Most of our readers were probably too young to witness the Nakba firsthand. Still, generations of Palestinians have been weaned on stories of the 1948 Nakba. Those who gambled that Palestinians would forget were dead wrong. Some 73 years later, the memories are as strong as ever. Vivid, cherished, yet painful memories have been passed on by elders from one generation to the next. As always, the compass leads us to Jerusalem, the heart of Palestine. In the early 1940s, Palestinians who lived in the western part of the city were thriving and living their best life. But Britain, in collusion with militant Zionist factions, was drawing up an immoral partition that would change the fate of Jerusalem and its Palestinian residents. Overnight, lives were turned upside down. Seeking a safe refuge, families were forced to flee their homes in the dead of night. Most didn’t think they needed to pack beyond a couple of days. They certainly didn’t anticipate that they’d witness a change of season while they were away from home. How many seasons have changed since that day?

The theme of this issue is West Jerusalem. Very personal stories whisk readers to Baq’a, Qatamon, and Talbiyeh – Palestinian neighborhoods in what later became known as West Jerusalem. This is not the story of one or two individuals or families, this is the story of Palestine. We promise that, after reading these stories, you will find them engraved forever in your mind and in your heart!

TWiP thanks Munib R. Masri for acquiring the gold sponsorship of this issue. Thanks also go to this month’s authors: Marina Parisinou, a Greek-Jerusalemite; Huda Imam, a Sheikh Jarrah native and activist; Marya Farah, a lawyer who focuses on international human rights law; Nahla Shawkat Assali, a member of the board of trustees at Birzeit University; Dr. Adnan Abdelrazenz, a researcher and Palestinian academic; Sir Vincent Fean, Chair of the Balfour Project charity, and former British Consul-General, Jerusalem; Sami Abou Shehadeh, a Palestinian historian and member of the Israeli Parliament; Rania Muhareb, a human rights scholar; and Terry Rempel, a scholar and founding member of BADIL Resource Center for Palestinian Residency & Refugee Rights. Colorful, rich, and moving stories are narrated by Abla Mohammad Taher Dajani Daoudi, Laura Baramki Khoury, and Claudette Ayoub Habesch. In this issue, TWiP also pays tribute to human rights activist Suha Jarrar, who passed away while her mother, activist Khalida Jarrar, remains imprisoned by Israel.

Our Book of the Month is In My Mother’s Footsteps: A Palestinian Refugee Returns Home by Mona Halaby; Chef Fadi Kattan shares a gem in TWiP Kitchen. Our Artist of the Month is Wanees Zarour. Where to Go takes you to Mandela Square, and Ahlan Palestine looks at the lives of West Jerusalem’s Palestinians through architecture.

From the entire team at TWiP, we hope you enjoy the rest of the summer – and thank you for your support!

Amal Hassan
Why Can't They Fix the Shutters?

By Nahla Shawkat Assali

Whenever I visited our house in Baq'a, I parked my car opposite the three-story building that my father built in the 1930s on what they now call Hamagid Street. The building has the aspects of architecture that distinguish it as an “Arab house” – in contrast to the matchbox-style apartment buildings that sprung up after 1948 in the space between our house and an adjacent row of lovely houses that belong to the Nammari family. We lived in the first-floor west unit, my grandmother and uncle in the roof terrace unit, and the other units were rented out.

Our neighborhood was very pleasant: streets were paved, buildings were neatly cared for, and the gardens were charming. Today the street is still fine and proper, but old buildings look a bit haggard, and the mix of new layers and old patinas causes dissonance to my 1948-trained eyes.

I often wonder about the Israelis who first occupied our house: how could they sleep in our beds, use our kitchen pots and wares, dig into our drawers, read our books, and eat at our dining table while enjoying the view of our back garden with its huge berry tree? They had to be quite hard-hearted to intrude upon a family’s life and belongings. They remain unchanged: the people of Israel are still living in denial with regard to the wrongs they committed against us.

To add insult to injury, we have to witness further injustice: Settlers are using biased Israeli law to expel Palestinians (again) from their rightfully owned homes in areas such as Sheikh Jarrah, making them homeless, and taking their place. Meanwhile, we Palestinians have no chance of winning any legal action in Israeli courts to reclaim our properties in West Jerusalem. So Israel’s injustices persist, our bitterness and suffering grow, while the world wears its blinders.

My mother often recalled an argument she had with my father back in late April 1948, the date of our flight from Jerusalem. Following the infamous Deir Yassin massacre by Israeli forces and after a stray bullet went through the balcony door of my parents’ bedroom and lodged in the bottom drawer of their dresser, my father decided to send us all – mother and five kids – to Damascus to stay with my grandmother. It was two years after the June 1967 war that my brother came to visit us. He appealed to my father to go visit our house in Lower Baq’a in West Jerusalem. This essay tells the story about the painful reaction my father had upon seeing his house.
maternal grandmother until things settled down. Mother was packing a couple of suitcases, adding some woolen sweaters, when my father blurted out at her that there would be no need for woolen wear since we were only going to be away for two or three weeks at most. Mother packed a piece for each of us saying that Damascus was cold at night. It has now been 73 years since that incident.

In 1950, we came back to East Jerusalem to rejoin my father, leaving my two elder sisters in Damascus to finish high school. No longer a landlord, my father rented half a house in Ras al-Amoud: a kitchen, two bedrooms, no lounge, no electricity, no running water, and minimal furniture. Mother borrowed some concrete blocks and wooden boards from the landlord from which she assembled makeshift beds for a multipurpose room: a living/dining/visitors’ room during the day, and bedroom at night. Mother’s can-do spirit and creativity also provided us with running water: she installed a small tank with a faucet over the kitchen sink, to which she added boiled water on the freezing cold winter days. We experienced our share of refugee life, though for a long time we were not registered as refugees because my father didn’t like us to be associated with his image of refugees: destitute people standing in queues waiting for their monthly rations. His pride did not allow his name to be entered in the UNRWA records.

Between 1948 and 1967, we all made it through school and university. It was my parents’ conviction that at least we were not going to be robbed of our education. This attested to how Palestinians in general, no matter their income level, put great value on learning and gave it their all.

After the June war of 1967, West Jerusalem became accessible to Palestinians living in its eastern part. But my father refused to visit our house in Baq’a. He resisted for two years, until my brother, who was then working in Kuwait, came to visit us and appealed to him to come along to visit the house. Through cajoling and repeated arguments, my father finally relented and we drove to Baq’a. It was summer of 1969.

I was driving. Sitting next to me in the passenger seat, my father did not utter a word, but I could see the blood congested in his face. As I parked the car, he remained seated, looked up at the building and noticed one of the shutters facing the road slanted sideways. He mumbled a few unintelligible utterances and then burst out: “Can’t they fix the shutters?” Without delay, he asked me to take us back home.

My father’s comment about the shutters was, and still is, one of my most hurtful memories. My brother and I regretted subjecting him to that agonizing ordeal. Was it that it really mattered to him at that moment to at least see his house in good shape? Some kind of consolation for his loss?

In Arabic, we have a word that aptly describes what my father, and countless other Palestinians who were dispossessed, felt, and still feel: ُقرح. There is no direct equivalent term in English, but one can say it conveys senses of bitterness, resentfulness, typically arising from being defeated by oppression.

Six years ago, I was again back at our house, this time with an Israeli filmmaker, Dorit Naaman, who was making a project about Palestinians’ houses in West Jerusalem. One of the building’s residents, a middle-aged Israeli woman, came out and talked to us. The woman claimed that the British awarded the house to her father in 1947, for his service in the British Army during the First World War. It was a blatant lie – we were living in the house then! Such are the lies they tell their children to hide the fact that they literally stole our houses. I wondered: Baq’a, Qatamon, Talbiyeh, and the rest of the Palestinian neighborhoods in West Jerusalem… How many lies have been told in those places? Those lies are part and parcel of Israel’s oppression that we have to resist. These days, I don’t drive any more, and it is my sons and my daughter who occasionally make the
trip to Hamagid Street: they go there in order to show their children their great-grandfather’s house.

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Jerusalem railway station, Eric and Edith Matson Photograph Collection; Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, LC-DIG-matpc-00844.
The Tragedy of Arab Jerusalem

A Historical Perspective

By Adnan Abdelrazek

The calamity that has been inflicted on the holy city of Jerusalem since the early nineteenth century is deeply rooted in the colonial scheme implemented by the British in collaboration with the Zionist movement. During the four hundred years of Ottoman rule in Palestine, the city of Jerusalem had retained its integrity and holiness, as Jerusalem’s Muslim and Christian Arabs lived in harmony and mutual respect for each other and for the local Yemeni and Sephardic Jewish minorities.

But as the First World War brought the end of Ottoman rule over Palestine, the country, including the city of Jerusalem, came under British occupation. In 1922, the League of Nations designated the British Mandate on Palestine, and Article 2 of the Mandate’s charter, in conformity with the Balfour Declaration of 1917, committed itself to securing “in Palestine the establishment of a national home for the Jewish people.”

Since the beginning of the British Mandate, the native and historical Palestinian owners of the country were opposed to the imposition of this rule and to Article 2 in particular. For years, Palestinians resisted in various ways the Mandate administration’s facilitation and promotion of Jewish immigration from Europe and the building of Jewish colonies. The British Royal Commission of 1937 issued full reports on the main Palestinian resistance events that took place in 1920, 1921, 1925, and 1936.

Jerusalem city was particularly affected by the influx of Jewish immigrants from Europe, who came to Palestine with the rise of Zionist national ideology and the plan to build a Jewish state at the expense of the native Palestinians. This Zionist scheme altered and shattered the previous harmony among the Jerusalemite Arabs and Jews. The ensuing conflicts were triggered by the attempts of the Jewish newcomers to expand their control over the city and to change the Status Quo arrangements and the custody of holy places in particular. A significant, bloody move by the new Zionist residents of Jerusalem was the forced attempt in August 1929 to change the traditional and agreed-upon arrangements that Jews pray in the corridor facing the Western Wall (Al-Boraq Wall); it resulted in the death of 133 Jews and 116 Muslims.

Following these and other such events, an international commission was appointed by the Mandate authorities in 1929, with the approval of the League of Nations, and tasked with following up and determining the rights and claims of the two sides. However, when the security situation continued to escalate all over Palestine, the commission concluded that the Mandate was unworkable and recommended that this rule should be terminated. This recommendation also presented the principle of the partition plan of 1937 to “separate the areas in which the Jews have acquired land and settled from those which are wholly or mainly occupied by Arabs.”

Regarding Jerusalem and the holy places, the commission recommended, “The Partition of Palestine is subject to the overriding necessity of keeping the sanctity of Jerusalem and Bethlehem inviolate and ensuring free and safe access to them for all the world.” It furthermore suggested: “A new Mandate [for Jerusalem] should be framed” and “an enclave should be demarcated extending from a point north of Jerusalem to a point south...
of Bethlehem, and access to the sea should be provided by a corridor extending to the north of the main road and to the south of the railway, including the towns Lydda and Ramle, and terminating at Jaffa.\footnote{vii}

This first plan for the partition of Palestine with special status for Jerusalem was superseded by the political and military events of the Second World War. In its aftermath, the United Kingdom declared that it was unable to resolve the conflict in Palestine and brought the problem to the United Nations. Here, a special committee was appointed to take up and discuss the fate of Palestine, including Jerusalem. At the outset of this committee’s work, the call for the partition of Palestine was dominant and led by the United States, the United Kingdom, and the Soviet Union, with a minority opposition led by Egypt, Iraq, Syria, and Muslim governments. For long months, two options were proposed and debated: the partition of Palestine, led by the dominant majority members, and a united, independent state of Palestine for Palestinians and Jewish immigrants, proposed by the opposing minority group.

In 1947, the General Assembly adopted Resolution 181(II) of November 29, which contained a Plan of Partition with Economic Union in which the greater part of Palestine would be divided into Arab and Jewish provinces. Under this plan, Jerusalem was to be ruled by a special international regime administered by the United Nations. The city’s boundaries were defined as including “the present municipality of Jerusalem plus the surrounding villages and towns, the most eastern of which shall be Abu Dis; the most southern, Bethlehem; the most western, Ein Karim (including also the built-up area of Motsa); and the most northern Shu’fat.”\footnote{vii}

This international regime over what constituted the city determined that Jerusalem should be considered a “corpus separatum” under the administration of the United Nations and that the Trusteeship Council should discharge the responsibilities of the United Nations in this respect. This administration of Jerusalem was recommended to “come into existence two months after the evacuation of the armed forces of the Mandatory Power has been completed but in any case not later than 1 October 1948.”\footnote{x}

During the late 1940s, the fate of Jerusalem was determined, however, not by international agreement but by military force. The fight between Arab/Palestinian and Jewish paramilitary groups had intensified several months before the United Kingdom relinquished its Mandate for Palestine on May 14, 1948. By the time a United Nations–negotiated truce came into effect...
This Week in Palestine

on November 16, 1948, Israel's territorial control had expanded deep into the territories allotted to the Palestinian state and into the western sector of the Jerusalem enclave destined for internationalization under the partition resolution.

Realizing this new forced reality, the General Assembly adopted its Resolution 194(III) of December 1948, calling for the right of the Palestinian refugees to return to their homes in Palestine. It also stipulated that compensation should be paid for the damage caused to properties and for the loss of property for those choosing not to return. Following is the text of Paragraph 11 of this resolution, where sub-paragraph 1 provides as follows:

The General Assembly

RESOLVES that the refugees wishing to return to their homes and live at peace with their neighbors should be permitted to do so at the earliest practicable date, and that compensation should be paid for the property of those choosing not to return and for loss of or damage to the property which, under principles of international law or in equity, should be made good by the Governments or authorities responsible.⁴

But the facts created by Israeli forces on the ground superseded the attempts by the Trusteeship to implement the internationalization of Jerusalem. Whereas the de facto division of the city between two countries at war – with sealed borders – was formalized in the Israel-Jordan Armistice Agreement of April 3, 1949, this agreement was considered internationally as having no legal effect on the continued validity of the provisions of the partition resolution that called for the internationalization of Jerusalem. Accordingly, no country established an embassy in Jerusalem until 1967. On December 13, 1949, Israel's Prime Minister Ben Gurion delivered the following statement in the Knesset (parliament), presenting the objection of his government to the General Assembly resolution concerning the internationalization of the city:

[T]he General Assembly of the United Nations has, in the meantime, by a large majority decided to place Jerusalem under an international regime as a separate entity. … It is to be hoped that the General Assembly will in the course of time amend the error … and will make no attempt to impose a regime on the Holy City against the will of its people. …

In the stress of war, when Jerusalem was under siege, we were compelled to establish the seat of Government in Ha'Kirya at Tel Aviv. But for the State of Israel there has always been and always will be one capital only – Jerusalem the Eternal. So it was three thousand years ago – and so it will be, we believe, until the end of time.⁵

When the Armistice Agreement between Jordan and Israel was signed, and the UN had failed to impose its plan of a special international regime for Jerusalem, the entire Palestinian community (estimated at 60,000 people) was expelled from the territory occupied by the new Jewish state, leaving behind 1,105 dwellings, including residential houses, business stores, cultural premises, and more.⁶

In 1951, attempting to provide figures and values of refugee property, the Refugee Office of the United Nations Conciliation Commission for Palestine (UNCCP) estimated the total number of Arab properties in West Jerusalem at 3,660 parcels, comprising 5,736 dunums of land.⁷ In contrast, the PLO – relying on the “Village Statistics 1945” prepared by the Government Office of Statistics and the Department of Lands of the British Mandate Government for the Anglo-American Committee of Inquiry on Palestine – estimated the total area of the city of Jerusalem, prior to 1948, at 20,790 metric dunums, of which close to 2,000 dunums fell within the 1949 armistice line of East Jerusalem.⁸

This left the area that in 1948 became West Jerusalem at 16,261 dunums, of which 4,885 dunums were Jewish owned, 2,473 dunums comprised Christian missions, 402 dunums were municipal lands, and 850 dunums were roads and railways; 850 dunums were designated no man's land.⁹

As a result of the June 1967 Six-Day War, East Jerusalem, the entire West Bank, and the Gaza Strip fell under Israeli control. The numerous measures Israel took to extend its jurisdiction over East Jerusalem and consolidate its physical control have been, and are still, declared invalid by the international community, including through resolutions of the UN Security Council and the General Assembly.¹⁰

According to Israeli sources quoted by Don Peretz, it appears that by May 1948, local Israeli military authorities had frequently failed to restrain mass looting, destruction, and pillaging of Palestinian properties left behind in Israeli-occupied territories.¹¹ Some years later, the Israeli Land Custodian, writing on Palestinian properties in occupied towns including Jerusalem, reported that when official inspectors went to inspect houses in deserted cities and neighborhoods they “found most of the houses broken into, and rarely was any furniture left. Clothes, household effects, jewelry, bedding – other than mattresses – never reached the warehouse of the Custodian Authority. More than 50,000 Arab homes had been abandoned.”¹²

The first attempt by Israel to “organize” the looting was on December 2, 1948, when it applied the enactment of the Emergency Regulations on Property of Absentees. It was only in March 1950 that the Israeli Knesset approved the Absentee Property Law. While the task of the Custodian of the Absentee Property was, above all, to administer and preserve the absentee property, the Development Authority, created by the same law, was authorized to take measures to dispose that property. In 1960, the Israel Knesset adopted a Basic Law that transferred all state land, including the absentee land, to the Israel Land Authority, legally transferring the ownership of the absentee land to the Israeli state. In 1997, the Israel Land Authority decided to transfer the ownership of urban property, including the absentee urban property, into privately owned land.¹³

The fiscal value of the absentee urban property (dwellings and land) is a matter that was dealt with in details when UNCCP worked on the “identification and valuation” of refugee property in Israel’s occupied areas in 1951 but has never been updated officially to reflect their
current value. However, information concerning the value of refugees’ property in West Jerusalem is frequently mentioned in real estate speculation and the transfer of Arab refugees’ houses in the city. In June, Jerusalem Report published a long article about real-estate speculation regarding the properties of Arab refugees, mentioning a transaction of a house in Talbiyeh, where the ground floor of a house was sold for $3.7 million whereas the upper floor is on the market for $7 million.xx

Such speculations with and transaction on Palestinian properties located in the western side of occupied Jerusalem, like other absentee properties in Israel, are available for Jews only. Palestinian (refugee) landlords of these properties who live in East Jerusalem – a few hundred meters away from their property are prevented from claiming them. Outdated Israeli laws, such as the above-mentioned Absentee Law were reactivated in Jerusalem after the city was occupied in 1967. More than 70 years later, this law remains on the books, unchanged, and most Palestinians who lost property through it are still not likely to get it back.

According to Talia Sasson, a former high-ranking official in Israel’s Office of the State Attorney, Israel has never ended the state of emergency that keeps the Absentee Property Law in force. In 1970, Israel issued a property law specific to East Jerusalem.xxx This law allowed Jews to reclaim property owned before 1948, regardless of the Palestinians who moved in afterwards.

By evicting Palestinians from Sheikh Jarrah now, Israel does them a double injustice as they had already been displaced from their homes during the Nakba. Sasson explains that the people whose East Jerusalem homes are now claimed by Jewish Israelis are the same people who had their property declared “absentee” in 1948. The 1948 law dispossessed these Palestinians of the homes in which they used to live, while the 1970 law enables Jewish Israelis to claim the homes where they currently live – without offering compensation or alternative housing. She concludes that this “abysmal law from 1970 cannot be erased without the Knesset acting – and it is impossible to imagine the current [and future, a.a.] Knesset acting to help Palestinians in East Jerusalem.”xxxii

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Dr. Adnan Abdelrazek, a researcher and Palestinian academic, worked at the Division for Palestinian Rights at the United Nations in New York and has been a lecturer at several universities, including the University of Michigan and Bethlehem University. He is the author of several books.

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viii Resolution 194, United Nations Works and Relief Agency for Palestinian Refugees in the Near East.

ix Statement to the Knesset by Prime Minister Ben Gurion, December 13, 1949.

x Resolution 194, United Nations Works and Relief Agency for Palestinian Refugees in the Near East.


xv Dr. Adnan Abdelrazek, The Arab Architectural Renaissance.

xvi Report of the Secretary General under General Assembly Resolution 2254 (ES-V) of July 14, 1967, “Measures taken by the State of Israel to change the status of Jerusalem.”


How I Left Jerusalem
Laura Baramki’s Story in 1948

By Laura Baramki Khoury

was asked to write my story and experience, indeed the story of my parents when we left Jerusalem, Palestine in April 1948. However, my story does not differ from other stories of the plight of Palestinians who were forced to leave their country, fleeing for their lives and the lives of their children.

My story begins on an evening in January 1948 when my grandmother and I were alone at home in Talbiyeh, an exclusively Palestinian neighborhood. I was studying for my exams at the Teachers Training College and wishing I would finish studying so that I could visit my friend who was living nearby. All of a sudden, we heard a menacing voice emanating from a monstrous tank that was completely closed except for two slits, ordering all Arabs in the Talbiyeh quarter to leave now, now! We panicked, especially because my parents were not at home at the time and we did not know what to do. Eventually my parents came home and we had to leave our house that evening and go to my uncle’s house in Lower Baq’a – another exclusively Palestinian-inhabited neighborhood – because that armored tank was relentless and insistent in its driving around and making sure that we would all be scared to stay. That was the second time that we had moved house while still in Jerusalem.

I had lived all my life until that fateful year in a house that my father had built near what became known after 1948 as Mandlebaum Gate. My father, Andoni Baramki, was an architect and he owned two houses. The one we were living in until we had to take refuge in the Talbiyeh quarter because the area became very dangerous due to the Haganah (a Jewish underground movement) terrorizing the area and shooting indiscriminately at any passerby. The other house, almost across the street from where we were living, was always rented out and after 1967 became a museum with changing names, currently called Museum on the Seam.

Andoni Baramki’s house; currently the Museum on the Seam.

Museum on the Seam. And to add insult to injury, the Israeli curators of the museum never acknowledged the fact that the building belonged to my father. All they mentioned was that the house, with its special architectural beauty, was constructed by Mr. Andoni Baramki, omitting by intention the fact that it was owned by Andoni Baramki.

However, the situation was getting worse and random shots were becoming an everyday happening. I almost got killed one evening as I was returning home from college, when a stray bullet grazed my hair. At first, I thought it was a bird flying over until a man passing by told me how lucky I was, barely missing that bullet.

In April of 1948, when everybody was leaving in the wake of the Deir Yassin massacre, and no place seemed safe enough, we left our home in Jerusalem, taking nothing with us except some of our clothes, thinking that it was a temporary period. That is why we took refuge in Birzeit, a town north of Jerusalem, so that we would be close by to return when all would be well again. But it was never well again. My family and I never saw again the Jerusalem we knew and had lived in.

After living in Gaza, then Beirut for a few years, we eventually returned to Jerusalem in 1953. What we found was a destroyed city, a city with its soul gone. Our families and friends were no longer there. Our homes were full of bullet holes, all run down and neglected.

I mourned for my youth that was lost in Jerusalem. Oh, how I had yearned to be a young adult in Jerusalem after finishing boarding school in West Jerusalem.
1947. I longed to live all year round in my city, wondering what my life would have been like. I was just about to be on the threshold of a new teenage life full of expectations, of romance if you like, or just plain living.

Palestine was like a beautiful tapestry, with myriad brilliant colors all tightly woven together with communities living together in harmony.

Alas, we came back to a ravished tapestry, all torn, its threads scattered all over the country, indeed across many countries.

My plight, as I mentioned at the beginning of this article, is only from my point of view and what my family and I went through. However, this is nothing compared to the rest of Palestine, to all the villages that were destroyed, their lands taken, their men, women, and children shot at and driven out of their homes at gunpoint, never to return, becoming refugees living in camps up until this day.

Not to mention the indelible trauma that all the families of my parents’ generation suffered as they had to leave their homes, their work, and all their achievements behind, as well as their dreams for their children. It was like a huge tsunami that happened and obliterated everything that ever was, except that this tsunami was man-made by evil people with the collaboration of other countries, not least the British who, thought our country was theirs to give away and divide. But of course, the British did this everywhere they ruled.

We will never forget, and our stories will continue to be passed on from one generation to the next and someday justice will prevail.

PS. After the war of 1967, I read an article in The Jerusalem Post (a newspaper that was more liberal then) by Menachem Begin in which he wrote, “The massacre of Deir Yassin was a blessing in disguise, because it helped create the State of Israel.”
Jerusalem from 1947 to 1953

The following chronology presents the main developments that affected – militarily, diplomatically, and politically – the fate and status of the city of Jerusalem during the period of the Nakba and the ensuing few years.

The events were selected and adapted by the Institute for Palestine Studies (IPS) from The Interactive Timeline of the Palestine Question, an online platform conceived and developed by IPS, in a joint project with the Palestinian Museum.

UNGA 181 (II): Palestine Partition Plan, Special Regime for Jerusalem
29 November 1947

The United Nations General Assembly recommends the adoption and implementation of the Plan ofPartition of Palestine by a two-thirds majority (33 to 13 votes with 10 abstentions). The resolution stipulates that independent Arab and Jewish States and a Special International Regime for the City of Jerusalem shall come into existence two months after the evacuation of the Mandatory armed forces but not later than 1 October 1948.

Fate of Diplomatic Representations in Jerusalem
11 February 1948 – 1 May 1948

On 11 February, in preparation for the possible establishment of the international regime for Jerusalem, the Holy See opens an “Apostolic Delegation in Jerusalem and in Palestine.” (Before that date, Palestine was under the responsibility of the Pontifical Representation in Cairo.) Thus, the Holy See joins 22 countries that had official consulates in Jerusalem during the British Mandate. Among these, however, Arab states (Lebanon, Egypt, Syria, Saudi Arabia, Yemen, and Iraq) are compelled to evacuate their consulates from Jerusalem (mainly Qatamon quarter) by 1 May. Apart from the Apostolic Delegation, only 9 states (the US, France, Great Britain, Belgium, Italy, Spain, Turkey, Greece, Sweden) will maintain general consulates in the city. Known as the “Consular Corps of the Corpus Separatum,” their representatives will not submit their credentials to either Israel or Jordan. But 16 other countries will have opened embassies in West Jerusalem before the 1967 war: Netherlands, Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Panama, Uruguay, Venezuela, Haiti, Ivory Coast, Zaire, and Kenya. For developments after 1967, see: https://www.paljourneys.org/en/timeline/overallchronology?sideid=21123.

Zionist Operations Shfifon and Kilshon in Jerusalem
14 May 1948 – 28 May 1948

On the day the Zionist leaders proclaim the establishment of the State of Israel, the Haganah launches Operation Schfifon to capture the Old City. It also launches Operation Kilshon to occupy strategic areas in Jerusalem evacuated by the British, and Palestinian residential areas outside the Old City. On 19 May, Palestinian defenses are broken in the Old City, but the Arab Legion comes to the rescue. On 28 May, the Arab Legion will take control of the Jewish quarter in the Old City.

Jerusalem and Count Folke Bernadotte’s Palestine Plan
28 June 1948

UN mediator, Count Folke Bernadotte, proposes to the Arab and Jewish authorities a plan whereby Palestine and Transjordan will form a Union comprising two states, one Arab and one Jewish. The plan envisions the inclusion of the City of Jerusalem in Arab territory.

Jordan and Israel Sign Agreement on Demilitarization of Mount Scopus Area, Jerusalem
7 July 1948

Jordan and Israel sign a special agreement under the auspices of the United Nations regarding Mount Scopus. During the fighting, the Hadassah Hospital and Hebrew University area had been a Jewish enclave within the territory.
controlled by the Jordanian army. The agreement provides for the following: the enclave will be demilitarized, as well as the neighboring Augusta Victoria Hospital and the Palestinian village of Issawiyya; each side will be allowed to have limited civilian police; the three sectors will be under the security responsibility of the UN; the latter will ensure that both sides receive adequate supplies of food and water.

Jordan Repulses Israeli Operation Qedem in Jerusalem

8 July 1948 – 17 July 1948

At the end of the First Arab-Israeli Truce (which had been declared for a four-week period 11 June – 8 July), the Israeli army launches a series of operations on different fronts. The Arab Legion repulses Operation Qedem that is undertaken on 16–17 July against the Old City of Jerusalem.

Israel Declares Jerusalem Occupied City

2 August 1948

In his capacity as defense minister, David Ben-Gurion issues two military proclamations. The first one provides for the application of Israeli law to “the area encompassing most of the city of Jerusalem, part of its western suburbs and outskirts, and the roads connecting Jerusalem with the coastal plain.” In the second proclamation, Ben-Gurion appoints a military governor for the area. Both texts constitute a response to UN mediator Folke Bernadotte, who had suggested the demilitarization of Jerusalem during a visit to Palestine on 26 July. Having secured a corridor between Jerusalem and the coast, and having gained control of Palestinian areas around West Jerusalem and emptied them of their inhabitants, Israeli leaders feel they can henceforth actively oppose the internationalization of Jerusalem as provided for in the Partition Plan.

Israel’s Area of Jurisdiction and Powers Ordinance

16 September 1948

In order to confer indefinite legality to Israeli control of Palestinian territory beyond the UN Partition Plan, and especially of West Jerusalem (considered as part of the Corpus Separatum to be governed by a special international regime), Israel’s Provisional Council issues an ordinance that stipulates in particular: “Any law applying to the whole of the State of Israel shall be deemed to apply to the whole of the area including both the State of Israel and any part of Palestine which the Minister of Defence has defined by proclamation as being held by the Defence Army of Israel.” The ordinance states that it applies retroactively as of 15 May 1948. It thus implicitly validates the military proclamations that were issued on 2 August concerning Jerusalem.

Bernadotte Second Plan on Jerusalem

16–17 September 1948

After his unsuccessful first proposal, UN mediator Count Folke Bernadotte abandons the idea of a Union and presents a new plan in which Jerusalem “should be placed under effective United Nations control.” The new plan is rejected by both the Arab League and Israel. He is assassinated by Lehi-Stern Gang in Jerusalem the following day.

Israel Strengthens Its Political Control over Jerusalem; Military Government Dissolved

20 December 1948 – 17 February 1949

To strengthen its political hold on the part of Jerusalem it controls and to foreclose the prospect of internationalizing the city, Israel decides on 20 December to start transferring governmental institutions to West Jerusalem. It had earlier (14 September) established there the seat of the Supreme Court. On 25 January 1949, residents of the city participate in the elections for the first Knesset. On 2 February, Ben-Gurion, as minister of defense, issues a proclamation abolishing the military government in Jerusalem and instituting civil administration as it is in force in other parts of Israel. The newly elected Knesset holds its first session in Jerusalem on 14 February and elects two days later Chaim Weizmann as first president of the state. It is in Jerusalem that the latter takes his oath of office the following day. However, the Knesset will hold its sessions in Tel Aviv until December 1949 and the President’s residence will be in Rehovot until the death of Weizmann in November 1952.
UNGA 303 (IV): To Place Jerusalem under a Permanent International Regime
9 December 1949
The resolution confirms the provisions of the Partition Resolution 181 (1947) relative to Jerusalem, according to which the City of Jerusalem “shall be established as a corpus separatum under a special international regime and shall be administered by the United Nations.” Both Jordan and Israel will quickly express their opposition to international control of the city.

Israel’s Measures to Make Jerusalem Its Capital
23 January 1950 – 13 July 1953
The Knesset issues a proclamation stating that “with the establishment of the State of Israel, Jerusalem has returned to be its capital.” On 13 December 1949, as a response to General Assembly Resolution 303 (IV) that had confirmed the principle of an international regime for the holy city, the Knesset decided to transfer its seat and that of the government to Jerusalem. The President’s official residence is moved to Jerusalem in December 1952 with the election of Yitzhak Ben-Zvi after Chaim Weizmann’s death. The transfer of government ministries is completed at the end of 1951, except for two: the ministry of defense, on which a decision is taken to keep it in Tel Aviv for alleged security reasons; and the ministry of foreign affairs, whose transfer is delayed because of US opposition, but which finally takes place on 13 July 1953.

Special International Regime for Jerusalem
4 April 1950
The UN Trusteeship Council approves a Statute for Jerusalem, providing for a Special International Regime for the city and constituting it as a corpus separatum under the administration of the UN.

23rd Zionist Congress Is Held in Jerusalem
14 August 1951 – 30 August 1951
The World Zionist Organization holds its 23rd Congress in Jerusalem for the first time since its establishment in 1897.

Israel’s Foreign Ministry Moves to Jerusalem
10 July 1953 – 12 July 1953
The Foreign Ministry informs foreign embassies and legations that it will move its offices from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem on 12 July, thereby asserting Jerusalem as Israel’s capital.
Jerusalem Beyond Partition

By Rania Muhareb

Seventy-three years into the ongoing Nakba, the language of partition remains prevalent in discourse on the plight of Palestinians. What is remarkable is how much partition has come, misleadingly, to shape our understanding of when and where Palestinian dispossession started. By the time the UN General Assembly recommended the partition of Palestine in Resolution 181 of November 29, 1947, Zionist colonization had already been ongoing for over half a century. It was in 1897, notably, that the First Zionist Congress in Basel resolved to “create for the Jewish people a home in Palestine secured by public law.” As Palestinian historian Walid Khalidi observes, the partition resolution must be seen as the “catastrophic (for the Palestinians) culmination of everything that had preceded it since the birth of political Zionism.”

Today, Palestinians continue to endure aggressive Zionist settler colonialism, which seeks their erasure, displacement, and replacement in every part of historical Palestine. The focus on artificial partition obscures the continuity of Zionist settler colonization; it suggests that Palestinian dispossession from 1948 onwards, and before that time, somehow differ from that following 1967.

By Rania Muhareb

Jerusalem and the arbitrariness of partition

Partition continues to dominate discussion of Jerusalem, informing how the city’s past and present are analyzed. In Jerusalem 1948: The Arab Neighbourhoods and their Fate in the War, Palestinian scholar Salim Tamari highlights the need to avoid anachronistic language on Jerusalem and to transcend the city’s problematic division into “east” and “west,” which resulted from “the ruptures of war.”

While it may be tempting to argue away the division of Jerusalem based on the city’s proposed internationalization as corpus separatum under the partition resolution, this argument is not altogether convincing. Such line of reasoning, even if unwittingly, seems to lend legitimacy to Zionist colonization within the parts of Palestine allotted, in the partition resolution, to a Jewish state. Yet, the Palestinian people constituted the majority across historical Palestine on the eve of partition; they owned the majority of the land in the country and had vehemently opposed partition since its first iteration in the 1930s.

Early on, Zionist scholars openly acknowledged the colonial nature of their project and the need to implement it by force. In 1923, Ze’ev Jabotinsky wrote: “Zionist soil irrespective of the wishes of the overwhelming majority of its inhabitants.” Palestinian opposition to the partition plan has been well documented as an encroachment on the Palestinian right to self-determination, which remains the basis for challenging the partition of Palestine and division of Jerusalem.

In a comprehensive briefing paper on west Jerusalem published in 2018, Al-Haq concluded that Palestinians retain their right to sovereignty over the entirety of Jerusalem.

Palestinian expulsion from west Jerusalem

Another reason to abandon partition altogether is the continuity of Zionist policy towards Palestinians across their fragmented geographies. Whether expelled beyond Palestine or displaced and dispossessed within its fragmented landscape, the Palestinian people have collectively...
been deprived of the exercise of their inalienable rights. The persistence of the Nakba is evidenced in the ongoing dispossession of Palestinians from Jerusalem and across historical Palestine.

Within the months leading up to May 1948, Palestinian neighborhoods in the western part of Jerusalem, including Baq’a, Talbiyeh, and Qatamon, were nearly entirely emptied including Baq’a, Talbiyeh, and in the western part of Jerusalem, Palestine. Dispossession of Palestinians from the land has occurred as part of the pattern of establishing and replacing of indigenous peoples from the land has occurred as part of the pattern of establishing and maintaining a settler state.

Jerusalem and the “logic of elimination”

As a microcosm of Palestinian oppression, the city of Jerusalem exemplifies Zionist policy towards the Palestinian people: Palestinians in Jerusalem have endured both the Nakba since 1948 and prolonged Israeli military occupation since 1967 over the eastern part of the city. The continuity of Palestinian expulsion, dispossession, and attempts at erasure from place and memory exemplify Patrick Wolfe’s notion of settler colonialism as “a structure not an event”: a continuous process of displacement and replacement of indigenous people(s) on the land. Wolfe has understood this structure as involving not only physical violence, through the massacres by Zionist militias that marked the Nakba, but also ongoing, structural violence aimed at the dissolution of indigenous societies.

Settler colonialism and apartheid, as mutually reinforcing frameworks, allow us to make sense of the systematic policy to drive Palestinians from their homes and provide a basis to comprehensively address Palestinian fragmentation. Israeli policy is best understood when examining the treatment of the Palestinian people as a whole. Doing so helps elucidate what Wolfe has termed settler colonialism’s “logic of elimination.” In Palestine, this “logic of elimination” underpins the ongoing Nakba: what began with the mass expulsion of indigenous Palestinians has developed into an institutionalized regime that systematically entrenches Palestinian subjugation, facilitates Zionist colonization, and denies Palestinians their right of return.

Israeli apartheid and the ongoing Nakba

The displacement and dispossession of Palestinians and their replacement with Israeli settlers are core components of Israeli apartheid, which is embedded in the logic of Zionist settler colonialism. Israel’s apartheid regime has gained mounting recognition in recent years. It is built on the legal, political, and geographical fragmentation of the Palestinian people as a whole. Through fragmentation, Professors Richard Falk and Virginia Tilley explain, Israel “obscure[s] this regime’s very existence” and denies Palestinians any collective rights, including to return and self-determination.

Palestinian scholars have exposed the racial underpinnings of Zionist settler colonization long before today’s discussions on apartheid. Early analysis on Israeli apartheid, notably by Palestinian scholar Fayez Sayegh, referred to the legal regime put in place to subjugate Palestinians following 1948 and to Judaize the land. This regime remains in place seven decades into the ongoing Nakba. In 1979, Richard Stevens concluded that in Palestine as in apartheid South Africa “the alienation of the indigenous peoples from the land has occurred as part of the pattern of establishing and maintaining a settler state.”

In Jerusalem, Palestinian transfer is escalated through house demolitions, discriminatory planning, denial of building permits, forced expulsions by the Israeli occupying authorities and Israeli settler organizations, the revocation of residency rights, and other forms of arbitrary displacement entrenching apartheid. As a result, Palestinians are systematically fragmented through physical and other less visible barriers: the Wall and Israeli checkpoints cut through east Jerusalem neighborhoods, Jerusalem is isolated from other parts of the occupied Palestinian territory, and Palestinians with different legal status are systematically denied their right to family unification, including in Jerusalem.
Settler colonialism and apartheid, as mutually reinforcing frameworks, allow us to make sense of the systematic policy to drive Palestinians from their homes. Zionism’s underlying “logic of elimination” has underpinned the ongoing Nakba since 1948: what began with the mass expulsion of indigenous Palestinians and the wanton destruction and looting of their homes, cities, and villages, has developed into an institutionalized regime that systematically entrenches Palestinian subjugation, facilitates Zionist colonization, and denies Palestinians their right of return.

In 2016, Rinad Abdulla argued that “[t]he hegemony over the legal and political discourse will continue to have disastrous implications for Palestinians... unless the framework is expanded to include the entire Palestinian population as a whole, rather than a piecemeal analysis of certain groups of Palestinians and certain territories of historical Palestine in fragmented discrete units.” Addressing Israeli apartheid requires us to understand Zionism’s settler colonial “logic of elimination,” to move beyond the partition of Palestine and division of Jerusalem, and thus to examine the plight of the entirety of the Palestinian people.

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8. Ibid., 9. See also Sayegh, op. cit. Charter of the United Nations (adopted June 26, 1945, entry into force October 24, 1945), 1 UNTS XVI, Articles 1(2) and 2(4).


16. Ibid., 387.

17. See, for example, Al-Haq, “Global Response to Israeli Apartheid: A Call to the UNGA from Palestinian and International Civil Society Organizations” (September 22, 2020) <https://www.alhaq.org/advocacy/17305.html>.


Falling Leaves Turn Back to Their Roots

Today, I visited our stolen house in the southern Baq’a area, in the western part of Jerusalem, the former Dajani neighborhood. A lifetime of beautiful memories hit me with a force that took my breath away. Standing on the doorstep of the home that witnessed my birth in 1930, I ran my fingers along its iron gate in an attempt to unlock it, when suddenly I realized that I was not allowed to enter. Those who occupied Palestinian houses cannot bear to see the original owners. Nevertheless, this moment of heartwarming nostalgia enkindled within me a sense of safety, security, and serenity, even though a large part of my childhood and early youth was spent under the domineering rule of the British Mandate. What saddens me most is that the name of the road that goes through this beautiful neighborhood has been changed to Hespira Street, as indicated by the sign affixed to the front of our old house.

Here I am, older and frail, vividly recalling that day when I had borrowed Adel’s bike. Adel happens to be my cousin on both the paternal and maternal sides of my family. He was the son of my uncle Ahmad Daoud Taher Al-Dajani and my aunt Balqis, the daughter of Abdullah Bek Al-Alami. Adel was on his way back from school when I asked him to take a photo of me with the Kodak camera that my oldest brother Sulaiman gave me upon his return from a visit to Britain that very week in 1948.

The 1940s were fraught with danger. Zionist gangs began to surface, committing heinous acts of terrorism with the full support of the British Mandate army. But even though the increasing influx of Jewish immigrants to Palestine presented a great challenge to Palestinians, the situation in our neighborhood in the western part of Jerusalem was still bearable. Rather than feeling the danger posed by Jewish immigrants, we formed friendships and partnerships, shared business interests and mutual relations, and were content with what felt like genuine coexistence. We shopped on Jaffa Street where most of the Jewish community lived, bought imported fine clothes from authorized Jewish agents, went to European bakeries, and frequented renowned cinemas, such as the Rex and the Rivoli in western Jerusalem. Oh, how we enjoyed the concerts of Umm Kulthum, Farid al-Atrash, and Asmahan that were performed at the King David Hotel.

My father had eight brothers. He was a distinguished and affluent...
The situation in Al-Baq’a was fairly acceptable until November 29, 1947. On that day the UN General Assembly announced a discriminatory resolution to divide the land of Palestine between Palestinians and Zionist Jews. August 1, 1948 was selected as the end of the British Mandate. Consequently, the State of Israel, with British and international support, occupied two-thirds of the historical land of Palestine. Arab resistance was virtually absent. Jordan, then represented by King Abdallah Ibn Al-Hussein, entered into an interim truce to maintain the security and safety of both Palestinians and Zionist Jews during this transitional period.

But tensions were at their peak: Palestinians rejected the unjust and biased resolution that divided their land and gave it away as a gift. Furthermore, the Palestinian resistance expanded, and confrontations raged between the Arabs and Zionist Jews. Zionist gangs began to execute their fanatic plots and aggressive criminal acts against Palestinians; they committed all sorts of crimes: robberies, killings, booby-trappings, displacement, and massacres, such as in Deir Yassin, killing Palestinians in their villages or deliberately harassing them just for the sake of humiliation, intimidation, and displacement. In addition, they perpetrated the arson of land and blew up hotels, such as the King David and Semiramis hotels. It was then that the feeling of imminent danger started to creep into our hearts, let alone our souls.

The number of British military checkpoints throughout Palestine doubled, separating neighborhoods and creating sealed military zones, while curfews were imposed in many areas, including in western Jerusalem which was divided into four zones. The Mandate regime required us to obtain permits to move around. They were classified by color, allowing the British soldiers to easily distinguish between residents in their respective locations; yellow, for instance, was the color of the southern Baq’a permits.

These conditions became pervasive. British soldiers accompanied Jewish gangs that roamed various areas in an attempt to control the situation, mitigate confrontations, facilitate Jewish succession to power, combat the revolutionaries and
This Week in Palestine

November 29, 1947 stood as a pivotal moment in my father’s life.

Muslim resistance fighters, and suppress the active role of Palestinian youth. At the same time, means of mobility and livelihood became very restricted. Armed confrontations arose in our neighborhoods, schools were closed, and people were living in constant fear. The Palestinian resistance movement was suppressed by the Mandate forces through imprisoning activists, executing many of them in the Russian Compound Interrogation Center and Prison (Al-Moscobiyyeh) at Jaffa Gate, near the Citadel of Salah Eddin Al-Ayoubi.

After the bitter experience of the Second World War, people were struck with terror; they frantically began to stock their homes for fear of a third world war. Scarcity prevailed, people reverted to the tradition of purchasing their supplies using food coupons to secure their basic needs from the British regime, as had been the case during the First World War, where a points system to obtain supplies had been established based on the number of family members. Prolonged power and water outages were a frequent occurrence.

People began to reinforce their houses and encircled them with barbed wire to counter terrorist attacks. Neighborhood voices cried out for the need to be armed and confront the heavily armed Jewish and Zionist gangs that were supported by the sophisticated British military and its arms, ammunition, armored vehicles, military vehicles, and camps. Palestinians were striving to collect money to buy simple rifles, and they felt abandoned. When the war broke out, Arab armies did not manage to reach Jerusalem due to lack of equipment, training, and familiarity with the topography of Palestine. All this did not contribute to protecting and salvaging Jerusalem.

My father was very unhappy with the ongoing developments. He had been an avid traveler who had spent most of his time far from the daily routine in Al-Baq’a. Thus, he and his brothers decided that the whole family should move and take refuge in Egypt to protect his children and our sick mother who required special care. At the time, my father had a grant-lease contract to cater meals for the airport’s canteen, including those served on board. One early morning, special arrangements were made for us to flee the neighborhood in hope of returning a few days later, when things would have calmed down and the situation stabilized. Our way to Lod Airport was safeguarded, and coordination had been made with the airport administration to book seats on a plane. British soldiers and a Jordanian tank accompanied us to make sure our trip to the airport was uneventful. We left our neighborhood in private cars, crossed the checkpoint in the Montefiori area, feeling safe in the presence of the Jordanian military soldiers we called 'The house in Baq’a where Abla was born.'
“The Red Strap Army,” who were originally Jordanian Bedouins who accompanied the Royal Jordanian entourage and part of the armistice crews.

Our trip to Egypt ended up being much longer than anticipated. In Cairo, we lived on Murad Street for three long years. My father did not join us in Cairo. Instead he decided to stay in Jerusalem at his Imperial Hotel at Bab al-Khalil to accommodate the foreign delegations that stayed at the hotel and also to protect the family’s properties in the Old City. Through the Belgian ambassador my father managed to get a permit to visit Al-Baq’a one week after we left. Once there, the Iraqi family that occupied our house told him that the house was left open. All furniture and family belongings had been stolen, including the jewelry that my mom hid in the window shutters. The only things that survived the robbery were the family albums that I cherish till this day. My father was very saddened by the fact that his Daoudi Agency was also robbed, including the British-made safe where he kept most of his official papers and family documents. In the winter of 1951, we all returned and stayed in family houses dispersed within the walls of the marketplace in the Aftimos neighborhood in the Old City.

The days and years passed. We also lived through the crisis of the Naksa during the 1967 War, when Israel occupied the rest of the land of historical Palestine, including East Jerusalem. Displacement continued, but our first migration had taught us never to leave our homeland again, under any circumstance. I visited our stolen house in Al-Baq’a as soon as the opportunity arose. Movement was restricted, yet two weeks after the war, I managed to go to Al-Baq’a with my husband and his brother in a car that was smeared with the traces of war. We headed to Al-Baq’a via Jaffa Street, bringing to full circle the suffering that our people have endured, and saw with our own eyes our house, inhabited by the occupiers who had stolen it and raised their flag at its entrance. What I felt in these moments cannot be described. The wounds that are engraved on our hearts can never be healed.

Since that agonizing trip 54 years ago, I have never stopped visiting our house and the neighborhood of our cherished childhood, just for the sake of re-experiencing its spirit and reliving the memories – and, most importantly, to pass on these treasured memories to my children and grandchildren so that they never forget or give up.

Abla Mohammad Taher Dajani Daoudi was born in December 1930 in Lower Baq’a and schooled at Schmidt’s Girls College. In May 1953, she married Aref Hassan Kleibo. She outlived her daughter, Narmin Hindiyeh, and has four sons, Hassan, Jamal, Mounir, and Mahdi. Abla is a very well-informed and avid reader; she loves photography, is a former herbal healer, and most of all, a supporter of women’s rights.

This article was written with the assistance of her son, Mounir Kleibo, who is currently the Special Representative of the ILO Office in Jerusalem.
A few years ago, I attended a lecture by a German official about the reunification of Germany West and East. It was an interesting lecture that included various topics about managing the reunification and applying laws and regulations to deal with the mired problems of this undertaking. One of the topics raised was real-estate properties of Germans that were left behind in East Germany, a complicated issue that the government was trying to tackle, especially since such properties were occupied by other Germans who were not the original owners. At that time, the process involved reimbursing the original owners one way or another. But there were no laws or regulations that prevented the original owners from regaining their properties or being compensated.

In contrast, Israel established “laws” in the 1950s that designated as “absentee properties” those owned by Palestinians who were forced to leave, especially those who fled to so-called enemy countries. The Israeli Absentee Property Law of 1950 (Absentee Property Law) is the main law in a series of laws that regulate the treatment of property belonging to Palestinians who left, were forced to flee, or were otherwise deported during the 1948 War.

Until now, Palestinians have been unable to recover their properties due to discriminatory laws that have stripped them of their properties and belongings. After 1967, Jerusalemites like myself were given identity cards and permanent resident status (at least in theory) but no right to recover their properties.

Recently the Israeli government was furious at Poland for instituting a law that would prevent Nazi-looted properties from being returned to their original owners. The hypocrisy and double standards are glaringly obvious. Israel considers that European Jews are by law entitled to regain their looted properties, while it simultaneously denies this right to millions of Palestinians.

My family used to reside in the neighborhood of Qatamon in West Jerusalem. At that time, there was no East or West, but one Jerusalem. In 1948 my family was forced to leave Qatamon at gunpoint by the terrorist Haganah militia. We were among the last families to leave the neighborhood. In January 1948, the Haganah blew up the Semiramis Hotel in Qatamon. Scores of civilians were killed. The neighborhood was also subjected to shelling, and its residents began to move to safer parts of the city. Yet, Ibrahim Abu Dayyeh, who led the local resistance efforts, entreated residents to stay...
put, and some did. In the aftermath of the Deir Yassin Massacre, however, the Arab population of Palestine was gripped by terror. Later that month, the Haganah broadcast messages to the remaining residents of Qatamon, ordering them to leave or it would blow up their houses with families inside.

My father gathered his family in our car and eventually headed to Lebanon by way of Amman, where some of our relatives took refuge. Since he regularly vacationed in Lebanon, he told his children that this was but a trip. He thought that they would leave for a two-week period until the hostilities subsided. Little did he know that this two-week period would become indefinite. During the war, he was able to slip back to Jerusalem to salvage some of our belongings and store them at one of the nunneries in Jerusalem for safeguarding. When his money was running low in Lebanon, he decided to go back to Bethlehem and try to reactivate the cigarette factory that he owned. He rented a house and gradually, over the next few years, brought his family back from Lebanon. Thus, in one day our lives were transformed – an affluent and well established Jerusalemite family became refugees.

After the British Mandate was set up in Palestine, my father came to visit his parents in the mid-1920s. Palestine was at the beginning of an economic boom, which interested my father. At the same time, he fell in love with my mother, Rose Jacob Jammal, who was living in Jerusalem. They decided to get married and briefly lived with my grandparents in Bethlehem while exploring the possibility of investing in Palestine, mainly in Jerusalem. Many Palestinians from Bethlehem were building their homes in the Jerusalemite neighborhoods of Qatamon, upper and lower Bak’a, and Talbiyeh.

After 1967, when the western part of Jerusalem was again accessible to us, my mother went to see her home in Qatamon. She broke down in tears when she saw that her home was being turned into a nursing facility for elderly people, and that the original design of the villa was being distorted by ugly additions. Israel is raising a storm about abandoned Jewish properties in Europe and the Arab world and wants compensation yet it denies the right of return or compensation to Palestinians.

There is much to be said about the loss of home and country, the scattering of a community, and the loss of a way of life that we Palestinians suffered in 1948, but I want to celebrate my father’s life achievements, achievements that 1948 and Israel’s racist laws stole from him.

My father grew up in Bethlehem. Around 1911, he and his brothers emigrated to El Salvador to search for work and to avoid Ottoman conscription. Through sheer hard work, they succeeded financially and eventually made their fortune in El Salvador, like many other Palestinians in the Americas.

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My father and his brothers decided to leave El Salvador and invest heavily in real estate in Jerusalem. My father bought several plots
of land and developed them. His properties in Jerusalem include the famous Sansur Building at the intersection of Jaffa Road and Ben Yehuda Street, the Greek Consulate in Qatamon (originally the Royal Egyptian Consulate), and the Italian Consulate, as well as other apartment buildings that he rented out. Our family home was also in Qatamon, as mentioned earlier. However, it was the Sansur Building that was his greatest pride. Designed by a distinguished Lebanese architect by the name of Michel Samaha, it stood as Jerusalem’s largest and most prestigious commercial building.

In addition to these, my father also established the Sansur Cigarette Company in Bethlehem, as he had had experience in the tobacco industry back in El Salvador. He also owned an orange plantation in the now-demolished Palestinian village of Saqiyah close to al-Lydd Airport. Its high-quality produce was exported to England. After 1948, my father often took us to a hill in Beit Jala to show us from a distance the neighborhoods where we and our relatives lived. He was sad but he showed remarkable resilience, telling us that “he makes the money but the money does not make him.” God rest his soul, for he was always optimistic and hopeful that justice would prevail and that we would eventually go back home.

After 1967 he would take us to Jerusalem and show us the wonderful buildings that our family owned, in particular the Sansur Building in the heart of Jerusalem’s commercial district. He would walk around the building and show us the large masonry, which helped it acquire the nickname “Solomon’s new temple” by the Jewish residents of the city. He also told us of the challenges he faced while building this edifice. The Zionists in Jerusalem were strongly opposed to the construction, not least since my father bought the land from a British Jewish lady in one of the rare instances during the mandate period when land passed from Jewish to Arab hands rather than the opposite. This angered Zionists as it contradicted their racist aspirations for an exclusively Jewish space.

As fond as he was of this building, every time he went to visit it he returned home upset and his blood pressure would rise. He was fully conscious of the fact that his life’s work had been stolen from him.

In an attempt to try to recover some of our properties, my father took the Greek Consulate General in Qatamon to Israeli court in 1972. The court ruled that the consulate should reimburse my father for lost rent or vacate the building. Yet, the Israeli Attorney General refused to execute the ruling, ridiculously claiming that the building — rather than the diplomats within it — enjoys diplomatic immunity. This only highlights how for Israel, the justice system exists merely to apply shallow legal veneer to its perpetual theft.

To this day, the Greeks refuse to pay rent. Even when we tried to obtain justice from alternate venues within Greece, the government would hinder our attempts through bureaucracy or simply turn a blind eye to our requests. As for the Italian Consulate, it continued to pay rent to my uncle Khalil for a few years after the Nakba but then stopped. On its website, there is mention of the building and of the architect Michel Samaha who designed it, but nowhere is there any mention of the Sansur family as owners of the building.

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The trajectory of my father’s life is not unique. It reflects that of many Palestinians of his generation as well as of ours, who have risen from humble origins to achieve great success, only to see their life’s work taken away from them. These injustices have never been rectified. Instead the thefts have been perpetuated by laws and lies.

Throughout the past 50 years or so there have been many articles, documentaries, and interviews about the Sansur properties in Jerusalem. One only has to search the internet to find them. Injustices cannot last forever, and one day, maybe soon or sometime in the distant future, justice is bound to prevail.

Ramzi Michael Sansur holds a master’s degree and a doctorate in environmental and occupational health sciences from New York University, USA. He worked for many years at Birzeit University to establish the Center for Environmental and Occupational Health Sciences. He set the grounds for quality control in various Palestinian industries and also helped establish the first Integrated Pest Management system in Palestine. Currently he and the family own an industrial European-style bakery.
The Mulberry Tree

This is my story and that of my family. It is also a shared narrative of thousands of other Palestinian families who experienced dispossession and as result became refugees in 1948.

I am from the neighborhood of Talbiyeh in West Jerusalem, and today I am a refugee and internally displaced in my own city.

At that time, I was too young to understand the calamities that were hiding just around the corner. I could not explain the silent glances between my father and mother. Those haunting looks clouded the otherwise happy, content, and hardworking household.

All I knew was that my parents took us to our winter home in Jericho for our security, a word I did not grasp then, as I had all the safety I needed provided by my family. You see, our home was the second building next to Saint Antonio Convent, which was at that time the headquarters of the British army. One day, my parents were away at a wedding in Jaffa and I was not able to join them because I was ill. But as a consolation they allowed me to sleep in their own bed, under the care of my grandparents. That night, a bomb planted in our garden exploded, shattering and breaking all the windows. I remember being terrified, covered in glass, and my uncle wrapping me in a blanket and running outside.

When I was older, my parents told me the full story according to the British investigation. The Haganah planted the bomb as a warning to the British to conduct a thorough search. My family rented a studio to a Jewish student who apparently belonged to the Irgun. His mission was to detonate a bomb, which was found under his bed and which was huge enough to destroy our home and the nearby house and convent.

While taking refuge in Jericho, my father started to repair the damage so that we could return. One day, soon afterwards, we learned that we would not be allowed to go back. Through it all I cried nonstop. I wanted my only doll that was left behind in Talbiyeh. I could not comprehend why my father, my rock, the symbol of strength and power, who never denied me anything, could not grant me my simple wish. Through shattered lives and shattered dreams, I will always wonder who hugged my doll and slept in the comfort of my bed.

It pains me till today to remember how my parents had to rebuild their lives, how hard they worked, and the sacrifices they made to make us feel safe and secure.

A few months after the war of June 1967, my mother-in-law, Jamileh Calis Habesch, also a refugee from Talbiyeh, called me one afternoon to ask me to pick her up early the next day. Without asking, I assumed she wanted a ride to one of her volunteer activities that were much needed after the devastation of another war. I arrived at her house only to find her elegantly dressed and looking majestic. She entered the car with a very solemn face and in a gentle yet demanding voice, she said, “Drive. We are going home.” In a voice that

By Claudette Ayoub Habesch

Tewfic and Jamileh Habesch in their Talbiyeh garden around 1935. Daughter Celeste is on the right of her mother, Colette is to the left of her father, and Beatrice is in front of him. Laurice is in front of her mother, and Issa is next to her. Yvette is the baby in the photo.
betrayed my emotions, I told her that I didn’t know the way. She gave the initial directions, but once we arrived at the King David Hotel, I was overwhelmed with memories, with images, even with familiar smells of my childhood unjustly robbed from me. The fountain in my garden, the sound of the water, our afternoon snack known as *asrouneh* in Arabic, and thousands of other details made my heart beat stronger and my eyesight blur with tears. I was amazed at how my mother-in-law remained composed, but I did not need her to show me the way. I, too, was going home, but as a stranger! Driving up towards Salameh Square, the Habesch home came into full view. Taking a deep breath, my mother-in-law uttered triumphantly in Arabic, “Thank God, thank God.” My brash response was, “Why, because the stones are there?” Her answer was “You’d better shut up.” And thus begins our story of the Mulberry Tree.

On the day that my late husband Issa was born, June 19, 1932, his father Tewfic Habesch planted a mulberry tree in the garden of his Talbiyeh home as a symbol of gratitude. He nurtured both his son and the tree. Many gatherings were held with family and friends under the shade of the mulberry tree, especially in the early summer to enjoy its succulent fruit. That tree became a symbol to the family and a living hope of return as the tree continued to bear fruit in abundance. It was exactly what my mother-in-law wanted to see.

When my husband passed away in February of this year and prior to the funeral service, the family took him on his final journey to his home in Talbiyeh, not only to honor his legacy but also to pass on the torch to his children and grandchildren. In a simple ceremony full of symbolism, a big black ribbon was tied around the mulberry tree to bid him a final farewell.

On his birthday this year, on June 19, in celebration of his life, the family went to lay flowers next to the mulberry tree, only to find it chopped down. Sadly, the tree did not survive beyond its 89 years as though it were inextricably connected to my husband. I felt that another piece of me had been ripped out, again. I felt a strange pain in my heart. I could not cry. The tears did not come. But how could they when I was suffocating with emotion? Was I missing Issa or was I mourning the loss of a homeland? We wonder as to the reason or reasons for attacking symbols of our collective history and memory. Is a tree with a black ribbon a threat to the existence of the families who live in our homes, which were taken away from us, their rightful owners in 1948? I wonder!

My grandsons found green shoots on the side of the trunk, as if the tree were saying, “I refuse to go away, and I will stand as a testimony to the injustice.” They took shoots in an attempt to try to re-grow the tree, and hopefully one day they will plant it where its mother once stood in resilience.

Even after 73 years, the injustice prevails, and though those years seem so long ago, the memories and pain are still alive. As long as our story and our cause are just and right, my children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren will continue to tell the story of the Immortal Mulberry Tree.

Claudette Ayoub Habesch was born in Talbiyeh, Jerusalem. At age seven, she became a refugee, finishing high school at Our Lady of Zion in the Old City of Jerusalem, obtaining her BA from Beirut College for Women in Beirut and doing an internship in public health at the American University of Beirut. An activist, Claudette headed Caritas Jerusalem for 27 years, serving as vice-president of Caritas Internationalis and president of Caritas MONA. Highly decorated, she is a Dame Commander of the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulcher of Jerusalem, and Dame with Star of the The Pontifical Equestrian Order of St. Gregory the Great.
Countering the Annexation of Jerusalem

By Marya Farah

Israel’s continued attempts to forcibly transfer Palestinians from Jerusalem – most flagrantly in Sheikh Jarrah and Silwan today – have not come without warning, nor are they isolated incidents. Israel has been clear in its intent towards the city and has established its proverbial “facts on the ground” premised on the continued dispossession and fragmentation of Palestinians, under the gaze of the United Nations (UN) and the international community at-large without consequence for over seven decades.

As part of this strategy, Israel has driven a narrative on possession and exclusivity, as the “undivided capital,” that has obscured the history of Jerusalem, its Palestinian-Arab identity and residents, and the city’s legal status. The international community’s reaction to Israel’s one-sided colonial discourse so far has only served to entrench the fragmentation of the city into east and west, as a posited “shared” capital.

The recent wave of Palestinian protests and acts of solidarity in Jerusalem, throughout Palestine, and globally have, however, not only challenged these prevailing refrains, but also opened the door for deeper conversations on Israel as a settler-colonial state. Edward Said’s call for a “well-planned information campaign stating the facts, bringing it to the attention of Jerusalem’s enormous worldwide constituency” thus not only resonates but is well overdue.

This article considers how Israel’s annexation of West Jerusalem and noncompliance with UN resolutions, mirrored in and in regard to East Jerusalem after 1967, have not changed the city’s legal status under international law. Despite a clear failure by the international community to take concrete action and protect the rights of Palestinians, it is still widely accepted State practice, and indeed in line with international law, to not recognize Israel as sovereign in Jerusalem. Accordingly, relevant UN resolutions, even with shortcomings in language and lack of implementation, and the broader history of Jerusalem should be a component of advocacy and challenging current Israeli policies in the city.

Leading up to 181

While it is impossible to adequately summarize the events that took place prior to 1947 that deeply impacted and facilitated Israel’s colonization of Palestine, two facts can cursorily provide the context in which UN General Assembly (UNGA) Resolution 181 (discussed below) was passed.

First is the impact of the British Mandate’s dismissal of the native population in favor of Zionist aspirations, including via the incorporation of principles from the 1917 Balfour Declaration into the Palestine Mandate. Most importantly, this included support for “the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people,” with Article 6 of the Mandate going on to ensure facilitation of Jewish immigration. As noted in Henry Cattan’s Jerusalem, this significantly altered the demography of Palestine, where the Jewish population “increased more than tenfold. From 56,000 in 1918 … to 608,230 in 1946.”

This translated into an increase in Jerusalem’s Jewish population from 33,971 to 99,400 during this period.

The second is that while the Balfour Declaration and Mandate gave lip service to not prejudicing “the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine,” with approximately 94 percent of the population at the time of the declaration being Arab, actions taken by the British contravened the right of Palestinians to self-determination, and the aim of the Covenant of the League of Nations.
Throughout this period, Palestinians expressed their opposition to Zionist immigration, British rule, and the impact of both on their rights and on Palestine more generally.\textsuperscript{vi}

**UN (in)action**

Following British withdrawal, the UN followed a similar path in terms of dismissing the rights, concerns, and legal claims of Palestinians. In its report on November 11, 1947, UN Sub-Committee 2 of the Ad Hoc Committee on the Palestinian Question, noted that certain States raised legal questions, particularly regarding the competency of the UN to recommend solutions “without the consent of the people of Palestine,” and called for an advisory opinion from the International Court of Justice.\textsuperscript{vii}

Instead, on November 29, 1947, the UNGA passed Resolution 181 which infamously called for the partition of Palestine, and the establishment of Jerusalem as “a corpus separatum under a special international regime…administered by the United Nations.” The proposal was reaffirmed in December 1948 via UNGA Resolution 194 (III), which underscored the “permanent international regime” for the city and called on the Security Council to “ensure the demilitarization of Jerusalem.”

Importantly, the Nakba began to unfold between the two resolutions. In the western part of Jerusalem and its environs, tens of thousands of Palestinians were driven out of their homes, which, along with their property, were subsequently looted and taken over, including via the Absentee Property Regulations of 1948, and Jews (including immigrants, evacuees, and Israeli officials) were transferred into their homes.\textsuperscript{viii} In acknowledging these changes – as had occurred throughout Palestine – Resolution 194 also called for the right of refugees to return to their homes, as well as compensation for lost and damaged property.

While Israel took further actions indicating its intentions towards Jerusalem, including abolishing military rule and instituting civil administration,\textsuperscript{x} as well as convening the Knesset there in February 1949,\textsuperscript{x} the UN continued to consider Israel a good-faith actor. In May 1949, the UNGA granted Israel admission to the United Nations. The resolution for admission recalled Resolutions 181 and 194 and their practical implementation, and further noted “declarations and explanations” made by Israel in regard to implementing these resolutions, as well as its acceptance of its obligations under the UN Charter.\textsuperscript{x}

Indeed, in discussing its application during the days leading up to admission to the UN, Israel’s representative, Abba Eban, asserted that “no juridical facts” were created by Israel’s integration of Jerusalem into the state, but that such steps were taken to “assist Jerusalem and to add economic recovery to the other aspects of its splendid recuperation.”\textsuperscript{xi} He went on to deny “false and malicious” claims that Israel proclaimed the city as part of the State. Any remaining pretenses were fully abandoned when on December 5, 1949, Israel’s prime minister declared Jerusalem as the capital.\textsuperscript{xii}

Days later, the UNGA, via Resolution 303 (IV), restated its plan for the internationalization of Jerusalem, and called on concerned States to...
This Week in Palestine

The decades-long pattern of Israel’s disregard of international law, alongside these and other condemnations continued, however, as did its impunity. This status quo was only disrupted — for the worse — when the Trump administration recognized Jerusalem as the capital in December 2017. The General Assembly immediately held an emergency session that resulted in the adoption of the resolution “Status of Jerusalem,” which again reaffirmed “that any decisions and actions which purport to have altered the character, status or demographic composition of the Holy City of Jerusalem have no legal effect, are null and void and must be rescinded in compliance with relevant resolutions of the Security Council […].”

The resolution also echoed previous calls for States to not establish diplomatic missions in the city. Before the General Assembly vote, the Security Council failed to adopt a similar resolution due to a veto by the United States; importantly, all other Security Council members voted in favor.

Months later, Israel again declared Jerusalem as its capital via the Jewish Nation-State Law. Since the beginning, Israel has been cognizant of the lack of political will to uphold international law and implement UN resolution after resolution. Even in this vacuum, and the continued entrenchment of annexation, Israel’s actions towards the city remain unlawful.

While it may be unrealistic to expect that the UN and member states will soon begin to rectify the 70+ years of impunity, reasserting the aforementioned resolutions and facts of Israeli colonization, including in Jerusalem specifically, remains important. States and the UN should continue to be reminded of their obligations and responsibilities and encouraged to take concrete steps, including by examining “practical ways and means” to ensure Israeli compliance.

As activists and civil society take the lead in changing the discourse on Israel’s colonization and apartheid regime, the current moment should be viewed as an opportunity for Palestinian leadership to take a stronger, and expanded, stance towards Jerusalem, i.e., one that encompasses the entire city — east and west — in line with international law, which must be followed by palpable action rather than the usual lip service.

Marya Farah is a lawyer who focuses on international human rights law and advocacy.

“approach these matters with good will and be guided by the terms of the present resolution.” In response, Israeli Prime Minister Ben-Gurion was obdurate, stating that the resolution was “utterly incapable of implementation.”

Expanding annexation

With no substantive international action taken in the two decades that followed, Israel pursued a similar path in East Jerusalem and quickly announced the city’s “reunification” following the start of the occupation in 1967. Echoing the aforementioned statements made in 1949 on integrating West Jerusalem to help its “economic recovery,” in 1967, Israeli diplomats were urged to discuss actions in the eastern part of the city as one of “municipal fusion” aimed to provide “proper services to residents of Jerusalem and its vicinity.” As in West Jerusalem, Israel again expanded the municipal boundaries of the city, obstructed the right of return of Palestinians who had left during the war (along with instituting other measures to ensure the continued transfer of Palestinians — exemplified today in Sheikh Jarrah and Silwan), and implemented various policies and practices to either appropriate property or limit its use.

These and other Israeli measures to annex and unlawfully extend Israel’s sovereignty over East Jerusalem — both after 1967 and following Israel’s issuance of the 1980 Basic Law, which named “complete and united” Jerusalem as the capital — were again met with Palestinian and international condemnation.

Subsequent UN Security Council resolutions underscored that actions taken to change the status of Jerusalem were invalid, called on Israel to rescind such measures, and recognized Israel’s failure to comply with previous resolutions.

Moving forward

Prior to its announcement of Jerusalem as its capital, the delegation of Israel submitted a memorandum in November 1949 where it justified its presence and underscored international inaction on the city. It noted in part, “The authority of Israel in Jerusalem has not arisen as an act of rebellion. It has advanced steadily along channels of consent, at no single moment conflicting with any effective authority or competing with any international body able to offer service and protection to Jerusalem.”

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See generally, Chapter 1, Khalidi.


Israel first expanded the boundaries of Jerusalem on August 30, 1949. The initial boundaries covered 16.26 km², and were extended “westward, incorporating most of the developing Jewish suburbs and many of the depopulated Palestinian villages in the surrounding hills, to a total area of 38 km².” Jerusalem & Its Changing Boundaries, Passia, January 2018, https://www.fes-palestine.org/fileadmin/user_upload/Publication_1/PASSIA/Bulletin_Jerusalem_Boundaries_English.pdf.


Memorandum on the Future of Jerusalem- an Analysis of the Palestinian Conciliation Commissions (Draft Instrument) Submitted to the UN General Assembly by the Delegation of Israel to the UN, November 15, 1949, Para. 24.

Rethinking Restitution: Commentary

By Terry Rempel

Writing about housing, land, and property restitution in the western neighborhoods of Jerusalem may seem somewhat detached from present realities as Palestinians elsewhere in the city, other territories occupied by Israel in 1967, and across the “Green Line” are struggling to remain in their homes, on their lands, and in possession of other properties. This past June alone, OCHA reported that Israeli demolition of Palestinian-owned structures displaced 108 people (affecting nearly 2,700 others) in the occupied West Bank, including the eastern neighborhoods of Jerusalem, a sevenfold increase over May and the second-highest monthly total this year. Significant as these statistics may be, they likely underestimate the scope and scale of ongoing displacement and dispossession: a more comprehensive accounting would need to consider other causes of forced displacement – eviction, revocation of residency rights, denial of family reunification, confiscation of land, etc. – in addition to the vulnerability of Palestinian citizens of Israel to displacement through application of similar measures.

Yet, as Huda Imam observes in her “Journey through Sheikh Jarrah” in the June issue of This Week in Palestine, efforts by settlers to evict Palestinian residents from Jewish claimed properties in the eastern neighborhood of Jerusalem over the past fifty years raise the obvious question of why the state of Israel prevents displaced Palestinians from the western part of the city – including Imam, whose family has title to property in the Baqa’ neighborhood – from repossessing their homes, lands, and other properties. Before answering that question, it is perhaps useful to consider briefly the workings of restitution in Jerusalem since the 1967 war, that is to say, how Jews are able to repossess homes, lands, and properties in one part of the city while Palestinians are denied the same opportunity in the other. A few additional words about developments in the law and practice of housing, land, and property restitution for refugees and displaced persons elsewhere will help place Palestinian claims in broader context.

The legal mechanism for restitution in this particular case can be found in the 1968 Legal and Administrative Matters Law (a consolidated version appeared two years later). The law essentially aimed to address certain anomalies arising from Israel’s military occupation and subsequent application of its law to the eastern neighborhoods of Jerusalem after the 1967 war. This included the status of Palestinian residents, most of whom held Jordanian citizenship, who suddenly became absentee with regard to their homes, lands, and properties under Israel’s 1950 Absentees’ Property Law. Transfer of this property to the state through the Custodian of Absentees’ Property and the Development Authority, the body set up to launder refugee properties after the 1948 war, may have been desirable from a Zionist perspective. Enforcement of the 1950 law in the eastern part of the city, however, created what Israeli foreign minister Yair Lapid recently described in reference to the demolition of the Bedouin village of Khan al-Ahmar as “international
challenges.” While it remains to be seen how Israel will handle the pending erasure of Khan al-Ahmar, the Legal and Administrative Matters Law provided a solution of sorts to the earlier problem by stipulating that Palestinian residents of eastern Jerusalem – i.e., those registered in Israel’s 1967 census – shall not be regarded as absentees in respect of property situated in “that area” (the significance of the quotes will soon become apparent) of the city. This seemed fair enough, although it should be noted that the Absentees’ Property Law still applied to Palestinians not registered in the census, those whose residency status was revoked by Israel, property owners who resided outside the city, and those who for other reasons were considered enemies of the Jewish state.

The Legal and Administrative Matters Law further stipulated, moreover, that housing, land, and other properties in the city, with few exceptions (e.g., public purpose), had to be returned to their original owners. It was this provision that enabled Jewish property owners to repossess homes, lands, and properties in the Old City and eastern neighborhoods of the city which had been administered since the 1948 war by the Jordanian Custodian of Enemy Property. This again seemed fair enough. Whether Jewish organizations intent on colonizing eastern Jerusalem, rather than the original property owners, should be entitled to claim properties in “that area” of the city before the 1948 war is another matter. More practically, enabling Jews to repossess homes, lands, and properties in the eastern neighborhoods of Jerusalem raised the prospect that Palestinian residents of those same neighborhoods who originated from the western parts of the city – estimated to comprise around a quarter of the population of eastern Jerusalem in 1995 – would use the law to claim their own homes, lands, and other properties in the western neighborhoods. In short, Israel prevented this from happening by restricting the application of this provision in the Legal and Administrative Matters Law to the eastern part of Jerusalem, which the law referred to discretely as “that area” of the city. Incidentally, it was the non-application of the 1950 Absentees’ Property Law to Jewish absentees after the 1948 war that prefigured the differential and discriminatory treatment of Palestinian claims in the western neighborhoods of Jerusalem two decades later.

This was not what the United Nations Mediator, Count Folke Bernadotte, had in mind when he recommended in his September 1948 Progress Report that the UN affirm “the right of the Arab refugees to return to their homes” and that a conciliation commission be set up “to supervise and assist their repatriation, resettlement and economic and social rehabilitation and payment of compensation for the property of those choosing not to return.” These recommendations also covered the comparatively smaller number of Jews displaced within and from Palestine as a result of the 1948 war, including those who owned homes, lands, and other properties in the eastern neighborhoods of Jerusalem. To what degree the Swedish diplomat who negotiated the release of prisoners from German concentration camps only a few years earlier was influenced by precedents being set in Europe regarding the restitution of property after the Second World War

Principle 2 - The right to housing and property restitution

2.1 All refugees and displaced persons have the right to have restored to them any housing, land and/or property of which they were arbitrarily or unlawfully deprived, or to be compensated for any housing, land and/or property that is factually impossible to restore as determined by an independent, impartial tribunal.

2.2 States shall demonstrably prioritize the right to restitution as the preferred remedy for displacement and as a key element of restorative justice. The right to restitution exists as a distinct right, and is prejudiced neither by the actual return nor non-return of refugees and displaced persons entitled to housing, land and property restitution.

is unclear, although it is likely that
his small team of advisers, including
Ralph Bunche, principal secretary,
and legal adviser Constantin
Stavropoulos were well aware of
these precedents. Bernadotte’s
recommendations formed the basis
of a series of American, British,
and UN draft texts that eventually
coaalesced on December 11, 1948
into General Assembly Resolution
194. In its Analysis of Paragraph 11
of the General Assembly’s Resolution
of 11 December 1948 (1950), the
UN Conciliation Commission for
Palestine (UNCCP), the body set
up to facilitate the implementation
of Resolution 194, observed that
“if refugees not returning are to be
compensated for their property,
those returning would re-occupy
their homes and be compensated
for losses and damages.” During the
debate, the British representative,
when asked, specifically stated that
these provisions applied to refugees
from the western neighborhoods of
Jerusalem.

Paragraph 11 in many ways
prefigured developments in law
and practice governing solutions
for refugees and displaced persons
fifty years later when the Palestine
Liberation Organization and the state
of Israel signed the 1993 Declaration
of Principles. From the beginning of
the 1990s, a plethora of UN bodies –
the International Law Commission,
human rights treaty committees,
the Commission on Human Rights
and its Sub-Commission on the
Protection and Promotion of Human
Rights, the Security Council, the
General Assembly, the Economic
and Social Council, the Office of the
High Commissioner for Refugees, and
peace-building missions – addressed
a range of issues relating to housing,
land, and property restitution,
including its application to refugees
and displaced persons. Restitution
principles and procedures could
also be found in peace agreements
around the world as part of a
standard package of elements widely
recognized as central to durable
solutions for refugees and displaced
persons. While the 1990s may have
been the decade of repatriation, as
then High Commissioner for Refugees
Sadako Ogata described the period,
the 1990s might also be described
as the decade of housing, land, and
property restitution. The difficulties
which refugees and displaced
persons encountered along the way
and an assessment of the outcome of
their efforts to return to their homes,
reclaim lands, and repossess other
properties are significant matters
that have been elaborated by others
elsewhere.

These were among the precedents
for Palestinian claims referred
to in Jerusalem 1948: The Arab
Neighbourhoods of the City and their
Fate in the War (1999, 2002), an
edited collection of studies published
by the Institute of Jerusalem
Studies and the BADIL Resource
Center for Palestinian Refugee and
Residency Rights on the eve of final
status talks between Israel and the
PLO. The project aimed to shed
light on a chapter in the modern
history of Jerusalem which is often
overshadowed by the ongoing
struggle of Palestinians to remain
in their homes, on their lands, and
in possession of their properties in
the eastern neighborhoods of the
city since the 1967 war. Presenting
initial findings from the joint initiative
along with information about a
related film entitled Yoom Ilak, Yoom
Alek: Palestinian Refugees from
Jerusalem, 1948: Heritage, Eviction
& Hope, BADIL’s newsletters from
the period also carried stories about
the colonization of Sheikh Jarrah and
Silwan, revocation of residency rights,
and denial of family reunification
along with Palestinian efforts to
prevent the destruction of what
remained of the village of Lifta, one of
four villages depopulated during the
1948 war and subsequently annexed
to the western part of Jerusalem. The
book also sought to provide context
for concepts and realities – e.g., the
terms “East” and “West” Jerusalem
and demographic division of the city
(before colonization of the eastern
neighborhoods) – which appeared
beyond question – at least in terms
of the discourse in which the Middle
East peace process was framed – by
the time Palestinians and Israelis
gathered around the negotiating table
in the 1990s to resolve their deep and
long-standing differences.

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Also notable in terms of restitution principles, though hardly mentioned in the literature on Palestinian refugees during the period, including my own contributions, was the 1993 Abuja Proclamation adopted by the first Pan-African Conference on Reparations for African Enslavement, Colonization and Neo-Colonization. Sponsored by the Organization of African Unity and its Reparations Commission, the proclamation captures the essence of what many Palestinians today refer to as their ongoing Nakba. Conference participants declared that they were “fully persuaded that the damage sustained by the African people is not a ‘thing of the past’ but is painfully manifest in the damaged lives of contemporary Africans from Harlem to Harare, in the damaged economies of the black world from Guinea to Guyana, from Somalia to Surinam.” German reparations to Jews (individuals, organizations, and the state of Israel) after the Holocaust recalled in the proclamation were also among the precedents that the UNCCP identified as important to Palestinian refugee claims after the 1948 war. Significant here, of course, is that the precedent-setting Luxembourg Agreement between Germany, the state of Israel, and Jewish organizations was being negotiated at the same time that the UNCCP was seeking an agreement to repair the losses suffered by refugees as a result of the 1948 Arab-Israeli war. Sami Hadawi, who worked in the Department of Land Settlement during the British administration of Palestine and as a land specialist with the UNCCP along with the Arab economist Atef Kubursi drew upon the same precedent some thirty years later in *Palestinian Rights and Losses in 1948: A Comprehensive Study* (1988). Emphasizing that no financial award, however large, could compensate fully for the loss of a homeland, they argued that an accurate assessment, which included both material losses and human suffering, would provide an indication of the magnitude of the 1948 Nakba. Notably, they added that assessment of losses suffered since then would require a separate investigation. The establishment of a World Jewish Restitution Organization to pursue claims in post-Communist eastern Europe in the 1990s, along with campaigns for the release of dormant accounts in Swiss banks and reparations from German companies for slave labor, reignited interest in German reparations as the Middle East peace process got under way. It was these precedents that refugee activists, Palestinian unionists, politicians and personalities in national institutions, researchers, NGOs, and independent figures in Palestine also drew upon in a petition entitled *Restitution: A Basic Human Right*, issued on the eve of final status negotiations between the PLO and Israel. The petition continued a long and diverse tradition of Palestinian resistance to displacement and dispossession, much of which has been overlooked and ignored in conventional accounts of high-level negotiations that have attempted to find solutions to the so-called refugee problem – not necessarily the problems faced by refugees.

The losses suffered during the Nakba, as Sami Hadawi, Atef Kubursi, and so many others have pointed out, extended well beyond the loss of homes, lands, and other properties. This is evident in the descriptions of pre-war life in the western neighborhoods of Jerusalem and surrounding villages of the city found in the chapters of *Jerusalem 1948*, many of which rely upon memoirs and oral history interviews with displaced residents. The displacement and dispossession of Palestinians from Baq’a, Qatamon, Talbiyeh, the Greek Colony, and the many other neighborhoods that make up the western parts of the city marked “the loss of an entire world that exemplified Jerusalem and Palestine” before its conquest during the 1948 war and subsequent dissolution. As Salim Tamari observes in the introduction to the book, Jerusalem was “a city of considerable social mobility, of ethnic diversity, and of communal conflict that was tempered by a fair amount of mutual dependence on local solidarities.” The map of real estate holdings in the western neighborhoods (attached to the book), which Sami Hadawi, himself a refugee from Qatamon, first prepared for the New York-based Palestine Arab Refugee Office in the late 1950s (one of the numerous initiatives mentioned above), reflects the emerging realities in Jerusalem as described in the book on the eve of the 1948 war. Tamari’s further observation that the portrait of the city is one that today is unrecognizable – an observation that can hardly be overstated – further underscores the limitations of a narrow definition of restitution centered on the return of homes, lands, and other properties, as significant as these may be.

It is this broader loss that Palestinian representatives, such as jurist Henry Cattan, a refugee from the Baqa’ neighborhood, along with Arab and other allies, perhaps sought to redress through demands during the drafting of Resolution 194 that paragraph 11 also address the
economic, social, and political rights of the refugees. From their perspective, in addition to the individual rights of return, restitution, and compensation, the resolution should have also affirmed the right of Palestinians as a people to return to their homeland, a demand that took another twenty-five years of struggle to codify in General Assembly Resolution 3236 (only to be vetoed by the United States in the Security Council) and one which remains, in practice, unrealized to this day. It is this broader definition of restitution, that is to say, restitution as decolonization that resonates in the findings of a recent (2018) BADIL survey of refugee and internally displaced youth in Palestine, Israel, and major Arab host countries. While many youth struggled to conceptualize what return would look like in practice, something that the editors of the Survey of Palestinian Refugees and Internally Displaced Persons (vol. 9) attributed to inadequate or absent discourse of return, most respondents nevertheless “recognized that physical return alone is not enough; that return must be sustainable and create an environment that not only addresses the injustice, but fulfills the social and economic rights of the returnees.” In addition to property documentation and socioeconomic rehabilitation they also identified reparations for the various crimes and violations arising from colonization as the most important problems to be addressed once their return has been realized.

Reading news about the ongoing Nakba in Jerusalem over the past few months, from forced evictions and demolitions to revocation of residency rights along with Palestinian efforts to preserve what remains of the depopulated village of Lifta, from the vantage point of Canada, where stories of the unmarked (and yet to be identified) graves of well over a thousand Indigenous children (and most likely many more) who perished in church-run residential schools funded by the government have filled (and fueled) the news over the summer, I am reminded of Tom King’s (2012) observation in The Inconvenient Indian: A Curious Account of Native People in North America. “Most of us think that history is the past. It’s not. History is the stories we tell about the past.” Summarizing his narrative journey through hundreds of years of Indigenous history, King, an Indigenous author, activist, and academic from the Cherokee Nation, concludes that “in terms of attitudes, in terms of dispossession and intolerance, nothing much has changed. [History] turns out to be our present. It may well be our future.” I am also reminded of the observation made by Elias Sanbar, the Palestinian historian and author of Palestine 1948: l’expulsion (1984), in the French language daily Libération on the eve of Israel’s 1982 invasion and the massacre of refugees in Sabra and Shatila that “Palestinians are the American Indians of the Jewish settlers in Palestine. In their eyes,” Sanbar writes, “our one and only role consists in disappearing.”

Why are these observations important and what do they have to do with Palestinian restitution in the western neighborhoods of Jerusalem? Simply put, they bring to fore an analytical framework that is absent from much of the scholarly and policy production in recent decades on housing, land, and property restitution for refugees and displaced persons, with the notable exception of comparative work on South Africa. Of course, settler colonialism in Palestine has its unique features – the presence of an indigenous Jewish population that predates Zionist colonization, the impossibility of non-Jews to assimilate within the Jewish state, and one of the world’s largest refugee populations (exceeded only in recent years by Syria), to name a few – but this is no different from other settler colonies and should not preclude considered comparison of the phenomenon. Understanding settler colonialism as “structure and not an event” with land as its “specific, irreducible element,” as Patrick Wolfe so usefully explains in “Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native” in the Journal of Genocide Research (2006), arguably helps to better explain Israel’s ongoing dispossession of Palestinians in Jerusalem, elsewhere in the territories occupied by the Jewish state since 1967, and across the “Green Line” since the 1948 war. The analytic also helps to explain the country’s domestic legislation – from the 1950 Absentees’ Property Law and 1970 Legal and Administrative Matters Law to the plethora of Basic (Constitutional) Laws governing Israel Lands (1960), Human Dignity and Liberty (1992), and Israel as the Nation-State of the Jewish People (2018) – under which restitution is virtually impossible.

While there is a rich body of early literature to draw upon, most notably, the writings of Fayez Sayegh, complemented by an emerging corpus of new research, some of which can be found in the journal Settler Colonial Studies, the challenges of restitution for Palestinian refugees and displaced persons, including those who originate from the western neighborhoods of Jerusalem, in a settler colonial context, whether historical or today, have barely been touched upon. Fruitful areas of inquiry might include a more critical consideration of international law, the colonial origins of important doctrines like sovereignty in particular; whether and how the handling of Indigenous claims by settler colonies like the United States and Canada impinge on their respective foreign policies regarding housing, land, and property restitution for Palestinian refugees; the roles that wider solidarity movements have and continue to play in reparations for colonialism (and its settler colonial variety); comparative research on restitution as decolonization in Africa (beyond post-apartheid South Africa), Asia, and the Americas; and, lastly, consideration and foregrounding of Indigenous resistance to dispossession and their struggles for reparation. This is not to dismiss the value of existing research, only to emphasize that in the absence of a settler colonial analytic, research on housing, land, and property restitution for Palestinian refugees is arguably ahistorical and incomplete, which in turn raises critical questions about its policy relevance.

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t’s one of those days when you feel like digging deeper into your past while being actively alert in the present. This time I do not choose the teenage journal or love letters I am secretly preserving. Instead, the focus is on family files and photos; a collection of old, aging, yellowish, ripped papers with notes, figures, certificates, and letters elegantly handwritten by my father in Arabic and English. My eyes fall on a folder that I very gently prise open, unfolding an A3 document inside that states:

Here it is. The koushan, the deed to our Baq’a house!

The very first time I saw our house in Baq’a was just after the 1967 War, when one afternoon we set off from Sheikh Jarrah, crossing the Green Line to Mandelbaum Gate, behind St. George’s School that my brothers attended. We passed the Mea She’arim Jewish neighborhood that day to learn about orthodox Jews, covered with coats and hats, all dressed in black. The women wore long skirts and had wigs on their heads; children our age—seven or eight years old—wore kippahs on their shaved heads with hair tails cascading down their ears.

Finally, we reached the beginning of the railway whose train route traveled from Jerusalem to Beirut, Damascus, Cairo, and Baghdad. “Here is Qatamon,” my father said. I heard my father’s heartbeat pounding stronger and stronger as he whispered loudly, “Hayyo hayyo, hay il bayt (here it is, this is the house)!” My father humbly walked towards the green garden gate at the front of his house. I stood very close to him, hugging him from the waist, looking up to his face, watching his blurred eyes while mine were darting left, right, up, and down. He touched the gate from the outside and pointed with his finger to the balcony, “This is where we had our morning coffee with your grandmother.”

My father stood still; he seemed calm, but in reality I could feel the anguish, pain, and distress in his face. He wasn’t well. He called my mother who was also visiting the house for the first time (as he got married five years after the Nakba). “Baba must miss his mother,” I thought, but it was more than nostalgia. He looked troubled, yet he continued to entertain us with
the house. “Look at the azkdenya, the lemon, the pomegranate… a whole life of green memories,” my father reminisced.

“What a shame the fountain is empty of water, full of dry leaves,” he lamented as he pointed at the water fountain in the middle of the garden. The house looked somber and heartbroken, exactly like my father. The yellow jasmine flowers were falling over the fence. We touched the flowers, when suddenly a woman came out and shouted at us in Yiddish, “Who are you?”

“No, you are not welcome to come in,” she spitefully retorted. “Go away.”

“Why is this woman so impolite, baba? Why doesn’t she allow us into our house?”

My father was let down. I think he struggled to maintain the strong father figure posture, but it wasn’t easy. His sorrow in this moment was channeled through my blood.

Looking back at that moment, I now realize that my father didn’t want to burden us with the grief that he had kept inside himself all those years caused by the catastrophic events in 1948 when he lost his home, his city, and his country.

The injustice my father endured, along with the deeply buried pain was passed on to me through his DNA. Somehow, the longing that I have for my father, who I miss immensely, has become inextricably linked with longing to be near his Baq’a house. My father grew up at Bab el-Silsileh (Chain Gate next to Al-Aqsa Mosque). However, the house he built and lived in, for less than seven years, still lies in the Baq’a Greek Colony.

Not a week goes by when I don’t go with my son to stand outside the house… it’s a ritual that I have become accustomed to. We stand quietly side by side while our eyes fixate on the stately well-crafted green home with jasmine, lemon, pomegranate, and azkdenya trees in the garden; we soak in the atmosphere. Memories of my father come flooding back.

My son, as humble and discreet as my father, observes the “new” inhabitants in these neighborhoods, and says, “These people do not belong to the architecture or to the landscape.”

Growing up, I carried with me the image of my father’s face as he was denied his home. A moment I shall never forget. And in order to heal from this obsession, I keep visiting my father’s house. The only problem is that I get arrested almost every time I am around there.

In 1998 when I returned home from London, where I pursued my postgraduate studies, I took a job with the Bethlehem 2000 Project. Every morning on my way to work, I enjoyed taking a detour to explore Baq’a, Qatamon, and Talbiyeh until one day I decided to walk towards the Greek Consulate and club to peek inside my father’s house. To my shock, I found a sign in Hebrew that read “FOR SALE”!

Bewildered, I started wondering who would dare sell my father’s house? My father died in 1978. He’s the only owner, and I have the koushan, the deed, the authentic “birth certificate” of the house. Not so discreetly, I entered the garden and then the house; I didn’t even need to break any windows or doors to get in. For years, I’ve yearned to be able to go inside through the pink stone arcades, to see the high ceilings, colored floors with tiles. Finally inside, I couldn’t believe my eyes. I was gallivanting inside my house like Alice in Wonderland, curiously discovering the stories that each room contained, as my father used to recount. The whole house was now a building site under renovation. Oh my God, this is my house, my dream house, exactly where I want to live.

As the house was undergoing a facelift, exactly like the Bethlehem sites and monuments within the Bethlehem 2000 Project, I arrived late to work every morning to be around my house and follow its rehabilitation.

The sale disturbed me. “Those Zionists forced my father out of his house, accommodated some strangers who came from Europe, and now they’re selling the house! No way!” I went to see a lawyer who had actually won two or three cases to repossess Palestinian property. “Netanyahu governs and privatizes, the occupation government is selling Palestinian houses appropriated in 1948,” the lawyer confirmed.

I consulted several lawyers who all tried to explain the Absentee Property Law again and again. But, my father was very present in Jerusalem after his expulsion. He was not absent. I was devastated. Seeing my determination, one of the lawyers advised, “You can sit in the house to stir up the media.”

My obsession grew stronger until a brilliant idea came to my mind “Well, what if I buy the house?” But, how could I possibly find $5 million? This story received international coverage. The Observer made the story its weekend editorial entitled “LSE
graduate cannot buy her own house.” This came after thorough investigative journalistic research by a number of newspapers that found out that Israeli real estate agencies will not sell to a non-Jew. Le Monde, ABC, BBC, Al Hayat of London, the Guardian, and Al Jazeera covered my story, relating it to peace talks back in 1998, when Jerusalem and displaced Palestinian refugees were still on the agenda.

I went to the house every day and became friends with the masons (craftsmen) who were refurbishing the stone, clearly Palestinians. I ended up quitting Bethlehem 2000, convincing myself that charity starts at home and this is my heritage project to preserve and protect. When a stranger stood right at the entrance of the house, with a most evident arrogant look that I saw through his black Ray-Ban sunglasses, he asked me, “Who are you?”

“Excuse me?” I responded. “Who are YOU?”

“Ahh. You must be the daughter of the owner. I mean the former…”

“Exactly,” I replied, “this is who I am, who are you?”

“Udi Kaplan. I have a real estate agency and we are selling the house. You see, it’s ‘balagan,’ a mess.” He continued, “the house will now consist of four apartments plus the ground floor.

“Who gives you the right to the house?”

“The Israeli government …you know Netanyahu loves money, so why keep all these houses in the government’s name?”

“But ‘we own the house,’ ‘the right of return’ …how much money are you asking for?”

“Around $5 million,” he said. “By the way, I am expecting some visitors who are interested in buying the ground floor, so you must leave to avoid problems.”

While I was struggling to behave in a civil manner to remain calm, he continued, “Ah, apparently you come here often, and you have been taking tiles, the neighbors told me.”

“Yes, correct. I shall take more tiles that you are uprooting.”

“But they are also for sale,” he said.

Respecting my ritual, I kept visiting and succeeded to place the tiles with geometric black, white, green, and terra-cotta colors as a carpet design in my Sheikh Jarrah house. I felt brave, happy, victorious. The fight is not over the tiles, nor obsession or possession, for me it was all about love and belonging. I felt that my father was proud of me keeping his legacy and fighting for what he wasn’t able to do.

When Naheel Aweidah, my dad’s cousin, happily surprised me with a visit after 40 years of exile, I was working in the Old City. Her permit allowed her to come one afternoon to Jerusalem. We looked into each other’s eyes and mischievously mapped our destination for the afternoon: Yalla to Baq’a. Naheel was born in Baq’a. Just before the evening descended, Naheel wanted to challenge her memory by leading the way to her uncle’s house – my father’s. Within five minutes we were standing at the exact location, outside the house, to take a photo, when suddenly the people living on the ground floor came out shouting in Hebrew. They let their barking dog outside the gate attack us and within minutes, the police arrived to arrest us.

I was so embarrassed when the police put us in handcuffs. One of the senior officers ordered chains to be put on my feet. Naheel was taken to a different room for investigation, then released. Naheel, who is a professor at the University of Damascus, later told me, “Huda, please don’t feel bad. Remember, I am writer, so I shall write our story.”

When I kept asking the policeman why we had been arrested, he didn’t know how to respond. He kept shouting, “You know very well why you are here!”

“Is it because I took a photo of my father’s house?”

“A photo of what?” he asked.

The police officer kept going in and out of the investigation room. “So, you go there often! And you take journalists, and groups with buses…” he said.

“Very true,” I murmured to myself!

“If you want to go home, you need to sign this paper.”

“It’s all in Hebrew. What does it say?”

“If you are ever found near your father’s house, you will be deported!” he said.
The Nakba of Qatamon

The bombing of the Hotel Semiramis on January 5, 1948 marked the beginning of the Nakba of Qatamon. In the next few days, the Kassotis family, who lived two doors up the street, made tea for the British soldiers who excavated the rubble looking for survivors, and watched as their neighbors packed up and fled in search of safety. Soon they’d be joining the exodus too. But at first they wouldn’t go very far...

The Nakba of Qatamon began with the bombing of the Hotel Semiramis on Monday, January 5, 1948, by the Haganah, the Jewish militia that grew up to be the Israeli army. About 26 people were killed.

Two doors up, on the next corner, was my grandfather’s house. Manolis Kassotis was brought to Jerusalem as a child from the Greek island of Samos by his uncle, the Greek Orthodox Patriarch Damianos I. In 1922 Manolis married Vitsa Schtakleff, a Jerusalem-born half-Greek half-Bulgarian girl of 17, and took her to live with him at Breij, a large estate he leased from the Patriarchate, some 30 kilometers west of Jerusalem. As the children arrived, beginning with my aunt Vasso in 1924, they needed a foothold closer to civilization, so Manolis purchased the house in Qatamon, initially renting it out. Two blocks away from the church and monastery of Saint Simeon, in what was known as Upper Qatamon, the house was already on the map by 1929, one of only a few dozen, well before Qatamon became a bustling neighborhood outside the walls of Jerusalem.

By Marina Parisinou

One of my mother’s earliest memories was of her three-year-old self holding her father’s hand as they stood outside the house, looking at what was about to become their new home in 1933. Her younger sister, Mary, was born in the house in 1936. The family was happy there. Manolis would go back and forth between Breij and Qatamon. The girls went to school: Vasso at Schmidt’s Girls’ College; Anna (my mother) first at the Greek school in the Old City and then, upon graduation, at the Jerusalem Girls’ College (JGC) in Rehavia for the benefit of an English education; and Mary at the primary school located at the Greek Club in the Greek Colony.

The club was the hub of the community’s activities and celebrations – where my grandmother played the piano and my mother recited poems and joined her Girl Guides’ troop. But it was not the only venue for the Kassotis’s outings. The YMCA, their uncle Nando Schtakleff’s Regent Cinema in the German Colony, the Jewish cafés in Ben Yehuda, the picnic grounds around St. Simeon, friends’ and relatives’ homes – all are remembered very fondly.

But in late 1947, the family’s easy, joyful life began to be overshadowed by the fighting that broke out following the November UN vote to partition Palestine. Explosions, snipers, barbed wire became daily occurrences. When access to JGC became dangerous, my mother, along with friends, moved to Al-Ummah School in Baq’a, run by Shukri Harami, for a few months until graduation.

The Semiramis explosion in early January and the ripples that followed in its wake left no one untouched. Within days, Qatamonians started fleeing in droves in search of safety. The Kassotomians started finding themselves isolated and with their house damaged by the explosion, moved in with the Gaitanopoulos. Vitsa’s sister, Marika, and her
But these were not fun times. There were curfews and blackouts. Sandbags were installed in the windows and provisions started arriving at the house in bulk: sacs of flour, rice, sugar. The families stockpiled food and braced themselves for the worst. The adults got busy: polishing the silverware, collecting the paintings off the walls, for safekeeping. What if during the bombing the picture of Pygmalion were to fall and break the candlesticks? How insignificant the integrity of the candlesticks would soon become…

To the younger girls, Mary (12) and Jenny (10), the parents presented the situation as a game or fairy tale. As bullets would often rain down around them, the parents cautioned them to be very careful. So when the little ones ventured out to play or shop, they’d carry their umbrellas for protection!

Soon the Gaitanopoulos left for Egypt, where Efthymios, who worked for Gresham Insurance, was ostensibly attending a conference. Only when they arrived in Cairo were the girls told that the family would not be returning to Jerusalem.

At some point, two of the Schtakleff brothers, Nando and Coca, who lived close by in the Greek Colony, also decided to flee with their families. They joined a large convoy of Palestinians headed for Egypt where, upon arrival at the border, they were refused entry. Instead they were kept in a detention center in El-Qantara, a town in the middle of the desert, on the Suez canal, which had been an old British army camp.

And so the Kassotis were left on their own in an ever-emptier Qatamon. Aunt Mary remembers how every morning her father would take her by the hand to walk around the neighborhood and take inventory of houses that had been demolished or damaged by bombs overnight.

It didn’t take long for the family to realize that they couldn’t hold out forever. But Manolis had a hard time dealing with the situation, so the eldest daughter, Vasso, who by that time worked at NAAFI (Navy, Army, and Air Force Institutes), took charge with my mother’s help. Having considered various options, they settled on Cyprus. In the north of the island was the Monastery of Saint Chrysostomos, affiliated with the Patriarchate. The abbot, who had baptized my mother in the Jordan River, was on good terms with the British colonial administration and was thus able to secure visas for them.

The tickets they bought for a flight out of Lydda became obsolete when the airport closed. Vasso and Anna went on a frenzy of visa-gathering for what would now have to be an overland trip through Jordan, Syria, and Lebanon. On May 1, 1948, as the battle of Qatamon was raging, and with whatever clothes they thought they’d need for the

In her memoir *Jerusalem and I*, Hala Sakakini narrates how they left Qatamon on April 30, 1948, thinking that they were probably the last ones to do so. Unbeknownst to the Sakakinis, and barely a couple of blocks away, a Greek family – the Kassotis (my mother’s family) – were huddling in their cousins’ house preparing for their departure on the following day: May 1, 1948. Like the Sakakinis, and the rest of the residents of what became “West Jerusalem,” they were never allowed to return.
summer bundled in sheets, the Kassotis left Qatamon in a friendly taxi. They were amongst the last to leave – possibly the very last. After a long drive through Jordan and Syria, they arrived in Beirut late in the evening. The only accommodation available was a single room in a hotel full of Palestinian refugees. The parents slept on the bed, the girls on the floor. The following morning, Manolis went shopping for suitcases. In the afternoon, they boarded the flight to Cyprus.

My grandfather never recovered from the shock, developed diabetes, and was gravely ill for quite a while. My mother and Aunt Vasso became the breadwinners for the family. The Gaitanopoulos soon joined them in Cyprus, and the two families shared a house again for a while – mostly to help out the impoverished Kassotis. Like the rest of the residents of what became “West” Jerusalem, they were never allowed to return. Although they eventually landed on their feet in their new home country, they always held tight to what little they still had from Jerusalem: some photographs, the title deed to their house – and their memories.

Born in Cyprus to a Greek-Jerusalemite mother and a Cypriot father, Marina Parisinou was weaned on stories of life in Palestine. She is one of the participants in and associate producer of the interactive documentary Jerusalem, We Are Here (info.JerusalemWeAreHere.com). She publishes her research on her maternal family’s history on her blog: MyPalestinianStory.com.

When we consider what happened to the western part of Jerusalem in 1948, we have to include the surrounding villages as well, and not only Jerusalem’s urban areas. The Stern Gang (Lehi) and Irgun, considered terrorist organizations by the Palestinians and the British, forced the evacuation of all the Palestinian neighborhoods of West Jerusalem and the surrounding villages such as Malha, Ein Karem, Deir Yassin, and Lifta. The deliberate and planned policy was to take control of the lands belonging to these vacated villages in order to expand the Jewish presence in West Jerusalem.

Consult the following books by Ibrahim Matar for more information on the conquered areas of West Jerusalem:


Both books are available at the Educational Bookshop on Salah Eddin Street in Jerusalem.
From Jaffa to Talbiyeh and Sheikh Jarrah

Israel Must Recognize the Nakba

By Sami Abou Shehadeh

Since 1948 no Israeli government has been willing to recognize the Nakba. This refusal of the well-documented ethnic cleansing process may be due to those who believe they did nothing wrong or perhaps because releasing the Nakba-related documents from the archives would dismantle the myth of Palestine as a “land without a people for a people without a land.” But in reality, no sustainable peace can ever exist without addressing the Nakba. And the western Jerusalem neighborhoods and villages are no exception.

There are several intricate levels involved in analyzing Jerusalem. While some opt to constantly emphasize the religious significance of the city, when it comes to the Nakba and the fate of the Palestinian people, Jerusalem is treated just like the rest of Palestine. And if the process that has been taking place in East Jerusalem since the 1967 occupation is similar to that of Jaffa since 1948, then it can be said that the western neighborhoods and villages of Jerusalem underwent a much more dramatic process: With the exception of the village of Abu Ghosh and a handful of families in Qatamon and Baq’a, no Palestinians survived the Nakba in their homes.

The fate of the western Jerusalem neighborhoods and villages is considered a “fact on the ground.” Despite the fact that important international parties strongly lobbied to secure a “corpus separatum” in Jerusalem for the UN partition resolution, neither this nor the safety of the civilian population was honored. The same countries that enthusiastically cheered for the partition of Palestine did little to prevent or repair the catastrophe that took place. The same has been true since 1948: from Jerusalem to elsewhere in historical Palestine.

In Jaffa dozens of Palestinian families are being threatened with eviction as the state takes illegal action to sell Palestinian refugee property to a private company; similar deals have been made in Haifa, Acre, and other cities, while almost 40 Bedouin villages in the Naqab area remain unrecognized, meaning that almost 100,000 people have no access to essential services such as water, electricity, or other basic infrastructure.

The State of Israel allows Jews to make claims over pre-1948 property, but this does not apply to Palestinians, including its own Palestinian citizens. This is how the state has denied justice while backing the work of extremist Zionist organizations that, with foreign funding, advanced agendas to maximize exclusive Jewish control over the land on both sides of the Green Line.

Based on our experience, most of these claims are unfounded. But based on the information available from the UN refugee property database created by the Palestine Conciliation Commission (PCC – composed of the United States, France, and Turkey) back in the 1950s, millions of dunums of privately owned Palestinian property has been stolen by Israel since 1948. This information is readily available and includes West Jerusalem. If Israel claims that all of Jerusalem is a “united capital” where all residents enjoy the same rights, why is it that Palestinians with Jerusalem IDs are prevented from reclaiming their property in Talbiyeh, Qatamon, Ein Karem, or Lifta? The answer is simply because the notion of “same rights” is a myth.

Think about this: My family-owned orange groves in Jaffa were confiscated under the “Absentee
Property Law,” and even though I am a member of the Israeli parliament, I cannot reclaim this land. Why? Because I’m Palestinian. Not only that: There are over 300,000 Palestinian citizens of Israel who were internally displaced in 1948, such as the villagers of Al-Aghabasiyya, Saffuriya, Iqrit, and Kufr Bir’im. To this day, the state denies their return, restitution, and compensation, and part of their land has been given to Jewish citizens for use. This is not justice; this is maximizing Jewish control over the land.

The State of Israel has a responsibility to recognize the Nakba and open the files so that everyone, regardless of religion, can reclaim what is rightfully theirs. The late US President John F. Kennedy once said: “We cannot negotiate with those who say what’s mine is mine and what’s yours is negotiable.” This is precisely Israel’s attitude, “What is mine (pre-1967 Israel) is ‘mine,’ and what is yours (the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem) is ‘negotiable.’ As reflected in the Trump administration’s initiative, the discussion has been shifted towards a “division of the West Bank” between Palestinians and settlers under a “Greater Israel.” According to this initiative, Jerusalem — whether East or West — is off-limits for Palestine. But was the Trump initiative just about borders? No, it was about sending a clear-cut message to the Palestinian people: You have been defeated. You have no rights.

Any serious attempt to bring about peace should begin by totally dismissing the racist, ignorant, and populist principles of the Trump administration and accepting a few facts, including that Jerusalem is not exclusive Israeli property. International law and Palestinian rights must be fully integrated into the formula, for those who will become citizens of the State of Palestine as well as those who are Israeli citizens. This certainly includes the fact that East Jerusalem should be the sovereign capital of Palestine, which can take place in the context of an open and shared city.

The western neighborhoods and villages of Jerusalem are part and parcel of the history of our Palestinian people and its cultural heritage. As witnessed by events last May, Jerusalem unites all Palestinians, and no annexation, wall, or colonial-settlement will change this reality. Achieving a lasting peace agreement between Israel and Palestine should also mean protecting Palestinian cultural heritage in places such as Lifta, Ein Karem, or the Mamilla Cemetery, while ensuring the fulfillment of Palestinian refugee rights, including rights over property.

It is in the interest of peace that Israel should look at the facts and agree that it cannot continue to avoid addressing the Nakba. Israel’s Nakba denial has led many Jewish citizens to ignore what has been done. As Moshe Dayan said to Israelis in 1969, “You do not even know the names of these Arab villages, and I do not blame you because geography books no longer exist.” On the other hand, we find the poet Mahmoud Darwish, a son of the Galilee, who wrote simple words full of meaning: “I am from there, and I have memories.” Whoever walks in the neighborhoods of Jerusalem’s Talbiyeh, Haifa’s Wadi Saleeb, or Jaffa’s Ajami will realize that those houses and spaces are part of the memories that represent a collective experience stronger than Israel’s Nakba denial.

Sami Abou Shehadeh is a Palestinian historian from Jaffa, a member of the Israeli Parliament for the Joint List, and leader of the National Democratic Alliance (Tajamu/Balad) Party.
The Balfour Project

What’s in a name? The Balfour Project charity (www.balfourproject.org) owes Balfour nothing, and certainly does not defend the Declaration of 1917 with its contradictory and broken promises. Rather, it seeks to raise awareness in Britain of the decisive, divisive historic role our country played in Palestine in the first half of the last century; to acknowledge continuing responsibility for wrongs done then, still felt today, and to argue that those actions require Britain now to work to advance equal rights for Palestinians in the land of their birth. That British role in the region, which began well over 100 years ago, is known to Palestinians even more than it is to Israelis. The people who know least about it are the British themselves, the British of 2021. But we cannot address the present inequality and injustice without a clear understanding of the past, and the responsibilities we British inherit.

The main charitable aim of the Balfour Project is education – to raise awareness in British schools, universities, and civil society of what was done in our name. With that comes the aim of advocacy: to persuade Britain’s people, political leaders, and Parliamentarians to act now in support of the Palestinian right to self-determination, to genuinely sovereign Palestinian statehood alongside Israel on pre-June 1967 lines, to mutual security for both peoples – not one people’s security at the expense of the other’s. Britain has influence today – not power – but far more influence than our Government cares to admit, still less to exert. We want to change that.

We press the British Government to recognize now the state of Palestine alongside Israel; to implement international law in deed, not just in word, and to uphold the independence and integrity of the International Criminal Court. To work determinedly to see a just and peaceful end to the occupation of 1967. In May, we held a major conference, “Israel-Palestine: in search of the rule of law,” to highlight the absence of justice and seek change. I am proud of the concluding statement (www.balfourproject.org/israel-palestine-and-law) by the Balfour Project: a British charity which asks for change by us, the British – a change of British mindset, of approach, to be based on equal rights, not political expediency. We make no claim to educate or advise anyone – except ourselves. There is much to do in that regard. Our charity does what it can, in schools, universities, Parliament, lobbying our Government. The British public realization of harm done, of discrimination, of entrenched injustice is growing. We need to do more. That is what the Balfour Project charity is about. Forget the name; look at what we do, and what we stand for: equal rights.

Sir Vincent Fean is the chair of the Balfour Project charity and former British Consul-General, Jerusalem (2010–2014).
Suha Jarrar passed away on July 11, 2021 at the young age of 30. A fierce advocate for Palestinian rights, Suha’s life and work embodied *sumud* in the face of immense personal hardships. From an early age, she saw her parents Ghassan and Khalida unjustly imprisoned by the Israeli occupying authorities for their commitment to the struggle for Palestinian liberation. Born while her father was in Israeli prison and under intense interrogation and torture, Suha died while her mother, Khalida, was imprisoned. Khalida was cruelly denied her request to attend her daughter’s funeral. In life as in death, the Jarrar family has been robbed of precious time together. Their plight thus epitomizes that of countless Palestinian families torn apart by Israeli oppression.

Against the injustice of her mother’s imprisonment, Suha championed the rights of all Palestinians to a dignified life and advocated for gender and environmental justice in Palestine. She obtained her BA in environmental and resource studies and women and gender studies with distinction from Trent University, Canada, and her MSc in climate change science and policy, also with distinction, from the University of Sussex, United Kingdom. Upon her return to Palestine, Suha worked as a Climate Change and Gender Officer at the Union of Agricultural Work Committees, a consultant with UN Women, and Program Development and Fundraising Manager at Ma’an—the Forum of Arab Women’s Organizations in the Naqab.

In 2017, Suha joined the Palestinian human rights organization Al-Haq, initially as Environmental and Gender Policy Researcher and then as Senior Researcher and Advocacy Officer. During her nearly 4.5 years at Al-Haq, Suha published a wide range of invaluable research materials, led delegations on numerous field visits to local communities, and represented Al-Haq in international conferences and fora, including the UN in Geneva and New York. Among her significant contributions to human rights work in Palestine, Suha drew attention to the gendered impacts of coercive environments on Palestinian women and girls facing the threat of house demolitions, settler violence, and restrictions on access to basic services, including health care.

In 2019, Suha published a seminal report on climate change adaptation in the occupied Palestinian territory, focusing on the plight of Palestinian communities in the south Hebron hills. Her research exposed the extreme difficulties faced by indigenous Palestinians in implementing community-based climate change adaptation measures due to the continued denial of their collective right to self-determination and permanent sovereignty over natural resources. In this, Suha made it clear that confronting environmental injustice and climate change in Palestine is only possible within a broader struggle against all systems of oppression, notably Israeli occupation, settler colonialism, and apartheid. Globally, Suha stressed the importance of decolonizing the climate justice movement. She embraced the struggles of indigenous land defenders across the Americas and in other parts of the world.

In Suha, we lost not only a courageous Palestinian human rights defender and talented researcher, but also a supportive sister, daughter, colleague, and friend, whose kindness and love overwhelmed all those who crossed her path. Suha’s personal and professional achievements are a testament to the strength of her defiance in the face of extreme injustice and hardships that marked her life and work. Suha will be remembered for her humanity, dedication, passion, and commitment to the struggle for Palestinian liberation. Her memory will remain a legacy for all those who champion the cause of freedom and justice in Palestine and around the world. May she rest in peace.

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In My Mother’s Footsteps:
A Palestinian Refugee Returns Home

By Mona Hajjar Halaby

Thread Books, August 5, 2021, 290 pages

Available through Amazon: https://buff.ly/3tNkKxq
https://www.amazon.com/gp/product/1800196121/ref=dbs_a_def_rwt_bibl_vppi_i1
https://www.barnesandnoble.com/w/in-my-mothers-footsteps-mona-hajjar-halaby/1139126968

“Refugees are like seeds that scatter in the wind, and land in different soils that become their reluctant homes,” my mother once told me. As a small child, I looked up at my mother and clutched her hand. The puffiness of her palm reminded me of a loaf of warm pita bread, and when she laced her fingers into mine like a pretzel, I felt safe. I would have walked with her to the ends of the earth. (Excerpt from In My Mother’s Footsteps.)

When Mona moved from California to Ramallah to teach conflict resolution at the Ramallah Friends School for a year, she kept a journal. Within its pages, she wrote her impressions of her homeland, a place she had only experienced through her mother’s memories.

As she settled into her teaching role, getting to know her students and the challenges they faced living in a militarized, occupied town, Mona also embarked on a personal pilgrimage to find her mother’s home in Jerusalem.

Mona had dreamed of being guided by her mother down the old souks, and the leafy streets of her neighborhood, listening to the muezzin’s call for prayer and the medley of church bells. But after fifty-nine years of exile, it was Mona’s mother who held her daughter’s hand as they visited Jerusalem together, walking the narrow cobblestone alleys of the Old City. Their roles were reversed. Mona had become her Mama’s legs and her memory – and the one to tell her story going forward.

Living in Palestine for a year, Mona saw with her own eyes the consequences of the Israeli occupation on her people— the concrete wall that separates Palestinians from their land and from other Palestinians; the checkpoints that severely limit Palestinian freedom of movement; and the illegal Israeli settlements in the Occupied West Bank and East Jerusalem.

In My Mother’s Footsteps is a personal narrative, but it also touches on the universal themes of displacement and dispossession. Mona’s hope is that her book will help humanize the Palestinian struggle for justice and offer insights into life under Israeli occupation.

A life story in two voices, past and present, exile and return, In My Mother’s Footsteps is a moving and heartrending journey of a daughter discovering her roots and recovering her mother’s beloved past. It is also an intimate and tender account of daily life for Palestinians as never seen before.

For fans of The Bookseller of Kabul and The Beekeeper of Aleppo.
(Text taken from Thread Books.)

Mona Hajjar Halaby is a Palestinian-American educator, writer, and social history buff who resides in California, USA. She has authored No-Fault Parenting, Belonging, and In My Mother’s Footsteps: A Palestinian Refugee Returns Home. She has created a Facebook page that focuses on photographs of Jerusalem during the first half of the twentieth century, entitled British Mandate Jerusalemites Photo Library, and has also collaborated on the interactive documentary www.jerusalemwearehere.com.
Wanees Zarour

Born in Ramallah, Palestine, Wanees Zarour is an award-winning composer, arranger, buzøq player, and violinist whose work focuses on empowering his native musical traditions to transcend borders and thrive in other environments, both musical and geographical, by challenging norms while fostering authenticity. Now based in Chicago in the United States, Wanees is the codirector of the Chicago Immigrant Orchestra, director of the Middle East Music Ensemble at the University of Chicago, and leader of the jazz/maqam touring band East Loop.

At the young age of seven, Wanees started studying music and playing the violin at the Edward Said National Conservatory of Music in Ramallah. While studying Western classical music and theory, he developed a deep interest in Arabic music, leading him to pick up the buzøq, learn the Arabic style of playing the violin, and study maqam.

His arrival during his teenage years in Chicago, a multicultural city with a rich and diverse music scene, was a turning point in his musical education and career. Wanees continued to perform and absorb Middle Eastern music while learning and performing jazz, often exploring the intersections of these two traditions. At the age of 19, he started to teach Middle Eastern rhythms, maqam,

and ensembles at the Old Town School of Folk Music, a tenure that lasted a decade. During this time, he quickly became a fixture in the Middle Eastern and jazz music scenes, performing and recording with noted artists and being featured in US and international festivals.

In 2010 Wanees became the director of the now 60-piece Middle East Music Ensemble at the University of Chicago, an orchestra that focuses on community engagement and empowerment. The orchestra performs Arabic, Turkish, and Persian music concerts, bringing together communities from all of these traditions, both on stage and in the audience. Wanees transcribes and arranges the music for the orchestra, and leads it as it performs these highly anticipated and sold-out concerts at the Reva and David Logan Center for the Arts in Chicago.

In 2014, Wanees released his album Quarter to Midnight, receiving critical acclaim for his compositions and approach in incorporating elements from the jazz, Latin, and Eastern European traditions into original music of the maqam vernacular and form.

Wanees’s ongoing and touring project, East Loop, was launched in 2018, and its main objective is to focus on the expanding parameters of both Arabic and jazz music, bringing Arabic music into a jazz environment, and engineering harmonic ideas to fit with our Arab maqam intonations and language. The East Loop is currently working on an album project expected to be released in 2022.

In 2020, the City of Chicago’s Department of Cultural Affairs and Special Events invited Wanees and renowned guitarist Fareed Haque to codirect the Chicago Immigrant Orchestra, which debuted in the 2020 Chicago World Music Festival. This orchestra brings together high-caliber musicians who come from all over the world to perform music from various traditions collectively, with arrangements that allow each musician to highlight his/her tradition and style authentically.

In 2021, Wanees was awarded Chicago’s highest artistic award, the Esteemed Artist Award. He also recently completed his graduate studies in jazz composition at DePaul University in Chicago.

Wanees plans to visit Palestine in the near future and hopes to be able to bring one of his groups to perform in his hometown.
Ka‘ek al-Quds

By Chef Fadi Kattan

When I think of Jerusalem, like so many others, I think of the food, the smells, Jerusalem street fare – falafel, ka‘ek in Al-Musrara, sweets in the Old City – and the refined lunches and dinners of the old Jerusalemite families.

But ka‘ek remains a symbol for me. A symbol of a food that is threatened by appropriation; erroneously and purposely called “Jerusalem bagel.” A symbol that evokes memories of Jerusalemites bringing ka‘ek to their relatives on trips abroad. A symbol that brings to mind memories of breaking open the ka‘ek, cracking the beit mashwi (wood-oven-baked eggs), and sprinkling the top with some of that salt and za‘atar mix they give you at Jerusalem bakeries.

Ingredients

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ingredient</th>
<th>Quantity</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>400 g flour</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>¼ cup powdered milk</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>1 tsp salt</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>3 tsp baking soda</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 tsp yeast</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 tbsp olive oil</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>125 ml warm water</td>
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For the wash

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ingredient</th>
<th>Quantity</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2 tbsp water</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 egg white</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40 g toasted sesame seeds</td>
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Method

1. Preheat oven to 200°C.
2. In a large bowl mix the flour, powdered milk, salt, yeast, and baking soda.
3. Make a well in the middle and add the olive oil and water.
4. Mix well with your hands until you have a homogenous dough.
5. Knead the dough for ten minutes.
6. Cover with a cloth and leave in a warm place for an hour.
7. Flour a working surface. Place the dough on the surface and cut into four pieces.
8. With oiled hands, work the dough into a ring and then slowly stretch it into the oblong shape of the Jerusalem ka‘ek. Place the ka‘ek on a baking tray layered with baking paper.
9. Cover with a cloth and leave to rise another fifteen minutes.
10. Prepare the wash: using a fork, whisk the water and egg white.
11. Immediately prior to baking, brush the egg wash onto the ka‘ek and sprinkle the top with sesame seeds.
12. Bake for 25 minutes or until golden. You may have to flip the baking tray around in the oven to get a perfect color.
Mandela Square

By Bassam Almohor

Mandela stands in Ramallah, his fist raised, forever looking north and reminding people of his long walk to freedom.

In 2016, Ramallah Municipality inaugurated Mandela Square in the Tireh neighborhood, west of the city. The six-meter-high (20 ft.) statue of blackish bronze portrays Mandela wearing a black suit, a red tie, and a green shirt, as if to symbolize the colors of the Palestinian flag. With his right fist high in the sky, his jacket rising, he’s smiling; his left hand open and relaxed at his side.

The square, as it is called, looks like an arena, with a round, slightly elevated area on which the statue is secured, overlooking an extended, open space tiled with dark grey stones. Long yellow lines surround the statue, symbolizing the years Mandela spent in prison. On the ground where the lines are drawn is a famous quote of Mandela etched in big white letters, “We know too well that our freedom is incomplete without the freedom of the Palestinians,” taken from his speech in Pretoria, 1997, for the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian people.

A similar statue stands outside the Drakenstein Correctional Centre, close to Cape Town, where Mandela spent the last months of his iconic long walk to freedom. Another similar nine-foot statue stands outside South Africa’s embassy in Washington.

Of the famous statues of Madiba, we find the dancing Madiba in Sandton, South Africa; the 2.8-meter bronze bust outside parliament in Cape Town; a life-size bronze statue at the United Nations Headquarters in New York; another at the site where Nelson Mandela was captured in Howick, South Africa; the Nelson Mandela statue at Union Buildings, Pretoria; a six-meter statue of Madiba shadowboxing in front of Chancellor House and the Johannesburg magistrate; a two-meter bronze statue at Parliament Square, London; and a 3.5-meter bronze statue symbolizing the long walk to freedom was also erected in the international zone of The Hague.

Mandela Square is located in Tireh neighborhood, a half-hour walk (2.8 km) downhill from Manara Square. Walk along Main Street (Rukab Street) and keep straight, passing Tireh Street, which boasts a wide variety of cafes. Or take a service taxi at the stand opposite Rukab Ice Cream.

Where to Go

Mandela Square

Mandela Square is located in Tireh neighborhood, a half-hour walk (2.8 km) downhill from Manara Square. Walk along Main Street (Rukab Street) and keep straight, passing Tireh Street, which boasts a wide variety of cafes. Or take a service taxi at the stand opposite Rukab Ice Cream.

By Bassam Almohor

Bassam Almohor can be reached at almohor@gmail.com, +972-52-458-4273, or Facebook @toursmore.
The Lives of West Jerusalem’s Palestinians Etched in Architecture

For the majority of Palestinians who live in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, the city of Jerusalem is one of the most difficult places to visit. Until very recently, Bisan and I had never had the chance or the permission to visit the city even though we live less than half an hour away.

When we were finally able to go to Jerusalem, we headed first to its most famous spot, the Old City. When Palestinians and internationals think of Jerusalem, they usually think of its majestic gates and walls. We marvel at its ancient and narrow alleys as the sound of the mosques’ *athan* and the church bells divinely intertwine. Whether you are Muslim, Christian, Jewish, or someone who could not care less about religion, the Old City’s Church of the Holy Sepulcher and the Dome of the Rock are often the highlight of your visit, whether for their religious significance or picturesque architecture.

Politically, the status of Jerusalem remains a central issue in the dispute between Palestinians and Israelis, but the international community just assumes that the western part of Jerusalem is for Israel and the eastern part for Palestine. But it’s not as simple as that, is it? If East Jerusalem has its holy sites, the Old City, and Palestinian neighborhoods, then what is the story of West Jerusalem?

Because Ahlan Palestine is a travel blog, our first attempt to discover this story was to Google the top tourist attractions in West Jerusalem. The websites that acknowledge the divided status recommend that we visit a museum, an aquarium, a zoo, a horse ranch, and a library. The Israeli websites that present Jerusalem as an undivided Israeli city include the Old City and sites found in East Jerusalem. Again, we were left wondering about the story of West Jerusalem.

This thought process led us to Ghadeer Najjar, a Palestinian architect who is passionate about the history of Palestinian cities captured by Israeli Zionist militias in 1948, before Israel’s founding. Ghadeer published a guide called *Bethlehem: The Historic Center and Bethlehemites in Jerusalem*, in which she maps the neighborhoods of West Jerusalem and the lives of its Palestinian population. She also helps travelers visit some of the most important buildings in West Jerusalem.
Ghadeer is interested in the neighborhoods of West Jerusalem not only because they serve as witnesses to an extensive Palestinian history and presence, but also to prove that Palestinians were not just living in small stone houses. What we now refer to as West Jerusalem was a modern cosmopolitan city with the most mesmerizing architectural villas, buildings, and apartments owned by the affluent and intellectual Palestinian population.

We wanted to learn more about the history of West Jerusalem, but we found little information online. Those who walk its streets are either blissfully unaware or actively trying to hide its history. But for Ghadeer, the answer lies in the city’s unique architecture. She enthusiastically told us, “We learn about West Jerusalem through its buildings, terraces, and gardens.”

On the day of the tour, Bisan and I had mixed feelings of excitement and nervousness. How do we learn about a city through its architecture if we’ve never studied architecture? And this is why Ghadeer was the perfect companion to take us on this journey. As an architect herself, she has the eye, knowledge, and ability to paint a picture of how Palestinians lived in these Jerusalem neighborhoods through the simplest elements of architecture, such as the doors, the windows, the gardens, and the old rooftops.

We visited three neighborhoods that were populated by Palestinians before their mass expulsion in 1948, known as the Nakba. The neighborhoods are Talbiyeh, Qatamon, and Baq’a. They still have their Arabic names but not their Palestinian Arab families.

We started the tour in Talbiyeh at a roundabout known as Salameh, in reference to the late Palestinian businessman Constantine Salameh and his beautiful villa. We were not able to enter this villa that had been, for decades, the residence of the consul general of Belgium. We stood outside and learned about this family’s history as the jasmine tree peeking through the villa’s metal fence attempted to offer its sweet fragrance to counter the bitterness of loss.

As we stood there, a group of tourists accompanied by an Israeli tour guide approached the villa and proceeded to hear an alternative story. A blue plaque that was hung by the Israeli Jerusalem Municipality next to the villa’s gate describes the owner as a Lebanese businessman, erasing any mention of his roots and the villa’s identity. Across from Villa Salameh, we stood at the gate of yet another villa with another plaque that says Villa Kittaneh, named after its Palestinian owners. The only detail that we found about the owners’ true identity was that they were Latin Christians.

Ghadeer said that many of the Palestinian homes in these neighborhoods were built by foreign architects who were commissioned by wealthy Palestinian families. They were businesspeople, merchants, and intellectuals who had a taste for fine art and an international architectural vision. This is one of the reasons that these homes combined international and European architectural elements that celebrate the work of Bethlehem and Beit Jala’s professional stonemasons.

We walked farther down the street, among more homes, while Ghadeer explained the architectural styles in relation to their past owners who were forced to flee, fearing for their lives and leaving behind amazing homes that are now occupied by Israeli families. One of these grand structures is the picturesque Yasmin House. This house was built by the Canaan family and named after and run by Dr. Tawfiq Canaan’s daughter Yasmin. It served as a guesthouse that was frequently rented by Palestinian families looking to spend the summer in Jerusalem.

The house is a unique example of the mix between Palestinian and European architectural styles as it uses Palestinian stone to build what looks like a Gothic medieval castle with different focal points, such as a tower and a dome. This house not only demonstrates the diversity in landscape and architecture but also the social and economic status of the Palestinian families who built these homes and lived in these neighborhoods.
Very close to Yasmin House is a very famous house that was built by Hanna Bisharat. Even though the house is currently occupied by Israeli families, one can still make out the faint engraved words on its front wall: Villa Haroun Al Rashid. Ghadeer said that the Israeli Prime Minister Golda Meir requested that the words be scrubbed off the house when she moved in.

We also visited the villas of the Oweidah brothers in the Baq’a neighborhood, which were stolen in 1948 and have been used by several organizations since that time. The houses have spacious gardens and terraces decorated with huge arcs, a recurring feature that can be seen in many homes built and owned by Palestinian families.

When you walk the streets of West Jerusalem, you can see the influence that this part of the city had on prominent Palestinian authors and intellectuals such as Khalil al-Sakakini, Edward Said, and Ghada Karmi. You start to imagine the laughter of children as they played in the gardens. The chatter of Palestinian women sitting on their balconies eating the citrus fruit freshly picked from their front yards. And you feel the overwhelming sorrow and horror they must have felt when they had to leave their homes behind forever.

This one-day trip was definitely not enough to hear all the stories of the Palestinian population of West Jerusalem, but it was a great start to a better understanding of the complexity and rich history of this place. We highly recommend that you read more about the history of West Jerusalem and find a Palestinian expert to show you the place through a new lens.

Malak and Bisan are the founders of Ahlan Palestine, a travel blog that promotes tourism in Palestine. You can follow their tour in West Jerusalem and hear more stories about its history if you visit their Instagram page @AhlanPalestine.
JERUSALEM

SYMPOSIA
Sunday 1 and Monday 2
20:00 Creativity in Crisis Times is an online training program in Arabic, organized by Creativity Lab and designed for entrepreneurs, youth, and anyone aspiring to develop his or her skills to interact with change and manage crises. For registration, please visit: shorturl.at/xaHO

BETHLEHEM

CONCERTS
Thursday 5
19:30 Taleed is musical artistic production, four years in the making, by Baladi Center for Culture and Arts. It revives Palestinian cultural heritage, particularly the Palestinian folk song that is associated with various events and stages of the Palestinian struggle that has played a role in shaping Palestinian identity. Convention Palace, Bethlehem. For more information, please visit: https://www.facebook.com/baladicenter/.

Friday 13
Al-Wajd w Al-Rouh, a sunrise concert over the Dead Sea and Al-Rashaydah desert organized by Al Kamandjati, presents a work of art that touches the soul in a journey between music and poetry, encompassing a combination of Andalusian maqam, Oriental music, and music composed by the Palestinian artist Iyad Staiti, including a lyrical performance by the Palestinian artist Uday Al-Khatib. Thursday, August 12, 2021 at 18:00, beside Al-Hamra Palace. To register, please visit https://bit.ly/3AjsCe7.

SYMPOSIA
Sunday 8
16:30–17:00 “Podcasts: The Worlds of Rashid Hussain,” presented by Palestinian Museum colleagues Marah Khalifa and Haneen Saleh, will explore the journey of poet Rashid Hussain and the effects of the Nakba on his life, his poetic and political expeditions, and his engagement in the struggle. Organized by the Palestinian Museum in partnership with Sawt Platform. Palestinian Museum social media platforms.

THEATER
Sunday 1
20:00 Paralyse is a German-Palestinian interdisciplinary play development on the themes of fear and identity, and is an intercultural co-production of Al-Kasaba Theatre and Cinematheque in Ramallah and bridgeworks e.V. Al Kasaba Theatre and Cinematheque.

RAWABI

ACCOMMODATIONS

RESTAURANTS

ATTRACTIONS

SPECIAL EVENTS
Sunday 1, 8, 15, 22, 29
13:00–20:00 Farmer’s Market presents a variety of local products by providing a platform for the Palestinian community and society to obtain uncompromised healthy products, mainly fruits and vegetables, and to support small-scale farmers. Khalil Sakakini Cultural Center.

Friday 6
19:00 Palestine Festival for Comedy presents a variety of comedy shows in addition to musical performances and other entertainment. Alistiqal Park, Al Bireh. For more information, please contact 059 994 1945.

Monday 9 and Tuesday 10
15:00–18:00 Creative Writing Workshop: Across the Coast, Across the Sea, presented by poet Asmaa Az. Children between the ages of 10 and 12 years old are invited to use writing to recreate imagined and distant relationships, and to bridge the gap between children of 1948 Palestine and other Palestinians who have been isolated by the occupation. It also aims to give space for self-, spatial, and sensual expression as a daily practice, and to introduce the art of writing letters into children’s lives in an era when the concept of letter-writing is reduced to smartphone messages. Organized by the Palestinian Museum. Please register at activities@palmuseum.org. Broadcast via zoom: https://us06web.zoom.us/j/81820760485.

CHILDREN’S EVENTS
Saturday 7, 14, 21, 28
17:00 Children’s cinema program, organized by Ramallah Municipality through the Children and Youth Public Library, in partnership with FilmLab, for children between the ages of 6 and 10 years old. Broadcast via zoom. For more information, please visit the event’s Facebook page: https://www.facebook.com/events/2809133539403403/?event_time_id=2809133539403402.

EXHIBITIONS
Sunday 15
17:00–20:00 Screening of a video about the exhibition “A People by the Sea: Annals from the History of the Palestinian Coast,” and an interview with the Palestinian Museum General Director Adila Laid-Hanifeh, PhD, with guest curator Inass Yassin. The Palestinian Museum and the museum’s social media platforms.

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You can silence Nahla Shawkat Assali, Laura Baramki Khoury, Abla Dajani Daoudi, Ramzi Sansur, Claudette Ayoub Habesch, and Huda Imam, the authors in this month’s issue of This Week in Palestine who share personal stories of how their families lost their homes in May 1948. You can certainly silence me, too! But as long as Palestinian Jerusalemites live and bear children, they, along with many others, will continue to write about the tragedy that befell the residents of the western part of Jerusalem in 1948. They will keep shouting, demonstrating, and crying FOUL.

As these authors wrote their stories, the wounds were reopened; even after 73 years. When I received one of the personal accounts, the author told me that although she had told the story a million times, she still cried when she wrote it. It’s totally understandable for the author to feel that way, but the irony is that you would think that no one could better understand the trauma Jerusalem Palestinians had gone through more than the sons and daughters of those who had been subjected to ethnic cleansing earlier during that awful era. How fickle fate can be.

What was lost in the western part of Jerusalem in May 1948 – indeed, in the whole of Palestine – was not just property. However, as painful as it is to lose one’s home, along with the furniture and one’s intimate belongings, the deeper and longer-term pain comes from losing one’s respect, dignity, pride, and life’s work; everything important to any decent human being. In May 1948, an entire educated, cultured, cosmopolitan, and vibrant community of Palestinians was decimated. True, many moved on and rebuilt what they had lost, but the scar remains and the humiliation continues. Somehow, this scar is genetic and is passed on from one generation to another.

No one should stop shouting against injustice. No one should conceal the truth even if it brings about further suffering and alienation. They say that history is written by the powerful, and although our voices may seem to come from the wilderness, our persistence will never cease to challenge humanity. More and more people around the world are waking up and being informed about the truth of what happened in Jerusalem in May 1948. The recent outpouring of support for Palestinians from around the globe can only strengthen Palestinian resolve to achieve justice. If not for self-vindication, then to make sure that no such atrocities are repeated ever again.

Long Live Palestine!

Sani Meo
Publisher
Filistin Ashabab
August issue #176

We make the change

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www.filistinashabab.com
https://www.facebook.com/Filistinashabab