁴⁷ But according to people living and working inside the camp, these figures are much higher⁴⁸. Different estimations are also suggested by UN officials, who suggest that the camp's population is at least 22,000 people; 15,000 Palestinians from Lebanon, 3,000 Palestinian refugees from Syria, and 4,000 Syrian refugees.⁴⁹ Despite this growing number of inhabitants, the camp is restricted by the Lebanese authorities from expanding outwards, so it is slowly growing upwards with less and less structural integrity.⁵⁰

In addition to the detrimental physical conditions, there is a lack of rights and growing social exclusion of Palestine refugees in the camp. Some argue that the labour laws that discriminate against Palestinians are the primary reason for their poverty.⁵¹ The lack of support from the Lebanese government is evident in a 2001 Law preventing Palestinians from owning homes, while other laws ban them from employment in over 30 professions, as well as preventing them from receiving social services.⁵² Thus the camp residents rely mostly on aid from UNRWA, which is also stretched thin by the Syrian conflict.⁵³

The Palestinian residents face social exclusion from the rest of Lebanese society, due to a fear of naturalization and integration, or 'Tawteen', a tool within Lebanese political discourse used to create public phobia against granting civil rights to Palestinians. Bayan al-Hout, author of 'Shatila camp, Beirut, 20 September 1982' puts this eloquently; "only when the 'Law of Return' is implemented, and when the so-called Palestinian State becomes a real free Palestinian State, the Palestinian refugees in Lebanon and in all parts of the world will be looked upon as real human beings."⁵⁴

Palestinian Refugees from Syria (PRS)

The Syrian crisis and the resulting arrival of refugees to Lebanon have made the country the "largest per capita recipient of refugees in the world."⁵⁵ Over half a million Palestinian refugees lived in Syria before the fighting began in 2011; most of them now rendered 'double refugees' by their second displacement. The camp was overcrowded even before the Syrian war began. Since then, Shatila's conditions have worsened with the arrival of these new refugees, some of which are Syrian, and some of which are Palestinian refugees from Syria (PRS). Nearly 90% of PRS in Lebanon are under the poverty line, and 95% are food insecure.⁵⁶

The physical strains on the camps caused by the 'new' PRS and Syrian refugees, coupled with the rise of anti-Syrian sentiments, fuel a concerning rise in tensions in all of Lebanon's Palestinian refugee camps. Different degrees of conflict are present between the inhabitants of the Shatila camp, with a certain 'hierarchy' of refugees taking shape, with the Syrians at the bottom. Many Palestinians feel that Syrians are 'trespassing' onto their areas and taking resources intended for the camp's original inhabitants.⁵⁷ To add to the crisis, the Lebanese government has refused to build new camps to accommodate the Syrian refugees, leaving them little choice but the country's 12 official Palestinian refugee camps.⁵⁸

In the Shatila camp, these tensions are observable in the conversations overheard at the camp; "there is an increasing tendency to distinguish between those who are 'Palestinian-Lebanese', 'Palestinian-Syrian', and 'Syrian-Syrian'" ⁵⁹. These ethnic distinctions started as purely empirical and void of judgment, but increasingly, the final category of 'Syrian-Syrian' is commonly used as an insult, or a synonym for 'drug-user' or 'loafer'. ⁶⁰ The tensions within the camp are understandable but there is no easy answer. Who has the 'right' to Shatila's resources? The camps were created for Palestinians that have no country to return to, while Syrians do have a country that is currently unsafe.

Conclusion

Investigating Shatila's current situation tempts one to assume that the solution to the numerous problems is additional funding by UNRWA or the Lebanese government. Lots of parties are responsible and actions should indeed be taken by both the Lebanese government and UNRWA. However, the key is a political solution, not a financial one. Only in combination with a political solution can there be hope for addressing the original cause of the Palestinian refugee problem, while improving conditions of all refugees in Lebanon. Similarly, unless the cycle of violence in Syria is stopped, and the Palestinian refugees are granted the right to return, this humanitarian crisis is prone to worsen.

Thirty-five years after the massacre, and a hundred years after the Balfour Declaration, we must pay attention to Palestinian refugees, their stories, and their lives, and not forget Israel's deplorable role in the Sabra and Shatila killings. Israel must admit responsibility for the 1948 Nakba and take action to grant Palestinians the right to return to their homeland, along with the international community continuing to exert pressure on Israel to follow international law⁶¹.

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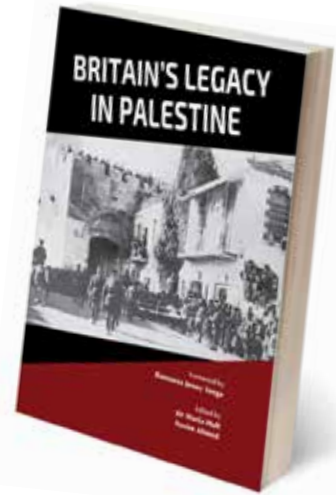
BRITAIN'S LEGACY IN PALESTINE

Foreward by Baroness Jenny Tonge

Edited by Dr Maria Holt and Nasim Ahmed

Britain's Legacy in Palestine is an international conference organised by the Palestinian Return Centre (PRC) to review British policy in Palestine from the Balfour declaration until the Nakba and beyond. Britain has left an indelible mark on Palestine and its catastrophic repercussions are still felt today. In enforcing the Balfour Declaration, Britain sold out Palestinian human rights, self determination and representative government to privilege the Zionist movement in Palestine which led to the 1948 Nakba and numerous massacres against the Palestinian people.

Academics, experts and senior politicians participated at the conference and delivered academic papers and speeches on the aspects of the British mandate policies. This book provides a documentation of the proceedings of the conference.



Participants

Salman Abu Sitta, Professor John Quigley, Dr Victor Kattan, Faysal Mikdasi, Dr Rev Stephen Sizer, Karl Sabbagh, Emile Badarin, Numan Abd al-Wahid, Dr Uri Davies, John Bond, Nasim Ahmed

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WORLD WAR I: IMPACT ON PALESTINE

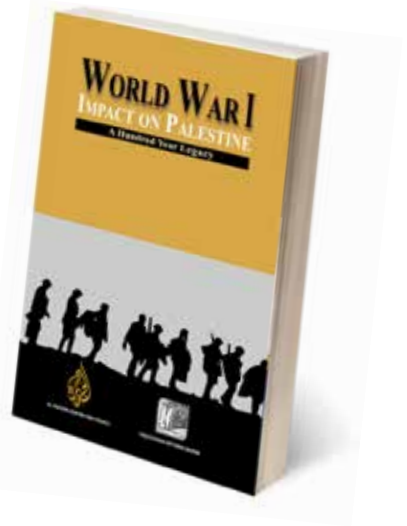
A HUNDRED YEAR LEGACY

Foreward by Richard Falk

Editor Sophia Akram

Co-editors Sameh Habeeb Omar Kachouh

Great Britain recently marked the centenary to commemorate the First World War (World War I), 28 January 1914 – 11 November 1918. The Great War, as it was known, was not only the deadliest war in history but possibly the most transformative: its impact resonated through political change and revolutions throughout the world, defining new borders and determining dominions. One nation that knows this more than any other is that of Palestine, who's future played out after growing support for Jewish migration during the war. This transmutation of the demographics and politics of Palestine is vehemently palpable today as the nations of Israel and Palestine find themselves in a protracted conflict and the Palestinians stateless and displaced. This combination of injustice, resistance and humanitarian catastrophe that has profound geo-political repercussions deserves astute historical and legal analysis. The Palestinian Return Centre and Al Jazeera Centre for Studies are no better placed to do so and have been pioneering research and contributing significantly to the discourse around this issue for almost a decade. It is therefore, of no surprise for it to convene fourteen leading historians, lawyers, academics and officials to evaluate events preceding, during and after World War I in order to inform the view surrounding the Palestinian crisis.



Participants

Yasin Aktay, Salman Abu Sitta, Oliver Miles, John Keay, Karl Sabbagh, Anthony Gorman, Ghada Karmi, Peter A. Shambrook, Malath Al agha, Jeff Handmaker, Gilbert Achcar, Mahmoud Haddad, Jafar Hadi Hassan

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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.

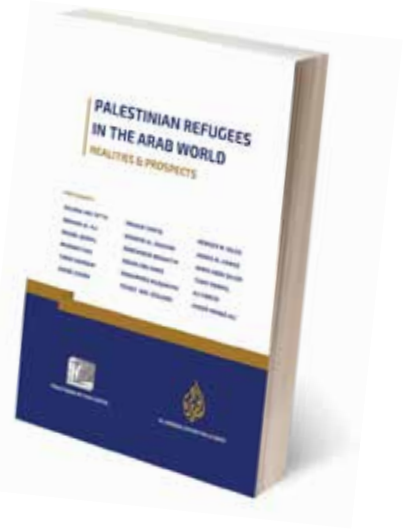
There are more than eight million Palestinian refugees in the world. The vast majority live in Arab countries, mainly neighbouring Palestine, with smaller numbers scattered in different parts of the world. They all live under extremely challenging conditions that differ according to the host country's 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.

Participants

Salman Abu Sitta, Mounir Chafiq, Mohsen M. Saleh, Ibrahim Al-Ali, Basheer Al-Zoughbi, Jawad Al-Hamad, Magda Qandil, Abdenmour Benantar, Hanin Abou Salem, Mariam Itani, Adnan Abu Amer, Terry Rempel, Tarek Hamoud, Mohammed Mushanish, Ali Hweidi, Adeeb Ziadeh, Yousef Abu Ossuood, Yassir Ahmad Ali



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THE PALESTINIAN RETURN CENTRE

KEEPING THE ISSUE ALIVE



Organisation in consultative status with
the Economic and Social Council since 2015

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 is an organisation in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council since 2015. The centre is also an accredited NGO with the United Nations Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People since 2003.

Support Palestinian Refugees

The Palestinian refugees are diverse and 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 Solana 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 the UK and in Europe. We regularly hold public seminars in the Houses of Parliament and European Parliament. Our strong relationship has encouraged PRC to embark on 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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