50 YEARS OF OCCUPATION
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50 Years of Occupation

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This Week in Palestine would like to extend its gratitude and appreciation to the Negotiations Affairs Department for sponsoring this special issue themed “50 Years of Occupation.”

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On this rather somber occasion, This Week in Palestine is proud to present our highest-profile issue so far, even though it marks an anniversary that warrants the celebration of very little – other than possibly the steadfastness of the Palestinian people. Framed by an introduction by PLO Secretary General Dr. Saeb Erekat, an eloquent recollection on the Palestine Liberation Organization’s aims and role in the struggle for a nation by Majed Bamya, director of the International Treaties Department at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and a vibrant outline of the Palestinian vision for a peaceful future by H.E. President Mahmoud Abbas, this issue illuminates how we reached this point in time and what the situation is on the ground.

Authors detail both the measures and methods applied by the Israeli occupation and the responses, resistance, and steadfastness shown by the Palestinian people and institutions.

Our sincere thanks go to the sponsor of this issue, the Negotiations Affairs Department, and to its contributing authors. Thanks go also to Marya Farah and Aseil Abu-Baker, Dr. Salim Tamari, Advocate Sahar Francis, Walid Salem, Dr. Jad Isaac, Dr. Mahdi Abdul Hadi, Dr. Rafiq Al-Husseini, Dr. Issam Nassar, Nur Arafah, Dr. Khaloud Khayyat-Dajani, Dr. Ahmed El-Atrash and Anjad Hithnawi, Samia Khoury, and Mohammad Allan for their insightful articles that shed light on the struggles and achievements of the Palestinian people throughout 50 years of occupation. And thanks go to our liaison, the support team at the Negotiations Affairs Department, who collected the testimonies that you will find interspersed among the articles. Here, Palestinians from throughout historical Palestine and abroad express in a few words how 50 years of occupation have affected their lives. Connecting the pages of this issue is a litany of acknowledgements that TWiP, on behalf of the Palestinian people, would like to offer as an expression of appreciation and gratitude to international personalities who have stood by Palestine and Palestinians. A word of appreciation goes to Hasheemah Afaneh who collected the information on the personalities proposed by TWiP in consultation with our sponsor, and our sincere apologies go to the many persons who deserve recognition and whom we would have liked to include in this issue but could not.

Relieved that the hunger strike of well over a thousand Palestinian prisoners has finally come to an end after forty days, and hoping that the demands of basic rights as supported by international law, voiced under the predominant silence of the international community, will be wholly fulfilled, TWiP and its entire team wish a blessed holy month of Ramadan to Muslims and a good summer to all of you.

Tina Basem

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A Message from H.E. President Mahmoud Abbas

Our challenge as Palestinians is greater than ever. After 50 years, we are the only remaining people in the world who still live under occupation. And it has been over 100 years that we have been actively denied our right to self-determination, along with all the hardships associated with the denial of that right: exile and forced displacement, occupation and subjugation, harassment and incarceration. There is no doubt that the balance of power is still weighted firmly against us. But I believe in our people and I believe that, even in these circumstances, we can and will prevail. We have truth on our side and strength in our hearts.

Our vision for peace remains clear and consistent: Two sovereign and independent states on the 1967 border: the State of Palestine – with East Jerusalem as its capital – living side by side in peace and security with the State of Israel. Jerusalem, the open city that befits its rich history as the cradle of the three monotheistic faiths. A just solution to the refugee issue based on the Arab Peace Initiative (API) and UNGA 194. And the freedom of all Palestinian prisoners in Israeli jails.

We have been committed to exploring and developing creative solutions based on international law and relevant UN resolutions. The API is a regional proposal that has been on the table since 2002. It offers Israel normalized relations with 57 Arab and Islamic countries, in exchange for Israel’s withdrawal to the 1967 borders (based on UNSC Resolution 242), a just and agreed-upon resolution to the refugee issue (based on UNGA Resolution 194), and the acceptance of an independent and sovereign Palestinian state with East Jerusalem as its capital. So far, Israel has ignored this historic offer. And yet, our offer stands. There is no direct pass to normalization between Israel and the Arab World without Israel fully ending its occupation of the State of Palestine, while implementing its obligations under international law.

From our side, we have focused on a strategy of internationalization in order to create conditions for our people to achieve their legitimate right to freedom and independence, while giving the two-state solution – and peace – the best chance of success. This strategy aims to bring the Palestine Question to a multilateral forum, to root a solution even more firmly in international law, to adhere to universal principles and global standards, and to engage the support of the international community in order to hold all parties accountable to international law and previously signed agreements. Without accountability for violations – particularly relating to Israel as the Occupying Power – there can be no hope of a just and lasting solution.

The occupation has survived for 50 years, and during that time it has been actively transformed from a military occupation to a project of settler colonialism. Ultimately, however, the situation is as untenable as it is unacceptable. No people in the world would tolerate living under these conditions, and we are no exception. We are mothers and fathers, grandmothers and grandfathers. More than anything we want a safe environment and a future full of opportunity and possibility for our children, our grandchildren, and all future generations of this vibrant and beautiful land.

We are a small but great nation, proud of our diversity and identity. We educate our children to respect themselves and others by standing up against injustice wherever it is found. We build our institutions based on the implementation of their responsibilities under international law. Palestinian Muslims, Christians, and Samaritans live and worship side by side, working together towards freedom and justice. We are a people famous for our hospitality and are keen to achieve our full potential as an independent and sovereign state, welcoming people of all faiths to the Holy Land.

We look forward to a day when, instead of commemorating 50 years of occupation, we celebrate the end of this occupation – and with it the beginning of independence, justice, peace, and stability in our region and beyond. In the meantime, the Palestinian people will remain steadfast.

President Mahmoud Abbas
National commemorations form part of every society’s fabric and identity. Some are celebrations – of peace, of independence, of milestones in human development. Others are solemn markings of a time gone by, of events to be remembered and learned from, but never repeated. For Palestine, this year brings several significant commemorations. While such anniversaries mark solemn historical events, they differ from most commemorations in one important way: Each event still impacts the lives of people in very real and very urgent ways.

One hundred years ago, a British politician, at his desk in London, signed a letter that would profoundly affect the fate of a people over 3,500 kilometers away. That politician was Sir Arthur James Balfour. And the letter he signed – promising a national home for one people in the homeland of another – denied the indigenous Palestinian population the right to self-determination and paved the way for decades of violence and suffering. Today, the Palestinian struggle for independence and self-determination continues.

Seventy years ago, the United Nations, in its assembly hall in Geneva, passed a resolution approving a plan to partition Palestine into two states, once again denying the right of Palestinians to determine their own fate. The following year, Israel declared independence, igniting war with Arab neighbors. By the end of the war, Zionist militias had taken 78 percent of historical Palestine, far beyond what was envisioned by the United Nations. Thousands of Palestinian civilians had been massacred or went missing, and approximately 800,000 Palestinians had been forced from their homeland, taking little more than a few belongings and the keys to their homes. Today, the vast majority of those who were made refugees in 1948, along with their direct descendants, still live in refugee camps throughout the Middle East. Meanwhile, forced displacement is very much a current Israeli policy – from Occupied East Jerusalem, from the Jordan Valley, from the Naqab. The Nakba (catastrophe), the name given to the horrific events of 1948, continues to this day in one form or another.

Fifty years ago, following a second war of six days, Israel occupied what remained of historical Palestine, displacing another 300,000 people and subjecting the rest of the indigenous population to military rule. Meanwhile, and in complete contradiction to international law, Israel began to transfer its own civilian population into this occupied territory, resulting in a situation where two groups of people now live on the same land but under two separate and unequal systems of law and control. Palestine, although now a state, is sovereign but not independent. In reality, and despite our best efforts with the limited autonomy we have managed to secure, Israel controls all borders, natural resources, airspace, movement, trade, and economy. From the issuing of a birth certificate to the issuing of a death certificate, all aspects of our people’s lives lie ultimately in the hands of a foreign military occupier. On a daily basis, people are denied movement between their towns and cities, have their homes and businesses raided or demolished, are arrested and imprisoned, injured and killed – without any ability to protest or appeal outside of this system of military control that is so heavily skewed against them.

And yet, the Palestinian people remain. And remain resilient. Every day we find new and creative ways to demand our long overdue rights to security, dignity, and freedom. The articles in this edition of TWIP shed light on the Palestinian struggle over the past 50 years and focus on specific elements of life under occupation. Personal testimonies remind us of the real and individual struggles that our people face every day. And a list of international figures who have stood up and supported our just cause reminds us that we are not alone.

One day, these national commemorations will be nothing more than the solemn marking of a time gone by. One day, we will celebrate independence and peace. Until then, we remain steadfast – as Palestinians and as friends of Palestine. It is my honor and privilege to introduce this edition of This Week in Palestine.

Dr. Saeb Erekat
Israel’s Takeover of Palestinian Land
Unlawful Processes to Unjust Realities

By Aseil Abu-Baker and Marya Farah

Since the mid-twentieth century, Israel has worked to gradually erase Palestinian existence and identity. The Nakba of 1948 and Israel’s continued dispossession of Palestinians within the first few decades of the state’s establishment provided a clear example of what more would come. Accordingly, the occupation of the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip in 1967 – recognized as the Occupied Palestinian Territory (OPT) under international law – was merely a continuation of what Israel began in 1948: the erasure of Palestine in order to establish a settler-colonial state.

Indeed, over the past 50 years of occupation, we have seen the constant takeover of Palestinian land, the continued displacement of Palestinians, and the persistent rewriting of the Palestinian narrative.

After beginning the occupation in 1967, Israel introduced a comprehensive legal system to justify the illegal confiscation of Palestinian land in the OPT. This system was articulated through Israeli military orders, which altered legislation that existed prior to the occupation, in violation of international law and Israel’s duties as Occupying Power. They include orders on the various methods of land acquisition, such as the requisition of land for military needs, the confiscation of absentee property, and declarations of “state” land; and orders that establish a discriminatory permit and planning system for Palestinians.

Immediately following 1967, Israel appropriated 730,214 dunums (10 dunums = 1 hectare) out of a total of 6 million dunums in the West Bank. These were lands either registered to Jordan or belonging to Palestinian landowners whom Israel classified as “absentees.” Simultaneously, Israel issued numerous military orders to requisition thousands of dunums of private Palestinian property for alleged military needs; such lands were used to establish some 40 settlements.

During the past 50 years of Israeli occupation, there have been countless people who have stood by the Palestinians and their cause. Realizing fully that there is no way to list them all, This Week in Palestine would still like to acknowledge a few as a tribute to their honorable stand.

Palestine would like to acknowledge:

Miguel Angel Bastenier
One of the most important international analysts in the Spanish-speaking world, Bastenier was often critical of the Israeli occupation and wrote extensively about the need for an independent Palestinian state. He continued to describe the reality of Palestine in his columns until his death in 2017.
The impact of the Wall on fragmenting the 15th anniversary of the beginning taken since. Instead, this June marks an end," no concrete action has been right to self-determination is brought to exercise by the Palestinian people of its the construction of the wall, to the it that any impediment, resulting from the construction of the wall, to the exercise by the Palestinian people of its right to self-determination is brought to an end," no concrete action has been taken since. Instead, this June marks the 15th anniversary of the beginning of Israel’s building of the Wall. The impact of the Wall on fragmenting Palestinian communities and serving the Israeli settlement agenda is exemplified in occupied East Jerusalem. There, the Wall’s path captured Israeli settlements such as Ma’ale Adumim and extra land for settlement growth as it excluded densely populated Palestinian areas. The Wall, coupled with the Israeli permit system, also effectively cut off Jerusalem, the historical economic, cultural, and religious center, from the majority of Palestinians in the OPT. It is important to underscore that while East Jerusalem is a part of the West Bank, Israel illegally annexed the city in 1967, extending its municipal boundaries and applying Israeli civil laws to the territory. In 1980, Israel took steps to reaffirm its annexation with the passage of the “Basic Law” on Jerusalem, which states, “Jerusalem, complete and united, is the capital of Israel.” The international community has not recognized Israel’s annexation of East Jerusalem, and it remains occupied territory. Furthermore, since 1967, Israel has implemented an array of policies that target Palestinian residents of Jerusalem, with the ultimate goal of removing them and Judaizing the city. Whether through land confiscation, a discriminatory permit and planning system—which only allocates 13 percent of the land for Palestinian development—inadequate infrastructure, the active revocation of residency and property rights, or countless other measures, Israel creates an environment that aims to force the Palestinian population to leave, while encouraging the increase of Israeli settlements. It should, therefore, go without saying that Israel’s control over land and the practices it imposes, ranging from access restrictions to home demolitions, have a grave impact on the individual and collective rights of Palestinians. The UN Security Council recently reiterated, “all measures aimed at altering the demographic composition, character and status” of the OPT, including East Jerusalem, were “in violation of international humanitarian law and relevant resolutions.” The resolution (2334/2016) went on to reaffirm that Israeli settlements have “no legal validity.” Irrespective of endless condemnations and the clear violations of international law which Israeli policies and practices entail, settlements persist and grow. More settlers are brought to the OPT to create “facts on the ground.” More profits are derived from control over Area C, where Israeli industrial and agricultural settlements proliferate (at the expense of the Palestinian economy). And, more subtly, settlements and land use, including the mere presence of over 600,000 settlers, are used to obscure reality. If tourists drive through the Jordan Valley, they find Israeli flags and signs for settlements perched along

**Julia Butros**

A Lebanese singer who rose to fame in the late 1980s and was known for her patriotic songs. Butros often raised her voice for the Palestinian cause and for their struggle for freedom and independence.

**Eric Cantona**

A French actor and former football player for Manchester United who has voiced his support for Palestine, Cantona in 2012 joined the campaign to free Mahmoud Sarsak, a Palestinian football player detained by Israeli forces for over three years. Cantona has appealed to his government to change its policy towards Israel.

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Palestine would like to acknowledge:
the road. Average tourists or pilgrims would be unable to determine whether they were in the OPT or Israel, or that the well-manicured settlements are illegal. Similarly, it is unlikely that tourists are aware of being in Palestine when they are in occupied East Jerusalem, or why settlement tourist sites such as the City of David and others based on creative storytelling are problematic.

In total, Israel’s control over land enables it to create unsustainable living conditions for Palestinians in the OPT, while also appropriating the narrative in an attempt to legitimize its presence and to a greater extent, its oppressive 50-year occupation.

Marya Farah and Aseil Abu-Baker are both lawyers who focus on international law.
This article examines the West Bank and Gaza Strip (WBGS) economy following the 1967 occupation within the analytical framework of settler-colonialism. Indeed, the occupation was only a continuation of the Zionist settler-colonial project. Israel’s control over the WBGS has been colonial because it involves a foreign entity that is seeking to appropriate the land of the indigenous population and establish a new colonial society. It has also been based on the disarticulation of the WBGS economy, making it heavily dependent on the Israeli economy and thus preventing Palestinian independence and sovereignty.

What are the structural mechanisms of Israeli colonial control and how has the relationship between the Israeli economy and the WBGS economy changed over the years?

For the purposes of this issue of TWIP, this article focuses only on the period from 1967 and on the WBGS economy. The term “Palestinian economy” is not employed in order to avoid limiting the “Palestinian economy” to the West Bank and Gaza.

Limited economic integration of the WBGS into the Israeli economy (1967–1993)

After the occupation in 1967, Israel sought to incorporate the WBGS economy into the Israeli economy in such a way as to allow for maximum expropriation of land, while precluding Israeli dependence on cheap Palestinian labor. However, as a result of the manner in which the system was implemented, the WBGS economy became heavily dependent on the Israeli economy.

Trade and labor constituted the two main pillars of partial economic integration. In the area of trade, Israel imposed a one-sided customs union on Palestinians. In theory, a customs union is an economic agreement among countries in which the parties allow for free trade of goods within the union, and agree on a common external tariff with regard to imports from the rest of the world. However, in practice, only one side – Israel – dictated the terms of the trade arrangement to meet its own needs.

For example, while Israeli products had free access to the Palestinian market, Palestinian goods had very restricted access to the Israeli market. In addition, the trade arrangement raised tariffs approximately fourfold, thus redirecting WBGS trade away from neighboring Arab countries and the rest of the world toward the Israeli market.

Consequently, the WBGS economy became dependent on the Israeli economy in the area of trade. The Palestinian market was a captive market for Israeli products, especially given the absence of economic borders between the two economies and the low transportation costs. For instance, in 1984, imports from Israel attributed to the cost of transporting goods from the WBGS to Jordan. However, in practice, only one side – Israel – dictated the terms of the trade arrangement to meet its own needs.
accounted for 88 percent of WB imports. Moreover, as Palestinian producers lost their competitive edge in international markets and faced fierce competition from advanced Israeli manufacturers, Palestinian production and exports stumbled. A large trade deficit was thus characteristic of this period as export growth was well below import growth.

This negative trade balance was largely financed by income from Palestinian workers in the Israeli market. In fact, the incorporation of Palestinian labor into the Israeli economy was another key factor in integrating the WBGS economy into the Israeli economy. Between 1967 and 1990, 35 to 40 percent of the employed Palestinian labor force worked in Israel. They generated more than 25 percent of the WBGS gross national product and contributed to the doubling of per capita income between 1970 and 1987. However, the increase in income was accompanied by a decline in the productivity of the WBGS economy that was due to several factors: stagnation of industrial production; decrease in cultivated areas; low investment in productive assets; and Israeli-imposed obstacles on the development of Palestinian enterprises that might compete with Israel.

The limited imposed economic integration, through trade and labor, made any Palestinian economic “growth” skewed since it was linked to Israeli rather than to Palestinian demand and supply, and was conditioned on access to the Israeli labor market and other external sources of income. Furthermore, the above-described system led to the transfer of substantial resources from the WBGS economy to that of Israel. First, there was no agreement in the customs-union arrangement on sharing the proceeds from import taxes, which were largely transferred to Israel. The second source of revenue to Israel was from income tax and social security paid by Palestinian workers in Israel. The third was the seigniorage revenue, i.e., the revenue earned by the money-issuing authority – Israel – since the Israeli shekel was made legal tender in the WBGS.

This drain of revenues was exacerbated by Israel’s expropriation of Palestinian economic resources and factors of production, especially through the illegal settlement enterprise. According to the UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) (1996), by 1992, 68 percent of the total land of the West Bank and 40 percent of that of Gaza was no longer under Palestinian use or control because of Israel’s confiscation policies.

As a result, by 1993, the WBGS economy was structurally weak, imbalanced, and heavily dependent on the Israeli economy. It was already in a state of de-development.

The Oslo Accords (1993/1995): Entrenching a crippling colonial dependency

As part of the Oslo Accords, the 1994 Paris Protocol codified the financial and economic relations between the Palestinian Authority and Israel. These accords have only deepened the structures of Israel’s colonial occupation by strengthening Israel’s domination over the WBGS and increasing Palestinian dependency on the Israeli economy, while denying Palestinian sovereignty and self-determination.

In the area of trade, the post-Oslo period was very similar to the pre-Oslo period. The Paris Protocol established a quasi customs union. Why a customs union and not a Free Trade Area as Palestinians initially wanted? Because only a customs-union arrangement would allow Israel to postpone the issue of borders and thus the controversy between separation and integration. In fact, a customs union entails neither the demarcation of internal borders and thus the establishment of a sovereign Palestinian economic and political entity nor the total elimination of borders or integration. It is thus completely in line with Israel’s “no-state solution” strategy. This explains why the continuation of Palestinian labor flows to Israel was conditioned on Palestinians’ acceptance of a customs-union arrangement.

As in the pre-Oslo period, the customs union was one-sided since the trade policy (customs rates and other regulations) of Israel was imposed upon the WBGS (apart from specific goods in the so-called lists A1, A2, and B). The arrangement has also allowed for unrestricted flow of Israeli goods into the Palestinian market, while severe restrictions were imposed on the movement of Palestinian goods between the WBGS and Israel and within the WBGS. Consequently, the Palestinian market remained a captive market for Israeli goods. According to UNCTAD (2016), Israel has recently accounted for more than 70 percent of Palestinian imports and 85 percent of Palestinian exports.

While trade in the post-Oslo period played a similar role compared to the pre-Oslo period, labor flows did not have the same integrating role as during the pre-Oslo period. Labor arrangements were determined by Israel’s attempts to redefine its territorial and economic borders with both the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. In the case of the West Bank, Palestinians still had access to the Israeli labor market, reflecting Israel’s strategy to incorporate parts of the West Bank while avoiding a demarcation of borders. However, in the case of the Gaza Strip, restrictions on labor flows indicate the move towards separation between Israel’s and Gaza’s economies.

The above short analysis of the Paris Protocol highlights that economic arrangements with the Palestinians have been largely shaped by Israel’s political interests and territorial considerations. While a Palestinian Authority was created, the Oslo Accords have led to the fragmentation of the Palestinian body politic and have entrenched Israel’s colonial domination over the WBGS. The Paris Protocol deepened Palestinians’ dependency on Israeli trade, monetary and fiscal policies and
gave Israel control over labor movement and Palestinian fiscal revenues, while conditioning any possible limited economic development to Israel’s security and territorial concerns.xix Meanwhile, the “Palestinian economy” has become restricted to the WBGS, corresponding to the future aspired borders of the Palestinian nation-state. Palestinians have also become increasingly dependent on donor aid, which has surged since Oslo. An “accelerated de-development process” thus ensued.xxx

The economic bantustanization of the WBGS (2000–today)
The closure regime has been a major economic aspect of the post-Oslo period. Since the 1990s, Israel has severely restricted the Palestinians’ freedom of movement and access in the Occupied Palestinian Territory through a hermetic system of physical, administrative, and institutional obstacles. Fixed and flying checkpoints, roadblocks, earth mounds, road gates, permit requirements, and the Wall, have become the dominant practices of the occupying authorities in the WBGS, with deleterious effects on the movement of persons/workers and goods within the WBGS as well as to/through Israel.

Closure policies went hand in hand with more expropriation of Palestinian land through the expansion of illegal settlements and the construction of the Wall, among other measures. The ensuing territorial fragmentation of the WBGS was accompanied by the political polarization of Palestinian society, especially following the split between the Fatah-led Palestinian Authority (PA) in the West Bank and the Hamas-led government in the Gaza Strip. Political disintegration went hand in hand with economic fragmentation, to the extent that it is more relevant nowadays to speak of Palestinian “economic regions” or fragments instead of “a Palestinian economy.”xxx

While the 1994 Paris Protocol forms the most important basis for Palestinian economic transactions and secures the economic viability of the Palestinian State, it has also entrenched the structures of Israel’s colonial occupation and Palestinian dependency on Israeli trade, monetary, and fiscal policies by giving Israel control over labor movement and Palestinian fiscal revenues, while conditioning any possible limited economic development on Israel’s security and territorial concerns.

The future: New economic warfare?
Against this background, the main question is: What can be done in the future? What can we learn from history, especially from the first Intifada?

The Intifada of stones, which erupted in 1987, took the form of civil disobedience and economic resistance. It connected economic activity to political vision and saw economic liberation and independence as necessary for political liberation. Economy was seen as a tool to help achieve social and national goals.xxiv

Fostering Palestinian productive capacity and self-reliance was at the core of economic resistance initiatives during the Intifada. A network of grassroots committees was thus established to emphasize production over consumption and provide agricultural training and education campaigns to help families plant their gardens. Committees, such as the Palestinian Agricultural Relief Committee (PARC), played a large role in spreading backyard gardens and household economies. The goal was to help establish an economy that was no longer dependent on the Israeli economy.

Widespread boycotts of Israeli products also took place and began with cigarettes and drinks. As a result, Palestinian production of cigarettes increased by 25 percent in a month. Meanwhile, Israeli trade with the Palestinians declined by more than US$ 50 million per month – a drop of 63 percent.xxxii

Palestinians also employed tax resistance by withholding tax payments that were largely used to fund the occupation. Beit Sahour was one of the leading towns that refused to pay taxes. In addition, Palestinian shops and businesses were closed in partial and general commercial strikes (including in the 1948 territories). Many Palestinian workers also resigned from their jobs in the Israeli market, in an effort to paralyze the machine of Israeli production. Israeli businesses faced many losses, especially in agricultural projects, textile production, and the construction and services sectors. Palestinian businessmen played an important role by decreasing commodity prices and employing more workers although they did not need them. However, despite these collective actions of economic resistance, grassroots committees failed to build an alternative popular system to replace the colonial one.xxxv

Is such economic warfare possible at the moment given the current weakness of grassroots and mass-based movements and the absence of a political and economic leadership that unifies all Palestinians?

An economic strategy of resistance is possible and certainly necessary. Economy should be used as an instrument in a future counter-hegemonic strategy of resistance to Israel’s settler-colonial project and
its power structures. Indeed, our struggle is an anti-colonial struggle and should not be limited to a nation-state project. The “Palestinian economy” should thus transcend the nation-state model, restricted to the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, and should at least incorporate the economy of the 1948 territories. However, this calls for a new leadership with a new vision and a new strategy.

Nur Arafeh is the Policy Fellow of Al-Shabaka: The Palestinian Policy Network, and a researcher in economic development. She has a dual BA degree in political science and economics from the Paris Institute of Political Studies – Sciences Po and Columbia University, and holds an MPhil degree in development studies from the University of Cambridge.


Ibid.


Ibid.


According to Roy, “prior to Oslo, Palestinian economic de-development was advanced by a range of policies that together effectively precluded the kind of indigenous economic and institutional change necessary for structural transformation and capital accumulation.” “De-development Revisited: Palestinian economy and society since oslo,” Sara Roy, Journal of Palestine Studies, Vol. XXVIII, No. 3, Spring 1999.


For more on the economic fragmentation of the OPT, please read: “Strengthening Trade and Economic Interaction Between Palestinians in the West Bank and Inside Israel: An Arab “north-north” alternative to Israelization,” Raja Khalidi and Gossay Alsatari, Centre for Development Studies, Birzeit University, 2015.


A Century of Surveillance

By Salim Tamari

Jerusalem Quarterly, in two recent issues, has examined the intelligence and security regimes that have monitored Jerusalem and Palestinian lives over the last century.* In articles that illuminate practices undertaken since the Ottoman Empire and World War I, contributors (including Elia Zureik, Johnny Mansour, Nadera Shalhoub-Kevorkian, Ahmad H. Sa’di, and many more) reflected on the continued and various efforts that have collected and recorded information for the sake of political control and disruption, recounting its developments and innovations.

These issues explore surveillance, beginning with the history of spying in Palestine (with fascinating detail that goes beyond the scope of this issue’s theme) by illustrating how the Zionist movement from the beginning strove to develop lasting intelligence infrastructures that extend into the present time. For example, in so-called Village Files (Saleh Abdul Jawwad) the pre-state security apparatus of the Haganah monitored and recorded the daily life of Palestinians in the 1930s and 1940s. The case of the village of Al-Bireh is both frightening and fascinating: the report highlights the most intimate details of local village lives. Details range from consumption patterns, featuring, for example, the itemization of the Birawi family’s entire belongings (including chickens and chicken coops, radios, and other “modern” items) to cropping arrangements, household furniture, marriage patterns, land title deeds, and elite formations. The variety of sources raises the issue of collaboration between the Zionist leadership and local as well as foreign scholars and visiting archeologists. These Village Files not only attracted Zionist attention prior to the conquest of 1948 and the occupation of 1967, but also provided important insights for the new state of Israel and its policies in the aftermath of these momentous events.

“Stifling Surveillance” examines efforts of the Israeli military government following the Nakba to “de-nationalize” the Arab community by undermining extended forms of solidarity with the forcibly exiled Palestinian community. With such mechanisms, Israel explicitly strove to incorporate the residual Palestinian population “at the margins of the Israeli polity and economy as subordinate collectivities devoid of an overarching identity, vision, will, or ability to resist.” The same objectives continue to determine policies today, albeit in a different format.

Moving on to the present, the sociology of contemporary surveillance in Jerusalem and the occupied territories is examined, and focus is placed on the punitive revocation of Jerusalem residency for Palestinians. In particular, the introduction of a new basis for punitive revocation – “breach of allegiance to the state of

Photo by George Azar.

The pervasiveness of surveillance in the Israeli matrix of control over the daily lives of Palestinians extends to body searches, identity documentation, and standing in line for hours while awaiting a signal from Israeli soldiers to either proceed or be turned away (emblematic of the checkpoint experience), and is characterized by dehumanization, lack of sovereignty, and overall limitation on free movement.

Palestine would like to acknowledge:

Fidel Castro

Castro demonstrated strong support for Palestinians from 1959 when he was prime minister of Cuba, and it was he who initiated diplomatic relations with Palestine. In 2014, Castro signed an international manifesto in support of Palestine. He vehemently opposed Israel’s oppression of Palestinians and provided thousands of scholarships to Palestinian students.

Hugo Chavez

As president of Venezuela, Chavez often expressed his support for the rights of Palestinians and condemnation for Israel’s actions against Palestinians. He severed relations with Israel in response to Israel’s grave violations of international law and UN resolutions. Venezuela recognized the State of Palestine in April 2009.
Israel” – indicates the ever-increasing discipline that Israeli rule demands. Population registration – including the census or the permit regimes that govern the movement of people which Israel introduced in the pre- and post-1967 periods in the name of state security – was crafted in such a way as to further spatial control and the expansion of Jewish colonies, restrict mobility, and stunt economic development of the Arab sector with walls and fences, checkpoints, watchtowers, and segregation barriers in the background, not to mention the panoply of high-technology surveillance machinery. Israel’s seemingly constant development of technologies of surveillance and suppression is addressed in Daoud Talhami’s review of Jeff Halper’s War against the People that applauds Halper’s clear-sighted evaluation of Israel’s security-industrial complex, its links to Israel’s foreign policy, and the international impunity that it has managed to secure through the sale of weapons and security technology to states and regimes worldwide.

Furthermore, by claiming that its military technologies have been tested in the laboratory of the occupied territories, Israel has managed to turn its failure to pacify the Palestinian population into a marketing strategy. Israel’s security “products” include not only conventional weapons but also satellite technology and drones, and “the militarization and weaponization of research in scientific fields, including genetics, nanotechnology, and biotechnology.”

A report by 7amleh – Arab Center for Social Media Advancement – indicates the degree to which Israeli (and Palestinian) security services have infiltrated social media, rendering its Palestinian users vulnerable to harassment and arrest. Helga Tawil-Souri, in “Surveillance Sublime,” notes that even the latest and most advanced technologies of surveillance merely supplement, rather than supplant, the tried and true “low-tech” methods developed well before 1948. Technologies that were fundamental to early colonial and state control, such as population interception, wiretapping, and x-ray machines. While an increasing number of tools – such as drones, remote-controlled robots, biometric data collection, and computer viruses – are hi-tech, they do not displace low-tech ones but supplement them. With some irony, Tawil-Souri reflects on the state’s attempt to usurp the all-seeing power (though not the all-loving potential) of God in the holy city of Jerusalem. Indeed, it is only in modern history that omniscient surveillance became a secular rather than a divine imperative.

Anne Meneley documents a form of self-surveillance in a wry review of A Slim Peace, a 2007 documentary about seven Palestinian and seven Israeli women who join a common weight-loss group in the settlement of Gush Etzion. Meneley suggests that this joint self-surveillance can provide grounds for the development of shared political subjectivity. The film records a bizarre and questionable example of a “normalization discourse” that assumes that nongovernmental practices and interactions can somehow lead to an end of violence or acceptance of the very unequal state of affairs in the Holy Land.

Salim Tamari is a senior fellow at the Institute for Palestine Studies (IPS) and the former director of the IPS-affiliated Institute of Jerusalem Studies. He is editor of Jerusalem Quarterly. A professor of sociology at Birzeit University and an adjunct professor at the Center for Contemporary Arab Studies at Georgetown University, Dr. Tamari has authored several works on urban culture, political sociology, biography and social history, and the social history of the Eastern Mediterranean.

* This article summarizes contributions related to surveillance in the two issues of Jerusalem Quarterly, themed “We are watching you” and “We are Still Watching You: Counting Cameras, Chicken Coops, and Calories of Power,” published by The Institute of Jerusalem Studies.
Mass Imprisonment of Palestinians
Acts of Control and Suppression

By Sahar Francis

Immediately after the Israeli military forces occupied the Palestinian territory in 1967, the commanders of the West Bank and Gaza released orders that proclaimed their jurisdiction and established a legal system. Proclamation 1 announced the Israeli takeover of power to “preserve security and public order,” and Proclamation 3 established legal procedures. In the initial “Order Concerning Security Provisions,” the Israeli military as a belligerent occupation force recognized the applicability of the Fourth Geneva Convention, affirming that the military orders were to be subordinate to the Fourth Geneva Convention and explicitly stating that in times of contradiction between the orders and the Geneva Convention, “the provisions of the Convention shall prevail.” A subsequent version of the same order, however, retracted this section.¹

The present legislation does not address the serious security needs and interests of the occupied Palestinian people, nor does it guarantee their public safety, as required by the Hague Regulations of 1907 and the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949, thus routinely contravening International Humanitarian Law (IHL). Neither does it limit the jurisdiction of the military court to the occupied territories: The military courts practice extrajudicial jurisdiction by prosecuting those engaged in any activity that Israel considers a threat to its security in any place in the world. However, these military orders are not implemented when perpetrated by Israeli settlers living in the West Bank.²

Palestinian people under occupation are controlled by military orders that affect every aspect of their lives, ranging from education to health care, the economy, and civil and political life. Hundreds of thousands of Palestinian men, women, and children, be they politicians, activists, lawyers, teachers, doctors, or students, have been subjected to imprisonment over the past 50 years. Military orders have declared all political parties illegal and banned them. This ban includes the PLO, with whom the Israeli government has been engaged in negotiations since the beginnings of the Oslo process. The ban also applies to PLO member organizations, including Fatah, the PLO’s largest member party that has been leading the Palestinian Authority in the West Bank since its establishment in 1994. Thus, in 2011, Hussam Khader, a Fatah leader and Palestinian Legislative Council member was placed under administrative detention for his activism against the Palestinian political division between Gaza and the West Bank.

The British Emergency Security Regulations of 1945, adopted under the British Mandate, were adapted

Palestine would like to acknowledge:

Noam Chomsky
Known as the “father of modern linguistics,” Chomsky is an American linguist and historian who has been outspoken on the Palestinian cause and critical of Israeli policies towards the Palestinians. In 2010, he was denied entry to Palestine because of his views about Palestine.

Muhammad Ali Clay
Legendary boxer known as the “people’s champion,” Muhammad Ali was an outspoken activist for the Palestinian cause. “In my name and the name of all Muslims in America, I declare support for the Palestinian struggle to liberate their homeland.” He helped created ties between Palestinians and black causes.

Photo courtesy of Pars Today.

Since 1967, Palestinians who live under occupation have been subjected to Israeli military courts, which lack internationally recognized fair-trial guarantees. All Palestinians under occupation may be subjected to military detention, including Palestinian children, women, Legislative Council members, human rights defenders, and currently even a circus performer.
and implemented into Israeli military orders and into the penal code valid inside Israel in order to prohibit any act of resistance to the Israeli occupation. They serve as the basis for the above-mentioned ban of political parties and furthermore prohibit demonstrations and the distribution of any political material or publications. Consequently, Palestinians in the occupied West Bank have routinely been arrested, usually through night raids on their homes.

Under Military Order 101, a West Bank Palestinian can be arrested for civic activities, such as participation in protests, vigils, assemblies, or for waving flags or other symbols of political content. The order prohibits any person from printing or publicizing in the region any publications, notices, posters, photos, pamphlets, or other documents that contain material having political significance without a permit issued by the military commander. According to Order 101, hundreds of books are deemed illegal, and hundreds of activists and ordinary citizens have been arrested for posts on social media, at times for expressing solidarity with victims of Israeli aggression. In addition, all student organizations within university student unions have been declared illegal by Israeli military decisions and incriminate even normal student activities, such as holding book fairs affiliated with such student blocs. Because military orders establish that gatherings deemed “political” are illegal, unless approved by the military commander, the organizers and participants in peaceful protests can be arrested – as has happened to Bassem as-Tamimi and Abdullah Abu Rahma who organize weekly nonviolent protests against settlement activities and the building of the Separation Wall on Palestinian land. Moreover, the Israeli civil code is used to repress the voices of Palestinian artists. Recent cases include poet Dareen Tatour from Reineh near Nazareth and novelist Khalida Ghusha from occupied Jerusalem, both of whom were charged for incitement under the civil code.

Since 1967, an estimated 800,000 Palestinians have been arrested under military orders – a number that constitutes a sweeping 20 percent of the population. As of January 2017, there were about 6,500 Palestinian political prisoners, including an estimated 300 children, 53 female prisoners, and 536 administrative detainees.iii

After the 1967 occupation, five military courts were established in the OPT, replacing the local courts that had existed under Jordanian and Egyptian control, in violation of IHL. The procedures under these military courts lack fair-trial standards and apply discriminatory procedures when compared to the laws that regulate Israeli criminal procedures. It is important to highlight that until the late 1980s there were no appeal courts. Until 2012, Palestinian minors were treated as adults from age 16 years and older (as opposed to the international standard of 18 years). Political leaders and activists have continuously been under attack through arrests and detention. In September 2005, more than 450 political activists were arrested from the West Bank in a clear attempt to affect the election of January 2006. iv In June 2006, the occupation forces arrested 48 courts’ panels of three judges did not require a legal background for all panel members, which means that hundreds of thousands of Palestinian prisoners were sentenced by soldiers who had no legal knowledge. Palestinian children as young as 12 years old were prosecuted in the same military courts as adults until 2010, when a special court was established, but whose rulings show no significant difference regarding the levels of protection or the lengths of sentences. Until 2012, Palestinian minors were treated as adults from age 16 years and older (as opposed to the international standard of 18 years).

Elvis Costello
A musician, singer, and songwriter, Costello joined the cultural boycott of Israel in 2010 after cancelling two concerts set in Israel in protest of the treatment of Palestinians by the Israeli government.

Luiz Inacio Lula Da Silva
In his last month as president of Brazil in 2010, Da Silva recognized the State of Palestine on the 1967 borders. In March 2010, he became the first Brazilian president to make a trip to Palestine, and he has been close to the Palestinian cause since his struggle against Brazilian dictatorship.
elected parliamentarians, causing total paralysis of the Palestinian Legislative Council. Since then, many of these parliamentarians have been re-arrested numerous times either under administrative detention or prosecuted under the charges of membership and support for an illegal organization. Currently, there are 13 parliamentarians under arrest, including 6 under administrative detention without charge or trial.

Israeli repression of Palestinians through detention is exemplified in the creation and implementation of two separate legal systems for individuals living in the same territory: Palestinians and Israeli settlers are not subject to the same legal codes. While Palestinians in the occupied West Bank can be held, by military orders, for up to 4 days without seeing a judge, an Israeli settler living in the occupied West Bank can only be held for up to 24 hours without seeing a judge. If a Palestinian living in the occupied West Bank is detained until the end of the trial proceedings, this can be for up to 18 months (further renewable), whereas for an Israeli settler who lives in the occupied West Bank this period is up to nine months (renewable with limitations). Sentencing provisions also differ significantly. For example, a Palestinian can be sentenced to life imprisonment for manslaughter (military order 1951), whereas an Israeli can be sentenced to 20 years imprisonment for the same crime.

Torture and ill treatment are widespread and systemic. These measures are used to coerce confessions and enable the prosecution process, which explains the high conviction rate within the military courts that prosecute Palestinians, which stands at 99.74 percent according to the most recently published numbers (2011). Administrative orders of the Israeli military are used to ban Jerusalem residents from entering their own city, including director of youth programs at the Health Work Committees Da’oud Al-Ghoul. Other Jerusalemites are barred from entering the West Bank, as has been the case of Addameer field researcher Salah Hammouri.

Administrative orders forbid thousands of Palestinians from leaving the occupied territories, and prevent families from obtaining visits to relatives living in Israel, including families of prisoners seeking visitation permits.

Furthermore, emergency security regulations that have been incorporated into the civil and military codes permit Israel to arrest thousands of people under a practice called administrative detention. Palestinians living in the OPT can be held without charge and held, based on secret evidence, for up to 75 days, 60 days of which they can be denied access to an attorney. This order can be, and frequently is, extended for indefinite periods. Administrative detention was used on a massive scale during the first Intifada against an estimated 10,000 Palestinians. Since the signing of the Oslo Agreement, it has been used massively, including against those who opposed these agreements: over 850 Palestinians from various political parties, including Fatah, were subjected to administrative detention between the signing of the Oslo Accords and the outbreak of the second Intifada in 2000. During the second Intifada, between March and April of 2002, between 2,500 and 3,000 Palestinians were placed under administrative detention. In 2015, the practice was used, for the first time in decades, against Palestinian children in Jerusalem. Administrative detention may amount to psychological torture; it has been condemned by the United Nations Committee against Torture and the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention and may constitute a crime of war in our context – as a form of systematic denial of fair trial against the Palestinian people.

The continued prosecution of Palestinians under military law, the widespread arrests, detention, and serving sentences of an occupied people exemplify the apartheid nature of the Israeli regime. Through the law and practice of Israeli military courts that distinguish between criminal and security prisoners, the Israeli authorities practice an “institutionalized regime of systematic oppression and domination” by Israelis over Palestinians, “committed with the intention of maintaining that regime” in line with the definition of apartheid by the International Criminal Court.

This system serves to repress Palestinians through lower trial guarantees, longer interrogation periods, and legal cover for torture.

Adv. Sahar Francis has been the director of Addameer (Arabic for conscience), a prisoner support and human rights advocacy organization, since 2005, and has been a human rights legal advocate since 1994. She specializes in issues of Palestinian political prisoners, including ill treatment and torture, administrative detention, prison conditions, and prisoners’ rights. She has extensive litigation experience in the Israeli military court system as well as in Israeli civil courts.

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ii. For more information, please visit the website of the Association for Civil Rights in Israel at http://www.acri.org.il/en/2014/11/24/twosysreport/.
viii. UN General Assembly, Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (last amended 2010), July 17, 1998, article 7(2).
The Centrality of East Jerusalem

The Palestinian National Struggle 1967-1987

By Walid Salem

The Israeli settler colonial project started in East Jerusalem in early 1967, directly after the beginning of occupation. During the same period, the Palestinian resistance began as both an armed struggle – as in Gaza mainly from 1967 to 1972 – and a public movement of nonviolent resistance – as in East Jerusalem and the rest of the occupied West Bank. In addition to settler colonialism, the Israeli project in East Jerusalem has included a combination of belligerent occupation and apartheid policies.

One of several early settler-colonial projects was the demolition of Al-Sharaf neighborhood inside the Old City, in order to begin the expansion of the Jewish Quarter over its ruins. At the same time, however, the Palestinian Jerusalem Municipality (Amanat al-Quds) rejected its dissolution by the Israeli occupying authorities. Sheikh Abdel Hamid Al Sa’eh, among other personalities, took the initiative to create the first National Guidance Committee, which has led the Palestinian struggle against the occupation since early 1967.*

Later on during the same year, the Israeli Occupation Authorities deported Sheikh Sa’eh to Jordan, but the resistance continued. In Jerusalem, this resistance preserved the Palestinian Islamic and Christian Waqf Institutions’ independence under the leadership of the High Islamic Commission that was established immediately after the 1967 war. The commission worked in tandem with the Christian religious representatives in order to protect the holy places and the religious courts’ independence, and to contribute to the leadership and guidance of the resistance against the occupation.

Using all kinds of creative measures, the Palestinian national institutions in East Jerusalem strove to protect themselves from being taken over by occupation. These included the chamber of commerce, the electricity company, the labor and professional trade unions, Makassed and Augusta Victoria hospitals (among others), and several charitable societies as well as the education sector. In this case the teachers undertook a long, successful strike in order to prevent the imposition of the Israeli curricula as the curricula for education in East Jerusalem schools.

These successes in the early years of occupation were sustained by others in subsequent years. In 1973 the National Front was established in Jerusalem and consisted of national and left-wing factions and parties in addition to national personalities. The National Front led the Palestinian resistance until 1976. Several demonstrations were organized during that period of time, especially by students. A national strike followed the martyrdom of Muntaha Al-Hourani, a schoolgirl from Nablus who was assassinated by Israeli Occupation Forces in 1974. The Palestinian artist Suleiman Mansour drew an impressive portrait of her bleeding from the back while lying on the ground in her school uniform.¹

For the Israeli Occupation Authorities, the combination of the struggle made

Palestine would like to acknowledge:

Angela Davis
An academic and civil rights activist and an outspoken supporter for the Palestinian struggle against Israeli apartheid, Davis is also a supporter of BDS.

Adolfo Perez Esquivel
Argentina-born human rights activist and 1980 Nobel Peace Prize winner, Perez Esquivel supported the Women’s Boat to Gaza as an act of solidarity with the Palestinian cause. “Whilst there are those who build walls of intolerance, hunger blockades and weapons for death, we, the peoples, must build bridges of dialogue and life.”
by the Jerusalem-based National Front – in addition to the students and trade unions, cooperatives, and other organizations under the national front leadership – combined with the Arab Rabat Summit recognition of the PLO as the sole representative of the Palestinian people, meant that there was a need to make concessions. One of the major concessions was the cancellation of the 1975 plan to establish a civil administration, and the decision to allow the PLO-affiliated personalities to run for the municipal elections in 1976, which resulted in a big victory for a number of important personalities, including Karim Khalaf, Bassam al-Shaka’a, and Ibrahim Al-Tawil, who became the mayors of Ramallah, Nablus, and Al Bireh, respectively.

The elected mayors played the role of political guide for the Palestinians and did not limit themselves to the provision of services. In 1978 when the Camp David agreement was signed between Israel and Egypt, the mayors gathered with other personalities and the university student councils, the trade union representatives, and others in the premises of the trade unions in Beit Hanina, Jerusalem, where they declared their rejection of the Camp David Accords and announced the establishment of the second National Guidance Committee.

In the early 1980s, the Israeli Likud-led government decided to dissolve the National Guidance Committee and initiated a war against the elected mayors. In the course of this campaign of persecution, Bassam Shaka’a’s car was bombed in June 1980, which left him in a wheelchair after he had lost parts of his legs and one hand.iii

At the same time, the Israeli occupation authorities created the so-called village leagues that were connected to the Likud-created Civil Administration. It was led by Hebrew University professor Menahem Milson (between November 1981 and September 1982). He ended up resigning after the utter failure of his experiment to “organize village leaders.” The whole plan failed in all its aspects: To weaken the urban-based PLO supportive leadership on one hand, and to create a leadership that was loyal to Israel on the other hand. In addition, the village leagues were boycotted, even in their own villages, which led to their full collapse a few years later.

As the Israeli government increased settlement expansion, with the number of settlers reaching 111,600 in 1993,iv it also hired Israeli professors such as Ezra Sadan to develop ideas for economic peace as an alternative to ending the occupation. These additional Likud policies strengthened Palestinian national aspirations and Palestinian support of the PLO, contrary to the aim of the Likud: that “the improvement of living conditions for Palestinians” as it was called then, would lead Palestinians to forget their national aspirations and the confiscation of their land.

These developments ripened conditions for the eruption of the first Intifada that started in 1987. Jerusalem once again was the center of the Intifada leadership, continuing until the death of the leader Faisal al-Husseini in 2001, and the Israeli closure of the Orient House.

This short overview has shown the centrality of East Jerusalem not only in planning and guiding the Palestinian popular struggle against the occupation from 1967 to 1987, but also in the protection of national institutions, the rejection of any compromise in the struggle for self-determination, and the strengthening and support of the PLO as the sole representative of the Palestinian people.

After 1967 the Palestinians refused to surrender their national institutions to the Israeli occupiers, continuing the Palestinian struggle for freedom. East Jerusalem was central to such efforts that ended up thwarting Israeli attempts to normalize the occupation and to create an alternative to the PLO. This strengthened the PLO’s status as the sole representative of the Palestinian people.

Walid Salem is a lecturer on democracy, human rights, and conflict resolution at Al-Quds University, and a PhD candidate in international relations at the Near East University of Northern Cyprus. He is also a member in the PLO Palestinian National Council, and the director of the Center for Democracy and Community Development in East Jerusalem.

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iii. Kashtini, ibid., p. 243.
v. Published until 1982, currently available in print at local libraries; soon to be available online.
Reflections on the 1987 Palestinian Intifada and Pre-Oslo Era

By Jad Isaac

A reflection on the events that happened 30 years ago requires that we consider the prevailing situation prior to the popular Intifada of 1987 – so many changes have occurred since that time. Ever since the early years of occupation, Palestinian politics have focused on liberation from the Israeli occupation (the approaches may have changed), even though for the average Palestinian, relieving economic hardship was an immediate concern as well. There were those who felt that under occupation, no real development could take place. Others considered development for the sake of steadfastness an acceptable strategy towards independence and a tool that could provide a practical, parallel path for political activism under prolonged occupation.

In the years leading up to the Intifada, 1982 marked a turning point in Palestinian attitudes towards both occupation and self-understanding. More and more, universities, grassroots organizations, and professional unions had become centers of political activism. A new leadership had emerged (often referred to as new Palestinianism) that was characterized by motivation, commitment, self-confidence, and self-reliance, and had no illusions regarding the relationships between the various parties in the Middle East conflict. In a very short time, the emerging grassroots organizations had attained widespread support despite continued attempts of the Israeli authorities – and other countries for that matter – to create alternative forms of leadership by using money and other sources of power as incentives. Grassroots organizations continued to prosper because they fostered social cohesion.

The popular Intifada was sparked on December 8, 1987, when four Palestinian laborers were killed by an Israeli vehicle in Gaza. Widespread demonstrations erupted, and the Israeli response was to crush the uprising by force – as expressed by Yitzhak Rabin, then Israeli minister of war, who within days issued the “break their bones” order that was taken literally, and at times deliberately carried out with rocks. Palestinians persevered in their protests, and on December 18, 1987, the United National Leadership of the Uprising (UNLU) issued its first communiqué, calling for an independent Palestinian state. Commercial and general strikes began to be held all over the OPT.

It is important to note that the economic situation in the OPT was not among the factors that had contributed to the outbreak of the Intifada, nor did it significantly deteriorate from pre-1987 conditions during the Intifada’s course. People worked in the morning, taking care of most of their business, and went on strike around noon. The disposable per capita income in the OPT amounted to approximately US$1,500, almost 200,000 Palestinians continued to work in Israel, and remittances from Palestinians in the diaspora further contributed to the stabilization of the economic situation despite ongoing unrest and work stoppages. What sparked the outbreak of the Intifada was dismay over the humiliating conditions of the occupation and the pervasive violent actions that had been continuously carried out against Palestinians by Israeli forces.

Palestinians persevered and organized themselves to deal with the new conditions. Neighborhood committees were established in every community: a protection committee guarded the neighborhood and alerted the residents.
of impending attacks by the Israeli army or settlers; women organized themselves in so-called “strike forces” to rescue arrested youth from the hands of Israeli soldiers; first aid committees were formed to treat the wounded; an alternative education system was established for each neighborhood to enable students to continue their education; and social committees were established to address the needs of the poor. Following the mass resignation in Beit Sahour went even further than other towns and bought 18 cows to provide milk to its population, which led Israel to launch its Wanted 18 Campaign. Furthermore, the people of Beit Sahour refused to pay taxes, adopting the slogan “No taxation without representation,” which led Israel to impose an extended curfew on the city, arrest more than 250 of its residents, and later confiscate the machinery and furniture of the businesses that refused to pay taxes. A United Nations resolution protesting these measures was vetoed by the United States. In response, the residents of Beit Sahour and other Palestinian cities decided in July 1988 to hand in their ID cards, an act that was considered civilian mutiny against the Israeli occupation.

Jerusalem was the coordination center of Intifada activities. While the UNLU remained underground, Palestinian national institutions in Jerusalem were proactive. In May 1988, a draft proclamation of independence was announced by the late Faisal Husseini, with more than 500 signatures from local leaders. Subsequently, Faisal Husseini was arrested, and the Arab Studies Society was closed by Israel. On November 15, 1988, the 19th Palestine National Council (PNC) session in Algiers proclaimed the Declaration of Independence of the State of Palestine with Jerusalem as its capital.

Regrettably, by the beginning of 1990, the popular Intifada started to suffer from factionalism. Mass popular demonstrations were replaced by factional activities. “Political money,” introduced by outside players, led many to abandon their involvement in Intifada activities.

On August 2, 1990, Iraq invaded Kuwait and over months resisted all efforts that urged it to withdraw its forces. When it became clear that war was imminent, the United States, in the aftermath of the war, started its initiative to promote the Middle East Peace Conference in order to reward the coalition of the willing that had supported its war against Iraq: Syria hoped for the return of the Golan Heights, and Egypt was hoping to receive economic boosts.

In Palestine, the Strategic Planning Unit was developed into the Technical Committee, in which more than 500 Palestinian professionals worked voluntarily to put forward the blueprints for a Palestinian state and to support the official Palestinian delegation in the peace negotiations.

These efforts culminated in the inauguration of the Madrid Conference in October 1991.
The signing of the Camp David Agreement between Israel and Egypt (1978) was interpreted as an abandonment of the Palestinian cause and therefore not welcomed by Palestinians; Arab nations were generally more preoccupied with the Iran-Iraq war (1980–88); and there was widespread dismay among Palestinians over the Israeli invasion of Lebanon and the massacres of Sabra and Shatila (1982). The expulsion of the PLO’s leadership from Lebanon (which was moved to Tunis in 1982) was perceived as a further attempt to marginalize the PLO and ignore Palestinian aspirations for freedom, causing tensions to rise among Palestinians.

Increased support from international bodies, many of them communist organizations, led to the establishment of strong and credible NGOs, such as the Palestinian Medical Relief Society, the Palestinian Agricultural Relief Committees, and others.


Jad Isaac holds a PhD from the University of East Anglia, United Kingdom. The recipient of numerous awards, he is the director general of the Applied Research Institute-Jerusalem (ARIJ), a leading Palestinian center that conducts research on agriculture, environment, land use, and water. He headed the Palestinian delegation for the environmental working group in the multilateral talks and is an adviser to the Palestinian Negotiations Affairs Department.

A scene from the film “The wanted 18.”
National Liberation: Adapting Strategies

By The Negotiations Affairs Department

On November 15, 1988, during the first year of the first Intifada, the Palestine National Council met in Algiers to declare the independence of the State of Palestine on the 1967 borders. This move came not only as a conclusion to years of political dialogue between the PLO and several countries, but also as a result of internal discussions about the best way forward in order to achieve the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people. After the declaration, drafted by the late Mahmoud Darwish and read by late President Yasser Arafat, thousands of people jubilantly took to the streets of the occupied country and raised Palestinian flags, from the beaches of Gaza to the Old City of Jerusalem.

The first Intifada marked a shift in the national liberation movement, moving from armed struggle, carried out mainly from outside of Palestine, to popular resistance in the streets. It was a popular struggle where all segments of society could contribute, from daily demonstrations to popular education, distribution of food, and cultural activities. The Palestinian people’s steadfastness forced the international community to take action, leading first to the Madrid Conference and later to the Washington Talks and the Declaration of Principles (DOP), known as the Oslo Accords. All talks were based on the same principle: end the Israeli occupation that began in 1967. Adopted in 1994, the DOP set a five-year limit for final-status negotiations leading to the two-state solution.

The two-state solution is the Palestinian adoption of an international formula. Historically, the Palestinian demand was to establish an independent, secular Palestinian state across all of historical Palestine with equal rights for its inhabitants. Thus, the Palestinian recognition of Israel on the 1967 borders was and still is the painful compromise. Nevertheless, the Palestinian people supported the prospects of this historic compromise for the sake of achieving a final-status agreement with Israel. The paradigm imposed by the Middle East Peace Process (MEPP) was about building the institutions of the Palestinian state while negotiating peace.

The national movement would move its center of gravity from the diaspora to the homeland in order to bring forth the MEPP. However, Israeli insensitivity over its colonial-settlement plans, as well as a lack of accountability on the part of the international community, led to a total collapse of the process. The promises made by the international community were left unfulfilled, and although heavy investments in institution building were made, little was done in order to achieve a political agreement.

Oslo was seen as a historic opportunity to lay the foundation for a Palestinian state. Building capacity for the State of Palestine became the top priority as at least 250,000 Palestinians returned after decades of exile. However, the optimism that erupted from the prospects of an independent Palestinian state began to disappear in 1996, as Benjamin Netanyahu became Israel’s prime minister with promises to prevent the creation of an independent Palestinian state began to disappear in 1996, as Benjamin Netanyahu became Israel’s prime minister with promises to prevent the creation of an independent Palestinian state. Soon more settlements and their related infrastructure would be built throughout Occupied Palestine and the five-year “interim period” became the “endless period.” The second Intifada (which began on September 28, 2000) was Israel’s excuse to destroy Palestinian infrastructure, and within months, with the complicit inaction of the international community, Israel was able to turn back the clock and prolong and expand its settler-colonialism.

After the collapse of the Oslo process, several attempts to resume the negotiations process were initiated – each one failing. The “What Went Wrong?” analysis resulted in the same result: lack of accountability. The culture of impunity that surrounds Israel and allows it to continue to reject its obligations under signed agreements, international law, and UN resolutions was encouraged by countries that invested resources in the two-state solution through the development of Palestinian infrastructure. Meanwhile the international community was unwilling to take concrete actions against Israeli colonial-settlement policies that continued to sabotage any attempts to carry out a meaningful negotiations process.

The bilateral negotiations approach,

Palestine would like to acknowledge:

Stephen Hawking
A world-renowned scientist and bestselling author who is vocal about his support for Palestine, Hawking made a bold move in 2013 to join the academic boycott of Israel in the name of Palestinian justice. In support of Palestinian youth and scientists, Hawking sponsored the first and second Palestinian Advanced Physics books.

Stéphane Hessel
A holocaust survivor who served as a French ambassador, diplomat, and writer, Hessel was a strong advocate for the Palestinian cause and a supporter of the BDS movement.
without any mechanisms of accountability, was an excuse for states not to intervene. Israel continued its colonial-settlement enterprise, and in the name of the peace process, continued business as usual, signing important international treaties, including its Association Agreement with the European Union, further entrenching the occupation at the expense of Palestine.

Not wanting to repeat the mistakes of the past, in which the PLO would enter into another interim agreement that Israel would prolong into perpetuity, the PLO pushed for the establishment of an independent Palestinian state, while the international community rushed to buy time for Israel.

Forced to adapt to disappointing realities of Israel’s lack of accountability, the Palestinian approach to end the occupation and gain its own state had to shift once more. By 2010, after the failure of the Annapolis process, Palestine pushed for three parallel strategies.

1. **Internationalization:** Recognition for the State of Palestine on the 1967 borders through diplomatic efforts, UN membership, and becoming a state party to international treaties, including the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court

2. **Institution building:** Strengthening the Palestinian presence on the ground through the development of infrastructure and institutions, and providing the Palestinian people with the means to stay on their land despite Israeli policies of forced displacement

3. **Popular resistance:** Local committees were established in order to lead non-violent demonstrations against Israeli colonial-settlement activities, including the Annexation Wall.

A combination of these three elements strengthened Palestinian leadership and resulted in upgrading Palestine’s status at the United Nations to non-Member Observer State, thereby raising to 138 the number of states that recognize the State of Palestine, including Russia, Brazil, Sweden, South Africa, India, and the Holy See. Though this momentum has brought the Palestinian diplomatic position to its strongest point since the Nakba of 1948, it was not enough to end 50 years of belligerent Israeli military occupation.

In parallel, Palestine called for broader international involvement in any possible negotiations process. Initiatives such as the Paris International Peace Conference, which Palestine supported and Israel unsurprisingly rejected for fear of international interference in order to implement a negotiated agreement, stalled unceremoniously.

No economic peace plan can succeed without a political solution that involves the fulfillment of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people.

The Palestinian cause is not merely about the land, it is also about the people of Palestine. Empowering the Palestinian people to stay on their land is the most important theme of resistance against the Israeli colonial-settlement enterprise that aims to take the land and expel the people. From the Balfour Declaration, when British colonialists gifted Palestine to the Zionist movement while referring to the Palestinians as the “non-Jewish population of Palestine,” to the Palestinian flag raised at the United Nations in 2015, the Palestinian national liberation struggle has gone through several stages. Throughout, the Palestinian people have persevered. In the words of the late national poet Mahmoud Darwish, “Standing here, staying here, permanent here, eternal here, and we have one goal, one, one: to be.”

The PLO Negotiations Affairs Department was established in 1994 to follow up on the implementation of the Interim Agreements signed between Israel and the PLO, and to prepare the Palestinian positions for the Permanent Status talks with Israel.
The Palestine Liberation Organization: What Has It Meant for the Palestinian People?

By Majed Bamya

To Marwan Barghouthi and the Palestinian prisoners, who from behind bars remind us that the jailer and the oppressor shall never prevail.

To understand what the PLO meant for Palestinians at its establishment, you have to take into account what it meant to be dispossessed of your land, of your past and present, of the promises of your future, what it meant to grow up in refugee tents, to lose everything, and to see your very existence denied by those who removed you from your land. Palestine has not witnessed the worst atrocities, but it is the victim of one of the greatest injustices of our time.

At a time when the world adopted the fundamental texts of international law, including the UN Charter, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and the Geneva Conventions, the Palestinian people were denied the very same rights that these texts were adopted to protect. Instead of seeing our right to self-determination fulfilled, our nation was and continues to be the victim of a widespread and systematic policy of displacement and replacement at unprecedented levels. The Zionist movement openly advocated changing the demography of this land, on a discriminatory basis and with total disregard for the indigenous population, going as far as denying its very existence.

Since then, Israel has been rewriting history and transforming the landscape to fit its narrative. Israel launched a war against our people and our homes, and even against the signs of our uninterrupted presence on this land for thousands of years as a nation that kept growing more diverse as history brought to our shores many people who became an integral part of who we are. This is the Nakba. It started in 1948, and almost 70 years later, the Palestinian people still struggle for their natural place in history and geography.

The PLO empowered the Palestinian people and provided the national struggle with a central voice. Accessing international bodies, such as the United Nations, has been one of the most important tasks in its mandate to represent the Palestinian people, returning Palestine to the international agenda. From desperation to hope. It was us saying we will not surrender, and whatever the might of the Zionist movement, the right of our people

Palestine would like to acknowledge:

Pope John Paul II
Pope John Paul II served as pope from 1978 till his death in 2005. He supported the rights of Palestinians and established diplomatic relations with the PLO. He advocated for justice and peace in the Holy Land, which he reaffirmed during his pilgrimage in 2000.

Ahmed Kathrada
An anti-apartheid activist and freedom fighter alongside Nelson Mandela in South Africa, Kathrada founded the Ahmed Kathrada Foundation in 2008. The foundation supports solidarity initiatives around the world, including the Palestinian cause. Recently, the foundation has stood in solidarity with the Palestinian political prisoners on hunger strike.

Photo courtesy of Voice of the Cape.
to self-determination shall prevail. Arafat’s smile and keffiyeh were the manifestation of our nation’s resolve, a resolve the world could no longer ignore. This is why people were ready to die defending the PLO and the independent national decision. We had finally found a Palestinian voice, and we were not ready to let anyone silence it. This is why Israel’s war against the PLO was not only against its political and military leaders, but also against its representatives worldwide. As Palestinian diplomats, we have a unique legacy because our representative offices abroad were opened at the price of martyrdom for many of our representatives.

The PLO marked a dramatic change in our history when we decided to save ourselves since nobody seemed willing or able to save us. There was nothing more empowering, more assertive, more reflective of Palestinian resilience and determination than the decision to lead our own struggle, with our limited means, in a battle of mythological dimensions. Maybe some laughed at these young people who apparently had not heard the news that they had been defeated and who actually believed victory could be achieved. But in 1967, Arab armies were crushed by Israel during the rule of the legendary Gamal Abd el Nasser who was a source of hope for an entire generation. While a few months later, the infant Palestinian national movement was able to push back the attack of the Zionist forces in the battle of Al-Karameh (dignity). Finally, all those who wanted to work for the liberation of Palestine, Palestinians of origin and Palestinians of heart, had an address. We understood our diversity – political, religious, ethnic – not as an element of division but as an important component of our identity, and despite all the differences, Palestinian factions maintained a unified voice to speak on behalf of our people.

The PLO was recognized worldwide as the sole and legitimate representative of the Palestinian people; and Palestinians recognized the PLO as an affirmation of their existence and their struggle. Palestinian refugees proclaimed through the PLO the right to be the masters of their own fate, after having been the victims of the decisions of colonial powers that disregarded them and their rights.

In 1982, when the PLO was driven out of Beirut by Israeli forces, to be exiled far away from Palestine borders, some thought that this would be the end of it. They did not understand that while the PLO was established by Palestinian refugees outside the borders of Palestine, it was also nurtured and loved by those under occupation and Israeli rule. The Intifada was the eruption of the Palestinian people under occupation onto the world stage, and because the PLO was faithful to the people, the people were loyal to the PLO. Despite Israeli policies of mass arrest and killings, its assassinations of the leaders of the Palestinian struggle, and maybe because of all that, the Palestinian people considered defending the PLO to be an integral part of defending Palestine. In the Madrid talks for peace in 1991, no Palestinian delegation was allowed to participate independently of the Jordanian delegation, and the PLO was not to be represented. And yet, those who unofficially represented the Palestinian people at these talks proved to be as attached to the PLO as its founding fathers.

But the PLO was besieged politically and financially after the Gulf war, and Israel had managed to assassinate several of its most influential founding fathers. The PLO thus considered the Oslo agreements as the only way to save itself, and maybe this weakness at that point in time and the disproportionate existential fear of alternate representation made it overlook essential aspects that were not properly addressed by the agreement. Since then the PLO transferred important competences to the Palestinian Authority. The PLO was maintained in its representative role, but its decision-making powers grew slimmer to mirror the expansion of the role of the Palestinian Authority. We were moving towards an independent state and the Palestinian Authority was the bridge towards that goal; therefore many believed that there was a need to invest in it. Had we not been stuck

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**Marcel Khalife**

A renowned Lebanese musical artist who was dubbed UNESCO Artist for Peace in 2005, Khalife has long been a friend of the Palestinian cause. Forming a close friendship with the late Palestinian poet Mahmoud Darwish, Khalife’s work often has the Palestinian cause as a central theme.

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**Elias Khoury**

A renowned Lebanese writer and author of eleven novels, Khoury joined the Palestinian resistance in Jordan in the late 1960s. In Lebanon, he worked alongside Mahmoud Darwish in the PLO Research Center, the literary group Mawaqif, and the journal Al-Karmel. In 2016, he received the Mahmoud Darwish Award for Creativity.
in limbo for the last 20 years, their analysis might have been correct. The PLO’s role is the fulfillment of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people. Once this is accomplished, it is normal for it to disappear. But Israel further entrenched its military and colonial rule instead of ending it. There was therefore still an important role for the PLO to play, but systemic problems had appeared over time, including the fact that important factions, notably Hamas, decided to remain outside the common home. The PLO saw cadres that preferred to join the Palestinian Authority with its role on the ground rather than the PLO and its political representation role. Thus the perception of its role among the Palestinian people changed. The PLO was strong because it was a common address, because it projected power and defiance, because it empowered people, because it was the place for pluralism and debate, because it brought to the struggle a new generation of Palestinians. The absence of these very same factors has taken its toll. While the Palestinian people are fully conscious of the importance of preserving their moral home at a time when independence still seems out of reach, they will defend the PLO but they will not fully belong to it, because that requires that it fully belong to them. They need it to be part of their lives, to be shaped by their choices, to be their reflection, and what brings them together.

The PLO is the biggest accomplishment of our struggle, affirming our identity and enabling our unity and determining our fate. The ongoing division, the difficulty of shaping a clear and unified strategy, and having popular support are motives for the PLO’s crisis and are motivated by it. The PLO does not necessarily need to manage the daily lives of Palestinians, it needs to honestly represent them, to be once again the place where we start practicing our right to self-determination; it should be a name that carries every son and daughter of this land, including its refugees and its diaspora. The PLO doesn’t need to be the government, but it needs to be the political leadership of our people. PLO strength was also drawn from the strength of our factions and trade unions. It cannot be fully revived in isolation of the intermediary bodies that comprise it.

Some may feel that this is becoming increasingly impossible. But I think them of a few young people who in exile and after a traumatic tragedy, found their way from the ashes of the Nakba to the path of resurrection. Their odds were far worse than those confronted by our generation. The Palestinian people are now recognized worldwide, including by those who tried to erase us. Our rights, including that of self-determination, were endorsed internationally. Solidarity with Palestine has become a rallying cry across all continents. Millions of our people are still steadfast on our land, and we have become yet again the majority in historical Palestine despite decades of displacement and replacement. Palestinians in the diaspora are self-confident and proud of their identity. This is the legacy that we have received from the PLO, and we have a duty to shape a legacy for the generations that will follow us.

I do not deny any of the objective reasons to consider this period an extremely difficult one; I do not deny the existence of blockades and walls, of regional conflicts that heavily impact and inflict suffering on our people in exile, the killing of civilians, and the ongoing mass arrests; I do not deny the structural weaknesses that have affected us, the open wound caused by the division, and the democratic crisis of refugees in exile not voting for their representatives for nearly 30 years and of the impossibility of holding elections in the occupied Palestinian territory for over a decade. I do not deny the spread of colonialism and the creeping annexation that reaches every home. I do not deny the arrogance of the occupying power and its impunity. I do not deny that peace despite conferences and summits continues to be evasive. But I trust the Palestinian soul. And yes I have faith.

This is a land of miracles, and I think that the birth and survival of the Palestine liberation movement is nothing short of a miracle. We are entitled to freedom, dignity, and return as all other nations around the world, and to ending the historical injustice and seeking redress. Our struggle is, however, not only a struggle against oppression, it is also a struggle against exclusiveness and exclusion, monopoly and supremacy, discrimination, segregation and apartheid. It is a struggle to preserve pluralism and diversity. As such, we are the guardians of the Holy Land, and the reflection of its unique history and geography. Jerusalem must be a capital of peace and coexistence, and then, instead of being a reflection of what is worst in the world, it can be a beacon for change and hope beyond our borders. I have faith. If a man who has spent decades in Israeli jails finds it in himself to defy the jailer and to proclaim his right to freedom and dignity, for himself and for his nation, if he can find hope in the darkness of a cell, I have to wonder: Why wouldn’t I? And you should ask yourself the very same question. Our answer will be the most decisive element for the future of our people and our cause, which matters not only to us, but to all those who believe that we are born free and remain free and equal in rights; to those who defend human dignity regardless of origin, nationality, ethnic group, race, gender, or social condition; to those who strive for justice and peace around the world.

Majed Bamya is the head of the international treaties department at the Palestinian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and in charge of the prisoners’ portfolio. He is the general coordinator of the international campaign for the freedom of Marwan Barghouthi and all Palestinian prisoners.
KHALIDA JARRAR, Former Prisoner and Member of the PLC, 54 Years Old, Nablus

I envisage my future and the future of my family without a military occupation, like all the peoples of the world. I imagine a life full of freedom and dignity where we can move and express our opinion without restrictions. I yearn to have freedom of movement and access in my own land and abroad, and I crave the end of killing, destruction, military checkpoints, and settlement enterprises. I long for the elimination of the frightful image of heavily armed soldiers. I hope that my people will soon have full sovereignty over their land, water, and natural resources. Now my people must keep the torch of hope and self-confidence ignited, and eventually they will be able to end the occupation and live in liberty like all the peoples of the world. Palestinian women stand out as models and active partners in the struggle for liberation and independence.

YAKOUB SHAHEEN, Palestinian Singer, Winner of the 2017 Arab Idol Talent Show, 23 Years Old, Bethlehem

Occupation is intimidation. I was born and brought up under a brutal military occupation that filled us with fear, frustration, uneasiness, and insecurity. I lived through military incursions and the siege of the Nativity Church. My family used to live very close to the church and throughout the siege days the situation was horrendous. We could not buy food or leave our home. I could not go to school and my education was disrupted. We, the youth of Palestine, must not give up hope; we must persevere so that we will be able to realize our dreams without forgetting or neglecting our just cause and struggle.

LEILA AL-ISSAWI, the Mother of a Palestinian Martyr, Fadi, and Four Prisoners in Israeli Jails; Shrine, Samer, Midhat, and Shadi – 69 Years Old, Jerusalem

RAED DEBIY, Vice President of the International Union of Socialist Youth and Chairman of the Committee of International Relations of Fatah Youth, 34 Years Old, Nablus

The occupying authorities confiscated my land and denied me the right to express my rejection of the confiscation through public protests, demonstrations, and marches. I was incarcerated six times, and when I was younger, during the first Intifada, the occupying authorities prevented me from leaving the country to pursue my undergraduate studies abroad. Most of the time I am deprived of free movement and access because of the military checkpoints. I cannot visit Jerusalem or the northern part of Palestine occupied in 1948. My sister is married and has been living in Lod for 15 years, but I have not been allowed to go to visit her, not even once. In light of the continuing military occupation I am always worried about my children because they may get arrested or killed at any time. My future is cloudy and is shrouded in fear and worry.

JANA JIHAD, Palestine’s Youngest Amateur Reporter, 11 Years Old, Nabi Saleh Village

The occupying authorities confiscated my land and denied me the right to express my rejection of the confiscation through public protests, demonstrations, and marches. I was incarcerated six times, and when I was younger, during the first Intifada, the occupying authorities prevented me from leaving the country to pursue my undergraduate studies abroad. Most of the time I am deprived of free movement and access because of the military checkpoints. I cannot visit Jerusalem or the northern part of Palestine occupied in 1948. My sister is married and has been living in Lod for 15 years, but I have not been allowed to go to visit her, not even once. In light of the continuing military occupation I am always worried about my children because they may get arrested or killed at any time. My future is cloudy and is shrouded in fear and worry.

MAHMOUD NAWAJAA, BDS (Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions) National Committee General Coordinator, 31 Years Old, Hebron

The military occupation is every bad thing in our lives. It hinders our free movement from one place to another, prevents us from carrying out our activities, and complicates our personal lives. There is an ongoing feeling of insecurity and instability. In light of the escalation of occupation and the emergence of some of the main features of the apartheid regime, I expect that my children’s future will be far worse. They will live in the midst of apartheid, and as a result, we must work hard to put an end to the occupation so that our children can live in peace and security.

ABDALLAH ABU RAHMEH, General Director of the Colonization and Wall Resistance Commission and an Activist, 46 Years Old, Bil'in

The occupying authorities confiscated my land and denied me the right to express my rejection of the confiscation through public protests, demonstrations, and marches. I was incarcerated six times, and when I was younger, during the first Intifada, the occupying authorities prevented me from leaving the country to pursue my undergraduate studies abroad. Most of the time I am deprived of free movement and access because of the military checkpoints. I cannot visit Jerusalem or the northern part of Palestine occupied in 1948. My sister is married and has been living in Lod for 15 years, but I have not been allowed to go to visit her, not even once. In light of the continuing military occupation I am always worried about my children because they may get arrested or killed at any time. My future is cloudy and is shrouded in fear and worry.
Barcelona football team to raise high the flag of Palestine. I would like to become as well a fashion designer to add to the Palestinian traditional dress.

OMAR AL-KHATIB, Former Prisoner, 52 Years Old, Jerusalem

The occupation ransacked 18 years of my life – the time I spent in prison. I had no contact with family members or friends, and in particular, I had no communication with my parents who did not live long enough to enjoy the dear moments of my release from jail. Upon release I started to rebuild my life. I had to race with time so I married and have become a loyal hard-working husband and father who never falters in his support of the Palestinian struggle for freedom and justice.

SA’EED AL-TAMIMI, Former Prisoner, 44 Years Old, Nabi Saleh

I grew up as an orphan. My father died when I was a year and a half old, and I always complained about the fact that I did not have a father like other children. I spent 22 years in prison, and I was released only three years ago. I was put under house arrest and I cannot leave Ramallah. I cannot move freely in the country or travel abroad. If there were no occupation, I would live as a free country or travel abroad. If there were no occupation, I would live as a free country or travel abroad.

AMAL AL-SA’DA, Former Prisoner, 28 Years Old, Hebron

Military occupation means imprisonment, oppression, and the stealing of lands and health. I was sentenced to jail for one year and two months. Occupation has greatly affected my mental state, social status, future, and practical life. Before my arrest, I used to work in an infirmary but today I am unemployed. I can imagine being free and secure in an independent state free of occupation. I dreamt of becoming a lawyer but I changed my mind after arrest and imprisonment because a lawyer may feel helpless before the tyranny and cruelty of the military occupation courts.

AMJAD AL-SHAWA, Director of the Palestinian NGOs Network, 46 Years Old, Gaza

It is really difficult to talk about the future in light of the continued military occupation, oppression, and injustice. I was born after the occupation of 1967, and the practices of the occupying power have become part of my conscious life. Occupation has affected my educational and professional life, and has damaged my health and turned my dreams into nightmares. It has restricted my freedom and spoiled my plans and relations. The occupation has turned Gaza into a place worse than a prison and continues to destroy everything that is in it. I always think about the life of my children and about their future. No matter what I do for them now, occupation will be their future.

AMAL SIYAM, Director of the Women’s Affairs Center, 47 Years Old, Gaza

Occupation means that you become a refugee in your own country or that you live as a refugee outside your homeland. Occupation means that you open your eyes as a little girl and see the UNRWA flag and not the flag of your country. You meet people and get to know their names and which countries they come from, and you say in a sad tone, “I am from Palestine,” but the answer comes to you like a thunder strike, “You mean to say Israel.” Occupation means poverty, unemployment, discrimination, racism, disgrace, and inhuman treatment. Occupation is every ugly thing in the world. I lost many dear friends because of the occupation, and it is the reason I am called a refugee living in her own country. I cannot see my children who have been studying abroad for three years now because of the occupation. When the occupation ends, I will no longer think of death and I will not have expectations of war or aggression.

AKRAM AL-AYASA, Head of International Relations at the Commission of Detainees and Ex-Detainees, 56 Years Old, Bethlehem

We have been refugees since 1948. I am constantly afraid that something bad may happen to my children while they are travelling through the many military checkpoints spread all over West Bank. I was arrested several times (total duration of five years). I was injured by an Israeli bullet in 1985, and my house was partially demolished because of an Israeli grenade in the year 2001. I am not allowed to cultivate my land because it’s located in Area C. The Israeli occupation continues to persist, and I am worried that my children will continue to suffer in the future.

AHMAD SUB LABAN, Specialist Field Researcher at Jerusalem and Israeli Settlements at Ir-Amim, 37 Years Old, Jerusalem

I believe that remaining in Jerusalem with my family and children is the true meaning of steadfastness, especially in light of the policies that aim to expel us from the holy city of Jerusalem. This is the fiftieth year of occupation, and it is a year that is not different from previous years, and it will not be different from the coming years. The only special thing this year is that it reminds us that the years pass by and we get older. We are still living an incomplete life that can hardly be described as “normal.” Our life under occupation is “uneven” and “unbalanced.” One could almost scream, “I live in an unending state of imbalance that impacts every single decision I take.”

IMAD HAMDAN, Director of the Hebron Rehabilitation Committee, 49 Years Old, Hebron

Unquestionably, occupation is responsible for the homelessness of most of the Palestinian people, and it has created many obstacles that impede their development. The military occupation has dispersed my family and has prevented our family reunion. In addition, occupation has limited my ambitions to continue my higher education. I expect that the future will remain uncertain and grim. There is nothing that forebodes hope or optimism in the future. Fear and underdevelopment are two sources of serious concern and worry about the future of my children. Fifty years of struggle against occupation have passed and there is no room for giving in or yielding to its aims.
When reviewing the evolution of the international community’s role and involvement in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, it is necessary to look first at the roots of today’s conflict (not only in Palestine but in the entire region), which lie in the period of and between the two world wars, i.e., from 1914 to 1945, when Europe, the United States, and the then Soviet Union embraced the Zionist movement’s thesis of a Jewish homeland in Palestine. At around the same time, the 1916 Sykes-Picot Agreement divided the Ottoman Arab provinces into various French and British-administered areas, the 1917 Balfour Declaration supported “the establishment of a Jewish national home in Palestine” and the 1920 San Remo Conference awarded the Mandate for Palestine, Transjordan, and Mesopotamia (Iraq) to Britain. After the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, Arab wishes were examined by the King-Crane Commission, which as early as 1919 warned against the effects of unrestricted Jewish immigration and Zionist plans in Palestine, but the report’s recommendations were not acted upon. On the contrary, many attempts were even made to have Arab leaders and notables acknowledge the Zionist movement’s goals, bypassing Palestinians. Throughout the British Mandate period, numerous committees – such as the Peel and the Woodhead commissions in the 1930s – recommended the partition of Palestine into two states due to the fact that both sides could not live in peace together, culminating eventually in the UN Partition Plan, passed as UN General Assembly Resolution 181 on November 29, 1947, which divided Palestine into Jewish and Arab states with Jerusalem and Bethlehem as a corpus separatum under a special international regime, de facto establishing the Jewish homeland that Zionists had been striving for.

Following the subsequent establishment of the state of Israel in 1948 and until Israel’s occupation of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip in June 1967, international efforts were directed at having the Arab countries appease their relationships with Israel. The Palestinian cause was sidelined, framed as a refugee problem, solvable by compensation and resettlement. However, as the Palestinians increasingly realized that there was no “salvation” coming from the Arab states and therefore took their matters into their own hands (especially with and after the creation of the PLO in 1964 as their official representative), the international community began to realize the regional and international dimensions of the conflict, hence the slow but gradual recognition of the PLO during the 1970s. However, the prevailing Cold War reality did not allow for much international diplomacy, as the Arab-Israeli conflict helped maintain the bipolar world order of that time: while the USSR sided with the Arabs both diplomatically and militarily, Western countries cherished a firm bias towards Israel. The collapse of communism and the Soviet bloc roughly coincided with the first Intifada and its message, “We are here to stay, we want to coexist.” This encouraged Europe to be involved in facilitating contacts and dialogue in pursuit of the two-state solution.

Palestine would like to acknowledge:

**Bruno Kreisky**

Chancellor of Austria between 1970 and 1983, Kreisky was a firm supporter of the Palestinian cause and opposed Israeli attempts to normalize the occupation. He supported a final-status agreement that honored the internationally recognized rights of the Palestinian people.

**Felicia Langer**

An Israeli lawyer and human rights activist, Langer has dedicated her professional career to fight against the various human rights abuses committed by Israel, including political prisoners, land confiscations, home demolitions, imprisonment, and torture.
Since the establishment of the PA in 1994, donor aid has become a major aspect of the international community’s role. While the donor funding to Palestine is unprecedented, it is yet seen as a fig leaf in face of the restrictions on trade and access to resources imposed by Israel, which have eroded the productive capacity of the Palestinian economy over the years, and without which, as international studies have shown, the need for donor aid would be significantly reduced. Moreover, donor aid is nowadays mainly used for budget support, with near total neglect for development support.

Especially since Oslo, the international role has taken the shape of an aid industry, using money and development to work around the occupation and mitigate third states’ inaction, rather than addressing the injustices unfolding before their eyes and living up to their legal and moral responsibilities with more decisive action than yet another report, de facto giving the occupier a license to proceed and arrogantly dismiss all those reports. The tragedy is that the international community is well aware of this but hesitant to step in due to the wider geopolitical context and its own domestic interests and politics.

In 2011, the UN declared Palestinian institutions ready for statehood, and while there are still large funds flowing in this direction almost by default, the state-building “project” is at an impasse, not least because Israel does not allow these institutions to function fully.

In light of the above, is it a surprise then that there is a widespread perception among Palestinians that the real occupation is not Israel but the rest of the world, without whose support – moral and financial – the occupation could not have been sustained for such a long time?

In the 50 years of occupation that have passed so far, foreign states and international bodies have kept busy with the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, trying at best to manage and contain it. Major milestones to recall include the 1973 Geneva Conference for Middle East peace; the UN’s granting the PLO permanent observer status in 1975, the 1978 Camp David Accords, the 1980 EC’s Venice Declaration, the 1981 Prince Fahd Plan, and the Arab League’s Fez Plan as well as the Reagan and the Brezhnev Plan in 1982, the 1983 Geneva International Conference, the 1988 Shultz Peace Plan, the 1991 Madrid Conference, and the subsequent bi- and multilateral talks, the 1993 Declaration of Principles, followed by the Oslo I and II Accords in 1994 and 1995, respectively, the 1998 Wye River Memorandum, the 1999 Sharm El-Sheikh Agreement, the 2000 Camp David II Summit, the 2001 Taba talks, the 2002 Arab peace initiative, the 2003 US “road map,” the 2007 Annapolis conference, the 2010 Proximity talks, the 2013 Kerry mission, and the 2016/17 French initiative.

There has probably been no other issue in the world which has seen so many initiatives launched, proposals made, conferences hosted, UN and other resolutions and conventions of international law adopted and passed, and agreements signed as the Palestine Question, though most of these “efforts” were linked to US policies and have been biased towards Israel (a look at the American voting pattern in the UN speaks volumes).

And there is no other place on earth where so many efforts have led to so few results. One may ask here, and rightly so, why the international community has failed to end the Palestinian-Israeli conflict and 50 years of occupation, although UN Security Council Resolution 242 already called in November 1967 (!) for Israeli withdrawal from the occupied territories, for mutual recognition, and for solving the refugee problem; although the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people were already officially recognized (for the first time) in a US-USSR joint statement back in October 1977; although, quite simply, all that needed to be done is apply international law and rulings to the conflict; and although the Palestinians had already made historical concessions by agreeing to negotiate on only 22 percent of their historical homeland and, on top of that, to accept the “land-for-peace formula.”

All the seemingly intractable issues at hand today are not new but have shamefully been on the table since the beginning of the occupation. And while the international community clung to the pretense of “negotiations,” Israel has...
effectively used the “peace process” itself to buy time and further establish more facts on Palestinian ground. Let’s take two examples – settlements and Jerusalem – to illustrate this: When the World Zionist Organization published its master plan for the development of settlements in 1978, then-US Secretary of State Vance, flanked by the USSR and Europe, called on Israel to cease settlement-building activities. Today, there are almost 600,000 settlers on Palestinian territory, and Jews, while constituting around 52 percent of the total population in historical Palestine, utilize over 85 percent of the total land area, while Palestinians – 48 percent – utilize less than 15 percent.

UN Security Council Resolution 478, adopted with no vote against on August 20, 1980, is one of seven UNSC resolutions that condemn Israel’s attempted annexation of East Jerusalem, and determine “that all legislative and administrative measures and actions taken by Israel, the occupying Power, which have altered or purport to alter the character and status of the Holy City of Jerusalem (…) are null and void and must be rescinded forthwith.” Numerous UNESCO resolutions condemned Israel for its attempts to “Judaize” the historical and cultural status of Jerusalem. Today, East Jerusalem is de facto annexed, and Israel maintains its – well-documented! – discriminatory measures and policies unimpeded.

It is high time for the international community to ensure respect for international law and replace the culture of appeasement, tentative attempts, and complicity with meaningful pressure and an end to impunity. It is time for political courage and vigorous intervention to hold Israel accountable and to realize that there is no conflict but an illegal occupation that must end; that the Palestinians and Israelis must not be treated as two equal partners; that it cannot be that an occupied people is made responsible for the security of its occupier; that the entire world, including Europe and blocs such as the Non-Aligned Movement, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, the Arab League, etc., is following the one alleged superpower, the United States; that after the failure of the Oslo process, the two-state solution is now an international responsibility.

Dr. Mahdi Abdul Hadi holds a PhD from the School of Peace Studies at the University of Bradford, United Kingdom. He co-founded civil society organizations, including the Arab Thought Forum (1977), the Arab Council for Jerusalem (1990), the Council for Peace and Justice (1992), and the Palestinian Academic Society for the Study of International Affairs (PASSIA) in 1987, of which he has since been the chairman. Among his numerous publications are 100 Years of Palestinian History, A 20th Century Chronology (2001) and The Palestine Question in Maps 1878–2014 (2014).

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FAKI HIDMI, Director of the Arab
Jerusalem Chamber of Commerce and
Industry, 39 Years Old, Jerusalem
When you live under occupation you
continuously suffer from oppression
and humiliation, which makes you
stronger in the fight for your just cause
of independence. I am very optimistic that
we will achieve our national aspirations
for independence with Jerusalem as the
capital of Palestine because our children
have proved time and again since the
occupation started that they never forget
their sense of belonging to their beloved
country and nation.

QASSEM AWAD, General Director of
Documentation at the Colonization and
Wall Resistance Commission, 34 Years
Old, Nablus
Occupation has stolen ten years of my
life—the years I was in prison. My family’s
home was demolished and I spent those
ten years in a state of severe alienation
under the worst conditions: the jails of
the Israeli occupation. I will continue
to expose before the international
community the occupation’s practices
and violations of human rights. I will
do also document those violations against
my unarmed people and chronicle their
historical steadfastness. I will remain
committed to popular resistance and I will
boycott the products of the occupation.
I will transmit our experiences and ways
to think to future generations with a
view to develop strategies to confront
the occupation.

ADEL AL-HALLAK, Director of Al-Aqsa
Islamic Schools and Lecturer at Al-Quds
Open University, 77 Years Old, Jerusalem
Occupation is slavery. I want to see my
homeland free like all other countries in
the world. Occupation is racism, oppression,
imprisonment, and humiliation. It has
affected my life and my thinking as well
as the possibility of self-development. It
has also adversely affected the education
of my children and their mental state.
I cannot plan for the future and I am
waiting for the departure of the colonizers.
However, I am optimistic that soon we will
have our long-awaited rights because our
cause is righteous. Israel is oppressing
our people, especially in Jerusalem. But
racism and slavery will not last forever.
We will be liberated like the South African
people.

HADEEL WAHDAN, Lecturer of Media at
Birzeit University, 37 Years Old, Ramallah
Occupation is my constant thirst for a
different future. Occupation has deprived
us of the charm of mystery when it
distorted the past and confiscated the
present and decided on the future. Occupation deprived me of my right to
manage my own affairs in my own way.
It interferes in the minutest details of
my personal life: where I go and what I
dream about. I cannot decide about the
future and I will always think of Palestine
as an idea and not as a reality. I do not
want this to happen to me and I cannot let
it happen to my children. Unfortunately,
occupation has taken away from me the
ability to dream. When my life becomes
free of occupation, I will not have pangs
of conscience and I will laugh and feel joy.
I will not allow my dignity to be humiliated
at a checkpoint or border crossing. I will
think a lot before I say, “On this land there
is something worth living for.” Finally,
I will be able to drive my car for four hours
without stopping and without passing
through the same place more than once.

AMJAD ABU AL-IZ, Lecturer of Political
Science at An-Najah University, 39 Years
Old, Nablus
The Israeli occupation is the arrogance
and conceit that I see in the spiteful eyes
of Israeli soldiers as they look at us at
checkpoints. I have a constant feeling that
I can be arrested at any minute and I may
sleep and wake up the next day and see
myself in prison. I believe that I exercise
the rituals of life and not life itself because
of occupation. I cannot travel and I feel
I am being watched by the occupation
at all times. I feel I am navigating on my
land without any possibility of return.
Occupation has strengthened my will
to challenge and rebel against unjust
forces that try to control my behavior.
Occupation has influenced the Palestinian
character. We are rebels and at the same
time we adapt well and underneath the
ashes there is a blaze. No occupation
means freedom, openness, and security.
It means that I feel I am part of this world
and that I am recognized by the world. I
feel I am equal to all people and I feel that
I own myself and my dignity.

IBRAHIM IBRASH, Retired University
Lecturer and Former Minister of Culture,
65 Years Old, Gaza
Occupation is the control of one state
or a group of people over another state
or people and denying them the right
to economic, social, and political self-
determination. In other words, occupation
is depriving people of freedom and
confiscating their territory. I am living the
life of a refugee because of occupation
and I have been denied the right to return
to my hometown in Ramla. I am not
living as a free citizen in an independent
Palestinian state but as a permanent
resident in PA territory. I cannot enter or
leave the territory without a special permit
from the occupying authorities. Like every
Palestinian working in his or her own
professional field, my role is to support
and promote our historical narrative
and rights, as well as to preserve our
culture and national identity by all means
possible. I have raised my children on
the love of Palestine, struggling for the
land, resisting the occupation, ending the
political split, and achieving national unity.

CHRISTINE RINAWI, Reporter at Palestine
TV, 28 Years Old, Jerusalem
I am writing this testimony from my
experience as a press correspondent
working in the city of Jerusalem. I am
forced to see victims of collective
punishment from close range and the
blood of martyrs shot dead by the
occupying forces. I document the
suffering of the martyrs’ families and I
see families dispossessed and expelled
from their homes in Jerusalem. All this
leaves a negative impact on me and my
life, and I sometimes feel that I need
therapy due to the volume of pain and
oppression that I witness daily. Living in
Jerusalem is taxing, and Palestinians in
the city have to pay a heavy price to stay
in the city to preserve its Arab culture.
Living in Jerusalem without occupation
would be equivalent to living in paradise.

ELIA GHOBIAH, Freelance Journalist
and Filmmaker, 25 Years Old, Jerusalem
For me, occupation means limitations
on everything, even dreaming. I work
as a journalist, and I have lost many
opportunities because I have a green ID
card (for residents of the West Bank). I
filmed my first visit to Jerusalem as a
news item, although Jerusalem is only 30
minutes away. I wish I could move freely
so that my parents wouldn’t be so afraid
every time I leave the house and call me
a thousand times a day. My generation
is disappointed with the typical tools [of
resistance] that have been affiliated with
factions and organizations, but the fact
that we are moving towards individual
resistance using the new tools of social
media is also disappointing. There will be
no future under occupation, the cage we
live in is becoming smaller and smaller.
Even today, Israeli government propagandists still claim that its 1967 occupation of the West Bank and Gaza (WBG) has brought benefits to the occupied population, especially in the field of health. As recently as 2014, David Stone, a professor at the University of Glasgow, produced a paper entitled “Has Israel damaged Palestinian health? An evidence-based analysis of the nature and impact of Israeli public health policies and practices in the West Bank and Gaza.” In the study, notably published by the British Israel Communications and Research Centre (BICOM), Stone argues that Israel has not damaged the health of the Palestinians of WBG and that, on the contrary, health in WBG has improved steadily since 1967 due to Israeli policy and practice over the course of the occupation.

It is true that, according to the general indicators, the health status of the Palestinians in WBG has improved since 1967. This, incidentally, is a worldwide trend, especially in Asia and Africa, mainly due to improved education and the rapid progress in medical and scientific development during the second half of the twentieth century. However, except for a limited number of positive but ultimately self-serving practices, this improvement has not been due to Israel’s generosity or benevolent occupation! Rather, as will be outlined below, most of the improvement in health status in WBG during the years of frank occupation (1967–1993) was a result of the efforts and determination of a resilient Palestinian community and the principled support and solidarity of certain sections of the international community.

Following the June war of 1967, Israel was required by international law to assume responsibility for health (and other) services in the recently occupied West Bank and Gaza. During the early days of the occupation, responsibility for health care was nominally shifted from the Israeli Ministry of Health to the Military Government and then to the Israeli “Civil” Administration, under the auspices of the Ministry. In 1985, the budget for government hospitals in the West Bank was US$8 million, of which three million were spent on the treatment of Palestinian Arabs who were transferred to Israeli hospitals. During the same year the budget of one Israeli hospital (Ichilov) was six times the amount allocated to all nine government hospitals in the West Bank. (UNCTAD, 1994)ii

Palestine would like to acknowledge:

Mairead Maguire
A peace activist from Northern Ireland and a Nobel Peace Prize recipient, Maguire spent years standing in solidarity with oppressed communities. In 2010, she boarded the Gaza Freedom Flotilla MV Rachel Corrie in an attempt to breach the Israeli blockade on Gaza.

Nelson Mandela
Known as “Madiba,” Mandela was a leader of the South African anti-apartheid struggle who was close to Yasser Arafat and a symbol of freedom for Palestinians. He supported the Palestinian struggle for freedom and said, “We know too well that our freedom is incomplete without the freedom of the Palestinians.”
of Defense. In reality, it has been well documented by several UN organizations (including WHO and OCHA), human rights agencies (including MAP-UK and Israeli Physicians for Human Rights), and others (including the Lancet) that during the first 25 years of the occupation (1967–1992), the Israeli-run government health services in the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPT) were intentionally starved on public health which resulted from the 1948 war. For the large refugee population that was exiled mainly to WBG (but also to neighboring countries), UNRWA, supported by Palestinian health activists, had been successfully implementing health and education programs that were bearing fruit for the population as a whole. Transformed into a nation of refugees, the Palestinians themselves were also eager to acquire new “transferable” skills through education, allowing them to use those skills wherever they found themselves, thus many studied medicine, nursing, or other health-related disciplines. By the time Israel occupied and unilaterally annexed East Jerusalem in 1967, there were already five well-established hospitals: Augusta Victoria, St. Joseph, St. John, Austrian Hospice, and the Red Crescent. Two further hospitals were almost ready to open by 1967: Makassed Hospital on the Mount of Olives, whose opening was delayed until 1968 and took place despite Israeli threats of confiscation; and the Jordanian Government Hospital in the suburb of Sheikh Jarrah, which was confiscated by Israel in 1967 and turned into Police Headquarters. Meanwhile, other major Palestinian towns such as Bethlehem, Hebron, and Nablus were also developing new government and/or NGO hospitals and medical centers. As Israel started moving from a temporary military occupation to a long-term policy of annexation and colonization of WBG, it had to make long-term plans to administer the territories. From day one, while the declared policy was to adhere to the principles of international law and the Geneva Conventions with regards to occupied territories, the operative policy closely resembled Theodor Herzl’s “Blue Plan,” outlined in his secret diaries of 1895: to settle every inch of the “Promised Land” but “to spirit the penniless population across the border by procuring employment for it in the transit countries, while denying it employment in our country.” One such manifestation of this plan was Israel’s refusal to readmit 300,000 refugees who fled or were outside WBG (including East Jerusalem) during the 1967 war. The policy of coercing as many Palestinians as possible to leave the OPT was soon put into practice in every sphere possible, although the sphere of health required careful consideration by the Israeli occupation authorities. The reasons for dealing positively with some aspects of health beyond the minimal approach that Israel had applied to all other sectors were broadly twofold: (a) a need for “self-protection” from epidemics and other communicable diseases, since viruses do not “stop at checkpoints” and (b) a need to utilize – at least for a certain period – the opportunity of a “cheap but healthy” workforce for carrying out menial jobs in Israel and the occupied territories (construction workers, waiters, cleaners, drivers, domestic workers, garbage collectors, etc.). This is not to deny that there were many well-meaning, left-leaning Israeli health NGOs and professionals from within and outside the official Israeli health system who were interested in promoting the health of the Palestinian people in WBG due to deep political and/or humanitarian commitment. But often these individuals and organizations were looked upon by the official Israeli authorities as renegades or anti-establishmentarian.

of adequate funding, leading to significant shortages of staff, hospital beds, medication, and essential specialized services. During that time, Israel aimed only to maintain standards of public health and curtail infectious and communicable diseases; it did not attempt to develop health services beyond primary care. Palestinians needing secondary or tertiary care were thus forced to depend on expensive health services in Israeli hospitals. Prior to 1967, the health status of the 1.25 million people in the OPT (750,000 in West Bank and 500,000 in Gaza) had been rapidly improving through a collaborative effort between the then responsible governments (Jordan in the West Bank and Egypt in Gaza) and Palestinian NGOs and UNRWA, whose combined efforts aimed to address the adverse effects

Hospital bed to population ratio of 1.4/1,000 in the West Bank and 1.2/1,000 in the Gaza Strip in 1988–1989 continues to be very low and compares unfavorably with the Israeli average of 6.1/1,000 obtained in the late 1980s. (UNCTAD, 1994)
4. Offering only minimal specialist training opportunities to Palestinian health professionals working in the “government” health department in the OPT, with the aim of ensuring diagnosis and follow up – rather than treatment – of complex/serious diseases

5. Denying Palestinian CSOs and NGOs the opportunity to officially or “legally” work with the Palestinian population in OPT

6. Limiting international support (“interference” as it was regularly referred to by Israeli authorities) to Palestinian health NGOs

While the first practice ensured that the “Residents of the Territories,” according to Israeli-government terminology, would remain sufficiently healthy and – more importantly – well-vaccinated so that they would not create epidemics that could also infect the Israeli Jewish population, the other five practices ensured that the Palestinian health system attained only minimal development, while the Israeli hospitals received the complex surgeries/medical cases. This meant that (a) Israeli hospitals were well reimbursed for their services from the OPT taxation system administered by an unsympathetic “Civil” Administration and (b) young Israeli specialists, medical residents, and students received solid and varied training when exposed to abundant numbers of complex/rare medical cases referred from the OPT.

David Stone, in his 2014 paper, further asserts that Israel provided “high quality training for doctors and nurses bringing modern standards to anesthesia, renal dialysis, cardiac surgery and many other critically important fields” and that an ambitious hospital development program resulted in several new units… being built or existing hospitals being greatly enlarged.” Both claims are demonstrably untrue. Firstly, most of the Palestinian doctors who were chosen for training in Israeli hospitals in the 1980s and early 1990s (after a full security check of course) and were sent back to work in WBG “government-run” hospitals as “specialists,” received inadequate training (only two years instead of four to five years) and were never officially or fully certified by the Israel Medical Board as “specialists.” These Palestinians mainly acted as “assistants” to Israeli specialists, identifying and referring the medical cases and following up after treatment or surgery. Secondly, in 1994, when the Israeli “Civil” Administration handed over the health sector to the Palestinian Authority (PA), the hospitals in many towns (Jericho, Ramallah, Tulkarem, Nablus, etc.) were handed over in a run-down state, unfit for the safe treatment of patients, with neglected building infrastructure, unsanitary wards, archaic medical equipment, and inadequate medical and nursing staff.

Contrary to Stone’s disingenuous claims, therefore, it was despite all the impediments created by Israeli occupation authorities that the Palestinian health system succeeded in growing between 1967 and 1994, and particularly after the eruption of the first Intifada (uprising) in 1987. Palestinian health NGOs mushroomed everywhere. In primary care, national groupings such as Medical Relief, Health Services, and Health Care Committees became very active and boasted several hundred medical centers and clinics all over WBG, despite Israeli obstacles. In secondary care,
Patient’s Friends and Red Crescent societies opened advanced medical centers in every major city and town. In tertiary care, Makassed Hospital became the main referral center for complex/serious cases. Many of these community-based groups were supported either by the PLO and its leading political factions, the Palestine Red Crescent Society; international solidarity groups such as MAP, NORWAC, OXFAM, Save the Children, Médecins Sans Frontières; international agencies such as UNRWA, UNDP, UNICEF, UNFPA; Arab Gulf States such as Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, UAE, Qatar, and Bahrain; or by Israeli human rights/anti-occupation activists.

The main factor in improving the health status of the Palestinian people following 1967 was quite simply the dogged determination of the Palestinian people, together with the support of international organizations. Israel not only failed to carry out its responsibility as an occupying power but actively attempted to hinder progress.

Since 1994, and after handing over health – among other sectors – to the PA, the health status of the Palestinian people has improved further. Yet even today, the occupation authorities continue to hinder the full development of the sector in several ways:

1. The closed borders with Jordan and the outside world hamper the importation of several advanced-technology machines, especially those using radioactive material, such as advanced PET, Gamma Camera, Gamma knife.
2. Visa restrictions prevent highly qualified medical staff who do not hold a Palestinian ID from returning or even visiting for short periods to help develop the system and train medical staff.
3. The closure of East Jerusalem, considered the Palestinian hub of tertiary medicine with its advanced hospitals and medical centers, and the restrictive “security” and licensing rules related to the closure, regularly denies patients and medical staff free access to these referral/training centers.
4. The hundreds of Israeli checkpoints that are opened and closed on a whim, coupled with the back-to-back patient handover system for WBG-East Jerusalem ambulances, have caused the conditions of severely sick patients to deteriorate and led to numerous cases of mothers giving birth at the checkpoints.
5. The strict closure of Gaza since 1993, and even more so since 2007, has drastically worsened the health situation there, increasing general morbidity and mortality among Gazans, especially with regards to infant and maternal mortality.

In conclusion, despite absurd claims to the contrary, there is firm evidence that the first 25 years of the occupation attempted – but failed – to severely hamper the development of an adequate and independent Palestinian health system. There is also no doubt that the second 25 years of the occupation, with the advent of the PA, allowed the Palestinian health system to develop further. While Palestinians should be proud of their steadfastness and everything they have achieved in the field of health, there is still a long way to go. The only way for the Palestinian health system to realize its potential and develop to its full capacity is by ending the occupation. And after 50 years, that moment cannot come soon enough.

SHIREEN ZYADEH, Founder of Ramallah Ballet Center, 29 Years Old, Ramallah

Growing up in Ramallah makes me feel like I am living in an open jail surrounded by a huge wall. I love to dance and I use it as a tool to fight. So establishing Ramallah Ballet Center six years ago has given me and the Palestinian kids and youth I work with a space to move freely in a country where freedom doesn’t exist, to break down walls hoping that we can live without occupation and checkpoints, to allow our kids to grow in a healthy atmosphere, to be creative, to have peace, and to feel safe as individuals so that together we can build Palestine and make it flourish.

GEORGE IBRAHIM, Founder and General Director of Al-Kasaba Theater and Cinematheque, Playwright, Director, and Actor, 72 Years Old

I continue to fight the occupation and expose its oppressive measures through art and the production of plays that mimic the diverse difficult aspects of our life. Sometimes we stage our plays in different parts of the world to send a message to the global community that we are people who want freedom and life. During the past years I learned how to confront the occupation and I was always ready to engage in a real and stubborn war to prove my right to life and existence on the Palestinian stage. And when creativity and innovation become a right and part and parcel of the surrounding environment then we are generously rewarded. On the other hand, I think the future of my daughters and grandchildren will be full of oppression and persecution and I am not sure whether they will benefit from my personal experience and arm themselves with it to confront the occupation.

MAHMOUD ELAYYAN, Photographer at Al-Quds Arabic daily and the American Associated Press Agency, 45 Years Old, Jerusalem

As a press photographer working for Al-Quds, I can say that the occupation has done all it can to attack and harass journalists. The occupying authorities make every effort to prevent us from publishing the truth about the atrocities and massacres they commit against the Palestinian people. The occupying authorities have on different occasions physically attacked journalists in Jerusalem and prevented photographers from taking photos. “Occupation” is an ugly word and has negative connotations. We are a people incarcerated in cantons and living through the bitterness of military checkpoints that have become part of the daily life of the Palestinian people. The large prison the occupying authorities are putting us in deprives us of our basic human rights.

IBRAHIM FARAJ, Photographer, 28 Years Old, Gaza

The blockade on Gaza imposed by the occupying authorities makes it extremely difficult and almost impossible for the Gaza population to go to other Palestinian cities or to Arab or foreign countries. Indeed the occupation has killed my dream to participate in international exhibitions and extinguished my ambition to hold a photography exhibition abroad. But I am struggling to realize my dreams in life and we are determined that the occupation will not make us kneel. As a Palestinian photographer, I expose the crimes of the occupying authorities and show the whole world what Israeli war machines do to our people. I also highlight the steadfastness of our people and their struggle against the cruel occupier.

JAMIL DABABAT, Photographer at WAFA, 40 Years Old, Tubas

For me occupation cannot be measured by time. The occupation of an hour may cause as much pain as the occupation of many years. Time is not as important a factor as the act of occupation itself. For me occupation means the loss of my natural will in exercising my inherent humanity. This feeling stems from the suspicion that there is someone who is watching over my life all the time and determining my actions. Fifty years of occupation means that neither my grandfather’s dream of a free life nor my father’s dream that I live a free life has come true. I am not sure if my dream of a free life for my son will ever be realized.

MUNIR NUSSEIBEH, Lecturer in Law and Director of the Community Action Center, 35 Years Old, Jerusalem

As a human rights advocate and academic, my whole life is about dealing with the negative consequences of Israel’s oppressive occupation and colonization regime. The future without the occupation would be about building a better future, as opposed to working towards the minimum standards of dignity, which is impossible under the circumstances designed by the occupation regime.

RAED SA’ADEH, Chairman of Jerusalem Tourism Center, 55 Years Old, Jerusalem

The Israeli Wall around Jerusalem has deprived Jerusalem of its hinterland and from its local market. On the other hand many Jerusalemites choose to do their business and seek their social life and their activities outside Jerusalem because their family and friends are locked from entering the city. This has exacerbated the deterioration of businesses that serve local clients and has negatively affected their sources of income.

FADI KATTAN, Chef and Hotelier/Tourism Expert, 39 Years Old, Bethlehem

The future is very dark, even though each time I create a new dish, each time tourists enjoy their stay in Palestine, each time I carry the voice of a certain Palestine I still feel hopeful. The future looks bleak in the darkness of this religious extremism that invades people’s minds in Israel and in the region, and I believe that it is crucial to preserve — on a daily basis — the values of a secular Palestine.

SALAH ABU-HASIRA, Chairman of Gaza’s Hotels, 43 Years Old, Gaza

Occupation has prevented me from developing myself and from seeing the development that is taking place all over the world. Occupation has isolated us from the outside world and forced us to live in a large prison that we cannot escape from. If there were no occupation my life would be prosperous and I would have opportunities for self-development on the cultural, economic, and family levels. I would have the chance to move and travel freely and visit my friends and family here in Palestine and abroad. But in light of the continued occupation neither I nor my children have a future. There is only frustration, discontent, and pessimism on the family and personal levels.

JAWDAT AL-KHUDARI, Chairman of the Museum Hotel, 57 Years Old, Gaza

Occupation means the loss of hope and freedom. It has caused the isolation of Gaza from the rest of the world and turned it into one large prison. There is no life under occupation. I imagine myself living the life of ordinary people. And now I have to live and stay firm on this land.
Armed Struggle or Civil Disobedience?
The Occupied Territory 1967-1987

By Issam Nassar

The common history of the Palestinian struggle against the occupation, to the extent that there is one, takes the diaspora as its starting point, with the rise of the fedayeen movements in the 1960s. Little attention was ever given to the emergence and development of the movement inside the occupied territory, except as an extension of the leadership outside. This short essay is a preliminary attempt to fill in the gap by granting Palestinians “inside” a certain agency that they have previously been denied in the general discourse. Based solely on my recollection of events that I witnessed and have reflected upon, this article makes no claim to be comprehensive or founded on archival or documentary research.

Following the occupation of what was left of Palestine in 1967, a resistance movement immediately emerged. However, the core of the movement was based outside the newly occupied territory, particularly in the refugee camps in Jordan, Lebanon, and Syria, where a number of paramilitary organizations already existed.

The Gaza Strip, which was governed by Egypt, had a number of active Palestinian movements with Palestinian forces known as the Palestine Liberation Army (PLA), under the auspices of the Egyptian army, actively recruiting young Palestinians. The PLA was the military branch of the newly established (in 1964) Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO). At the same time, the organization known as the Arab Nationalist Movement (ANM) was present and encouraged by the regime of President Gamal Abdel Nasser, to recruit freely as its vision was not significantly different from that of the regime itself. In addition, a Palestinian Communist Party was also active in the Strip, although its work was largely underground at the time. In the immediate aftermath of the occupation, the existence of these groups made it easier to organize against the occupation. Shortly after the war, the ANM dissolved itself, and a Palestinian branch of the movement was established under the name of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), and many of the members of the ANM joined the newly established PFLP.

In the West Bank, on the other hand, no political parties were allowed to function, though a few had supporters and members who resorted to underground work. Unlike the Egyptian rule in Gaza, Jordan annexed the West Bank and extended citizenship to its residents. Jordanian law did not allow the freedom to organize within political organizations – perhaps with the exception of the Muslim Brotherhood Movement, whose activities were restricted to the realm of religious preaching. Underground organizations in Jordan and the West Bank at the time included the Ba’ath Party, the ANM, and the Jordanian Communist Party. Unlike in the Gaza Strip, military activities outside of the legitimate army of the state did not exist.

The difference in the conditions between the West Bank and the Gaza Strip during the period before the occupation had significant ramifications on the struggle in the two areas after the June 1967 war. Where the overcrowded Gaza Strip with the largest refugee population was more prepared for armed resistance, the subdued West Bank, with its strong connections to Jordan, was prepared for peaceful protests and acts of civil disobedience. Still, after a few years of armed struggle in Gaza, the Israeli authorities managed to crush the movement. Israel opened up its market to the Gazan labor force, a fact that tremendously helped the largely poor inhabitants of the Strip and, at the same time, helped Israeli to pacify the population.

The situation in the West Bank was different in some ways. Despite the imposition of an oppressive system of Israeli military rule that crushed

Palestine would like to acknowledge:

**Diego Maradona**

Considered to be one of the top football players in history, Maradona was also the former captain of the Argentinian national team. He openly stated, “I’m the biggest fan of the Palestinian cause,” and “I support this nation’s cause since I grew up on struggle and standing against injustice.”

Palestine would like to acknowledge:

**Gabriel Garcia Marquez**

One of the most important Latin American writers, the Colombian novelist Marquez won the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1982. That same year he published an article denouncing Israeli crimes against the Palestinian and Lebanese peoples, stating that “Begin and Sharon deserve the Nobel Prize for killing.” He remained close to the Palestinian cause until his death in 2014.
any form of organization (be it civil or political) in the West Bank, Israel extended its civil law over occupied Jerusalem, a fact that gave Palestinians in the city the opportunity to organize and build national institutions, using the existing Israeli legal system that had a certain margin of freedoms otherwise denied in the rest of the territory. This is not to suggest that Palestinian activity in Jerusalem was unimpeded, but simply to recognize that the margin for organizing was a little easier in the city. By the early 1980s, Jerusalem had a number of active institutions and centers, such as the Arab Thought Forum and the Arab Studies Society, among others, whose main focus was the condition of the Palestinians under occupation. A number of Palestinian newspapers also appeared in Jerusalem during that period, including Al-Fajer, Al-Shaab, and Al-Tali’aa. Whereas the first two were connected with the PLO and largest faction, Fatah, the last one was the mouthpiece of the Palestinian communist organization – the autonomous West Bank branch of the Jordanian Communist Party at the time. Similarly, a few Jerusalem-based publishing houses emerged and reprinted books from the Arab world, particularly from Lebanon where the PLO and its organizations were based, which were not allowed to enter the occupied territory at the time. The newspapers and the reprinted books had a major impact on fortifying a Palestinian national consciousness in the occupied territory.

Similarly, the emergence of colleges and universities in the West Bank had a significant impact on the political movement, with Birzeit College upgrading to a full-fledged university that attracted students from the entire country, and the establishment of Bethlehem University and Al-Najah in Nablus – all in the mid-1970s – political action was taking hold among students in ways that had not been seen before. The universities became centers for independent political thinking, and Palestinian political groups, such as Fatah, the Popular Front, the communist organization, and the Democratic Front actively mobilized students. For the first time since the Nakba, Palestinians from the various parts of Palestine were meeting, organizing together, and building networks that connected the political movements across Palestine.

In 1976, the PLO gave its blessing to its supporters to participate in the municipal elections that Israel allowed to take place. Supporters of the various Palestinian factions won the elections in most cities and towns, and the new mayors emerged as community leaders who were active in the civil struggle against the occupation.

By the early 1980s, a political leadership and an active popular movement were already in place in the occupied territory, a fact that Israel did not take lightly. With the crushing defeat of the PLO in Lebanon in 1982 and the dispersal of its cadres throughout the Arab world, the occupied territory work conditions for the Palestinian workers inside Israel intensified political activism. In December 1987, an Israeli driver ran over and killed a number of Gaza workers. The protest movement that emerged quickly developed into what became known as the Intifada, which lasted for a few years.

It is possible to make the claim that the groundwork of the future mass mobilization that would be seen after the eruption of the Intifada in 1987 would not have been possible without the footwork of the activists in the Occupied Territory during the first two decades of the occupation. The West Bank and the Gaza Strip became, for the first time in the history of the Palestinian struggle, the center of the movement rather than its periphery. Did such a change have anything to do with the decision of the outside leadership to move into Palestine via the so-called Oslo Peace Accords? This is a matter perhaps for studies that have not yet been undertaken. It goes without saying, of course, that the

 Issam Nassar is a professor at the Department of History at Illinois State University, specializing in modern Middle Eastern history and Palestine’s history in the late Ottoman period.
TAYSEER ABU EISHEH, Merchant, 54 Years Old, Hebron

Occupation is the siege imposed on us that isolates us from our land, our property, and our families. My house is located inside a settlement called Ramat Vishai in Tel Rumeideh in the city of Hebron. It is surrounded on all sides by the settlement, a military camp, and two military checkpoints. I also have a store that is five minutes from my house, located near Shuhada Street. Every morning I have to cross four checkpoints to reach my store. Occupation has affected me economically and morally, and deprived my wife and children of the right to visit me at home. No one may reach the place where I live, not even physicians, and ambulances need special coordination with the occupying authorities. I feel like a prisoner sentenced to life imprisonment.

AMER HLEIHEL, Actor-Director and Art Director at Al-Midan Theater, 37 Years Old, Haifa

Occupation for me means that I was not raised under the chestnut tree planted by my great grandfather in the deserted village of Qadita, and that I haven’t been able to sneak a taste of the fruit of the carob tree behind our neighbor’s house in the village. Occupation means I can’t take the bus from Safad to Gaza to watch a movie or buy sweets or new clothes. I now live in Haifa, and whenever I pass one of the deserted and locked-up Palestinian homes in Wadi Salib, I remember that I am a refugee in my own country. I am engaged in an unending battle with the occupation and I am hopeful of an occupation-less future. I hope that one day I will have breakfast in Haifa, take lunch in Beirut, and enjoy dinner in Damascus.

DALAL ABU AMNEH, Palestinian Artist and Neuroscientist, 33 Years Old, Nazareth

Occupation is the shackles that restrict my cultural, social, artistic, and spatial freedom. It is the type of restriction that forced me to live in isolation from the larger Palestinian and Arab society. It is a restriction that pushes me and my children toward surrender and toward forgetfulness and historical belonging. We Palestinians who live in the 1948 territory are constantly struggling to determine where we belong and identify our national identity. I am sincerely worried that the Palestinian people living inside the 1948 territory will lose their cultural and social identity – something that unfortunately can be seen happening – in spite of the fact that for 69 years we have been able to preserve our history and Arab Palestinian identity. We are struggling with time and I do not wish to see the future generations from the 1948 territory distance themselves from their original identity or lose faith in their right to liberation and to one day return to their homeland.

JAMAL ABU SHA’BAN, Member of the Association for the Defense of the Rights of Displaced People (ADRID), 43 Years Old, Acre

Occupation has taken away my home from me and displaced my family into the diaspora and refugee camps. Occupation has deprived me of the right to exercise my freedom and beliefs. It is the force that has obliterated a whole nation and destroyed its cultural, religious, and historical heritage. If there were no occupation, I would live in peace and our nation would be the richest and most beautiful Mediterranean country. My life would be stable and I would have a position in the government. I would also be able to visit my family and friends in the West Bank and Gaza unimpeded by checkpoints or oppression. In light of the current regional conditions and the dominance of the right-wing extremists all over the world, and in light of the existence of an occupying power that rejects all peaceful solutions and settlement, I see a bleak and bloody future. I expect more human rights violations, more oppression and displacement, and more suffering for the Palestinian people.

AISHA HUSSEIN ARISHI, 77 Years Old, Palestinian Refugee in Sweden

I am a Palestinian refugee from a small village called Faram in the Galilee. My family was expelled in 1948, and I can still remember our home vividly, the fig trees and the olive trees. After the Nakba we went to Baalbek Refugee Camp in Lebanon, where we lived until we migrated to Sweden in 1990. My husband was martyred in an explosion in Beirut in the 1970s, and later I was obliged to work, harvesting crops and providing for my family that consisted of 13 boys and girls. We lived in the refugee camp in very dire circumstances. I also lost 15 members of my family in the Sabra and Shatila massacre. I feel alienated and since I was severed from my family and friends I have not been able to smile or laugh wholeheartedly.

MAHMoud ALADIN, retired Palestinian Ambassador, 73 Years Old, Palestinian refugee in Germany

I was born in Jaffa but my family comes originally from Bethlehem. We moved from Bethlehem and settled in Ramallah, and in 1965 I left Ramallah to study at university in Germany. In the same year I joined Fateh. I could not return home because of the occupation. If it were not for the occupation I would return to my homeland and work for my people and contribute to building our nation. But I was denied the right to return home and see my family and friends. I will certainly return home when the occupation comes to an end. I miss my homeland and my hometown Jaffa. As time passes my yearning and nostalgia grow and likewise the anger in my heart continues to grow. In the blink of an eye I have lost my history! I lived for so many years and I always thought to myself, “When will the occupation end so that I can return home?”

AHMAD AMRO, Unemployed and Currently Studying French – A Palestinian Refugee Born in Yarmouk Refugee Camp who Fled to France after the Destruction of the Camp, 41 Years Old

Occupation means the death of hundreds of Palestinians who could not return to their homeland and who drowned in the Mediterranean while fleeing the destruction of their camps. Occupation is the permanent question we are asked by others: Why did you come to our land? Occupation is the only thing that can obliterate my name and the way I define myself while everybody insists on calling me a “refugee.”

BASSAM Al-AZA, Merchant – Palestinian Refugee in Al-Baqa’ Refugee Camp in Jordan, 55 Years Old

Occupation means losing all of your homeland: land, trees, stones, and everything. Occupation was the thing that made us homeless and turned us into refugees. It took away our rights, and I found myself living in a refugee camp unable to return home. My family was displaced and made homeless twice: Before the Nakba of 1948 my family used to live in Hebron and owned large areas of land, but after the Nakba we were displaced and became homeless and forced to move to Aqabat Jaber in Jericho, and in 1967 my family was expelled to refugee camps in Jordan where we settled in Al-Baqa’ Refugee Camp. We uphold our right of return and we will never give it up. We are waiting for the end of occupation so that we can return home and live in freedom and dignity.
Education under 50 Years of Occupation

Al-Quds University’s Fight for Survival in Occupied East Jerusalem

By Khuloud Khayyat Dajani

Education is a basic human right for each child, and schools must ensure that all children’s educational, psychological, and special needs are addressed as comprehensively as possible. Palestinians hold education in high esteem because due to the scarcity of resources under occupation, it is considered essential for survival.

Access to schools has been hampered by the ongoing occupation throughout the West Bank and Gaza and in occupied East Jerusalem, particularly in schools and communities that are located near the Separation Wall, settlements, military areas, and in isolated communities. Palestinian students continue to experience harassment on their way to school as well as inside the premises of schools, colleges, and universities.

The situation in occupied East Jerusalem (OEJ) is complex, and challenges are largely due to Israeli dominance over the Arab Palestinian population. An ongoing system of exclusion from subsidies and discrimination targets Palestinians. The people of OEJ are living under difficult socio-economic conditions. Approximately 80 percent of them subsist below the poverty line. The average available space of Palestinian households in the Old City consists of 40 square meters, with some families sharing kitchens and bathrooms.

Brutal treatment and humiliation of the population, including young students, by Israeli forces has led to trauma and mental disorders among many young students.

Al-Quds University has existed in Jerusalem for over 30 years. The country’s leading academic institution and the only Arab university in Jerusalem, it ranks top in the entire Arab world with regard to the number of peer-reviewed publications per faculty member in a given year. Al-Quds has two principal campuses: a larger campus is located in Abu Dis, at the edge of Jerusalem, and a smaller “city” campus lies inside occupied East Jerusalem (OEJ) – in the Old City and its environs. With about 1,000 students and numerous institutes and research centers, the Abu Dis campus has over

Palestine would like to acknowledge:

Luisa Morgantini
An Italian politician, member of the EU Parliament and its former Deputy Speaker, Morgantini has been actively supporting the nonviolent resistance of the Palestinian people against the Israeli occupation, as well as Palestinian diplomatic initiatives to achieve the two-state solution.

José Mujica
President of Uruguay between 2010 and 2015, Mujica is known as a human rights defender. Under his leadership, Uruguay recognized the State of Palestine in accordance with international law, as well as the membership of Palestine in all international organizations.
In the past decade, there has been a significant split from the Jerusalem city campus and from the colleges and centers located within the Israeli-defined borders of East Jerusalem. Cut off from the territories by the Separation Wall, these communities have been left in an increasingly precarious position, both legally and practically. As a result, the university campus in OEJ has been forced to severely curtail its educational activities, as both students and professors have consistently been denied access to its premises.

In the last few years, the university has noted a marked increase in the pressure applied by the Israeli government on the political/legal and military fronts. Over the years, hundreds of students and some staff have been injured by the Israeli army in repeated attacks. Such “visits” have occurred on the university campus in Abu Dis and at times have caused injuries among students and staff and damage to university buildings and cars. Hundreds of tear gas canisters, rubber-coated steel bullets, and live ammunition have been fired there. Staff and students are frequently summoned, arrested, and intimidated, on both the Abu Dis campus and the premises in the Old City, which have been raided and closed down on numerous occasions.

On the legal/political level, the university has been struggling for its very existence, battling the threat of closure by the Israeli authorities—a threat that has been lurking for the past seventeen years. In addition, the university has a long history of attempts to fight for its right to exist through negotiating with Israeli authorities and by bringing its case to Israeli courts.

The point of disagreement is that although Al-Quds University is fully accredited and licensed by the relevant Palestinian bodies, and recognized worldwide, the Israeli authorities in OEJ have insisted that it submit to Israeli accreditation standards as an Israeli institution or be closed down and have its administration arrested. Thus, Al-Quds University was ultimately forced to apply for accreditation of its “city” campus as a separate institution under Israel’s jurisdiction. It did this based on an informal agreement with the Israeli Ministry and Council of Higher Education that, once it had submitted its application, Israel would automatically recognize all the degrees held by university graduates.

According to both international law and the Oslo Accords, Palestinians have a right to both study and work in Jerusalem; they must be given the chance to learn and acquire the skills necessary to earn a living in their home city and country. Accordingly, Al-Quds University has the right to exist and operate as a university in East Jerusalem. In a formal statement to the Knesset signed by the then foreign minister, the late President Shimon Peres, the Israeli Foreign Ministry reiterated in a letter to Minister Holst of Norway on October 11, 1993: “Therefore, all Palestinian institutions of East Jerusalem, including the economic, social, educational and cultural, and the holy Christian and Moslem places, are performing an essential task for the Palestinian population. Needless to say, we will not hamper their activity; on the contrary, the fulfillment of this important mission is to be encouraged.”

The plight of Al-Quds University may not be a political issue. The university's
services are vital for the inhabitants of our city, but a solution can apparently only be reached if continued and great pressure is exerted on Israel to respect both international law, especially the right to education, and its own stated commitments. Israel must cease immediately from attacking Al-Quds University campuses, staff, and students, and it must permit the university to work without hindrance in Abu Dis and East Jerusalem, providing recognition to its graduates.

Israel must adhere to the stipulations of international law and to its own commitments signed in the Oslo Accords. It must support, rather than stifle, education on the campuses of Al-Quds University, both in Abu Dis and in occupied East Jerusalem.

Khuloud Jamal Khayyat Dajani is a doctor of medicine, a doctor of community medicine, and a doctor of philosophy in health policy and science. She is a professor of social medicine and health policy and dean of Hind Al-Husseini Women’s College, founding dean of public health and the Child Institute at Al-Quds University, and former executive vice president and director of International Cooperation at Al-Quds University.
Planning and Its Discontents
The Israeli Planning Policies in Palestine

By Anjad Hithnawi and Ahmad El-Atrash

When Aristotle (384–322 BC) defined phronesis as an intellectual virtue of wisdom in determining both the ends and the means to attain them, he certainly could not expect that phrasonic planning research (in which insights are developed through the detailed analysis of particular processes) would be necessary to comprehend the planning crisis that affects post-1967 Palestine. Israeli policies on the ground have, by and large, been implemented to serve an expansionist project in which the everyday is often an instantiation of multiple episodes of contradictions and struggles. Only with a probe look into these policies can one understand the colonization processes that have been employed over the last five decades, confiscating and appropriating Palestinian land, evicting its people, and depopulating its rural lands. This piece tries to draw a nuanced picture of this troubled planning situation.

As soon as the Israeli forces completed the military occupation of the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, they started unabatedly to enforce a new policy, creating a new reality on the ground. On the third day, the Maghrabi Quarter in the Old City of Jerusalem was demolished under the false claim that its 650 residents were living in slum conditions, when in fact the reason was to make way for a plaza below the Western Wall and an open-air synagogue. Similar efforts have aimed to fabricate a geographic reality in favor of Jewish supremacy, implemented especially in Jerusalem and its environs. By 1970, Israel had managed, through a series of expropriation acts, to seize an area almost three times larger than Arab East Jerusalem prior to 1967. In the areas surrounding East Jerusalem, Israel had built up settlements that covered an area of more than 10.5 square kilometers. Over time, Israeli settlements have increased in size and significance, controlling now more than 8.5 percent of the West Bank, mainly due to the support and enabling environment provided by the Israeli planning system.

Day after day, the Israeli occupation creates obstacles and challenges that resolutely deny the basic human rights of Palestinians. For instance, Palestinians cannot register their lands or participate in the plan-making processes related to their communities, whereas Israeli settlers have a say in planning their settlements. In a few cases, Israeli authorities presented plans for the spatial organization of Palestinians, but they were rarely inclined to respond to the expressed suggestions and needs of Palestinians. A closer look into such plans reveals that the intention has been to confine Palestinian growth and reserve the lands and natural resources for the Israeli expansionist settlement project. By pretending to cooperate with Palestinian communities, Israel aims to appear concerned about Palestinian aspirations, without actually conceding sovereignty over the land. During years of aggression, Palestinians have remained suspicious of these nefarious plans, but they refused to concede to...
the threat of such a bleak scenario.

A discipline of details has always been needed to comprehend the bigger picture. The stagnant peace process that started with the Declaration of Principles (DoP) in 1993, often made the prevailing planning practices ambivalent at best, and dismissive at worst, concerning concrete spatial development towards sustainability. Since the signing of the DoP, more than 4,000 Palestinian structures have been demolished, and the number of pending demolition orders is estimated at 22,000, more than half of which are in East Jerusalem alone. Further sobering facts reveal that more than 750,000 trees have been uprooted, i.e., over 4.5 times more than the total number of trees in the 8 Royal Parks inside Greater London, including Greenwich and Hyde parks.

The result of these practices has been a forced and accelerated urbanization process. While urbanization in and of itself is a positive development, care has to be taken that proper tools are used and fit-for-purpose approaches are utilized that are poverty- and gender-responsive, and environmentally friendly. The Israeli occupation is indeed an urban-centric project. The number of Israeli settlements in rural areas of the West Bank is almost twice the number of settlements in its urban areas, but in the “urban” settlements there are almost eight times as many settlers as in the “rural” settlements. Analysis reveals that areas taken up by Israeli settlements exceed those of Palestinian communities in eight out of the eleven West Bank governorates. Whereas inside Israel proper, the urbanization rate stands at 91.9 percent, urbanization among Palestinians has witnessed an unprecedented increase of more than 300 percent over the last five decades. Clearly, the 630,000 Israeli settlers who occupy the West Bank are a threat to the harmonious urbanization of Palestine. Palestinian society has been urbanizing rapidly largely due to the geo-political conditions and developments on the ground, but this fast pace is not sustainable. As of today, the population of the Palestinian territory is 74 percent urban (69 percent in the West Bank and 81 percent in the Gaza Strip), which is much higher than the average figures for the Arab states and the world, which stand at 57 percent and 51 percent, respectively. The period after the eruption of the first Intifada witnessed less urbanization in the West Bank. But since the second Intifada, increased daily violence, restrictions on movement, dispossession of land, and the curtailing of economic activities caused by Israeli practices has led to a relatively high outflux of the West Bank population. The urbanization trend has mainly affected smaller Palestinian communities and has caused a population decrease of almost 50 percent in communities with fewer than 2,500 inhabitants. High outflux rates to areas and countries outside the West Bank (emigration) have been coupled with a silent influx by small rural communities to large urban communities (migration).

This analysis is a key element in understanding the context and is crucial in order to realize the transformative power of urbanization that could support the Palestinian flagship project of building a Palestinian state. In October 2016, along with 191 states, both Palestinians and Israelis signed on to the New Urban Agenda adopted in Quito, Ecuador. This document outlines how cities and communities need to be planned and managed in order to promote sustainable urbanization. The Israeli planning system in the occupied Palestinian territory needs to be dismantled altogether if sustainable urbanization is to be achieved, and Palestinians must be enabled to resume full planning jurisdiction and authority over land, natural resources, and regulatory frameworks. Members of the international community are asked to curb and reverse the settlement drive that has been sweeping across the occupied territory, and to advocate for the lawful right of Palestinians to plan for a better future.

Anjad Hithnawi and Ahmad El-Atrash share both profession and life together. Anjad is an architect and planner with experience in working with universities, INGOs, the UN, and the Palestinian Authority. She finished her postgraduate studies at the University of Nottingham, UK, and Massachusetts Institute of Technology, USA. Ahmad is an engineer and planner with solid experience in working with think tanks, research institutes, and development partners, including the UN. He received his PhD from TU-Dortmund University, Germany.
MUHANAD ODEH, Teacher, 42 Years Old — Palestinian Refugee in Syria — Born in Yarmouk Refugee Camp and Today Living in One of the Old Damascus Suburbs

Occupation means that you lose hope and live in permanent helplessness. It means that you’re pushed away at a very young age from the lap of your mother and tied to a cold wooden chair where there is fear and darkness. Occupation is not to forget the furniture of your grandmother who had put her head on your lap and murmured, “I miss Safad.”

NA’IFA KHALED HAMOUDEH (UM ALI), a Palestinian Refugee in Al-Wihdat Refugee Camp in Jordan, 69 Years Old

I was only one month old when the Nakba took place. My siblings and I lost our family for 15 days. We used to sleep under the fig trees and as a result my sister contracted conjunctivitis that remained with her all her life. Occupation forced us to live in refugee camps, deprived us of education, and took away all our rights. Before occupation we used to live luxuriously in Deir Tarif. We owned a big house and large areas of land cultivated with citrus and olive trees. How much I yearn to go back to my homeland! But I will never return as long as the occupation is still there. I can never put up with seeing the occupation killing and humiliating our people.

ADNAN AI-ASMAR, a (blind) Palestinian refugee in Al-Baqa’ Refugee Camp in Jordan – director of the Community Rehabilitation Center for the Disabled in the Camp, 62 Years Old

We are originally from Beit Natif Village in Hebron district. We left our home in 1948 and took refuge in Azabat Jaber in Jericho. In 1967, we moved to Al-Karama Refugee Camp and later to Al-Baqa Camp where we have been living since 1967. Occupation causes poverty, hunger, and instability of income among refugees. I am a displaced refugee living a hard and humiliating life outside my own country. We lived in poverty in tents with no services – a humiliating and painful life. There is no dignity for any person who lives as a refugee outside his country. Many of my family members contracted skin diseases as well as diseases in their digestive system because of displacement and homelessness. Occupation has also affected my and my family’s educational status. I studied in a tent until the sixth grade and later I went to a school built of corrugated steel and asbestos sheets.

DIEGO (not his real name), Lawyer, a Palestinian Refugee in Chile, 26 Years Old

My grandfather was forced to leave his homeland. We are always terrified that the occupiers are not going to let us enter Palestine, or that they will subject us to psychological torture in order to enter our own homeland. We travel without even knowing whether we’ll be allowed in or not. We live with the fear that if we say all that we think we may not be allowed to enter Palestine again. Israel has built its illegal annexation Wall through our lands in Beit Jala, Cremisan. We live in fear that those lands will eventually be annexed in order to expand an illegal settlement. Several of my relatives have had to leave Palestine because of the occupation. I definitely want to return to the State of Palestine, and until that happens we’ll continue to support the process of liberation from wherever we are.

MOHAMMAD OWEISS, Businessman and Political Analyst — A Palestinian Refugee in the United States, 62 Years Old

I was born in Ein Al-Hilweh Refugee Camp but I am originally from Al-Manshiye in Acre. My family was expelled in 1948 and moved to Ein Al-Hilweh. When I was five, we moved to live in Al-Arish Refugee Camp in south Lebanon. When I was twenty, I went to Saudi Arabia and then to the United States where I have been living for the last forty years. The only ones who can understand the meaning of being a refugee are the Palestinians who have actually experienced displacement and homelessness. I myself feel like a tree with its roots in Palestine and its trunk somewhere else. The tree cannot take in food or water from the land where it has grown. The fall of the trunk means my end and the end of my Palestinian identity because I am not living on my land. If it were not for the occupation I would have been a productive businessman working in my country where I would farm and cultivate the land, grow and die on it. If the occupation were to end tomorrow, tomorrow I would be back home.

NABIL MOHAMMAD, Vice President of the American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee (ADC) – A Palestinian refugee in the United States, 53 Years Old

I come originally from Samaha Village in Acre. My family was expelled in 1948 to Baalbek in Lebanon, and then we moved to Tel Al-Zaatar Refugee Camp and later to Al-Rashidiyye Camp and then to Sabra and Shatila Camp. My grandfather owned olive trees and an olive press in Acre and when asked in Lebanon if he wanted to obtain the Lebanese ID card he said, “The olive press is waiting for my return and I am sure one day I will eventually return home.” Around ninety relatives of my extended family were killed during the Tel Al-Zaatar massacre, including my father and elder brother. More of my relatives were killed during the Sabra and Shatila massacre, including my mother and five of my siblings. Only my little brother and sister and I stayed alive. We are determined to stay alive in spite of the harsh conditions we have experienced while living in refugee camps. We have learned not to lose hope. Occupation is the cause of our homelessness and displacement, and if it were not for the occupation there would be no Palestinian refugee camps.
When we woke up to a new reality on June 5, 1967, we realized that we were not ready for war or for an occupation. Many of us thought, however, that this occupation would come to an end as suddenly as it had begun, especially after the unanimous adoption of UN Resolution 242 by the United Nations Security Council on November 22, 1967. Of course many others were not as optimistic, considering that they had lived through the Nakba of 1948, and are still waiting for the implementation of UN General Assembly Resolution 194 that calls for the right of return of Palestinian refugees. The rhetoric of the occupying forces about “liberating Judea and Samaria” did not give much hope.

In the meantime, we had to be innovative and creative in dealing with this new reality. At the time, I was fully involved as a volunteer with the Young Women’s Christian Association (YWCA), and we felt that our main concern was not only women, but children, youth, and the community as a whole.

With the support of Bread for the World, the YWCA had just finished the construction of a new building that included a section to be used as a hotel, offering the guarantee of a steady income that would allow the association to cover the cost of its activities and vocational school. When the war broke out, however, the building’s interior was not yet complete, although all the fittings and furniture were already stored in part of the building. The YWCA had been using two rented apartments on Salah El-Din Street, one that housed the administration, activities, and a hostel for girls, and the other a vocational school.

The first thing that worried YWCA general secretary Doris Salah was the new building. She feared that it would be taken over by the Israeli military forces, under the pretext that it was abandoned. In fact, the guard of the building had been killed during the war, although he was unarmed and all alone. Without hesitation, Doris took it upon herself to move the furniture and equipment of the two rented apartments to the new building to give the impression that the building was in full use. In the meantime, the contractor was able to resume work and finish the building.

In no time the YWCA opened its doors and served as a haven for everyone in the community irrespective of faith or gender. Clubs for all ages were established; members of El-Jeel el-Jadid (the young generation) were able to enjoy a variety of programs such as music, art, and drama, as well as summer day camps until the YWCA was eventually able to buy property in Ramallah to run a sleep-in camp. Nadi el-Ghad (the Future Generation Club) laid the groundwork for training future leaders in civil society. Meetings, lectures, and panels on various issues were frequently held. There was no TV at the time, so the YWCA provided movies for children and occasionally for adults as well.

Members of The Mothers’ Group were very concerned about bringing up a new generation under occupation. They helped to plan programs for the children in order to provide an atmosphere of...
hope. The group helped to establish parent-teacher associations in the Jerusalem schools in order to guarantee cooperation between the school and the home. It also encouraged the promotion of local products and arranged for the first exhibit of local products with a special focus on traditional Palestinian handicrafts.

It was a time when there were no art galleries or music schools, so the YWCA worked with the schools to run art shows and competitions as well as musical performances, including school choirs. The YWCA itself hosted the Jerusalem Choir for classical music that performed during Christmas and Easter. For many years, Salwa Tabri directed the choir and Nadia Mikhail-Abboushi provided accompaniment. The choir eventually moved to Ramallah because of travel restrictions on the people from the remainder of the West Bank. At the same time, some of the talented young members of the YWCA formed a number of musical ensembles, and Rima Tarazi led a choir whose repertoire focused on Arabic national songs. One performance, in particular, was held in honor of the families of prisoners, including those who had been martyred during the hunger strike at the Nafha Prison in 1980. Another outstanding event was The History of National Songs performed by the choir along with a narrative about that history.

The dabka (folk dancing) group, trained by Saliba Totah, was one of the first in the country after 1967. The young men and women performed regularly on various occasions and also very often for groups who were staying at the YWCA hotel. In the absence of a national government at the time, with the occupying forces not assuming their responsibilities (under international law), it would not be an exaggeration to say that the YWCA was considered a center of culture and information. YWCA members as well as leading figures of the community were often asked to speak to foreign groups and to form study circles on the Palestinian cause. The YWCA even had its own human rights committee that documented violations and disseminated information before any of the civil-society organizations in that field were established.

At the request of UNRWA, the YWCA established preschools in Qalandiya and Jalazon refugee camps after 1967. The YWCA had already had extensive experience in the field after being one of the first organizations to work with refugees in Aqbat Jaber in 1948. Through the preschools, it was possible to work with the mothers in the camps and implement joint programs with YWCA members from Jerusalem and Ramallah, which was a great experience for both groups of women. Later on, young girls from the refugee camps were also able to join the summer sleep-in camps in Ramallah.

Shortly after these humble beginnings, in the early seventies, young committed members of the community from Ramallah and Jerusalem started a number of creative initiatives in drama, art, and music. Balaleen, the first theatrical group, performed in schools and municipal halls. All its members were volunteers. The script was written by the group itself to be pertinent to the situation, and the performances were in colloquial Arabic, which appealed to a wide range of audiences. Soon afterwards small groups mushroomed out of this first initiative, the most

The Oslo interim agreement of 1993 defined Jerusalem as a permanent status issue. Many Palestinian and non-Palestinian institutions began to move out of Jerusalem as the city became increasingly difficult to access for Palestinians from the remainder of the West Bank. As a result, the city began to lose its former status as a Palestinian cultural hub.
outstanding of which was El-Hakawati, which used Al-Nuzha Cinema as its base. Eventually the site became known as the Palestine National Theatre and hosted many drama groups and other activities.

It was the same with art. A group of committed artists started The League of Palestinian Artists in the early seventies, and their work focused on the Palestinian cause using symbols that were familiar to and understood by the community. The New Visions group emerged from the league and established Al-Wasiti Center in Jerusalem’s Sheikh Jarrah quarter. It was the first art center that provided opportunities for school children and members of the community to learn about art and attend art shows.

Also at the beginning of the 1970s, “committed songs” emerged to express opposition to the occupation, especially during the first Intifada. Mustafa al-Kurd and Al-Bara’em group were among the first names associated with this kind of music, and El-Funoun was one of the first dabka groups that eventually developed into a professional troupe. In the early 1980s, Sabreen musical ensemble was formed and was followed later on by a number of other individual initiatives. In the early 1990s the National Conservatory of Music was established by a group of musicians under the umbrella of Birzeit University. Soon after, other music schools were created, such as the Magnificat Institute, which is affiliated with the Franciscan order, as well as Al-Kamandjati in Ramallah.

Unfortunately after the Oslo Accords, Jerusalem, which was the center of most of the cultural activities, was greatly affected because the city was no longer accessible to the people who lived in the remainder of the West Bank. As a result, a number of initiatives, including Ashtar Theatrical Group, moved to Ramallah. In the meantime, other activities emerged in many locations throughout the West Bank. In Jerusalem, Palestinian centers such as Yabous Cultural Center, The Music Conservatory, Al Hoash Palestinian Art Court, the Palestine National Theatre, Al-Maamal Foundation for Contemporary Art, and Dar Issaf Nashashibi for Arts, Culture and Literature continue to contribute significantly towards sustaining cultural activities in Jerusalem. The regular book readings and book launches by the Educational Book Shop have been a source of political and cultural enlightenment, notwithstanding, of course, the contribution of Palestinian universities and community colleges who offer art and music programs, as well as the museums and other cultural centers on the West Bank.

My apologies go to all the young men and women who were involved in various initiatives and cultural activities but who are not acknowledged here. It would take a whole article to list their names and give them the credit that they deserve. However, this is a personal reflection and not formal documentation. Given the schools of music, art, drama, and folk-dancing, as well as the numerous talented artists, singers, and performers who have emerged over the years, the cultural aspect of Palestinian life has been a source of inspiration to help sustain the people under occupation, lift their spirits, and give them hope for a brighter future.

After fifty years, it has become clear that this is not an “ordinary” occupation that will be dismantled by a UN resolution. It is a settler colonial regime with an ongoing project of dispossession. Yet how can we lose hope when justice is on our side? And how can we lose hope when we see young children carrying their musical instruments and getting ready to join the orchestra? January 1, 2011, marked the debut of the Palestine National Orchestra under the slogan: “Today an Orchestra, Tomorrow a State.” Dare we hope?

Samia Khoury is a retired community volunteer who devotes most of her time to writing reflections on the current situation. Her book Reflections from Palestine: A Journey of Hope, published by Rimal in 2013, is also the title of her blog: reflectionsfrompalestine.blogspot.com.
Occupation, Oppression, and the Right to Education

By Mohamad Allan

College is supposedly one of the best phases in our lives, not only due to the amount of knowledge we receive, but also because it is the space where we become independent for the first time and are able to explore all aspects of ourselves. The college experience in Palestine, however, is different. It is a fight for a basic human right in the midst of the absurdity of the Israeli occupation.

The right to education is a fundamental human right and basic freedom; it is the responsibility of governments, organizations, and individuals to defend it and work towards its realization. As a child growing up under occupation, I had various abnormal daily experiences that seemed completely standard at the time. Not until living in the United States and the United Arab Emirates and going back to Palestine to pursue a bachelor’s at Birzeit University did I realize that I was living under an illegal Israeli occupation that violates the simplest human rights of individuals on a daily basis.

During my college experience in Palestine from 2007 to 2011, we students were directly affected by several incidents during our course of study. Birzeit University does not offer on-campus housing, so students live off campus either with their families or in privately owned dormitories. On multiple occasions, we found ourselves stranded, either under curfew when we were not allowed to leave our homes, or surprised by checkpoints on the way to college, preventing us from exercising our right to education. This continues as a result of the Israeli occupation’s methodical barricade to Palestinian education in the West Bank and Gaza which not only violates basic human rights but also destroys basic infrastructure. Due to frequent closures of cities, hundreds of military roadblocks, and the construction of the illegal apartheid Separation Wall, thousands of students and teachers are prevented from getting to their educational institutions, yet they continue to exercise their right to education and recognize its potential in acquiring peace.

As a Palestinian American who just finished his master’s degree in the United States, I now better understand the difference between being a student in Palestine and a student in the United States. I realize that a 20-minute commute to class that takes 5 hours is not okay. Meeting your professor and classmates at a public library in Ramallah because we could not get to class is not okay. Leaving your home in the morning and not knowing what to expect, or coming home covered in mud from crossing checkpoints to get to campus is not okay. I am bombarded with values, stories, and theories that supposedly represent where I come from and what my college experience has been like, but in reality

Palestine would like to acknowledge:

José Saramago
Renowned Portuguese writer and Nobel Prize winner in literature, Saramago expressed his solidarity with the Palestinian people on countless occasions, including by visiting Palestine in the middle of the second Intifada. He publicly called for an end to Israeli impunity for their war crimes in Occupied Palestine. He passed away in 2010.

Pope Shenouda III of Alexandria
Pope Shenouda led the Coptic community in Egypt for 40 years and was a committed supporter of the Palestinian cause. He banned Coptic pilgrimage to the Holy Land in order not to normalize the occupation. Pope Shenouda used his position to lobby various countries on behalf of the Palestinian people.
the experience of college life in Palestine is like being in a prison with no possible escape route.

Constantly affected by international laws and public policy, the Palestinian-Israeli conflict remains one of the strongest topics in today's politics and leadership with no signs of justice. Despite the lack of objective media attention in the West Bank and Gaza to deliver an authentic image, Palestinians remain resilient every single day notwithstanding the lack of support by the international community. In spite of the suffocating Israeli occupation practices, Palestinians rank high in world literacy averages and choose education as one of the most peaceful tools to resist occupation. The human development study conducted by The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in 2014 shows that 96.3 percent of the Palestinian population is literate.¹

With minimal resources, we Palestinians continue to build and structure our current education system through achieving the highest levels of schooling abroad and then returning to Palestine to apply our academic knowledge and assist in developing our society. On the way towards liberation, Palestinians will continue to do whatever possible to access education. As the great Edward Said put it, “We cannot fight for our rights and our history as well as the future until we are armed with weapons of criticism and dedicated consciousness.”

Mohamad Allan is a Palestinian American who works in healthcare management with a specialization in emergency medical transportation. He holds a bachelor’s degree in business administration from Birzeit University and a master’s degree in public administration from Keller Graduate School of Management, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Mr. Allan is currently working on obtaining his PhD in public administration with a research focus on corporate social responsibility.

The UN adoption of the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics is pivotal to the process of empowering official statistics, as these principles strongly and clearly call for the enforcement of professional independence and scientific methods in producing statistics. But the principles are not at all sufficient if only treated as formal statements. It is essential to bring them to life in everyday practice and to defend them where necessary. They are essential to ensure public trust in national statistical systems through professional independence and impartiality of statisticians, their use of scientific and transparent methods to produce appropriate and reliable data that adhere to certain professional and scientific standards.

Professional independence in official statistics – from the public perspective – comes as a result of consistent practices of the National Statistics Office. It is a process that requires hard work, professional ethics, distinct organizational identity, and competent professional staff. All this is available at the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS) through the skilled statistical professionals who represent the bureau. Reliable services and attentiveness to users build credibility.

The Council of Ministers in Palestine adopted the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics in 2005 and the Code of Practice in 2006. These steps have contributed significantly to the development of Palestine’s official statistics system. The PCBS operates in a fragile environment that affects the setting of its priorities. Despite this fact, the PCBS has maintained a reputable image that has been shaped by its professional independence, strong national and international recognition, expert power in the field of official statistics, and credibility among users and stakeholders, as well as an organizational culture that is based on continuous learning, innovation, and a strong presence in local community. The PCBS reputation exceeds the boundaries of Palestine, as evidenced by the formal and informal recognition of the quality of statistics and management of statistical operations by the international statistical community. The subscription to the Special Data Dissemination Standard of the IMF that was accepted on April 19, 2012, is a case in point, as well as the recent European Foundation for Quality Management (EFQM) Committed to Excellence International Award.

PCBS contributes to the development of Arab and international statistical systems through its substantive contributions and leadership in promoting the value of official statistics. In recognition of its integrity, professional independence, and quality of work, the PCBS is part of international and regional bodies as head of the International Association of Official Statistics, and as a member of the UN High Level Group on Partnership and Statistical Capacity Building, the Board of the Arab Institute for Research and Training in Statistics, the Bureau of the Statistical Committee of the UN Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, and others.

The PCBS experience has shown that official decisions and formal statements are necessary to pave the way for the enforcement of change and the modernization of the national statistical system. Yet what really counts is the government support, the mutually beneficial cooperation with partners, the continuous assessment of priorities, and the support of partners during the process of producing official statistics. Specific attention must be given to the building and maintenance of trust by all stakeholders, including policy makers, the media, research communities, and the public at large.

The PCBS is a learning organization that strives continuously to develop its operations and services to increase efficiency and provide quality statistics to strategically meet the increasing demands of users and stakeholders. PCBS recognizes the volume of challenges ahead but its determination stems from the support of partners and its belief in its mandate as Palestine’s provider of official statistics. The PCBS has high public visibility, and it is viewed by other national institutions of the Palestinian state as a role model, which obliges it to function in a manner that is socially and ethically sound.

The PCBS was founded in 1993 as the National Statistical Institute of Palestine. The legal basis for PCBS and its work is the General Statistics Law and its bylaws. The PCBS is a government institution that enjoys a judicial character and is directly accountable to the Council of Ministers.

Palestine would like to acknowledge:

Desmond Tutu
An outspoken South African archbishop and a symbol of the anti-apartheid struggle in South Africa. Tutu repeatedly called for an end to Israeli apartheid and the implementation of the rights of the Palestinian people. He also endorsed BDS.

Roger Waters
A musician and Pink Floyd star, Waters joined the Palestinian quest for freedom after a visit to the West Bank in 2006. Since then, he has been a supporter and an advocate of BDS. Waters graffitied on the apartheid Wall: “We don’t need no thought control.”
50 YEARS OF OCCUPATION
Figures and Facts since 1967

Palestinians killed by Israeli occupation forces

1,491
Palestinians including
304 children

1987 (first Intifada)

7,822
Palestinians

From 2000 (second Intifada) to 2013

2,200
Palestinians including
705 children
333 women

2014 (The 3rd attack on Gaza)

3,083
Palestinians

From 2009 to Feb. 2017

The West Bank

From the year 2006 – Feb. 2017:
1,256 Palestinian housing units in Area C were demolished, leaving 5,789 people displaced, including 2,930 children.

Once completed, the full length of the apartheid wall will be around 440 miles long, leading to the confiscation 46% of West Bank’s land.

The Gaza Strip

After the 2012 Israeli attack on Gaza, 50,000 Palestinians were left in need of some form of psychological intervention and 286 schools were destroyed.

44% of the Palestinians in the Gaza Strip suffer from food insecurity

The siege on Gaza has reduced Gaza’s GDP by 50%

Restriction of Movement

More than 500 checkpoints, roadblocks and barriers in the West Bank.

More than 2,500 children travel through at least one checkpoint per day to go to school.

Settlements

40% of the total area of the West Bank has been confiscated by Israel through settlement building

More than 250,000 Palestinians in 80 communities are vulnerable to daily settler violence.

The Palestinian Detainees

April 2017
more than 1,800 Palestinian detainees participate in the longest mass hunger strike in Palestinian history

More than 800,000 cases of arrests, including 12,000 women and 8,000 children

East Jerusalem

Since 1967, around 15,000 residencies have been revoked from Palestinian Jerusalem residents.

From the year 2004 – Feb. 2017:
696 Palestinian housing units were demolished, leaving 2,552 people displaced, including 1,389 children.

“My name is Aysha. I am 15 years old. I have lived through 3 wars, lost my home and many relatives, but I dream of becoming a famous journalist when I am older, so I can share the stories of others.”

Data Sources: B’Tselem statistics, PCBS press releases.

Designed by: مشاريع القدس التعليمية
Al Quds Educational Channel
Kingdom of Olives and Ash
Writers Confront the Occupation
Edited by Michael Chabon and Ayelet Waldman
ISBN 13: 970-0062431783
Reviewed by Leslie Cohen and Fida Jiryis

June 2017 marks the 50th anniversary of the Israeli occupation of the Palestinian territories – a milestone brought into even sharper focus by the 2016 United Nations Security Council resolution that cites the presence of Israeli settlements as a hindrance to true peace with the Palestinians. Over the decades, the violence on both sides of the conflict has been horrific, the casualties catastrophic. In 2004, to speak out against the injustices committed there and to help end the occupation, a group of former Israeli soldiers who served in the occupied territories created a nonprofit organization, Breaking the Silence (BTS).

When members of BTS met novelist and essayist Ayelet Waldman at the Jerusalem Writers’ Festival in 2014, they invited her to tour Hebron, a city of more than 200,000 Palestinians with a settlement of a few hundred Israeli settlers – guarded by hundreds of Israeli soldiers – lodged at its core. What she witnessed disturbed her greatly, and as she later described the events to her husband, Michael Chabon, they both came to understand that they wanted to do something, anything, to change the situation. Then they realized: “Storytelling itself – bearing witness, in vivid and clear language, to things personally seen and incidents encountered – has the power to engage the attention of people, like us, who had long since given up paying attention, or who had simply given up.”

Working with BTS and other local Palestinian and Israeli activists, Chabon and Waldman invited two dozen acclaimed international writers to visit the West Bank and Gaza to share with the world what they saw. Kingdom of Olives and Ash is a collection of unflinching, often devastating testimonies of the ground-level human consequences of an occupation too often seen from afar as an intractable abstraction.

For many of the writers, it was their first visit to the area; others were returning to a place they knew well. The Palestinian and Israeli writers were writing about home. Over the course of 2016, the international writers came to Palestine-Israel in delegations organized by Breaking the Silence. They spent their time in the occupied territories, in the East Jerusalem neighborhoods of Silwan, Sheikh Jarrah, and Shuafat Refugee Camp; in the West Bank cities of Hebron, Ramallah, Nablus, Jericho, and Bethlehem; in West Bank villages, including Nabi Saleh, Susiya, Bili’in, Umm al-Khair, Jinba, al-Wallajeh, Kufr Qaddum; and in the Gaza Strip. The writers met with Palestinian community organizers and nonviolent protest leaders, among them Issa Amro of Youth Against Settlements, as well as with shop owners, artists, intellectuals, and laborers, women’s rights advocates and journalists, businesspeople and farmers, and bereaved families. Some writers visited the military courts. They also met with Israeli settlers and Israeli and Palestinian anti-occupation activists, human rights lawyers, academics, and writers. The subjects chosen by the authors were diverse and varied – a breadth of experience, perspective, and narrative that is reflected in the pages of this book.

After nearly being turned away at the border gate, Dave Eggers spends a weekend in Gaza, talking with a young couple desperate to obtain visas to America where they might be able to make new lives for themselves. Israeli novelist Assaf Gavron considers the plight of Palestinian soccer players, whose efforts to participate in international competitions are often frustrated at the border. Renowned Palestinian author Raja Shehadeh writes about his friend, a Palestinian taxi driver, and the obstacles placed in front of average Palestinians as they seek to navigate the Kafkaesque maze of the occupation. Madeleine Thien writes about life in the small villages of the south Hebron hills, including Susiya, where every house has been given a demolition order by the Israeli authorities. Palestinian writer Fida Jiryis writes about the occupation as a continuation of the Nakba and dispossession of Palestinians in 1948, and sheds light on the life of Palestinian citizens of Israel, who face institutionalized racism and discrimination. Other contributors to this anthology include Pulitzer Prize-winning writers Lorraine Adams and Geraldine Brooks, National Book Award winners Colum McCann and Jacqueline Woodson, and Nobel laureate Mario Vargas Llosa.


All royalties from the sales of Kingdom of Olives and Ash will be divided between Breaking the Silence and Youth Against Settlements, a Palestinian NGO based in Hebron.
Ahmad Dahbour is a renowned Palestinian poet from the Revolution Generation. He was born in Haifa, Palestine, on April 21, 1946. On the day of his second birthday, his family was exiled from Palestine to Lebanon as Haifa fell into the hands of the Zionists, and the family ultimately settled in a refugee camp in Homs, Syria. Due to the harsh conditions and poverty that refugees faced, Dahbour did not complete high school; however, he was an avid reader and continued to teach himself, demonstrating an early gift for writing poetry in his teen years.

He published his first collection of poetry, The Predators and the Children’s Eyes, when he was 18 years old, and his first complete book, which included seven collections of poetry, in 1983. His poem “The Tale of the Palestinian Child”, written in 1969, appeared in his second collection, which bore the same title and gained him a distinguished place amongst prominent Palestinian and Arab poets.

Dahbour’s poetry derived its images and ideas from his own experience of living through the Palestinian catastrophe, the Nakba, and the consequent oppression and suffering in the refugee camps of the diaspora. His poetry, however, departed from subjective experience and reached out to and resonated with the masses. Many of his works became patriotic songs that were filled with the yearning to return to Palestine, glorifying the revolution, and empowering the poor and the weak to overcome the misery of their reality and to achieve victory and freedom. These songs, mostly written between 1978 and 2011, are still played and memorized by many.

In the late 1970s, Dahbour cofounded the musical troupe Al-‘Ashikeen (The Adorers), for which he wrote numerous songs dedicated to the Palestinian resistance. The songs and troupe were well received by both Palestinian and Arab audiences. Although Dahbour wrote most of the songs, the troupe’s music also included work by poets such as Mahmoud Darwish, Tawfiq Zayyad, and Samih Al-Qasem. Because of the band’s unprecedented success, efforts are still being made to revive it since it disbanded in the 1990s.

In addition to poetry and songs, Dahbour wrote a television series about a resistance figure, the Syrian preacher Izz ad-Din Al-Qassam. He also wrote numerous articles in various newspapers and magazines, ranging from daily columns to literary critiques. His work on the latter elevated his status to that of a distinguished literary critic.

Dahbour joined the Palestinian revolution in its early years as a war correspondent, writing for Fatah newspaper from the freedom fighters’ bases on the frontlines in Jordan. Subsequently, his destiny was tied to the revolution as he fought in battles in Jordan and Lebanon, eventually relocating from Syria to Tunisia, and finally back to Palestine. Although Dahbour returned to his homeland because of the Oslo Accords, he adamantly rejected the new reality it created – one without Haifa – by coining the term “the part of Palestine available to us” in reference to the West Bank and Gaza.

Dahbour worked as editor of Lotus magazine, editor-in-chief of Albayadir, general director of the Culture Department of the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO), and deputy minister of culture of the Palestinian Authority, the position from which he ultimately retired. He published 13 collections of poetry in two books, and efforts are under way to reissue his work, including some previously unpublished writings.

Dahbour was presented with the Tawfiq Zayyad Poetry Award in 1988 and was granted the Medal of the Order of Merit and Superiority by Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas in 2012. He also received the Jerusalem Award for Culture and Creativity in 2015.

Dahbour passed away on April 8, 2017 in Ramallah.
WHERE TO GO?

From Dhahriya to Beit Mirsim
A Hike on Masar Ibrahim Al-Khalil

Courtesy of VisitPalestine.ps

The Masar Ibrahim Al-Khalil is a long-distance, cultural hiking trail in Palestine. The route is 321 kilometers long and extends through the West Bank – from the village of Rummana northwest of Jenin to Beit Mirsim southwest of Hebron. The trail passes through 53 cities and villages where hikers, walkers, and travelers can experience the famous Palestinian hospitality.

The trail is divided into 21 day-long stages, with most ending in locations that offer travelers accommodations through local homestay arrangements, small guesthouses, Bedouin tents, or even a cave (in the area of the Jerusalem wilderness between Jericho and Bethlehem).

The final stage of the trail takes hikers on an interesting 19-kilometer hike between Dhahriya, located 23 kilometers southwest of Hebron, and Beit Mirsim, located 30 kilometers southwest of Hebron. Dhahriya and Beit Mirsim can be reached from Hebron with public transportation, costing around 8 to 10 shekels per person.

According to local tradition, Dhahriya was founded in thirteenth century by the Mamluk ruler Al-Malik al-Dhahir Baibars, after whom the village was named. However, archaeological findings confirm that the site was inhabited before this time. Within the village stands a well-conserved fortress from the Hellenistic or early Roman period. Nevertheless, Dhahriya’s historic core, with its narrow streets and small domed stone houses, is a well-preserved example of an architectural complex that dates to Ottoman times in Palestine. Before the houses were constructed, probably during the sixteenth or seventeenth century, the villagers used to live in caves that currently can be found beneath the old town.

In the late spring, the fields surrounding the trail that connects Dhahriya and Beit Mirsim become golden from the ripening ears of grain grown abundantly in the area. This is also the season when various kinds of grasshoppers and butterflies are plentiful and move from stone to stone or flower to flower.

Six kilometers down the trail one can see the ruins of a Byzantine church, located about 300 meters east of the village of Anab al-Kabir (22 kilometers southwest of Hebron). The compound served as a main religious center for the neighboring locations and includes parts of mosaic floors and the remains of a vine press and an impressive grain mill.

The masar also passes through populated areas and just next to the primary school of Anab al-Kabir. If you hike on a workday, it is very possible that students on their way home from school will join you for some part of the trek.

After Anab al-Kabir, the trail turns back to the north, leading to the suburb area of Dhahriya, where small shops can be found – a great place to refill supplies of cold water for the rest of the day. The trek also passes next to an amusement park and garden where hikers can take a break and rest in a shady spot.

The final part of the trail leads through the picturesque Wadi Nufakh, a valley that becomes a river during the rainy season. The slopes of the valley are rich in various shrubs, including felty germander (Teucrium polium), in Arabic jedeh (الجعدة), which is widely used in popular medicine for treatment of stomach ailments. In the middle of the valley can be found a small olive grove, ideal for taking a rest in the shade of the trees.

The trek before reaching the village of Al-Burj, famous for housing the remains of a Crusader-period fortified castle and a church, passes just next to the Israeli separation barrier. The Wall is also later visible from Beit Mirsim, the final location on Masar Ibrahim Al-Khalil. The village is rich in heritage and includes such historical sites as a Byzantine olive press and a shrine of the Prophet Handal (Maqam al-Nabi Handal). Close to the village lies Tell Beit Mirsim, an ancient archaeological site, dating approximately to the eighteenth century BC. The site is now located on the other side of the Wall and is inaccessible from the West Bank.

To learn more about various destinations in Palestine, visit our website at www.visitpalestine.ps, or contact the Visit Palestine Information Center in Bethlehem via info@visitpalestine.ps or (02) 277-1992.

More information about Masar Ibrahim Al-Khalil can be found at www.masaribrahim.ps.
EVENTS

EAST JERUSALEM

SPECIAL EVENTS
Monday 12
21:00 – 23:30 /si:n/ festival – Jerusalem at Night Drift is a music walk through Jerusalem, where a crowd of people wearing headphones drift for 150 minutes through the city to an undefined destination. They are connected by a common soundtrack composed by emerging DJs and sound artists from the Palestinian electronic music scene. The drift is organized by the Goethe-Institut and the Palestinian Art Court – Al Hoash, and will be hosted by the game designers Sebastian Quack and Claudius Hausl. The meeting point is at the Palestinian Art Court - Al Hoash. For registration, please send your full name and contact phone number to thomas.scheele@goethe.de before June 7, 2017.

Tuesday 13
7:30 – 9:30 /si:n/ festival – Jerusalem in the Morning Drift is a music walk through Jerusalem, where a crowd of people wearing headphones drift for 120 minutes through the city to an undefined destination. They are connected by a common soundtrack composed by emerging DJs and sound artists from the Palestinian electronic music scene. The drift is organized by the Goethe-Institut and the Palestinian Art Court – Al Hoash, and will be hosted by the game designers Sebastian Quack and Claudius Hausl. The meeting point is at the Palestinian Art Court - Al Hoash. For registration, please send your full name and contact phone number to thomas.scheele@goethe.de before June 7, 2017.

BETHLEHEM

CHILDREN’S EVENTS
Monday 12

14:30 – 17:00 French Summer School 2017 for 12-to-16-year-old children offers intensive French classes and activities with professional French teachers. Alliance Française Bethlehem.

TOURS
Friday 2, 16, 30
9:00 – 10:00 The Bethlehem Old City Walking Tour is a free-of-charge tour organized by Hosh Abu Jarour Tourist Information Center and Bethlehem Municipality to explore the history, culture, and heritage of Bethlehem through inspecting the old buildings and visiting various sites. During the tour, participants will visit Star Street, Abu Jarour Neighborhood, the Icon School, the Salesian Museum and Workshop, Manger Square, and the Church of the Nativity. The starting point will be at the headquarters of Hosh Abu Jarour Tourist Information Center on Star Street, and it will end at the Church of the Nativity. For registration, please send an e-mail to nizar@bethlehem-city.org.

RAMALLAH

CHILDREN’S EVENTS
Sunday 4
8:30 – 14:30 Summer Camp for 6-to-12-year-old children offers activities that include origami, art, dancing, outdoor games, and zumba dancing, and runs till July 4, 2017. The camp is sponsored by Scholarship for Training and University Services. For more information, please call 298-6515.

Monday 5
8:30 – 14:30 Sareyyet Ramallah summer camp organized yearly for kids between 5 and 12 years old, where they can have fun and learn new skills in basketball, football, art, crafts, scouts, dance, and swimming, and runs till July 22, 2017. Sareyyet Ramallah.

CONCERTS
Tuesday 13
21:30 World music: SAFAR project is a concert by the talented Tunisian musicians Imed Alibi and Zied Zouari, accompanied by students of Edward Said National Conservatory of Music, Jerusalem, organized by the French Institute of Jerusalem. For more information about the event and venue, please visit the official website at www.institutfrancais-jerusalem.org.

EXHIBITIONS
Monday 5
21:00 – 23:00 Opening exhibition of Sensorial Immunity, a group exhibition curated by Rula Khoury and organized by Gallery One, with the participation of the artists Noor Abed, Bashar Ahlroub, Rafat Asad, Wafa Hourani, Monther Jawabreh, Bashar Khalaf, Manal Mahamid, Rabai Safiti, and Amer Shomali. The exhibition runs until August 10, 2017. Gallery One and Khalil Sakakini Cultural Center.

FILM SCREENINGS
Wednesday 7
19:30 – 22:30 The City At Night is a 2012 German film series with Arabic subtitles directed by Jan Ole Gerster that puts a spotlight on life after sunset in various cities. Each film is introduced by a conversation with residents of Ramallah who tell stories of the night in their city. Organized by the Goethe-Institut. The French-German Cultural Center.

SPECIAL EVENTS
Friday 2
10:00 – 12:00 Expert workshop on the Art of Grafting organized by the Palestinian ecological garden, Mashjar Juthour, led by professional farmers giving their experience in clipping and grafting various types of trees. Meet at 9:30 at George Habash Square, at the end of Al-Tireh. For more information about the event, please contact Mashjar Juthour at info@juthour.org, or call 056-981-3714.

Saturday 10 – Thursday 15
21:30 – 24:00 Layali Ramadania/Storytelling Festival organized by Seraj Library Network and Goethe-Institut, where storytelling and music activities are offered for children and their parents in an outdoor event under the stars. The public libraries/community centers in Ramallah, Bethlehem, the Jordan Valley, and other villages and refugee camps.

Sunday 11
21:00 Baibar’s Nights, a storytelling night organized by the French Institute of Jerusalem during Ramadan, features Palestinian and Jordanian storytellers who will revive the gigantic novel of Sirat al-Malik al-Zahir Baybars. Beit Ardi Café.

Wednesday 14
19:30 – 22:30 /si:n/ festival – Ramallah at Sunset Drift is a public presentation of drift experiences through Ramallah, where a crowd of people wearing headphones drift for 150 minutes through the city to an undefined destination. They are connected by a common soundtrack composed by emerging DJs and sound artists from the Palestinian electronic music scene. The drift is organized by the Goethe-Institute and the Palestinian Art Court – Al Hoash, and will be hosted by the game designers Sebastian Quack and Claudius Hausl. The meeting point is at the French-German Cultural Center. For registration, please send your full name and contact phone number to thomas.scheele@goethe.de before June 7, 2017.

INTERNATIONAL

CONCERTS
Thursday 8
21:00 Ramadan Night musical performance by Al Kamandjati Ensemble. Grand Hyatt Hotel – Amman, Jordan.

SPECIAL EVENTS
Saturday 3
8:00 A Catholic family breakfast organized by the Palestinian Salvadorean Association under the theme of Consecration of Families to the Heart of Jesus. Alhambra Hall of the Arabian Club Salvadoran, El Salvador.
50 YEARS
OF ISRAEL’S MILITARY OCCUPATION OF EAST JERUSALEM

Israeli settler-colonial policies in occupied East Jerusalem extend from three central strategies: The first creates a Jewish majority in the city through establishing “Jewish only” settlements; the second pursues the same goal by reducing the Palestinian population through policies that either forcefully evict Palestinians from Jerusalem or impede their growth and development as a community; the third isolates East Jerusalem and divides the West Bank into two parts. A policy of spatial colonial segregation reduces the visibility, if not the demographic ratio, of the Palestinian presence in their city.

1. **Raids on Al-Aqsa Mosque Compound / Al-Haram Al-Sharif**
   The Israeli government has allowed Israeli extremists to invade Al-Aqsa Mosque Compound, the third holiest site in Islam and a symbol for all Palestinians. In 2016 alone, Israeli extremists made 14,800 incursions into the compound.

2. **Colonial Settlement Installations (outposts)**
   The Israeli government, together with settler organizations, is creating an arc of settlements that surround the Old City. Currently, there are 83 settlement installations within the walls of the Old City, in addition to 87 installations in Silwan neighborhood, and approximately 160 installations in other neighborhoods around the Old City.

3. **Settlement Tunnels and Excavations**
   Excavation work is continuing nonstop on three tunnels adjacent to Al-Aqsa Mosque in the Old City: a new 720-meter tunnel that stretches from Silwan to Al-Aqsa Mosque. Another 100-meter-long tunnel stretches from Hammam Al-Ein toward Al-Aqsa Mosque. And the expansion of the “Western Wall” tunnel beneath the Buraq Wall, which is a part of Al-Aqsa Mosque.

4. **Talmudic Gardens – Declaration of “National Parks”**
   As a tool to control land in the city of Jerusalem, Israel declares certain areas to be “National Parks.” In 1974, Israel declared a 1,100-dunum (270-acre) plot of land near the Old City to be the Jerusalem Walls Park. In 2000, a 165-dunum (40-acre) plot of land on Mount Scopus was declared Tzurim Valley Park. Israel plans to declare a 467-dunum (115-acre) plot of land to be the Mount of Olives Park.

5. **Cable Car Project**
   The Israeli government's settlement-infrastructural cable car project is designed to operate within Jerusalem’s discriminatory transportation system to serve the Israeli population, in particular, Israeli settlers and Israeli-hosted tourists. The project will link West Jerusalem to the Old City, south of Al-Aqsa Mosque, the Mount of Olives, and Gethsemane Church.
The Light Rail
The Light Rail System was built to connect Israeli settlements in occupied East Jerusalem with West Jerusalem. The first phase is completed north of Jerusalem, while the second phase will connect the rest of the settlements with West Jerusalem.

The Annexation Wall
It cordons off the city of Jerusalem and prohibits West Bank Palestinians from entering the city and places of worship. The wall's route fragments the West Bank into two parts and isolates occupied East Jerusalem from the rest of the West Bank.

Revocation of Residency Rights
Since 1967, Israel has revoked residency rights of at least 14,550 Palestinians. Palestinians from East Jerusalem are defined as "Permanent Residents." They have limited rights and are treated as aliens. Israel can revoke their residency for arbitrarily applied reasons such as leaving the city to live elsewhere, including other parts of occupied State of Palestine.

Right to Housing
A series of discriminatory zoning policies allows Israel to make it nearly impossible for Palestinians to acquire a building permit to build new structures or expand existing ones. Consequently, there is a high level of overcrowding, and Palestinians are forced to resort to construction of homes without permits. Moreover, Israel continues its policy of home demolitions under the pretext of unlicensed construction. (Approximately 25,000 homes are at risk of demolition and 3,500 homes have been demolished since 1967.)
ISRAEL’S WALL AND SETTLEMENTS (COLONIES)

Construction Starts in Israeli Settlements by Year

Palestinian Land Restricted by Israeli Settlements and the Wall

Settler population growth has tripled since 1995
Undeserving

A couple of days ago, I watched an hour-and-a-half-long documentary on the history of the world, which supposedly started 13.7 billion years ago with a big bang! What actually banged, and what was there before the Big Bang was not made clear. But it was made very clear that those bangs kept recurring and this is how the stars, the planets, and the universe were created. The bangs or explosions are a never-ending process and so is the creation of new stars and planets. The documentary was absolutely fascinating.

What was also very interesting was the comparison that was made to show when humans appeared on earth relative to the history of the universe. The narrator said that if we compress the almost 14 billion years into 14 years, humans would have appeared during the last three minutes of those 14 years, and the industrial revolution would have taken place 6 seconds ago! So there’s no doubt that we humans have been around for only a brief instant in the recorded history of the universe, occupying actually only a tiny slice of it.

And what a mess we have made during this short time! It’s almost embarrassing to acknowledge the havoc we have caused on our minute planet earth, which supposedly was formed 4.6 billion years ago. Havoc in consuming its land and water resources that took literally millions of years to form; havoc in destroying the environment that took billions of years to acquire its current shape, and more embarrassingly, havoc in killing each other after the millions of years it took homo sapiens to look and act the way we do today (with all due respect to those who believe otherwise!).

If an (assumingly more advanced) alien were to land on earth, could you imagine how ridiculous we would sound to it when we actually fight each other over a plot of land? Or worse, that we actually abuse to the point of killing each other over the possession of material things or even over differences in ideologies? If I were that alien, I would say “You earth people don’t deserve this!”

The documentary ended with the following sentence: “In everything that we do, in all that we are, we remain living monuments to the past as we continue to make history every day.” We are indeed living monuments to the past, but what kind of history are we really making? I am not totally dismissing the achievements of humanity, but I believe that any outsider would conclude that until now, we have been disrespectful to our collective history, we have been ungrateful for the treasure of resources that was given to us, and possibly more importantly, we have been unkind to each other, especially given that we’re all created from the same cosmic material.
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