



# JERUSALEM QUARTERLY

88

Winter 2021



## WHO OWNS PALESTINE? – Part 1

**Between Extinction and Dispossession**

**A Rhetorical Historiography of the Last Palestinian Crocodile (1870–1935)**

*Elizabeth Bentley*

**Mu'askar and Shu'fat**

**Retracing the Histories of Two Palestinian Refugee Camps in Jerusalem**

*Kjersti G. Berg*

**Karimeh Abbud: Entrepreneurship and Early Training**

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**The Politics of Power around Qalandiya Checkpoint:**

**Deconstructing the Prism of Im/mobility, Space, Time for Palestinian Commuters**

*Reem Shraydeh*

**Jerusalem and the Continuing Nakba**

*Philip Farah*

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## EDITORIAL

# Who Owns Palestine?

At about 1:30 a.m. on Monday, 6 September, six Palestinians imprisoned in Israel's Gilboa prison emerged out of a tunnel, dug painstakingly with kitchen implements, into the night air of freedom. Of the six, Zakariya Zubaydi had the highest international profile, having risen to prominence as a leader of the al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigade in Jenin refugee camp during the second intifada and, in 2006, as co-founder with Juliano Mer Khamis of the Freedom Theater in Jenin refugee camp. The other five, affiliated with Islamic Jihad, were Ya'qub Qadiri of Bir al-Basha, Munadil Nafay'at of Ya'bad, Iham Kamamji of Kafr Dan, and the cousins Muhammad and Mahmud al-'Arida of 'Arraba. The news of their "self-liberation" rippled across the news and social media, with Palestinians and their supporters marveling at the improbable – cinematic, even – feat.

Israel's recapture of the six men over the following two weeks put a damper on the initial enthusiasm that greeted their escape. But it remains a source of pride and energy, especially coming on the heels of the events of the past summer – the activism against Palestinian displacement that coalesced in and around Shaykh Jarrah; the eruption of protests throughout Palestine, including Lydda, Haifa, Jaffa, Acre, and elsewhere in the '48 territories, which were frequently met by violent Israeli vigilantism; another round of Israeli bombardment of Gaza, prompting global protests that brought thousands to the streets in Amman, Istanbul, Cape Town, Madrid, Paris, Berlin, and various cities in the United States, the United Kingdom, and Ireland; and the sustained resistance by the villagers of Bayta and

other volunteers to the imposition of Evyatar colony on Jabal Sbayh. The prisoners' escape returned focus to the condition of Palestinians in Israeli detention – many held indefinitely without charge – especially after Israeli authorities, embarrassed by the escape, intensified their maltreatment of prisoners, subjecting them to additional harassment, searches, and transfers, and denied access to the Red Cross. Palestinians imprisoned by Israel have responded by setting fire to their prison cells and launching a mass hunger strike.

Qadiri, Kamamji, and the al-‘Arida cousins were serving life sentences, confined to an Israeli prison cell for the remainder of their days (or until political negotiations might allow for a prisoner release); Zubaydi, who has spent multiple stints in Israeli and Palestinian prisons, had been charged in an Israeli military court, and was awaiting a verdict; Nafay‘at had been imprisoned without charge. In a sense, Israel’s prisons are the ultimate embodiment of its carceral temporal and spatial regime that seeks to immobilize Palestinians, freezing them indefinitely in confinement. Beyond the real physical freedom, however temporary, that the escape granted these six individuals, it resonated symbolically, suggesting that even in those spaces where Israel’s carceral regime is most stringent, resistance is not only possible, but can achieve liberation.

The prison may present this carceral logic in its most distilled form, but it can be found, too, in the blockade of Gaza or in the restriction of movement by walls and checkpoints in the West Bank. As Reem Shraydeh writes in “The Politics of Power around Qalandiya Checkpoint,” a notable submission to the 2021 Ibrahim Dakkak Award for Outstanding Essay on Jerusalem, Palestinian bodies at checkpoints are “humiliated, subjected, regulated, trained, made obedient in order to serve the colonial plan that turns them into occupied subjects.” Moreover, whereas Michel Foucault, in *Discipline and Punish*, posited that modern states sought to make bodies docile in order to discipline them, thereby making them more compliant and thus more useful workers, soldiers, students, and citizens, for Palestinians the result is not usefulness but waste: wasted time that renders them a kind of disposable surplus population, justifying further confinement (or, potentially, elimination). Shraydeh’s essay, however, focuses not only on the carceral time-space of the checkpoint, but also on Palestinian efforts to manipulate and resist this regime using various tactics to manipulate events in order to turn them into opportunities of mobility, to turn “checkpoint time” into “survival time.”

Shraydeh also observes that one of the insidious ways in which Israel has erected its system of walls and checkpoints in the West Bank, as with its siege of Gaza, is through a claim of temporariness. These are all justified as responses to immediate “security” necessities, and thus temporary. The experience of the indefinite temporary also informs Kjersti Berg’s article “Mu‘askar and Shu‘fat: Retracing the Histories of Two Palestinian Refugee Camps in Jerusalem.” As Berg notes, Palestinian refugee camps, especially those in Lebanon, have been the sites of research for anthropologists, geographers, and architects, “but historians have largely stayed out of the camps .... The refugee camp is a blind spot of historians – invisible to or invisibilized by them!” Their supposed temporary nature has perhaps given the impression that they exist

in the present, with no important past or future. In her article, Berg traces the 1966 removal of Palestinian refugees from Mu‘askar camp in the Old City of Jerusalem to Shu‘fat refugee camp, which was planned by UNRWA in the 1960s with hopes to avoid some of the problems of crowding and physical deterioration that characterized camps established in the immediate wake of the Nakba. Yet Berg shows how UNRWA officials abandoned these plans, ultimately building Shu‘fat camp to low standards and predicting “that it, too, would soon deteriorate into an urban slum.”

Palestinians living in Mu‘askar were unsurprisingly resistant to leaving Jerusalem’s Old City for such a destination. Yet, once they did, they set about making Shu‘fat their own: adding new rooms and floors to existing structures in defiance of UNRWA regulations. As the population of the camp grew and time elapsed, questions of property rights in the camp became increasingly important. Officially, neither the refugees nor UNRWA owned the land in the camp, and thus land was not alienable; however, “refugees have attempted to define ownership by practice.” Berg thus not only makes visible a history of Mu‘askar camp, largely forgotten, but raises questions about the durable yet precarious forms of ownership that have evolved in Shu‘fat camp – a system that has become all the more crucial as Israeli impositions on Palestinians with Jerusalem residency have made Shu‘fat a “desirable” location. Further, as Berg notes, refugees’ claims to rights within the camp do not entail an acceptance of dispossession but rather, because the land in the camps also represents a link to historic Palestine, an articulation of the right of return.

“Mu‘askar and Shu‘fat” evolved out of Berg’s presentation at the 2020 New Directions in Palestinian Studies (NDPS) workshop at Brown University, organized by Beshara Doumani and Paul Kohlbry, which took as its theme “Who Owns Palestine?” and invited papers on the past, present, and future of ownership and on what it means to “own” Palestine.<sup>1</sup> Elizabeth Bentley, another participant in the 2020 NDPS workshop, takes a more unusual approach to the question of ownership, asking readers to consider the crocodile. More specifically, Bentley conducts a rhetorical historiography of the “last Palestinian crocodile” and the desire by colonial zoologists to acquire this singular figure – several of which can be found today in British, German, and Israeli collections. By analyzing the rhetoric of extinction, Bentley attends to pernicious forms of “slow violence” that are often absent from headlines following political developments. Bentley connects colonial publics’ interest in the “last Palestinian crocodile” to “violent histories of colonial resource extraction, racialized labor exploitation, and indigenous human dispossession” – and especially the drainage of the Zor al-Zarqa/Kabbara marshlands and the displacement of and confinement of the Ghawarna community that lived in these lands. By contrast, Bentley shows how the community-based research by Ghawarna individuals today “opens analytical pathways for recognizing – even mourning – the loss of nonhuman animal life in Palestine without valuing it over indigenous human life.” In an era of intensified attention to the impact of climate change on human and nonhuman animal life, and of Israeli greenwashing, such approaches feel necessary and urgent.

Two further pieces in this issue of *JQ* shed light on the kinds of lives, careers,



networks, and politics that (human) Palestinians forged in the early twentieth century. Mitri Raheb provides an account of the pioneering Palestinian photographer Karimeh Abbud, born in the late nineteenth century to a Protestant family from al-Khiyam, in what is now Lebanon. As Raheb notes, Abbud is in many ways exceptional, standing out as a woman in the male-dominated worlds of photography and entrepreneurship. Yet, her life is also reflective of the massive transformations taking place in late Ottoman and Mandate Palestine, and in particular the shifting gender norms in a middle-class, educated Protestant family. Salim Tamari, in “Rebel at Night, Colonial Official by Day,” reviews the recently published diaries of another Palestinian witness to these massive changes, the journalist, historian, and government official ‘Arif al-‘Arif. Though limited to the period of ‘Arif’s secondment to the Jordanian government in the late 1920s, these diaries illuminate the afterlives of the Ottoman era – as Tamari writes, “a striking feature of these memoirs is the persistence of an Ottoman presence in the lives and politics of the Arab East” – and the birth pangs of the new post-World War I order. ‘Arif’s internal conflicts as a nationalist by inclination, but a servant to British colonial power by occupation, led him to engage with opposition groups and restive tribes, while maintaining a “love-hate relationship” with Jordan’s ruler, Emir ‘Abdallah. Despite its tensions and contradictions, this relationship would eventually lead to ‘Arif’s appointment as mayor of Jerusalem under Jordanian rule post-1948.

Rounding out the issue, contributions from Philip Farah and Nadim Bawalsa emphasize ongoing Israeli efforts to erase Palestinians from Jerusalem – and Palestinians’ resistance to them, on full display this past summer. Farah writes of his parents who, after fleeing the Jerusalem neighborhood of Musrara as refugees in 1948, finally found housing in the nearby neighborhood of Shaykh Jarrah. As their family grew, they hired a teenage girl, Rasmiya, to help raise the children. Rasmiya, herself a survivor of the Dayr Yasin massacre, had after 1948 made her home in Silwan. Some seven decades later, Shaykh Jarrah and Silwan are at the center of the Palestinian struggle to maintain their lives and livelihoods in Jerusalem, as Israel seeks to force them out to “Judaize” the city. And, as in the case of Mu‘askar, Palestinians resist such attempts to turn these places of refuge into sites of displacement, turning them into foci of solidarity and mobilization. Similar dynamics play out in the memoir of Mona Hajjar Halaby, *In My Mother’s Footsteps*, reviewed in this issue by Nadim Bawalsa. Born in Egypt to a Palestinian mother and a Syrian father, Halaby moved to Switzerland with her family before settling in California, where she worked for three decades as an educator. Inspired by her mother’s stories, she was drawn to Palestine and moved to Ramallah to teach at the Friends School. As Bawalsa writes, Halaby’s “thoughtful interventions into educating under occupation are punctuated by gripping memories and photos of Palestinian life in Jerusalem before 1948, as recounted in letters her mother Zakia wrote to her.” Refusing to accept the loss of this pre-Nakba Palestine, Halaby organizes a peaceful march through the Jerusalem neighborhood of Talbiyya on the sixtieth anniversary of the Nakba, which she culminated by entering her family home in Baq‘a. Bawalsa, whose own efforts to return, with his mother, to a family home in Jerusalem are recounted in *JQ* 84, notes both the uniqueness and

the familiarity of Halaby's narrative, "at once a tribute to her mother, to Jerusalem, to Ramallah, and to historic Palestine."

Finally, we would like to announce the two new co-editors of the *Jerusalem Quarterly* – Lisa Taraki and Alex Winder – who will serve for three years beginning in January 2022. Both editors bring with them outstanding credentials and a rich career of academic and scholarly work. Lisa Taraki is a sociologist and was a founding member and director of the PhD program in the social sciences at Birzeit University, and Alex Winder is a professor of history at Brown University. They succeed current editors Salim Tamari and Beshara Doumani who will continue with *JQ* as editorial committee members during the next year of transition.

#### Endnotes

- 1 For further details on the 2020 workshop, see [palestinianstudies.org/workshops/2020/who-owns-palestine](http://palestinianstudies.org/workshops/2020/who-owns-palestine). Articles developed from NDPS workshops in 2018 and 2019 appeared in *JQ* 79, *JQ* 80, *JQ* 83, and *JQ* 84; the next issue of *JQ* will include additional articles from the 2020 workshop.

#### Corrigendum:

The name of the translator for two articles that appeared in *JQ* 87 – Ahmad Heneiti's "Jerusalem's Villages: Grey Development and Annexation Plans" and Nazmi Jubeh's "Tariq Bab al-Silsila: A Portrait of an Old City Suq" – was inadvertently omitted from the printed text. Samira Jabaly translated both articles from the original Arabic.

# Call for General Submissions to the *Jerusalem Quarterly*

The *Jerusalem Quarterly* accepts author submissions of original contributions about Jerusalem, its social and political history, and its current realities. Occasionally personal memoirs or works of fiction are accepted. Submissions may be made throughout the year; specific deadlines for special thematic issues may also be announced.

*JQ* sends all manuscripts to designated readers for evaluation. Authors may also specifically request that their article be peer-reviewed. Authors should allow four to eight weeks from the date of submission for a final evaluation and publication decision.

Please direct submissions or queries to the *JQ* team:  
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## SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

Articles submitted to *JQ* for consideration should adhere to the following:

- Size: 3,500 to 12,000 words, and including an abstract (maximum 200 words), a list of keywords (maximum 10), and a brief author's biography (maximum 25 words).
- Spelling: American English according to Merriam-Webster.
- Text style: Refer to *Chicago Manual of Style* (CMOS) for all questions regarding punctuation, capitalization, and font style.
- Transliteration of Arabic, Hebrew, and Turkish names and words should follow the style recommended by the *International Journal for Middle East Studies*, but modified for Arabic transliteration, by omitting all diacritical marks except for the 'ayn and hamza.
- Citations should be in the form of endnotes and written in full (CMOS) as in the original source, with transliteration as needed.
- Any photos, charts, graphs, and other artwork should be in camera-ready format, and should be saved as JPEG, with a minimum resolution of 600 dpi, or 700 KB. The author should provide captions and credits, and indicate the preferred placement in the manuscript. The author is responsible for securing permission to reproduce copyrighted materials.

# Between Extinction and Dispossession

## A Rhetorical Historiography of the Last Palestinian Crocodile (1870–1935)

Elizabeth Bentley

### Abstract

This article presents a rhetorical historiography of the last Palestinian crocodile, tracing its circulation across colonial zoological literatures between 1870 and 1935. This was the historic period of colonial zoologists' speculation about Palestinian crocodile extinction, and by extension, the whereabouts of the last Palestinian crocodile. The article argues that the Palestinian crocodile extinction story is intertwined with violent histories of colonial resource extraction, racialized labor exploitation, and indigenous human dispossession. By tracing the last Palestinian crocodile's rhetorical circulation to 1935 – when a Zionist zoologist declared that Palestinian crocodiles were finally extinct – the article connects Palestinian crocodile extinction with the British Mandate and the Palestine Jewish Colonization Association (PJCA)-led drainage and destruction of the crocodile's former habitat and the dispossession of the Ghawarna who lived on that land.

### Keywords

Crocodile; extinction; historiography; Palestine; zoology; Nakba; Zionism; Jisr al-Zarqa; marsh drainage.

Clarence the crocodile drifts about lazily in the thick summer heat, slowly submerging and resurfacing in his soupy pea green pond.<sup>1</sup> It is a midsummer day at the Tisch Family Zoological Gardens in West Jerusalem. The zoo, known locally as Gan HaChayot HaTanachi or the “Biblical Zoo,” prides itself on its

multiculturalism and “inclusivity” toward Palestinian visitors from occupied East Jerusalem.<sup>2</sup> Despite the heat I linger in front of Clarence’s enclosure, hypnotized. My morbid daydreams about getting ensnared in Clarence’s jaws are interrupted by a glance at the informational poster to my left. It is one of three posters positioned between the windows that look out onto Clarence’s enclosure, quite literally framing visitors’ perceptions of the crocodile on the other side of the glass. Visitors learn that while Clarence is not from Palestine, Nile crocodiles once lived in Palestine’s Mediterranean coastal marshlands. The poster narrates the Nile crocodile’s regional extinction in late Ottoman Palestine, beginning with a brief account of the last crocodile’s demise: “In 1905, the last crocodile was hunted in Israel by residents of [the Palestinian village] Jisar-A-Zarka.”<sup>3</sup> “We must do everything,” the poster concludes, “so that the small amount of wildlife still found in our region will not meet the same fate as that of the Nile crocodile.”<sup>4</sup>

The Biblical Zoo’s account erases the web of historical relations that led to this extinction beginning with one crucial fact: the market for late Ottoman Palestine’s small and dwindling crocodile population was overwhelmingly driven by colonialists rather than the indigenous population. By invoking and isolating the Palestinian identity of the hunters who allegedly killed the last crocodile, the Israeli zoo poster implies that Palestinians were responsible for Nile crocodiles’ regional extinction. This historical narrative hinges on the last crocodile’s symbolic singularity; the demise of the last living member of a species marks extinction through “a singular body and a singular moment.”<sup>5</sup> Yet, the bodies of scientific literature and taxidermy that they left behind demonstrate that scores of colonial zoologists wished to acquire a “last Palestinian crocodile” from the Zor al-Zarqa/Kabbara marshlands.<sup>6</sup> Several “last Palestinian crocodiles” – that is, crocodiles hunted when the local population was at the brink of extinction – remain to this day in British, German, and Israeli collections. The last Palestinian crocodile, therefore, is a dynamic rhetorical figure rather than a singular specimen.

In this article, I conduct a rhetorical historiography of the last Palestinian crocodile,<sup>7</sup> tracing its circulation across colonial zoological literatures between 1870 and 1935. This was the historic period of colonial zoologists’ speculation about Palestinian crocodiles’ extinction, and, by extension, the whereabouts of the last Palestinian crocodile. As with the rhetorical figure of the last crocodile, I approach extinction as both “a material reality and a cultural discourse that shapes popular perceptions of the world.”<sup>8</sup> I contextualize my critical engagement with the colonial scientific archive with Palestinian-authored scholarship from this historic period, as well as ethnographic interviews with local historians from Jisr al-Zarqa whose ancestors, members of the Ghawarna community, lived in the Zor al-Zarqa/Kabbara marshlands. Colonial zoologists’ approach toward extinction perpetuated an unjust social order.<sup>9</sup>

To date, rhetorical studies scholarship on Palestine has largely focused on overtly “political” texts such as politicians’ speeches and journalistic media. Regional archives of scientific communication, such as those at the heart of this article, are saturated with the persuasive tactics and power relations that are central to rhetorical

study. Through its analysis of extinction rhetoric, this article attenuates pernicious forms of “slow violence” against Palestinian life and land that are not easily captured in news headlines.<sup>10</sup> This article also contributes to the growing field of Palestinian environmental historiography, and, more broadly, the environmental historiography of the modern Middle East, by drawing attention to how animal extinction contributed to the remaking of Palestine’s landscape during a critical period in Palestine’s environmental, economic, and political history.

The Palestinian crocodile extinction story is intertwined with violent histories of colonial resource extraction, racialized labor exploitation, and indigenous human dispossession. By tracing the last Palestinian crocodile’s rhetorical circulation to 1935 – when a Zionist zoologist declared that Palestinian crocodiles were finally extinct – I connect the story of Palestinian crocodile extinction with the British Mandate and Palestine Jewish Colonization Association (PJCA)-led drainage and destruction of the crocodile’s former habitat and the dispossession of the Ghawarna who lived on that land. In contradiction to the Biblical Zoo poster, it was only after the wetlands were drained that the PJCA transferred the Ghawarna community to Jisr al-Zarqa, newly created on a fraction of the Ghawarna’s ancestral lands. The Jisr al-Zarqa community leaders’ research into these violent historical events further exposes how settler-colonial environmental policies have detrimentally impacted their ways of life. As I argue in the conclusion, these community leaders’ place-based research also presents alternative pathways for valuing the lives and loss of nonhuman species in Palestine.

## What Is a Palestinian Crocodile?

Scientists generally presume that the crocodilian species in Palestine was the “true” Nile crocodile, *Crocodylus niloticus*.<sup>11</sup> These are the most common crocodiles and among the most notorious of all crocodilians due to their large size, aggressiveness, and tendency to eat humans. They are indigenous to the African continent, including but not exclusively the Nile River that appears in their Latin taxon name.<sup>12</sup> Nile crocodiles had a relatively small habitat in Palestine, which was the northernmost terrain where this species was found in the wild.<sup>13</sup> The crocodiles lived in marshlands and rivers along the Mediterranean coast, primarily in an area located just north of Caesarea and just south of the southern slope of the Carmel mountain range.

From a zoogeographical perspective, the presence of Palestinian crocodiles and their small habitat is fairly unsurprising. Due to its location in the Great Rift Valley and at the juncture of three continents, historic Palestine is exceptionally biodiverse. It contains two primary climatic regimes and approximately twenty-three distinct ecosystems.<sup>14</sup> Nonetheless, both before and after their regional extinction the crocodiles have consistently been treated as an ecological anomaly. In numerous lively origin stories, Palestine’s crocodiles are framed as an introduced species that was transported to the Mediterranean coast as property from Egypt by one of several waves of human conquerors: Greek, Roman, or Egyptian.<sup>15</sup> Most of these origin stories, which primarily

circulated orally and have only sporadically been documented in writing, relate to the ruins of prior civilizations and corresponding place names that remain embedded in the coastal landscape. They highlight Palestinian crocodiles' longstanding, layered, and occasionally violent relationship with regional human and nonhuman ecology.

Building upon these narrative traditions and the ecocriticism of Palestinian and allied intellectuals including Raja Shehadeh, Mazin Qumsiyeh, Sandi Hilal, and Alessandro Petti, my decision to identify the crocodiles as "Palestinian crocodiles" is not only pragmatic but political.<sup>16</sup> Pragmatically, I refer to the crocodiles as "Palestinian" to clarify the geographic range of the Nile crocodile's regional extinction for the purposes of this study – that is, from their habitat in historic Palestine. The colonial zoological literature composed during the late Ottoman and British Mandate periods that I address in this article often refer to the crocodiles as Palestinian even though "Palestinian crocodiles" was not (and never has been) a scientifically recognized species classification. By using the term "Palestinian crocodiles" across historic timescales and into the present, I also aim to foreground the crocodiles' historic and ongoing place-based relationships with the land's indigenous inhabitants. Palestine's crocodiles are perpetually entangled in "naturecultures" – real or imagined – that do not readily lend themselves to fantasies of a pristine, empty land or an original biblical past.<sup>17</sup>

## **Palestinian Crocodiles' Habitat**

In the late nineteenth century, the crocodile was one of a multitude of species that inhabited and drew sustenance from the Zor al-Zarqa/Kabbara marshlands.<sup>18</sup> Naming these historic multispecies relations is crucial in order to move past an isolated and decontextualized understanding of the impact of the crocodile's extinction. As apex predators, the crocodiles' formidable appetite helped regulate the marsh ecosystem. They feasted on crustaceans, frogs, fish, migrating birds, and – according to European researchers – livestock that came to drink from the Zarqa river.<sup>19</sup> The crocodiles were also a food source for other species. In one of the most iconic of symbiotic interspecies relationships, spur-winged plovers would have daintily picked leftover meaty tidbits from the crocodiles' open mouths, cleaning the crocodiles' teeth in the process.<sup>20</sup> Crocodile eggs and hatchlings were eaten by otters.<sup>21</sup> Mosquitoes – which thrived in the still waters – sucked blood from crocodiles and from all the other living, blood-filled beings that moved through the marshes.

The marshlands were also a source of economic and cultural sustenance for Palestine's human population. The freshwater Nahr al-Zarqa, known for its clear blue waters, was used for drinking and agriculture.<sup>22</sup> Marsh water powered a flour mill that operated at the edge of a Roman-era stone dam in the marsh.<sup>23</sup> The marshlands were in close proximity to Caesarea and multiple Palestinian villages. Beginning in 1882, they were also adjacent to one of the earliest Zionist settlements, Zikron Yaakov. The marshlands themselves were home to two communities of Bedouin origin, 'Arab Kabbara and 'Arab al-Ghawarna, who lived in tent encampments and caves in the

marshland's rocky hills.<sup>24</sup> The Ghawarna, who are blamed for crocodile extinction in the Biblical Zoo plaque and whose descendants still live in the area today, are central figures in the analysis that follows.

'Arab al-Ghawarna roughly translates to "people of the lowlands" or "marshes." For reasons of social status intertwined with their marshland dwelling-place, the name carries a fraught and at times stigmatized history.<sup>25</sup> The Ghawarna who lived in the Zor al-Zarqa/Kabbara marshlands were primarily members of the 'Ammash and Jurban families.<sup>26</sup> As recounted to me by the local historian Mohamad Hamdan and the environmental and community activist Saidah al-



Figure 1. The marshlands as represented in C. R. Condor and H. H. Kitchener, *Palestine Exploration Fund Map* (PEF, 1879), Sheet VII.

Ali – who live in Jisr al-Zarqa and are descendants of the original families – the Ghawarna earned a living raising water buffalos and weaving mats from the marsh's abundant supply, springy reeds.<sup>27</sup> They were also renowned as hunters.<sup>28</sup> Palestinians of Sudanese descent were also affiliated with the Ghawarna during this period. Indeed, the marshes have been described as a quasi-Maroon community that welcomed individuals who were marginalized elsewhere or fleeing violence.<sup>29</sup> Their blackness – and the "darkness" of the Ghawarna more generally – was the subject of repeated, disproportionate fascination in the writings of colonial researchers who came to hunt crocodiles and document marshland flora and fauna.

## Colonial Zoology in Palestine

By now it should be clear that late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Europeans did not "discover" Palestinian crocodiles, even by their own Eurocentric epistemological standards. Apart from the marshlands milieu that I described above, accounts of Palestinian crocodiles circulated even further through Palestinian-authored scholarship by the likes of Abdullah Mukhlis and Stephan Hanna Stephan.<sup>30</sup> However, the drive to systematically kill and collect Palestinian crocodiles as exotic commodities – and by extension, a fixation on the last Palestinian crocodile – appears to have been primarily driven by colonial forces. To date, I have not come across evidence of either



a widespread Palestinian tradition of hunting the crocodiles that extended beyond the Ghawarna who lived in the marshlands or an extensive Palestinian consumer market for Palestinian crocodile byproducts during this period. This is not surprising, since by all accounts the crocodile population in Palestine was small and localized. Efforts to recover and address historical Palestinian human-crocodile relations are complicated by the dispossession and decimation of surrounding Palestinian cities and villages during the Nakba.<sup>31</sup> Apart from the Ghawarna, these coastal communities were in closest proximity to the crocodiles and therefore would have been most likely to incorporate crocodiles into their economic and cultural infrastructures. While sensitive to these violent historical erasures, my claims are informed by interviews with community historians in Jisr al-Zarqa and surveys of local hunting practices and economic exports that were authored by Palestinian and European scholars during this period.

The relationship between imperial science, natural resource extraction, and territorial expansionism during the late Ottoman and British Mandate periods is well-documented. This imperial-ecological phenomenon has been identified and critiqued in the accounts of travel writers and colonial administrators who, in their hunt for biblical ruins, ignored or erased Palestine's exceptionally rich biological and human diversity.<sup>32</sup> They described Palestine as a desolate land that was in dire need of ecological management and improvement. In comparison, colonial zoologists and collectors saw and appreciated Palestine's bountiful plants and animals as objects of scientific inquiry. This scientific appreciation was inextricable from imperialist ambitions and the drive for profit. There were no wildlife protection laws in Palestine until 1924,<sup>33</sup> which was after crocodiles' likely regional extinction, and even then, the laws were loosely enforced.<sup>34</sup> Colonial zoologists not only observed and wrote about Palestinian animals in their natural habitat. The act of zoological speciation was one of extraction and commodification.<sup>35</sup> Euphemistically termed processes of "collection" involved a network of human and nonhuman actors, whereby colonial zoologists hunted and killed Palestinian animals, studied them, and transported their remains to collections.

While several prominent colonial zoologists maintained private collections in Palestine, the main colonial markets for Palestinian specimens were in Western Europe and the United States.<sup>36</sup> The nineteenth century was the heyday of natural history and taxidermy production. Taxidermy animals from colonial landscapes, especially wild and ferocious predators, were coveted by European museums and private collectors alike.<sup>37</sup> This mania extended to specimens from the "Holy Land," a domain where "the European public was more convinced that they had 'rights of ownership' . . . than . . . any other non-European territory."<sup>38</sup> This overarching exceptionalism and entitlement was intensified by competitiveness between European nations jostling to establish their scientific dominance over Palestine and each other.<sup>39</sup>

Holy Land taxidermy served several objectives. Because species from tropical or subtropical climates rarely survived in European menageries, taxidermy enabled European researchers to study animals from Palestine's distant colonized terrain. And

in the precinematic era, taxidermy facilitated visual displays of power to broader European publics. Natural history museums with public education programs were widespread, especially during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.<sup>40</sup> As both animal and man-made objects, taxidermy “asserted not only a [nation’s] rule over natural resources and its discovery of new beasts but also its innovation and scientific knowledge.”<sup>41</sup> Disemboweled, stuffed with wire and flax, and then displayed in glass cases, Palestinian animals were reanimated as spectacles for the viewing pleasure of museumgoers in London and Berlin.

## **“Last Palestinian Crocodile” in Colonial Zoological Literature**

While aligned with these broader trends, the colonial commodification of Palestinian crocodiles was distinct. It cannot be conflated with other Holy Land species. For nearly half a century, colonial zoologists speculated endlessly about the origins and extinction status of Palestine’s near-obsolete crocodile population. This speculative line of inquiry consistently centered on the whereabouts of the enigmatic last Palestinian crocodile.

For example, although they were published thirty-six years apart, Henry Baker Tristram’s 1884 entry in *Flora and Fauna of Palestine* and George Buchanan Gray’s 1920 *Palestine Exploration Quarterly* (PEQ) article begin on this near-identical note.<sup>42</sup> They proclaim that the extinction status of Palestinian crocodiles is a great unresolved mystery, and they analyze evidence of the crocodiles’ existence. This “evidence” was the last few Palestinian crocodiles that other colonial scientists allegedly saw and occasionally successfully captured and killed in the Zor al-Zarqa/Kabbara marshlands. Both authors then recount their own laborious efforts at procuring a last Palestinian crocodile (Tristram was successful and Gray was not). The striking repetition across these accounts demonstrates how colonial zoologists’ speculation about crocodiles’ extinction status consistently translated into a drive to kill lingering last crocodiles rather than conserve them. It also demonstrates how speculation about the last crocodile was an ongoing genre convention in colonial literatures on Palestinian ecology.

Even among naturalists, the allure of the last Palestinian crocodile surpassed the confines of zoological inquiry and extinction science; it adapted a symbolic, even mythical quality. “Figures,” Donna Haraway explains, “are at the same time creatures of imagined possibility and creatures of fierce and ordinary reality; the dimensions tangle and require response.”<sup>43</sup> As with all rhetorical figures, the last crocodile’s persuasive power – its ability to invite identification and compel audiences to action – depended upon “shared meaning.”<sup>44</sup> As it circulated across colonial scientific literatures, it reflected and refracted the values and aspirations of colonial publics.

I use the phrase “colonial publics” (rather than, say, “scholarly” or “scientific”) to foreground the markedly colonial sensibilities that propelled European zoologists toward sustained speculation about the crocodiles’ extinction status for such an extended time period despite the crocodiles’ relatively small habitat. After all, this was not a microscopic insect that they were pursuing but a rather large reptile. Species

extinction is a gradual process that is often difficult to quantify. Nonetheless, I argue that colonial zoologists' ongoing speculation about Palestinian crocodile extinction necessitated a degree of willful (or internalized) unknowing.<sup>45</sup> Here I am referring to colonial scientists' detachment from how local populations lived alongside Palestinian ecology, as well as colonialists' mistrust and condescension toward Palestinians even as they depended heavily upon Palestinians' ecological expertise.<sup>46</sup> Colonial scientific literature on Palestinian animals frequently perpetuated the racist, historically inaccurate outlook of "science for the West, myth for the rest."<sup>47</sup> Yet colonialist writings on the last Palestinian crocodile reflected their own symbolic attachments and investment in mythical thinking.

A simple, yet powerful, illustration of the colonial dimension of this speculative project is Stephan Hanna Stephan's comparative disinterest in either speculating about the crocodiles' extinction status or participating in mythmaking surrounding the last crocodile, even as he published alongside European scholars. Like several of his Palestinian colleagues, Stephan published his scholarship in the *Journal of the Palestine Oriental Society* (*JPOS*), thereby destabilizing reductive dichotomies between European and Arab scholarly inquiry during this historic period.<sup>48</sup> Stephan included a crocodile-related Arabic saying in his 1925–28 *JPOS* article series, "Animals in Palestinian Folklore," where he referenced Palestinian crocodiles' existence and extinction status in a succinct footnote: "Crocodiles were until the middle of the last century met with in the Kishon (*nahr il-muqatta*')." <sup>49</sup> Although colonialists were still fervently speculating about the whereabouts of Palestinian crocodiles in the 1920s, Stephan quite straightforwardly dated the crocodile population's downturn, if not their total demise, to the mid-nineteenth century.<sup>50</sup> Since Stephan composed the article from his scholarly vantagepoint as a Palestinian folklorist, it is safe to assume that the mythical figure of the last Palestinian crocodile did not carry immense significance in Palestinian animal folklore during this period.

Why did Palestinian crocodiles – especially the last crocodile – attract so much attention from colonialists? What did they find so intriguing about this small, localized, and rapidly dwindling (if not entirely extinct) population? There is no singular answer. The last Palestinian crocodile was a highly elastic rhetorical figure.<sup>51</sup> Its ongoing circulation across colonial zoological literature was fueled by its exceptional conceptual and material dynamism. In what follows, I organize my analysis of the last crocodile's key iterations across a series of categories that cut across its scientific and cultural, material, and imaginative properties. I demonstrate how the last crocodile's *properties* (its attributes or qualities), along with its status as *property* ("a thing belonging to someone") figured as modes of value-extraction in service of capitalist accumulation and colonial conquest.<sup>52</sup> Colonialists' decades-long pursuit of the elusive last crocodile was marked by layers of material and epistemic violence against Palestinian life and land. This violence surpassed the outcomes of individual colonialists' hunts.

Despite the competitiveness between European nation-states, colonial scientists of different national and religious affiliations cited and purchased specimens from

each other in their pursuit of Palestinian crocodiles. Amateur European naturalists and researchers who were trained in other disciplines also documented and collected Palestinian crocodiles. They published alongside one another about Palestinian crocodiles in the same journals and periodicals. I draw on colonial zoological literatures published between 1870 and 1935, focusing on publications by German (Catholic and Templar), British, and Zionist individuals because of their prominence in documenting, acquiring, and speculating about Palestinian crocodiles. I use “colonialist” and “colonial zoologist” as unifying terms, though when it is relevant, I distinguish between these groups. However, national or religious affiliation alone cannot serve as an organizing principle, and my overarching intention is to address the pervasive speculation about Palestinian crocodiles across colonial projects. In what follows, I demonstrate how colonialists’ pursuit of Palestinian crocodiles was propelled by colonialists’ enduring fascination with “lastness” as a spatial-temporal construct, Palestinian crocodiles’ market value as scarce commodities, place-based historical associations, and the value of crocodiles as racialized symbols of colonized terrain in European animal imaginaries.

### *Lastness*

Colonial zoologists’ fixation on the last Palestinian crocodile was in part driven by an enduring European fascination with “lastness” as a spatial-temporal construct. This fascination exemplifies the convergence of evolutionary science and imperial sensibilities that shaped colonial research on Palestinian life and land. During this period, evolutionary theory was “understood as *the* preeminent doctrine of empire” by both its “popularizers” and critics.<sup>53</sup> In colonial cultural production, it converged with the myth of the “last of the race” and an enduring fascination with the “rise and fall” of civilizations.<sup>54</sup> From a strictly Darwinian standpoint, rarity is associated with weakness rather than value.<sup>55</sup> Certainly, colonialists’ writings on Palestine reflect their confidence in their superiority and commitment to white European supremacy. Yet these sentiments, and their violent and exploitative activities, were often cloaked in an air of “imperialist nostalgia.”<sup>56</sup> A looming sense of extinction motivated colonial researchers’ efforts at capturing Palestine’s human and nonhuman inhabitants in words and images. As Beshara Doumani observes, their skewed, orientalist studies aimed at “documenting an unchanging society before its anticipated extinction due to contact with the West.”<sup>57</sup> They failed to see and address Palestinian society’s cultural, economic, and intellectual heterogeneity and dynamism.

### *Scarcity*

The scientific value of the last crocodile as rare empirical evidence was inextricable from its market value as a scarce commodity. Alongside taxonomy and habitat, colonial zoologists’ writings on last Palestinian crocodiles were interspersed with references to money: an inability to afford purchasing a last crocodile,<sup>58</sup> a willingness to pay “any price within reason,”<sup>59</sup> and a triumphant proclamation that “the promise of a reward produced” a specimen after a zoologist’s unsuccessful hunt.<sup>60</sup> These discursive performances of ownership and invocations of finances demonstrate how, following

Fred Moten and Stephano Harney, “speciation” serves as a prelude to “possession.”<sup>61</sup> Speciation, they argue, is a bilateral process. It is a violent act of domination over the earth and the colonized other that also makes, or speciates, the “self-owning, earth-owning” white European Man.<sup>62</sup>

Like extinction science, neither capitalist conceptions of property nor the commodification of animal byproducts were solely Europe’s domain during this period.<sup>63</sup> However, colonial zoologists frequently enacted the violent, totalizing divisions that Moten and Harney describe. The interlocking relationship between speciation and commodification often extended to humans; capitalist value relations figured as a near-taxonomic distinction between “us” and “them,” colonizer and colonized. Colonial zoologists recognized that ownership of rare, expensive crocodilian specimens would elevate their status among their European male peers. In turn, they dehumanized members of the indigenous population who they perceived – and “perceived” is a crucial word here – as interacting with nature outside the circuits of capital. Colonialists’ valuation and production of Palestinian crocodiles as rare commodities for the European marketplace depended upon the appropriation of Palestinian life and land as fungible, expendable resources.<sup>64</sup>

Colonial zoologists occasionally referenced conversations with unnamed Palestinian business contacts in Haifa and Nazareth; this suggests that they profited (however tangentially) from relationships (however fleeting) with members of Palestinian urban society’s middle and upper classes. Exploitative economic dynamics are most striking in colonial zoologists’ representations of the Ghawarna. Colonialists were quite forthcoming about their reliance upon the Ghawarna for labor, hunting prowess, and knowledge of marshlands ecology. Nonetheless, they never once mentioned paying or otherwise compensating members of the Ghawarna community. And despite colonial zoologists’ keen appreciation of the Palestinian crocodiles’ market value, there was no consideration of either the crocodiles or marshlands as the Ghawarna’s property – at least not in these terms.

The interlocking relationship between imperial science, capitalist exploitation, and racist dehumanization is apparent in an 1887 *PEQ* article by the Templar German-American researcher Gottlieb Schumacher. Schumacher did not merely represent the Ghawarna as existing outside the circuits of capital. To him, they *were* capital. Schumacher offered a lengthy, sensationalized account of his week-long unsuccessful hunt for an elusive last crocodile. He alleged that he depended heavily upon the Ghawarna throughout his excursion. Schumacher referred to them as “our *Ghawarneh*,”<sup>65</sup> thereby implying that the Ghawarna hunters were his property rather than autonomous human beings. Schumacher’s racist dehumanization of the Ghawarna was intensified through his appraisal of their “dark-skinned” physique to determine who was worth “taking” on his hunt.<sup>66</sup>

### *Place*

Palestinian crocodiles’ popularity among Europeans was heightened by place-based historical associations. The crocodiles were associated by name with several

archeological and geographic sites near their habitat which were connected to Hellenistic and medieval Crusader histories in Palestine. These sites included the ruins of the Greco-Roman port city Crocodilopolis and the nearby river Nahr al-Zarqa, which during the Greco-Roman period was allegedly known as Crocodeilon. The ruins and river attracted a broad spectrum of nineteenth- and twentieth-century Europeans, many of whom were apt to speculate about the significance of these active and lapsed place names. This speculation directed attention back to the area's live crocodile population, and so references to Palestinian crocodiles were ubiquitous in writing by European researchers and travelers who might not otherwise have cared about Palestinian wildlife. As evidenced by the dense citational web that often characterized colonial literature on Palestinian crocodiles, a steady stream of publications heightened Europeans' awareness of the crocodiles and subsequently increased the crocodiles' cultural capital.<sup>67</sup>

Through their excavation and representation of Palestinian crocodiles' place-based historical associations, colonialists perpetuated a Eurocentric interpretation of Palestine's material history.<sup>68</sup> The crocodile served as a reptilian conduit for rewriting – and claiming ownership over – Palestine's past, thereby de-Arabizing the history of the coastal marshlands.<sup>69</sup> The more scholarly, research-based colonial literatures often included uneven literary historiographies of references to local geography and the crocodiles; these jumped from Greco-Roman to medieval Crusader to nineteenth-century European-authored texts, omitting or glossing over periods in Palestine's history characterized by Arab rule.<sup>70</sup> They mostly neglected to cite literature on Palestinian crocodiles and crocodilian place-names that were authored by scholars from the region, such as that of Nasir Khusrau in the eleventh century or their contemporary, Mukhlis.<sup>71</sup> Instead, the Palestinian crocodile's origin story aligned with the grand origin story of so-called Western civilization, wherein Europe figured as the cultural and militaristic heir of Greece and Rome.<sup>72</sup> It was not only the crocodiles but also the colonists who donned the rhetorical mantle of lastness. Through the act of observing (if not successfully hunting) Palestinian crocodiles, nineteenth- and twentieth-century colonialists attempted to weave themselves into the noble legacy of conquerors past.

German Templers in particular had a pragmatic place-based advantage because of their colonies in the area, which preceded a substantive British or Zionist settler-colonial presence.<sup>73</sup> Although the British were enthusiastic about crocodile collection, historical records indicate that Germans were more successful at observing crocodiles in the wild and obtaining specimens.<sup>74</sup> On several occasions beginning in 1877, Templers from Haifa visited the Zarqa/Kabbara marshlands to renovate the flour mill and build other structures. Their documentation of crocodiles in *Die Warte des Tempels* was cited as evidence by colonial scholars beyond Templer circles.<sup>75</sup> German sites in Haifa were a hub for colonists who were interested in obtaining specimens. At the nexus of Templer-scientist relations in Haifa was Schumacher, whose writing on “those famous crocodiles” appeared across British and German venues.<sup>76</sup> Even among colonists, access to the last crocodile's habitat was dependent on political and economic strategy.

### *Reptilian Imaginaries*

Colonial zoologists' Palestinian crocodile-mania was fueled by an enduring European fascination with crocodiles. Long before the nineteenth century, crocodiles occupied a central place in European bestial imaginaries. Since crocodiles are not indigenous to the European continent, Europeans' knowledge of crocodiles drew upon a rich tapestry of Arab and African crocodile-related texts and traditions – itself a vast and varied subject that is beyond the scope of this article.<sup>77</sup> Shaped by layers of Egyptian, Roman, Gaelic, and Christian tropes, crocodiles were animated in lively if physiologically suspect ways in European visual arts, literary fiction, and rhetorical theory.<sup>78</sup> Crocodiles often figured as both the “ultimate beast of hypocritical evil” and an emblem of exotic terrain.<sup>79</sup> These reptilian imaginaries were occasionally bolstered by crocodilian remains transported from the African continent. Well before the modern era of natural history, crocodilian remains hung from the ceilings of European churches and apothecaries.<sup>80</sup>

Against the backdrop of these longer histories, crocodiles emerged with renewed force as a “key imperialist symbol” beginning in the late eighteenth century.<sup>81</sup> This infatuation was heightened by the iconic image of a chained crocodile that appeared on the “Napoleonic medal for the conquest of Upper Egypt.”<sup>82</sup> As Edward Said observed, this campaign played a significant role in catalyzing the “Oriental renaissance” that overtook Europe in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.<sup>83</sup> Crocodilians became a convenient, generalized metonym for the “colonial other” and the dangers of colonized terrain “across imperial borders” because they inhabited Africa, India, and Asia.<sup>84</sup> The crocodile hunt emerged as an iconic imperial trope of European masculine dominance.<sup>85</sup> Unlike charismatic mammals like lions or cheetahs, which colonialists favorably associated with nobility and strength, crocodilians were viewed as untrustworthy creatures that needed to be overcome. By the time colonial interest in Palestinian crocodiles peaked at the turn of the twentieth century, crocodiles were a ubiquitous racialized symbol of colonized otherness.

This phenomenon does not fully account for Palestinian crocodiles' particularities in the eyes of European zoologists. Because of their scarcity and Holy Land habitat, Palestinian crocodiles were often viewed more favorably in comparison to crocodiles on the adjacent African continent, which colonial governments and hunters generally approached as pests to be exterminated rather than coveted collectables.<sup>86</sup> However, Europeans' enduring crocodile-mania undoubtedly contributed to colonialists' rather extreme fixation on a minor and localized Palestinian species. It helps to explain how, and why, Palestinian crocodiles were so readily available as a symbol of Palestine's “exotic” terrain and its militarized conquest.

This crocodile-mania is apparent in the Egyptian Expeditionary Force publication, the *Palestine News*. Inquiries about Palestinian crocodiles exceeded those about any other Palestinian animal species. The *Palestine News*' pages were populated with Palestinian crocodile-themed research briefs, poetry, letters to the editor, and adverts on behalf of self-identified zoologists who wished to purchase Palestinian crocodiles. The crocodiles' precise habitat and extinction status were irrelevant to some *Palestine*

*News* authors, the majority of whom had recently entered Palestine by way of Egypt. In a series of compositions that blended fact and fiction, they imaginatively willed wild crocodiles into existence across the Holy Land: One anonymous British military man alleged that he witnessed two crocodiles kill a camel on Ramallah Road<sup>87</sup>; another penned a poem that drew parallels between “Palestine crocodile tears” and the saltiness of the Dead Sea.<sup>88</sup> Coupled with the more overtly scientific and seemingly factual articles, this imaginative cultural production reflected and perpetuated British colonial fascination with Palestinian crocodiles.

## “Last Crocodile” in Times of Marsh Drainage



Figure 2. Photograph of the drainage process. “Measuring the stream.” Photographer Unknown. Undated, early 1920s. Archives, Kibbutz Maagan Michael.

Colonial zoologists’ half-century of speculation about the whereabouts of the last Palestinian crocodile and the extinction status of Palestinian crocodiles ended with the Zor al-Zarqa/Kabbara marshlands drainage project. In his 1935 volume *Animal Life in Palestine*, the Zionist zoologist Frederic Simon Bodenheimer specifically invoked the drainage as proof that Palestinian crocodiles were finally extinct.<sup>89</sup> Bodenheimer recognized that by destroying the crocodiles’ former habitat, marsh drainage made crocodile life in Palestine impossible.



The drainage project reflected shifting power dynamics in British Mandate Palestine. Initiated by the British Mandate and Palestine Jewish Colonization Association (PJCA) in the early 1920s,<sup>90</sup> it was fueled by a different configuration of “state, science, and capital” than the colonial zoological project.<sup>91</sup> Although it had implications for the natural sciences, marsh drainage was primarily executed under the scientific rubric of public health; malarial disease was a pressing issue at the time, and it was linked to the mosquitos that thrived in Palestine’s marshlands terrain.<sup>92</sup> Concerns about malarial disease and an investment in marsh drainage were shared by many members of Palestinian Arab society – a point that Bodenheimer’s contemporary Tawfiq Canaan argued in 1936.<sup>93</sup> However, the Zor al-Zarqa/Kabbara drainage project was also a vehicle for settler-colonial land appropriation. PJCA was eager to take over the so-called “waste land,” which was in close proximity to several existing Zionist settlements.<sup>94</sup> The Ghawarna’s efforts to defend their land in a protracted legal battle were unsuccessful.<sup>95</sup> Their labor was exploited during the drainage and they were resettled in the newly established city of Jisr al-Zarqa, which was created on a fraction of their former land.<sup>96</sup>

Bodenheimer’s extinction proclamation offers more than textual closure to a colonial scientific debate. Both because of Bodenheimer’s subject-position as a Zionist zoologist and the connection that he forms between Palestinian crocodile’s extinction status and the drainage project, Bodenheimer’s text reflects the continuation and evolution of the colonial zoological project in Palestine, which until this point was primarily executed by European Christians. In turn, it reflects the ongoing nature of the Palestinian crocodile’s extinction story. Palestinian crocodile extinction is not “just” an isolated species death perpetuated by past imperial powers. Its material and cultural afterlives are not only held in archival texts, taxidermized specimens, or in the historically inaccurate extinction narratives of Israeli cultural institutions such as the Biblical Zoo. The story of Palestinian crocodile extinction also continued on the ground through the environmental politics and policies of the Zionist settler-colonial project as it gained a stronghold over British Mandate Palestine.

A closer rhetorical analysis of Bodenheimer’s entry reveals these connections. Bodenheimer situates himself in scholarly conversation with the scores of colonial zoologists who previously speculated about the crocodiles’ extinction status and attempted to acquire specimens. He identifies several last Palestinian crocodiles and the German and British institutions where their remains are held.<sup>97</sup> Like colonial zoologists who previously wrote about Palestinian crocodiles, Bodenheimer relies on the Ghawarna’s knowledge of marshlands ecology; he notes that “Beduins, who inhabit the swamps, have repeatedly reported loss of human life and goats” to crocodiles.<sup>98</sup> But unlike colonial zoologists who were writing in the early 1920s, Bodenheimer does not end on an uncertain, speculative note. He establishes closure to the crocodile saga:

Since that time the whole swamp to the south of the Carmel has been properly drained and a flourishing settlement, Binyamina, now exists on their main breeding place. It is almost certain that the Nile Crocodile

is definitely gone and that it should be added to the list of the extinct species.<sup>99</sup>

The value-laden phrases “properly drained” and “flourishing settlement” suggest that Bodenheimer was a proponent of swamp drainage. In keeping with the scientific norms of the day, Bodenheimer does not indicate remorse about the destruction of an exceptionally biodiverse area. His complementary description of Binyamina demonstrates that his approval of the marsh drainage was driven by settler-colonial politics as much as public health concerns.<sup>100</sup>

Palestinian dispossession is, à la Said, a present absence in Bodenheimer’s account.<sup>101</sup> Bodenheimer does not name or address the drainage’s implications for the marshes’ Ghawarna inhabitants, despite the fact that their exploited labor and communal dispossession created space for Binyamina. This omission is striking because Bodenheimer previously invoked the Ghawarna’s dwelling-place and ecological knowledge in order to advance his scientific premise about the crocodiles. Bodenheimer’s selective invocation and erasure of the Ghawarna demonstrates the fungibility and disposability of Palestinians not only within colonial zoology (which among Zionists was catalyzed by the principle of *yidiyat haaretz*, “Knowing the Land”)<sup>102</sup> but within the broader settler-colonial Zionist enterprise.

This erasure is also apparent in Bodenheimer’s juxtaposing descriptions of the marshlands pre- and post-drainage. By describing the marshlands as the crocodiles’ “main breeding place” and the drained land as home to “a flourishing settlement,” Palestinian human presence is subsumed into crocodilian animal presence. Employing what Achille Mbembe calls the “grammar of animality,” Bodenheimer dehumanizes the Ghawarna and implicitly discredits their rights to and ownership of the marshlands.<sup>103</sup>

The events that Bodenheimer glosses over were monumental for the Ghawarna community. In our conversations about Jisr al-Zarqa’s interwoven environmental and human histories, local historians and community figures Sami al-Ali and Mohamad Hamdan shared their theory – cultivated through years of archival research and conversations with community elders – that their community’s Nakba dates to the 1924 drainage project.<sup>104</sup> The violent and disorienting transition to urban living, coupled with the near-total destruction and loss of their land, disrupted ways of life and livelihood that were intertwined with the marshland ecology.<sup>105</sup>

Al-Ali and Hamdan’s research combats three processes of isolation and separation. First, it challenges the community’s singular and (especially in the aftermath of 1948) often stigmatized status not only among Israelis but also among some Palestinians.<sup>106</sup> Jisr al-Zarqa is the last solely Palestinian city remaining on the Mediterranean coast within Israel’s 1948 borders; this is yet another rhetorical configuration of “lastness” that circulates around the community in the present.<sup>107</sup> Naming their community’s historic trauma as their Nakba is an act of communal empowerment; it is a means of inserting themselves into the broader narrative of Palestinian peoplehood.<sup>108</sup>

Second, al-Ali and Hamdan’s research foregrounds how ecological devastation – specifically habitat destruction and biodiversity loss – have detrimentally impacted

indigenous Palestinian ways of life. Their research, and the experiences of their community more broadly, lend critical valence and historical specificity to the term “environmental Nakba.”<sup>109</sup> The marsh drainage’s centrality to their community’s Nakba underscores how the Nakba’s human injustices were at times informed by coterminous settler-colonial environmental policies. Not only did the British Mandate and PCJA-led drainage project displace the Ghawarna from most of their ancestral wetlands, but the resulting ecocide also contributed to ongoing processes of economic marginalization and cultural erasure.<sup>110</sup>

By extension, al-Ali and Hamdan’s community-based research opens analytical pathways for recognizing – even mourning – the loss of nonhuman animal life in Palestine without valuing it over indigenous human life. As is now clear, late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century colonial zoologists’ outlook on Palestinian crocodile extinction was driven by an isolated preoccupation with the last living member of the species, and by extension, their ability to procure individual specimen to transport overseas. The extinction’s significance was tethered to a scientific-financial enterprise that demeaned and exploited the local Ghawarna community. By foregrounding the interconnectedness between human and nonhuman flourishing in their ancestral wetlands, al-Ali and Hamdan’s research paves the way for a relational approach to extinction that does not bifurcate Palestine’s nature from its human culture.<sup>111</sup> Instead of a myopic focus on a single species, a relational approach to extinction considers the interspecies ways of life that unravel as species go extinct.<sup>112</sup> Rather than fixating on the death of a singular specimen or the identity of a singular hunter, it addresses the intersecting circumstances that contribute to an extinction as it unfolds over time. And crucially, this approach foregrounds the experiences of those whose daily lives are most impacted and left most vulnerable in an extinction’s wake.

## **Conclusion: Afterlives**

Nearly a century has passed since Bodenheimer proclaimed the Palestinian crocodile’s extinction, obscuring the violent processes of Palestinian dispossession and ecological destruction. This dispossession has not ended.<sup>113</sup> Under the rubric of nature conservation, increasingly contemporary forms of extinction science have enabled the settler-colonial cooptation of Jisr al-Zarqa’s natural resources. And while there is no longer any doubt that the crocodiles are regionally extinct in the wild, their specters still loom over their former habitat where they at times animate Israeli environmental governance. The Zionist Names Committee renamed Nahr al-Zarqa as Nachal Tanninim, “Crocodile Stream,” an act of de-Arabization that hearkened back to the waterway’s Greco-Roman and Crusader monikers. Crocodilian imaginaries and settler-colonial state policy converged again at the turn of the twenty-first century. Israel displaced the people of Jisr al-Zarqa from more of their land when the Israel Nature and Parks Authority decided to rewild a segment of the former marshlands and establish the Shmurat HaTeva Nachal Tanninim, “Crocodile Stream Nature Reserve.”

A fence separates the nature reserve from the densely populated coastal city of Jisr al-Zarqa, whose growth has been curtailed by a number of discriminatory policies.<sup>114</sup> Although the reserve's establishment was presumably driven by a desire to conserve endangered species rather than eradicate them, it extends the violent legacy of colonial zoological activities in the area. Sami al-Ali and Mohamad Hamdan's place-based research is a powerful reminder of their community's steadfast, evolving presence throughout these decades of change and violence. Their work, together with the environmental justice initiatives of community leaders such as Saidah al-Ali, presents innovative tactics for commemorating past ways of life in Palestine's marshlands and imagining new ways forward.

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## Endnotes

- 1 Clarence's origin story is described on an adjacent plaque. I analyze it and the Biblical Zoo at greater length in my book manuscript in progress, "The Last Crocodile in Palestine: Envisioning Extinction in the Ruins of Empire."
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  - 15 See, for example, Yehudit Ayalon, *Tanninim v’Nachal Tanninim* [Crocodiles and Crocodile River] (Jerusalem: HaYechida L’Yediat HaAretz v’Limudei HaSadeh, Misrad HaHinuch v’Tarbut, 1979), 3–4. I write about these stories in my book manuscript in progress, “The Last Crocodile in Palestine: Envisioning Extinction in the Ruins of Empire.”
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  - 47 Colin Scott, "Science for the West, Myth for the Rest? The Case of James Bay Cree Knowledge Construction," in *The Postcolonial Science and Technology Studies Reader*, ed. Sandra Harding (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011), 175–97. See also Marwa Elshakry, "When Science Became Western: Historiographical Reflections," *Isis* 101, no. 1 (2010): 98–109. Notable historical accounts of animal science in the broader Middle East include Alan Mikhail, *The Animal in Ottoman Egypt* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014); and Housni Alkhateeb Shehada, *Mamluks and Animals: Veterinary Medicine in Medieval Islam* (Leiden: Brill, 2012).
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  - 53 Marwa Elshakry, *Reading Darwin in Arabic, 1860–1950* (Chicago: University of Chicago

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  - 67 Gray, "Crocodiles"; Schmitz, "Crocodiles."
  - 68 Abu El-Haj, *Facts on the Ground*, 13–14.
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- 92 Sufian, *Healing the Land*. See also: Chris Gratien, "The Ottoman Quagmire: Malaria, Swamps, and Settlement in the Late Ottoman Empire," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 49 (2017): 583–604.
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- 96 Canaan, *Conflict*, 86–87. Until this point, Jisr al-Zarqa, which roughly translates to "Bridge over the Blue [Waters]," was the name of the bridge over Nahr al-Zarqa. Author interview with Sami al-Ali.
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- 98 Bodenheimer, *Animal Life*, 197.
- 99 Bodenheimer, *Animal Life*, 197.
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- 104 Author interview with Sami al-Ali; author interview with Hamdan. Al-Ali and Hamdan's community-based research reflects Sherene Seikaly's powerful theorization of the Palestinian archive as a project that "resists settler-colonialism's imperative to isolate, to separate and to erase." Sherene Seikaly, "Gaza as Archive," in *Gaza as Metaphor*, ed. Helga Tawil-Souri and Dina Matar (London: Hurst, 2016), 231.
- 105 Author interview with Sami al-Ali.
- 106 Author interview with Sami al-Ali. The multifaceted nature of this stigma is beyond the scope of this article.
- 107 By "solely Palestinian," I mean a city that was not settled by Israelis. This distinguishes Jisr al-Zarqa from coastal cities that were ethnically cleansed, such as Caesarea, as well as "mixed" coastal cities such as Akko or Haifa.
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# Mu‘askar and Shu‘fat

## Retracing the Histories of Two Palestinian Refugee Camps in Jerusalem

Kjersti G. Berg

### Abstract

More than seventy years after 1948, no comprehensive history of Palestinian refugee camps exists. The microhistory of Mu‘askar and Shu‘fat, involving refugees, UNRWA, and the Jordanian and Israeli governments, is one piece of this wider history. While most Palestinian refugee camps were established as part of emergency operations after the wars in 1948 and 1967, Shu‘fat camp in Jerusalem was built between the two wars. The project intended to remove refugees residing in Mu‘askar, an unofficial refugee camp in the Old City’s Jewish quarter, to this new camp four kilometers north of the city center. Planning started in 1959 but, due to complications, Shu‘fat camp was only inhabited from 1966. After 1967, Israel’s annexation of East Jerusalem deeply affected both Mu‘askar and Shu‘fat. Mu‘askar exemplifies history and presence erased and Shu‘fat illuminates contradictions of planning a long-term refugee camp from scratch. The article traces the evolution of the camp as a site of belonging and ownership and explores history’s contributions to this field.

### Keywords

Jerusalem; refugee camp; Palestinian refugees; UNRWA; humanitarianism; construction; erasure.

After the war in 1948, a Palestinian refugee camp, Mu‘askar,<sup>1</sup> was established in empty buildings in the Old City Jewish quarter in East Jerusalem.

Despite the refusal by refugees to leave the camp, in June 1966 the refugees were moved to Shu‘fat camp, a new camp built four kilometers to the north of the Old City. Only one year later, along with the Israeli annexation of East Jerusalem after the 1967 war, Israel took over the quarter, evicted the Palestinians who still lived there, and re-built an exclusively Jewish neighborhood in its place. Meanwhile, Shu‘fat refugee camp evolved at the margins of occupied East Jerusalem.<sup>2</sup>

The story of the move from Mu‘askar camp to Shu‘fat camp is, however, not so straightforward. Several strands interweave: the voices and actions of refugees in Mu‘askar and Shu‘fat camps; of UNRWA, the humanitarian agency set up to assist the refugees; and of the Jordanian and Israeli governments. This article weaves these three strands together to craft a microhistory of the move from Mu‘askar to Shu‘fat that addresses a number of key questions: How and why was this scheme undertaken and why did refugees in Mu‘askar refuse to move? How did UNRWA plan the new camp at Shu‘fat and how did the camp develop after 1967?

Based on the reconstruction of the move from Mu‘askar to Shu‘fat, I also discuss questions related to ownership and refugees as a propertyless population: who owns the camp or to whom does the camp belong? And in a wider sense, how can encampment and a propertyless population help us reconsider the broader question of belonging and ownership in Palestine? To do so, the article sketches out the formal ownership of land and property, the evolution over time of humanitarian management of camps, and refugees’ appropriation of the camp. The article traces the gradual emergence of a novel form of ownership that centers on the everyday, on struggles to belong and overcome crises, and on connections and claims to Palestine. Throughout, I approach refugee camps as sites producing history, aiming to historicize the camps and their development.

The story of Mu‘askar and Shu‘fat engages various dimensions of Palestinian history, including the history of erasure. Israeli erasure of Palestinian history is one example: the planting of forests over Palestinian villages, the taking over of Palestinian homes, and removing and repressing proof of Palestinian existence prior to 1948.<sup>3</sup> This was not a one-time act in 1948 but continues with the colonization of land. This erasure is, in a wider sense, part of the long denial of existence, prompting Palestinians to focus on proving the existence of Palestinian society and identity prior to 1948.<sup>4</sup> Today Mu‘askar camp is gone, and its history remains unwritten. Is this because Mu‘askar was not a village in Palestine, but a Palestinian refugee camp? More than seventy years after the war, fifty-nine official camps and a number of unofficial camps and gatherings still exist, but no comprehensive history of Palestinian refugee camps, and only fragments of the histories of individual camps, have been written.

Anthropologists, geographers, and architects have done important and in-depth ethnographic work among refugees in camps, particularly those in Lebanon, and Rosemary Sayigh, Julie Peteet, Nell Gabiam, and Ilana Feldman, among others, have produced rich descriptions and analysis of the local experiences of Palestinian refugees.<sup>5</sup> But historians have largely stayed out of the camps. While located in the heart of Jerusalem, neither Mu‘askar nor Shu‘fat figure in the history of Jerusalem.

The refugee camp is a blind spot of historians – invisible to or invisibilized by them! Beshara Doumani and Alex Winder write that Palestinian history more generally has focused on the “trials and tribulations of political elites,” not the everyday lives of ordinary Palestinians, whose histories have remained in the shadows cast by the rupture of 1948, and to other historic ruptures such as 1917 and 1967.<sup>6</sup> Refugees have sometimes been reduced to pawns of politics or indistinguishable masses of poor camp dwellers; other times the history of refugee camps figure merely as a background to current events. Often, camps are seen as temporary sites, rich in symbolism, representing the right of return, suffering, and injustice, but not *also* as historical places, whether in the sense of historicizing their development or analyzing them as sites that produce history (and are not only acted upon by it). The story of Mu‘askar and Shu‘fat, then, is one small piece of a wider history of Palestinian refugees and the refugee camps.

Mu‘askar is not the only refugee camp that is gone. After 1967, other refugee camps were destroyed by the violence of host states, for example, in the Jordan Valley and in Lebanon, and many camps cannot be traced today. Soon after 1948, more than seventy camps existed, in addition to numerous unofficial gatherings scattered around, and new camps were also built in the 1950s. Host countries attacked and removed some camps as sites of (actual or potential) militarization. Other camps disappeared more quietly as part of the humanitarian operation. Almost all camps located close to borders were removed due to their sensitive location, and often reestablished closer to towns and cities, which eased humanitarian operations and access, and offered employment to refugees. Other times refugee “squatters” were removed to bring order and improve hygiene. Refugees have also moved on their own in and out of and between camps.<sup>7</sup>

The establishment, evolution, and disappearance of the camps over time is inextricably linked to the humanitarian management of the Palestine refugee question. Soon after the 1948 war, UN Resolution 194 confirmed the refugees’ “Right of Return” and established the UN Conciliation Commission for Palestine (UNCCP), which was to search for political solutions. UNRWA was established in late 1949 to provide temporary relief and works until a just political solution could be found. UNCCP soon fell into abeyance, and the refugees were in practice left with a humanitarian response from the international community.<sup>8</sup> UNRWA has provided essential assistance and services over the decades, and its practices, and relationship to the camps have varied over time. While scholarly work on UNRWA has focused on the agency’s establishment and its legal and humanitarian role, the history is often limited to UNRWA’s institutional evolution. As an international organization, it is more rarely historicized or seen as a part of local Palestinian or regional history.<sup>9</sup> In tracing the history of Mu‘askar and Shu‘fat camps, this article seeks to historicize the role of UNRWA as a humanitarian organization within a field of refugee studies that is highly oriented toward the present tense.

Further, this article rethinks what is possible to say about local histories of Palestinian refugees after 1948. What can history offer? In search of the history

of Palestinian refugee camps, aiming to texture erased histories, the question of access to archival sources is key, but archives also reflect the history of Palestinian statelessness and dispossession. It is not clear what files are stored in countries hosting refugees, and access to archives is highly restricted. Israeli state archives have seized documents from both Palestinians and Arab states, and documents remain classified in what historian Mezna Qato refers to as “archival captivity.”<sup>10</sup> Israeli historian Avi Plascov is one of few researchers who has written about Mu‘askar with access to such Jordanian government files about Palestinian refugees in Jordan between 1948 and 1957.<sup>11</sup> Lacking such access, this article is instead based on interviews with Palestinian refugees in Shu‘fat and retired Palestinian UNRWA staff, as well as archival files gathered in the waqf archive in Abu Dis and UNRWA’s Central Registry archive in Amman, to which I was generously granted access.<sup>12</sup>

## **A Refugee Camp in the Old City**

In a letter from May 1948, only a few days after the establishment of Israel and the outbreak of regional war, the Supreme Muslim Council described the dramatic situation in Jerusalem: “The need in al-Quds has reached high levels. The city is full of families and children of martyrs, refugees which make us feel pity and have mercy on them and their sacrifice in those tough times that hit the nation, man, and property.”<sup>13</sup>

Less than a year later, the war concluded, Arab Palestine was lost to the new state of Israel, and nearly two-thirds of the Palestinian population had become refugees. Jerusalem was divided, and Palestinians had fled their homes in west Jerusalem and surrounding villages – now under Israeli rule – to the east. East Jerusalem, along with the West Bank, was annexed by Jordan. By this time, an unknown number of Palestinian refugees lived inside the Haram al-Sharif compound in the Old City. Adjacent to the compound, Palestinian refugees took up residence in empty houses in the Jewish Quarter in the Old City. During war, Jordanian troops had evicted three hundred and fifty Haganah soldiers from this same quarter, and nearly two thousand Jewish women, children, and elderly people there had surrendered; the first group left as prisoners of war to Jordan, and the latter were handed over to the Red Cross.<sup>14</sup> This area, or parts of it, became defined as a refugee camp called Mu‘askar. More than eight thousand refugees picked up their rations at a makeshift ration distribution center set up by the Red Cross inside the Haram al-Sharif.

UNRWA took over from the Red Cross in Mu‘askar, running basic camp services, including schools, and distributing rations inside the Haram al-Sharif compound.<sup>15</sup> According to an UNRWA map of the geographical distribution of refugees, in 1954, 4,923 registered Palestine refugees lived there.<sup>16</sup> Eleven years later, according to an agency headcount, the total number of families in the area was 1,250, of which 550 were refugee families.<sup>17</sup> The exact number of refugees residing in Mu‘askar camp is not known and it not clear exactly what area UNRWA considered to be the camp. In letters between agency directors, it was referred to variously as a camp, quarter,

site, and area. The borders between camp and non-camp districts were probably blurred, since UNRWA sometimes also counted non-refugees as living in the same area. Refugees interviewed often referred to it as Hayy al-Sharaf, or as located in the Sharaf quarter.

## Suspicion and Fear of Mu‘askar

In 1959, the Jordanian government informed UNRWA that a site had been found for a new camp for the refugees in Mu‘askar, located at Shu‘fat, four kilometers north of the city.<sup>18</sup> But UNRWA directors were hesitant to start building, predicting problems with closing down Mu‘askar. They feared that refugees would abuse the scheme, reoccupying the “hovels” of Mu‘askar and renting out their new shelters in Shu‘fat, and that it was doomed to fail.<sup>19</sup> There were other obstacles, too, as Mu‘askar residents refused the family investigation necessary to determine the size and quantity of future units in Shu‘fat.<sup>20</sup>

The paper trail shows UNRWA trying in different ways to make the Jordanian government prevent the refugees from returning to Mu‘askar. Initially, UNRWA wanted the Jordanian government to issue a defense order to prevent “infiltration” back to the Old City, and threatened to cancel the whole project without it. The government agreed that, after UNRWA conducted a headcount, it would physically move the refugees and ensure that Mu‘askar would not be “re-occupied.”<sup>21</sup> It also issued a defense order as an assurance of its commitment to the scheme.<sup>22</sup> UNRWA remained unconvinced, however, that refugees would not return to Mu‘askar. As UNRWA’s Field Relief Service Officer argued, it was impossible to keep the old quarters empty without resorting to complete demolition. Refugees would use “every device to stay there, even to the extent of ‘paying lip service’ to the proposal of removing or only moving part of their family, and this way obtaining two quarters to live in instead of one.”<sup>23</sup> This reasoning drew on agency experiences with “slum-clearance projects” and the removal of refugee “squatters” in Amman, to which the Shu‘fat scheme was often compared. UNRWA also feared that refugees’ opposition to the move would be so strong that local authorities would ultimately refuse to act.<sup>24</sup>

As a next step, UNRWA officials suggested cutting rations as a “penalty” for “those recalcitrant refugees” who defied the scheme and refused to move to Shu‘fat.<sup>25</sup> The government initially refused, but, when UNRWA again threatened to call the scheme off, accepted ration cuts.<sup>26</sup> The plan was obviously sensitive, as the minister of development and reconstruction requested that the matter be given no publicity and that the policy only be announced when “need” was demonstrated.<sup>27</sup> In return, UNRWA would have to pay for the transfer of the refugees to the new camp in government vehicles.<sup>28</sup> The government also assured UNRWA that the houses would be sealed with wax, fenced off with barbed wire, or demolished immediately “so that no refugee will be able to stay there or return to these places.”<sup>29</sup> In March 1965, despite fears that the government might waiver in its “firmness” against refugees’ opposition to the move that “well may break out at the last minute” in Mu‘askar, UNRWA directors

accepted the fresh governmental assurances. They made completion of the new camp at Shu‘fat a priority, hoping to complete the project by autumn 1965.<sup>30</sup>

Negotiations between UNRWA and the Jordanian government about the refugees recall Orientalist suspicion of “the native.” The files often depict refugees in camps as one homogenous, uncontrollable group, expanding, crowding, and a problem of poverty to be managed. Some directors in UNRWA had previously worked under the British colonial administration, and as military personnel under the Second World War. Moreover, the history of humanitarianism is closely linked to ideas of civilization and modernization and to military interventions.<sup>31</sup> Here, the negotiations exemplify the power of humanitarian governance at the time, and the pragmatic measures justified to avoid the failure of a well-intended scheme. Clearly, UNRWA’s power was ambiguous, and it feared being misused and being unable to intervene and control refugees who sought to return. At this point, in the early 1960s, UNRWA officials did not link their situation to politics, rights, losses, or the struggle for identity and belonging.

## Belonging, Togetherness, and Losses in Mu‘askar

Refugees’ voices rarely enter these piles of documents, but UNRWA officers do describe in detail how refugees refused the scheme. In 1963, for example, Officer D. T. Holland visited the Mu‘askar quarter with a commandant of the security police. They inspected shelters and met with the camp director and one of the mukhtars. Holland reported to UNRWA directors that a “number of refugees” had stated clearly that they had “no wish whatsoever” to move from this area. This was also the position taken by “one refugee living in very bad circumstances. She said she was unwilling to go away from her friends and relatives and that she would move only if they also moved.”

Summarizing the inspection, he reported that those who wanted to move were the refugees living below “the sun level who had little or no light and bad drainage facilities.”<sup>32</sup>

‘Aziza is an elderly woman living in Shu‘fat camp. She was young when she and her family were displaced from their original home in a Jerusalem area village and lived almost twenty years in Mu‘askar. In an interview in 2009 she explained why she did not want to move: “In Hayy al-Sharaf we had a house with many rooms. A bathroom.



Figure 1. Mu‘askar camp in the Old City of Jerusalem, 1953. UNRWA photo archive, republished with permission.

The whole area was like one family. We experienced joy together. Now we are separated. In Shu‘fat you would have only one room. And we owned a big house before.”<sup>33</sup> The move to Shu‘fat led to different types of losses, and ‘Aziza traced these back to her original home in Palestine before 1948 as she made the comparison to how her family lived in Mu‘askar. This points to a feeling in Mu‘askar of proximity to an earlier time, a past that had not yet passed. The move to Shu‘fat, after many years of living in Mu‘askar, was experienced as a rupture of collectivity. Shu‘fat implied a loss of space and way



Figure 2. Women, and laundry drying, in a Mu‘askar courtyard, date unknown. UNRWA photo archive, republished with permission.

of living, of the closeness and togetherness of Mu‘askar, but also a feeling of loss of direct connection to life in Jerusalem and to their original homes. In his book, Plascov argues that most refugees refused to move as they “feared losing both their source of income,” the market and the tourists, and the opportunity to pray in the “second most holy place for Muslim believers.”<sup>34</sup> Yet the refusal to move was more than pragmatic, it was tied to the closeness of exile in the Old City, and in particular the familiarity of the quarter. In 1948, many had fled nearby villages and west Jerusalem, and had a close connection to this quarter long before 1948. Mu‘askar held a proximity to everyday and a way of life before 1948, evoking feelings of belonging, familiarity of livelihood and prayer, and comfort produced by the view over Jerusalem. The way the camp was talked about, with a sense of nostalgia, is reminiscent of how villages and places in Palestine before 1948 are remembered.<sup>35</sup>

Mu‘askar was not a typical camp built by a humanitarian agency for assistance and control, but a more informal urban setting. It was often referred to as an area of the quarter rather than a camp. Its buildings were similar to those in which some had previously lived. It did share commonalities with camps, like the



Figure 3. Schoolchildren in Mu‘askar camp. UNRWA photo archive, republished with permission.

UNRWA school, health and distribution centers, and a Palestinian refugee camp director, but the traditional roles played by mukhtars and village elders were still relevant. ‘Aziza emphasized in particular the different forms of authority in Shu‘fat as compared to Mu‘askar, the different levels of autonomy granted the refugees, and the different configurations of private and public space: “In Hayy al-Sharaf we paid eleven dinar for one year to the waqf. In Shu‘fat we could not choose the house. We were given a card with the number of the shelter. Same number [today].”<sup>36</sup> ‘Aziza also highlighted that in Shu‘fat there were public *hamams*.<sup>37</sup> The move from Mu‘askar to Shu‘fat, from urban informal life to a basic camp life under the humanitarian aegis, signaled a major change. With public bathrooms, the move also implied the loss of privacy.

## Why Move the Refugees and Build a New Camp?

UNRWA directors discussed among themselves the Jordanian government’s desire to see the refugees moved from Mu‘askar to Shu‘fat, but they did not know or record a definitive reason. Speculation has long persisted that the Jordanian government had made a secret deal with Israel before 1967 to give this quarter to Israel. Alex, a Palestinian who worked with UNRWA since 1953, first as a teacher in a West Bank camp, then in administration of UNRWA education, described Mu‘askar’s relatively short history:

Jews evacuated, and refugees came and took over. Some buildings were destroyed by the Jordanian bombs. They [the refugees] occupied the old buildings. Then Jews took over Mu‘askar [in 1967]. I have a house in the Armenian quarter close to the Jewish quarter. People were given money to go out. King Abdullah knew Israel would take it and agreed with UNRWA to move the refugees. Any building Jews live in belongs to us.<sup>38</sup>

One UNRWA director wrote that it was the Jordanian government who wanted the move, and that it was hoping to “clean up the whole site.”<sup>39</sup> Others reportedly heard of Jordanian interest in excavating there, and in building “modern popular dwellings” or a housing scheme on the site.<sup>40</sup>

Files in the waqf archive suggest slightly different Jordanian interests in the scheme. In the early 1950s, the Jordanian government, at the direction of the king, pressured UNRWA to move its distribution center from inside the Haram al-Sharif to just outside it.<sup>41</sup> By the early 1960s, the location of the distribution center *outside* the Haram al-Sharif was “bothering” the king when he brought visitors to al-Aqsa.<sup>42</sup> UNRWA documents refer, for example, to the king bringing Ethiopia’s emperor Haile Selassie and Pakistani president Ayub Khan to the mosque.<sup>43</sup> At this time, King Husayn of Jordan sought to link the Hashemite family to the holy places of Jerusalem, and particularly to the Haram al-Sharif.<sup>44</sup>

In negotiations with UNRWA about closing down Mu‘askar, the Jordanian governor



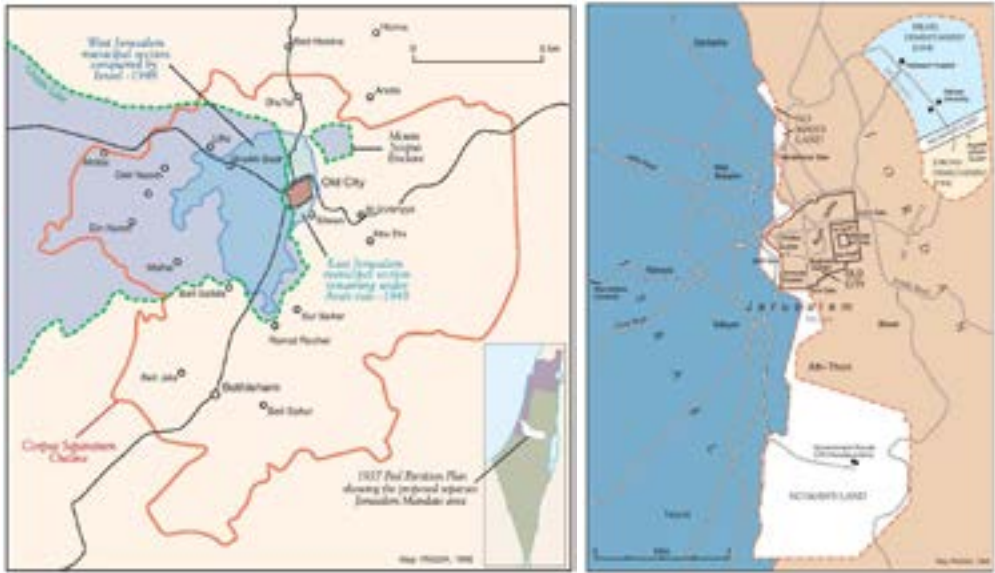
(*muhafiz*) hoped that, as a “quid pro quo” for his cooperation, UNRWA would move the distribution center to another place, emphasizing that he was “extremely concerned” about this matter.<sup>45</sup> This request was repeated over the years, including when the agency officer visited the governor in October 1966.<sup>46</sup> The refugees in Mu‘askar might have bothered the king for the same reasons the distribution center did. This exchange of letters shows that the Jordanians were more concerned with removing the distribution center than with establishing the new camp.<sup>47</sup> Moreover, Jordan’s security concerns shaped its relations to the West Bank and most likely underlined its interests here. The regime tried to balance its relationship with the refugees, repressing expressions of Palestinian nationalism and undermining protests while seeking to appear as their patron.<sup>48</sup> As the Jordanian government’s reasons for wanting to remove the refugees from Mu‘askar are ambiguous, UNRWA’s motivations become even more central.

It was UNRWA who kept insisting on pulling the scheme through and keeping Mu‘askar closed. Relocating camps and “slum clearance” were sensitive operations at the time.<sup>49</sup> According to UNRWA’s deputy director, “governments and refugees” saw these schemes as confirmation that UNRWA was “resettling the refugees” in its rehabilitation program. For UNRWA, the overall aim of the project was to “clear out” all the refugees in Mu‘askar.<sup>50</sup> It aimed to improve the living conditions for these refugees and to avoid the emergence of a slum with substandard shelters. Mu‘askar’s “shacks” or “hovels” were seen as dark, miserable, unhealthy, and unhygienic. Shu‘fat was to offer these refugees a sanitary and “decent” standard of living. The full range of agency services offered at Shu‘fat were in themselves reasons for closing down Mu‘askar.<sup>51</sup> But the fact that the living standard in Mu‘askar actually varied, posed a problem for closing it. A “considerable” number of the shelters in Mu‘askar camp were seen as quite reasonable.<sup>52</sup> However, to allow some dwellings to remain accessible would make it impossible, in UNRWA’s view, to prevent newcomers from, in the words of an agency director, “settling into the really terrible rat-holes in the present camp, and then we shall have the same situation all over again.”<sup>53</sup> Efforts to raise the standard would fail if refugees reinhabited these dwellings. The director suggested removing only the UNRWA facilities, arguing that this would remove agency responsibilities from the camp.<sup>54</sup> However, others feared that the refugees would complain over the lack of services and installations, and that there would be pressure from the government and refugees to reinstall services in Mu‘askar.<sup>55</sup>

## **Shu‘fat: A Camp Built as an Exception**

While the Jordanian government and UNRWA discussed the danger of refugees returning to Mu‘askar, a parallel discussion was ongoing in UNRWA about what kind of camp should be built at Shu‘fat.<sup>56</sup> According to the late Palestinian historian Albert Aghazarian, in the 1950s and 1960s, quite a few Palestinians moved out of the Old City to the north of the city.<sup>57</sup> This trend appears to be in line with the Arab Jerusalem master plan of 1964, produced by the Briton Henry Kendall. One aim

of this plan was to improve living conditions and the standard of public services in Jordanian Jerusalem, with new residential areas planned in the north of Jerusalem and an industrial zone in ‘Anata.<sup>58</sup> After the Jordanian government gave the Shu‘fat site to UNRWA, it did not involve itself in the camp’s design. UNRWA informed the government about major decisions concerning the camp, and agreements were signed about access to municipal services, collection of refuse, and so on.<sup>59</sup>



Figures 4 and 5. On the left, Jerusalem according to UN Resolution 181, partitioned Jerusalem 1948–1967; on the right, Corpus Separatum, 1947. Maps from PASSIA, online at [www.passia.org](http://www.passia.org) (accessed 1 November 2021).

Although the actual construction of the camp was heavily delayed, planning started in early 1960. Shu‘fat camp’s design was supervised by engineer John Tanner, chief of the technical division at UNRWA’s Beirut headquarters since the 1950s.<sup>60</sup> According to the blueprint, the camp leader’s house would be located beside the water reservoir to allow privacy. Main installations were envisaged at the entrance of the camp, including a girls’ school, a boys’ school, and a playground. Opposite the boys’ school, space was reserved for a future handicraft center. The camp leader’s office and sanitation store were sited at the entrance of the camp facing east. The police post was envisaged at the entrance, with the distribution center near the main road to ‘Anata, and east of the main entrance a waiting shed and a combined supplementary feeding and infant health center. A clinic and a youth center with basketball and volleyball courts, along with a sewing center, were to line the main entrance road. The mosque and marketplace were situated in the middle of the camp, with space reserved to accommodate potential refugee shops. The plan also included a bathhouse, five water points and pipelines, and septic and private latrines. Moreover, there would

be concrete platforms for the collection of garbage, asphalt roads, culverts (because of the site's uneven topography), a telephone, and space for a public garden. The boundary walls of the camp were drawn at 1,256 meters and fences of 420 meters.<sup>61</sup> The infrastructure of the whole camp was initially planned to include eight hundred families on 203 dunums.<sup>62</sup>

The planning of the distribution center offers a glimpse into how UNRWA officials imagined disciplining the rations line. A secure distribution center would afford “more opportunity for control of the line and the exclusion of crowds and rowdy elements.”<sup>63</sup> It was suggested that the building contain the entire length of the distribution line, removing it from public sight and making it easier to monitor.<sup>64</sup> At the time, UNRWA sought to stop refugees from trading in rations, and a well laid-out center would “enable better control” of the distribution operation, and make it more efficient. These ideas are consistent with the disciplinary architecture of refugee camps elsewhere; one can also find traces of this in some camps that UNRWA planned from scratch.<sup>65</sup>

Yet Shu‘fat was initially envisioned as much more elaborate than camps built in the 1950s.<sup>66</sup> On the belief that the camp would develop as a suburb of Jerusalem, no “relief or welfare shelters” should be built there.<sup>67</sup> Instead, Shu‘fat was referred to as an upgraded “permanent” urban housing project,<sup>68</sup> with “permanent or semi-permanent dwellings rather than temporary shelter.”<sup>69</sup> This upgrade would more than double the price of each shelter, but one aim was to avoid the mistakes of the 1950s where because of low standards, lack of planning, and extensive refugee construction, camps had quickly deteriorated into slums.<sup>70</sup> After lengthy discussions, UNRWA officials reduced the number of shelter units planned for Shu‘fat, and determined that shelters would be simple one-room standard units on plots of 120 square meters each.<sup>71</sup> Of the seventeen different types of UNRWA shelters used at the time, in terms of price, size and quality, those built in Shu‘fat were among the cheapest, smallest, and lowest quality.<sup>72</sup> The agency planned to distribute materials to the refugees so that they themselves could build boundary walls surrounding their shelter. If the refugees “chose to,” they could build private latrines. Plans to construct a slaughterhouse and incinerators, along with the various centers, were all dropped.<sup>73</sup>

The camp was built to low standards not because refugees or governments pressured UNRWA to maintain its “temporariness,” but because UNRWA prioritized “cleaning up” squatter conditions in Amman. Roy Lucas in the Jordan field office argued that Amman, as a center of economic activity, would continue to attract refugees, adding that it was “infinitely more constructive and important to allot funds for squatter housing in Amman rather than over the hill at Shu‘fat.”<sup>74</sup> His reasoning conforms with Jordanian policies before 1967, which prioritized development of Amman and the East Bank and largely neglected Jerusalem and the West Bank.<sup>75</sup> According to Tanner, the decision to build public latrines – where private latrines had originally been planned – changed the basic conception of Shu‘fat camp.<sup>76</sup> He argued that the standard UNRWA shelters, when in or adjacent to an urban environment, “almost inevitably deteriorate into slums within short time,” due to the standard of construction and simply because the accommodation was inadequate.<sup>77</sup> Moreover, he

pointed out that there would “inevitably” be refugee construction since the shelters were so small. “Shu‘fat camp,” he argued, “will look like Amman New Camp within a short period of time.”<sup>78</sup> Thus, while refugees were moved out of Mu‘askar with the justification of improving their living conditions, the new camp at Shu‘fat was built to low standards and, as a result, UNRWA officials predicted that it, too, would soon deteriorate into an urban slum.

During the planning of Shu‘fat, UNRWA changed its overall policy on shelters and camps, deciding to not build any more refugee camps and to wind down the longstanding shelter program. While “large problems were unresolved” – for example, the need for upgrades and maintenance, and the lack of available land in camps – camp shelters should now be “the concern of the tenants themselves.”<sup>79</sup> Indeed, agency expenses on shelters would decrease drastically throughout the 1960s.<sup>80</sup> The aim was to close down the shelter program by way of increasing “self-help refugee construction.” UNRWA officials felt that such construction was also key to self-support.<sup>81</sup> Here another contradiction appears: not long before, refugee construction had been identified as one reason for camps’ quick deterioration.



Figure 6. Shu‘fat camp “as executed.” Layout plan of Shu‘fat, FECOS archive, UNRWA West Bank Field Office, republished with permission.

As support to camps and shelters declined, UNRWA’s main priority became education. This change can be traced to the 1959 annual report, which initiated a turning point for UNRWA, from relief to welfare through education.<sup>82</sup> In it, director John Davis pointed out that education was more important than relief assistance. The provision of basic education to refugee children held out hope that, conditions permitting, they would be able to lead “reasonably useful and productive lives.”<sup>83</sup> Relief (including the shelter program) was indispensable, but merely “palliative.” In this view, the “lack of opportunity, disappointments, frustrations, and blighted hopes” were even more tragic in terms of “human waste” than the need for improved food, shelter, and clothing. The director argued that the psychological, political, and social repercussions of the Palestine refugee problem were no less significant than the economic and humanitarian aspects.<sup>84</sup>

Eventually, Shu‘fat was built as an exception to existing shelter policy, as it was not seen as possible to improve the living conditions of the refugees in the Mu‘askar quarter “without removing them and creating a completely new camp.”<sup>85</sup> The process of planning Shu‘fat signaled a tendency that would become more explicit in the 1970s, that of UNRWA limiting its role toward the refugee camps.

## June 1966: The Move

In the week beginning 6 July 1966, 450 families were moved to Shu‘fat.<sup>86</sup> ‘Aziza explained that “some moved to Shu‘fat themselves, others were forced in trucks.”<sup>87</sup> UNRWA assigned one-room shelters to the families.<sup>88</sup> According to UNRWA files, 505 shelters had been built, and 465 families in Mu‘askar camp – as well as six families who were not in Mu‘askar but who would join them – had been head-counted and designated as “ready to move” to Shu‘fat. Thirteen families refused to leave, according to the records, and the names of these families were given to the governor of Jerusalem, who had made it “very clear” that they would be forced to move.<sup>89</sup>

Upon Shu‘fat camp’s opening, the acting commissioner general John Reddaway and Tanner agreed that the camp had an “unfinished air.”<sup>90</sup> The shelters lacked stairs and installations were not ready. On 9 August 1966, *al-Manar* newspaper published a critical report concerning the camp. “No one knows whether UNRWA is attempting to relieve the refugees or something quite different,” the journalist reported.<sup>91</sup> He criticized the low standard of the camp, with its public latrines. Small one-room shelters of approximately ten square meters were “considered enough to accommodate a whole family of eight persons.” Windows were of wood, walls were thin, and there were no enclosure walls between neighbors. With only four water taps on site, fights had broken out over water. The camp itself was placed far away from the city, unconnected by transportation. The article described women forced to take their dough to the city, as there was no bakery in the camp. The report closed by insisting on better camps. The refugees “usually have only one alternative. They resort to the government to intervene and force UNRWA to build comfortable camps.”

UNRWA’s public information officer replied to the critique, arguing that the report did not give a “true and precise” picture of the camp.<sup>92</sup> He specified that five water points were installed in different parts of the camp, and that each of the water points contained four taps. Furthermore, UNRWA was prepared to provide building materials for “any head of a family” ready to construct a private latrine and an enclosure wall. The camp facilities, he argued, included two modern schools and a “first-class clinic.” According to the public information officer, the location of the camp was “excellent and healthy.” Furthermore, it was well built – a “well planned housing area provided by UNRWA for the refugees on replacement of their miserable sub-standard unhealthy and unhygienic accommodation in Mu‘askar camp in the Old City.” In conclusion, he argued that the conditions in the new camp at Shu‘fat were “incomparably” better than those in Mu‘askar.

Three months after the move to Shu‘fat, it was unclear how many refugees were still living in Mu‘askar. The UNRWA area officer was sent to Mu‘askar to see what was being done. He was to visit the governor of Jerusalem and remind him of his promise to demolish the houses there: it was important to “keep up the pressure.”<sup>93</sup> In October 1966, Reddaway himself visited Mu‘askar. He reported being “somewhat disturbed” to see that the area, which a month ago had been “almost clear” of refugees, was now being reoccupied.<sup>94</sup> Some refugees (and non-refugees) were “infiltrating”

back into the area and living in some of the “shacks” that had been vacated. Reddaway reasoned that the whole area would probably be reoccupied within two or three weeks, if immediate action were not taken by the authorities.<sup>95</sup> In a meeting on 15 October, UNRWA’s director in Jordan reminded the governor of Jerusalem that under Defense Order no. 35-1963, the authorities were required to prevent reoccupancy and to demolish buildings on “enemy property” (referring to West Bank land owned before 1948 by residents of Israel, either Jews or Palestinians).<sup>96</sup>

To prevent the reoccupation of Mu‘askar, the UNRWA chief asked the governor to demolish all the shacks on enemy property and to close up the vacated buildings on Arab properties. After “considerable urging” on UNRWA’s part, the governor agreed: commencing 17 October, laborers would be sent to the area to demolish the houses on enemy property. The governor did not commit to closing buildings on Arab property, a more sensitive issue, but said that he would deal with the problems “one at a time” and do his “utmost” to solve them all.<sup>97</sup> It is not clear if the government actually demolished or closed any of the buildings.

## **The Jewish Quarter and Shu‘fat after June 1967**

‘Aziza’s family did not leave Mu‘askar in 1966, and her descriptions of conditions there after 1967 illuminate the increased pressure felt by its inhabitants under Israeli rule:

The way I left differs from the majority. The rest came to Shu‘fat after 1967. The Jews took down the houses. There could be three or four families in one house. The Jews came and offered to buy houses from us. We refused. Then they demolished the neighboring house, and the sound would scare us to move. They would bring the policeman or the army. And throw the things outside to scare us and throw us out of the house. The Hayy al-Sharaf was the area and in 1973 very few refugees stayed there. Houses were closed.<sup>98</sup>

Immediately after the Israeli victory in June 1967, Israeli military forces took over the Old City in Jerusalem, evicted the inhabitants of the Moroccan Quarter, the quarter next to the Wailing Wall, and flattened it. The Palestinian families who lived there found refuge in Shu‘fat camp and elsewhere. Nearby, Israel expropriated the surrounding area of Hayy al-Sharaf (including Mu‘askar) for “Jewish Quarter redevelopment” and gradually evicted the Palestinian residents. Anthropologist Thomas Abowd comments that, for Palestinians, these schemes represented a repetition of the policies of removing Palestinians’ presence and history in 1948.<sup>99</sup>

Only a few weeks after the military conquest in 1967, Israel annexed East Jerusalem and adjacent parts of the West Bank. Thus, Shu‘fat camp was incorporated into the Jerusalem municipality and became, technically, the only Palestinian refugee camp in Israel. For Israel, the annexation of Jerusalem created a “demographic problem,” as

it included a large Palestinian population within the municipality, seen to undermine Jerusalem's status as a Jewish and Israeli city.<sup>100</sup> Already in 1969, refugees in Shu'fat camp felt the threat of eviction. They were "warned by Israelis that they were to be moved to the Jericho area," and this was interpreted as an attempt to "scare them away."<sup>101</sup> Such threats coincided with Israel's implementation of dramatic schemes in Gaza – road-widening, resettlement housing projects and demolitions – to thin out the existing camps there.<sup>102</sup> Since 1967, urban planning has been only one of a wide range of repressive measures that Israel used to manipulate the city's demography, and, over time, the Jerusalem municipality would effectively marginalize, exclude, and invisibilize Shu'fat camp.

## Who Owns the Camp?

The move from Mu'askar to Shu'fat, and the development of Shu'fat camp illuminates changing notions of ownership over time. It contextualizes the question of ownership and gives insights into the evolution of claims to camp space. Different claims to property and space, and different interpretations of ownership have coexisted. The evolution in Shu'fat shows how refugees living and building in the camp gradually blurred – not legally, but in practice – already complex categories of formal ownership and UNRWA's management of the land.

Historically the borders between the quarters of the Old City had been dynamic and fluctuated according to immigration and political circumstances. The land and buildings in the Jewish Quarter form part of different ownership systems across different political regimes over time. Exact estimates of ownership in the Jewish Quarter vary. Meron Benvenisti refers to Jewish ownership of 20 percent of the buildings. Before the war in 1948 the quarter was made up mostly of property rented from public and family *awqaf* and from Palestinian Arab landlords.<sup>103</sup> After 1948, the property was placed under the control of the Jordanian Guardian of Enemy Property. The guardian rented this to individuals and later to UNRWA. After 1967, Israel expropriated 116 dunums in this area, including 700 stone buildings, only 105 of which had been owned by Jews before 1948. Offers of compensation did not make sense since the properties were largely *waqf* property.<sup>104</sup>

In Shu'fat, land ownership was also layered, complex, and disputed. Plascov writes that the site "chosen for resettlement" in Shu'fat was formerly Jewish-owned, enemy land in East Jerusalem.<sup>105</sup> He argues that the location of the site on enemy land meant that the transfer would neither be at the expense of the Arab "natives," nor would it raise problems of confiscated land. He sees this as a way of showing the refugees that they still occupied Jewish land, and that this would perhaps give them "some satisfaction and a kind of tangible security."<sup>106</sup> However, less than 5 percent of land in Shu'fat camp was designated enemy land and UNRWA files refer to private Palestinian ownership of parcels of the land in Shu'fat.<sup>107</sup>

At the time, UNRWA defined its role as "administrator" of camp land, and the details of land ownership varied from camp to camp. Formally, host countries allocated

land to UNRWA, and the agency paid annual nominal rent to the original landowners.<sup>108</sup> Governments could lease or expropriate privately owned land.<sup>109</sup> In the 1950s, UNRWA established its camp regulations, which established the rights of refugees in camps, including, for example, access to camp facilities and centers.<sup>110</sup> They also defined terms of “law and order,” “cleanliness,” and additional refugee construction in camps. According to these regulations, “[u]nder no circumstances can in-camp refugees” sell, lease, or transfer shelters or plots. All construction on camp land was under the “temporary jurisdiction” of the agency. Upon leaving the camp, refugees lost claims to all “immovable property therein.” If refugees did not adhere to the regulations, this could result in cuts to rations, demolition of unauthorized construction, or expulsion. UNRWA relied on the police of the host country to enforce its regulations.<sup>111</sup>



Figure 7. UNRWA girls' school in Shu'fat, undated. UNRWA photo archive, republished with permission.

In 1968, only two years after Shu'fat camp opened, UNRWA officials reported that camp inhabitants had started to add rooms to their units due to their increasing needs. This raised sensitive questions for UNRWA: would it have to seek permits from Israel, as a host country, for repairs or construction work in the camps? Would its camp regulation be affected by Israeli rule? And to what degree would Israel intervene in refugees' building activities in camps? In past experience, although Lebanon had placed restrictions on refugee construction, UNRWA had generally been able to implement its own construction inside camps with little interference from or coordination with host governments.<sup>112</sup>

Initially, Israel was concerned with limiting refugee construction in camps, but refused to send its police to enforce UNRWA's camp regulations.<sup>113</sup> Meanwhile, UNRWA sought to continue its regularizing role based on the camp regulations. UNRWA directors came to consider ration cuts inefficient and demolitions sensitive.<sup>114</sup> In order to enforce its building regulations, UNRWA initiated a new strategy: taking refugees who built in contravention of UNRWA's camp regulations to Israeli and West Bank courts.<sup>115</sup> Refugees, unsurprisingly, did not take kindly to this approach. Muna, a retired Palestinian UNRWA staff who worked with the agency since 1951, argued that this was necessary to preserve the common spaces of the camp, but explained that the “refugees used to be a bit upset.”<sup>116</sup>

Despite UNRWA's attempts to regulate refugee building in the camp, a construction boom took off in many camps in the 1970s, and over time regulation turned out to



be impossible. A new generation was born into camps facing urgent need for more space.<sup>117</sup> By 1980, refugees were building shops and adding rooms or second stories to existing structures, often “encroaching” on adjacent vacant spaces, to meet the needs of their growing families.<sup>118</sup> UNRWA continued to issue building permits into the 1980s. Israeli pressure increased, and during the first intifada Israel evoked pre-1967 Egyptian and Jordanian laws to intervene in camp regulation.<sup>119</sup> Despite this, the 1990s saw an “unparalleled construction boom” and camps became characterized by “high density, chaotic planning, and a lack of enforced planning rules.”<sup>120</sup> UNRWA formally agreed to the construction of second stories, but refugees built beyond this, too. In recent years, refugees constructing more than two floors merely had to sign a paper absolving UNRWA of responsibility if the building collapsed.<sup>121</sup> Thus, we see UNRWA’s regulatory role in camp construction gradually decline, and refugees increasingly appropriating camp space.

As UNRWA over time lost its governance over camps, land became alienable. While refugees developed their housing, formally they neither owned the plot of land nor the shelter built upon it.<sup>122</sup> UNRWA outlawed land sales, as neither the refugees nor UNRWA owned the land in the camps.<sup>123</sup> This policy was clear-cut, but impracticable. In 1974, the UNRWA area officer and Shu‘fat camp director reported to the UNRWA field office that a refugee had sold camp land. One director referred to “beliefs” among refugees that they would be given the deed to the land, and to refugees’ references to “a Jordanian law” that gave property rights to those who built on the land.<sup>124</sup> Refugees bought, sold, swapped, and rented shelters, and UNRWA was



Figure 8. UNRWA boys’ school in Shu‘fat, undated. UNRWA photo archive, republished with permission.

powerless to intervene, save from issuing statements that refugee construction did not affect ownership of land.<sup>125</sup> Around 1970, UNRWA officially limited its role in camps – in part because (some) camps became politicized or militarized, but also because camps were difficult to manage.<sup>126</sup> Meanwhile, international donors and host states have also sought to shed responsibility for the camps.

Refugees living in Shu‘fat transgressed agency regulations for many reasons: to meet their needs, to make the camp their own, and for lack of alternatives. More recently, Israeli impositions on Palestinians with Jerusalem residency have impacted Shu‘fat’s real estate “market.” ‘Aziza comments:

Today, UNRWA only provides school, a health center, and garbage

[collection]. [The camp suffers from] garbage problems and open sewage . . . [there are] no more rations in Shu‘fat, because of the Israeli ID. Now they transfer people from al-Ram and other areas to here, to keep the Israeli ID. They pay two hundred, three hundred dollars a month for an apartment in the camp. [We] earn money from renting, and [we] do not pay for water here.<sup>127</sup>

Refugees who, lacking legal ownership, try to exercise control over space are in some ways similar to those engaged in auto-construction and slum housing elsewhere, from Brazil to South Africa and beyond.<sup>128</sup> By appropriating the camp, refugees have, over decades, attempted to define ownership by practice. This allows a conceptualization of ownership through the evolution of the camp, presenting an opportunity to think about how ownership is



Figure 9. The physical evolution of Shu‘fat camp, 1974. UNRWA Photo archive, republished with permission.

made by the propertyless, thus creating a new understanding of ownership. This is not ownership by law, but refugees’ own understanding of their surroundings and a right to self-define attachment. This can be understood as the creation of (a new form of) ownership, a novel mode of property regime. Shu‘fat was built as urban slum, but it is also home to human strength and a site of claims.

The form of ownership that has emerged in Shu‘fat camp is insecure and marginal. Refugees have made investments over decades, but what happens if the original landowners claim the land? Will refugees’ assets and investments be recognized? And who is responsible if a building collapses, or for the overall camp over time? Who can protect the refugee when a more powerful neighbor trespasses? Today Shu‘fat camp is often described as extraterritorial, and characterized by poverty, physical deterioration, and lawlessness. While it remains within the bounds of the Jerusalem municipality, the route of the Israeli “separation wall” in Jerusalem was gerrymandered to leave Shu‘fat outside of the city. It is thus outside the jurisdiction of the Palestinian Authority, while Israeli presence is mostly limited to checkpoints controlling entry and exit, border police incursions, and tax collection. UNRWA and local organizations are present in the camp, but with limited resources and capacities. The inhabitants of Shu‘fat camp, among the poorest in Jerusalem, are in a squeeze, as they rely on access to Jerusalem for employment. They have, unlike West Bankers, a legal right to be in the city, but this right – as for other Palestinians in East Jerusalem – is under pressure.

## Who Owns Palestine? Belonging of the Propertyless

Mu‘askar camp is part of an erased history, overlooked by historians and invisibilized in Jerusalem. The microhistory of Mu‘askar and Shu‘fat is one small piece of the history of camps. It is maybe unusual: Shu‘fat’s construction was undertaken not as a direct humanitarian response to war, but as a solution to a perceived problem and as an exception to UNRWA policy at the time. Indeed, Shu‘fat was built at a time when no more camps were thought necessary.

Three strands are interwoven in this history. First, refugees’ struggle to belong runs through both camps: their refusals to move from Mu‘askar, to submit to the headcount, their attachment to space, collectivity, and connection to life before 1948. Maybe “squatting” can be seen as a form of ownership born in Mu‘askar and evolving in Shu‘fat, as its inhabitants lived in and built up the camp over time. A second strand is the role of UNRWA. UNRWA’s humanitarian power was initially strong in Mu‘askar, while its early role in Shu‘fat was pragmatically seeking to avoid the failure of the planned scheme, and aiming to improve living conditions. But its power – and both its ability and willingness to intervene – quickly declined in Shu‘fat. This microhistory also gives examples of how UNRWA officials talked about and dealt with ownership, without reference to refugees’ rights, assets, belonging or losses. The third strand is the role of the host governments, first Jordan and then Israel. Each took a different position toward Mu‘askar and Shu‘fat, but both were ambivalent and unreceptive toward the refugees, in effect contributing to Mu‘askar’s destruction, Shu‘fat’s marginalization, and UNRWA’s ineffectiveness.

One-third of the Palestinian refugees forcefully displaced from their original homes and lands in Palestine have lived as a propertyless population in camps, each family with a designated shelter on a plot. By living and building there, over time they made new forms of ownership. This is not an acceptance of their dispossession from their homes in Palestine, permanency, or formal integration into their host societies; rather, it represents a struggle of a propertyless population for improvement, participation, belonging, and control – to live normally despite the constraints. Yet refugees in camps also live on land that represents a link to historic Palestine and thus symbolizes their right of return. They improved their living conditions, then, as part of their struggle to live and have rights, both human rights and the right to Palestine.

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## Endnotes

- 1 In Arabic, *mu'askar* refers to a military encampment.
- 2 This article builds on a chapter of my PhD thesis: Kjersti G. Berg, "The Unending Temporary: United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) and the Politics of Humanitarian Assistance to Palestinian Refugee Camps, 1950–2012" (PhD diss., University of Bergen, 2015).
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- 6 "The Everyday and the Shadow Years," *Jerusalem Quarterly* 79 (2019): 4; Beshara Doumani and Alex Winder, "1948 and Its Shadows," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 48, no. 1 (2018): 7–15.
- 7 Kjersti G. Berg, "From Chaos to Order and Back: The Construction of UNRWA Shelters and Camps, 1950–1970," in *UNRWA and Palestinian Refugees: From Relief and Works to Human Development*, ed. Sari Hanafi, Leila Hilal, and Lex Takkenberg (New York: Routledge, 2014); Berg, "The Unending Temporary."
- 8 Marte Heian-Engdal, *Palestinian Refugees after 1948: The Failure of International Diplomacy* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2020).
- 9 One exception is Benjamin Schiff, *Refugees unto the Third Generation: UN Aid to Palestinians* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1995).
- 10 Mezna Qato, "Returns of the Archive," *The Nakba Files: The Nakba, the Law, and What Lies In Between*, 1 June 2016, online at [nakbafiles.org/2016/06/01/returns-of-the-archive/](http://nakbafiles.org/2016/06/01/returns-of-the-archive/) (accessed 24 May 2021). See also Musa Budeiri, "Controlling the Archive: Captured Jordanian Security Files in the Israeli State Archives," *Jerusalem Quarterly* 66 (Summer 2016): 87–98.
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- 12 UNRWA Central Registry (CR) and the Institute for Islamic Research and Heritage Revival (IRHR, Ar. Mu'assasat ihya al-turath wa-l-buhuth al-Islamiyya), Abu Dis.
- 13 President of the Defense Committee of Palestine to Shaykh Isma'il, Members of Supreme Muslim Council, 25 May 1948, in

- “Request to open milk distribution in Haram Sharif by Bab al-Asbat by the Red Cross,” in IRHR, High Islamic Shari‘a Council, Public Awqaf Administration, 13/49/5,63/2/60.
- 14 “The Diaries of Constantine Mavrides,” in *Jerusalem 1948: The Arab Neighborhoods and Their Fate in the War*, ed. Salim Tamari (Jerusalem and Bethlehem: Institute of Jerusalem Studies and Badil Resource Center for Palestinian Residency and Refugee Rights, 1999); Tom Abowd, “The Moroccan Quarter: A History of the Present,” *Jerusalem Quarterly File* 7 (2001): 8.
  - 15 “The usage of the al-Haram al-Sharif for the distribution of aid for the refugees by the United Nations,” in IRHR, High Islamic Shari‘a Council, Public Awqaf Administration, 13/50/5, 64/2/60.
  - 16 Map of geographic distribution of refugees, addendum to Plascov, *Palestinian Refugees*.
  - 17 Inter-Office Memorandum from Field Relief Services Officer, Jordan, to Director of UNRWA Affairs, Jordan, 26 January 1965, in CR, RE 400/4, part I (Camps and Buildings, Shu‘fat Camp, 1960–66).
  - 18 Chief, Technical Division, to Chief, Health Division, 19 June 1959, in CR, RE 400/4, part I. See also Cabinet Memorandum no. 101/62, 19 October 1962, in CR, RE 400/4, part I. In 1947, Shu‘fat had been suggested as the most northern point of the corpus separatum proposed for Jerusalem in the Partition Resolution 181, to be placed under effective UN control. After the war in 1948, Shu‘fat town fell on the Jordanian side of divided Jerusalem. Deputy Director to Minister of Development and Reconstruction, 4 August 1960, in CR, RE 400(4), part I. See also Proposed Layout plan for Shu‘fat attached to letter from Director of UNRWA Affairs, Jordan, to Director of Relief Program, HQ, 26 September 1962, in CR, RE 400(4), part I.
  - 19 A. F. J. Reddaway to Roy Lucas, 2 November 1960, in CR, RE 400/4, part I. See also Cabinet Memorandum no. 101/62.
  - 20 Director of UNRWA Affairs, Jordan (DUA/J), to Director of Relief Programs, 22 January 1962, in CR, RE 400/4, part I.
  - 21 DUA/J to Minister of Development and Reconstruction, 10 July 1962, in CR, RE 400/4, part I.
  - 22 Ministry of Development and Reconstruction to Director of UNRWA Affairs, 23 July 1964, in CR, RE 400/4, part I. See also Note for the Record, 15 October 1966, in CR, RE 400/4, part I; Cabinet Memorandum no. 101/62.
  - 23 Ministry of Development and Reconstruction to Director of UNRWA Affairs, 23 July 1964, in CR, RE 400/4, part I. See also Note for the Record, 15 October 1966, and extract from notes on shelter construction, 18 July 1964, in CR, RE 400/4, part I.
  - 24 DUA/J, Note for the Record, 9 January 1963, in CR, RE 400/4, part I.
  - 25 DUA/J to Director of Relief Programs, 31 July 1964, in CR, RE 400/4, part I; Field Relief Service Officer, Jordan, to DUA/J, 26 January 1965, in CR, RE 400/4, part I. DUA/J to Director of Relief Program HQ, 4 February 1965, in CR, RE 400/4, part I.
  - 26 Ministry of Development and Reconstruction to DUA/J, 28 February 1965, in CR, RE 400/4, part I; Field Relief Service Officer, Jordan, to DUA/J, 26 January 1965, in CR, RE 400/4, part I; Cable or letter received 25 January 1965, in CR, RE 400/4, part I.
  - 27 Cable or letter to Director of Relief, 5 February 1965, in CR, RE 400/4, part I.
  - 28 DUA/J to Director of Relief Program HQ, 4 February 1965, in CR, RE 400/4, part I.
  - 29 Ministry of Development and Reconstruction to DUA/J, 28 February 1965 in CR, RE 400/4, part I.
  - 30 Note for the Record, 9 March 1965 in CR, RE 400/4, part I.
  - 31 Craig Calhoun, “The Imperative to Reduce Suffering: Charity, Progress, and Emergencies in the Field of Humanitarian Action,” in *Humanitarianism in Question: Politics, Power, Ethics*, ed. Michael Barnett and Thomas G. Weiss (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2008), 77; Benjamin Thomas White, “Humans and Animals in a Refugee Camp: Baquba, Iraq, 1918–20,” *Journal of Refugee Studies* (2018).
  - 32 DUA/J, Note for the Record, 9 January 1963, in CR, RE 400/4, part I.
  - 33 Author interview with ‘Aziza, 7 March 2009, Shu‘fat camp.
  - 34 Plascov, *Palestinian Refugees*, 68.
  - 35 Davis, *Palestinian Village Histories*.
  - 36 Author interview with ‘Aziza, 7 March 2009, Shu‘fat camp.
  - 37 Author interview with ‘Aziza, 7 March 2009, Shu‘fat camp.
  - 38 Author interview with former UNRWA employee, 3 March 2009.
  - 39 DUA/J, Note for the Record, 9 January 1963, in CR, RE 400/4, part I.
  - 40 A. F. J. Reddaway to Roy Lucas, 2 November

- 1960, in CR, RE 400/4, part I; Minister of Development and Reconstruction to DUA/J, 2 July 1962, in CR, RE 400/4, part I; extracts from minutes of meeting with Minister of Development and Reconstruction, 3 July 1962, in CR, RE 400/4, part I.
- 41 The distribution center was moved to the Tuma-Tuma by Bab al-Asbat. See “The usage of the al-Haram al-Sharif for the distribution of aid for the refugees by the United Nations,” in IRHR, High Islamic Shari‘a Council, Public Awqaf Administration, 13/50/5, 64/2/60.
  - 42 See, for example, General Director of Waqf, Tax Agency for the Waqf, Jordan, to Supervisor of Waqf in al-Quds, 7 January 1952 in: “The usage of the al-Haram al-Sharif for the distribution of aid for the refugees by the United Nations,” in IRHR, High Islamic Shari‘a Council, Public Awqaf Administration, 13/50/5, 64/2/60.
  - 43 Note for the Record, 15 October 1966, attached to letter from Acting DUA/J to Acting Commissioner-General HQ, 17 October 1966, in CR, RE 400/4, part I.
  - 44 Take, for example, renovations of the Dome of the Rock undertaken between 1953 and 1964. Kimberly Katz, “Jordanian Jerusalem: Postage Stamps and Identity Construction,” *Jerusalem Quarterly File* 5 (1999): 5.
  - 45 Note for the Record, 15 October 1966, attached to letter from Acting DUA/J to Acting Commissioner-General, HQ, 17 October 1966, in CR, RE 400/4, part I.
  - 46 UNRWA, which had obviously been asked to do this many times, replied that they needed funds and a site from the government before such action could be taken. Note for the Record, 15 October 1966, attached to letter from Acting DUA/J to Acting Commissioner-General, HQ, 17 October 1966, in CR, RE 400/4, part I.
  - 47 From Acting DUA/J to Acting Commissioner-General, HQ, 17 October 1966, in CR, RE 400/4, part I. See also Note for the Record, 15 October 1966, attached to this letter.
  - 48 Plascov, *Palestinian Refugees*. See, for example, Rashid Khalidi, *The Hundred Years’ War on Palestine: A History of Settler Colonialism and Resistance, 1917–2017* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2020).
  - 49 See, for example, plans to clear al-Nayrab camp in Syria in the early 1960s. Deputy Director to AD/OPS, 12 May 1963, in CR, RE 410(S), part I (Camps and Buildings – Construction and Maintenance, 1959–1969); UNRWA Representative, Damascus, to Deputy Director, HQ, 1 June 1961, in CR, RE 410(S), part I; AD/OPS to Deputy Director, 20 May 1961, in CR, RE 410(S), part I; Director of Relief Program to DUA/J, 13 July 1964, in CR, RE 400(4), part I.
  - 50 Extracts from minutes of meeting held with the Minister of Development and Reconstruction, 3 July 1962, in CR, RE 400(4), part I (Camps and Buildings, Shu‘fat Camp, 1960–66).
  - 51 From Roy Lucas to A. F. J. Reddaway, 28 October 1960, in CR, RE 400(4), part I. See also A. F. J. Reddaway to Roy Lucas, 2 November 1960, in CR, RE 400(4), part I.
  - 52 From Roy Lucas to A. F. J. Reddaway, 28 October 1960, in CR, RE 400(4), part I.
  - 53 From A. F. J. Reddaway to Roy Lucas, 2 November 1960, in CR, RE 400(4), part I.
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  - 55 Director of Relief Programs to Deputy Director of UNRWA, 29 January 1962, in CR, RE 400(4), part I.
  - 56 This suggestion implied larger-size plots, better types of housing, and a water source large enough to provide (at a later date) house-to-house supply. This improvement was referred to as reflecting “camp” versus “urban housing” movement, the latter along the lines of the Hneiken scheme in Amman. If this were approved for Shu‘fat, it would imply a cost jump to US\$375 per shelter and double the price of the camp. Director of Relief Programs to Director of UNRWA Affairs, Jordan, 20 October 1962, in CR, RE 400(4), part I.
  - 57 Author interview with Albert Aghazarian, 4 March 2009, Jerusalem.
  - 58 Elisha Efrat and Allen G. Noble, “Planning Jerusalem,” *Geographical Review* 78, no. 4 (1988): 398.
  - 59 See CR, RE 400(4), part I.
  - 60 John Tanner was the chief of the engineering office at Beirut headquarters. Each field office had an engineering division. This division was a part of the field relief department, which also housed the general rations program. Roy E. Skinner, *Jerusalem to Baghdad, 1967–1992: Selected Letters* (London: Radcliffe Press, 1995), 104.
  - 61 John Tanner, technical report on proposal for Shu‘fat camp, 10 October 1962, in CR, RE

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- 62 Proposed layout plan for Shu'fat, attached to letter from DUA/J to Director of Relief Program, HQ, 26 September 1962, in CR, RE 400/4, part I. See also Cabinet memorandum no. 101/62.
  - 63 Field Relief Services Officer, Jordan, to Director of Relief Programs, 22 September 1964, in CR, RE 400/4, part I. On rations, See Schiff, *Refugees*.
  - 64 Field Relief Service Officer, Jordan, to Director of Relief Programs, 6 October 1964, in CR, RE 400/4, part I.
  - 65 Jenifer Hyndman, *Managing Displacement: Refugees and the Politics of Humanitarianism* (Minneapolis: Minnesota University Press, 2000); Peteet, *Landscape of Hope and Despair*; Berg, "Unending Temporary."
  - 66 Berg, "Unending Temporary."
  - 67 Director of Relief Programs to DUA/J, 20 October 1962, in CR, RE 400(4), part I. See also DUA/J to Acting Commissioner-General, 25 September 1965 in CR, RE 410/2(2), part I (Urban Self-Support Housing, Amman Hneiken Scheme, 1961–68); and Field Relief Service Officer, Jordan, to Director of Relief Programs, 6 October 1964, in CR, RE 400(4), part I.
  - 68 Deputy Director, UNRWA Operations in Jordan, Note for Cabinet, 12 July 1960, in CR, RE 410/2, part I (Review of Shelter Policy, 1960–75).
  - 69 Cabinet Memorandum no. 14/83, 8 March 1963, in CR, RE 410/3 (1962 Shelter Program).
  - 70 Chief, Technical Division, to Director of Relief Programs, 24 November 1961 in CR, RE 410/3.
  - 71 Cabinet Memorandum no. 68/64, 13 November 1964, in Field Relief Service Officer, Jordan, to Director of Relief Programs, 6 October 1964, in CR, RE 400(4), part I. See also: Extract from Executive Cabinet Meeting no. 372, 27 October 1962, in CR, RE 400(4), part I.
  - 72 Standard Cost Estimates for Types of Concrete Block Shelters Jordan Camps, attachment to John Tanner, Technical Report on Proposal for Shu'fat Camp, 10 October 1962, in CR, RE 400(4), part I.
  - 73 Cabinet Memorandum No. 68/64; Memorandum from Chief, Technical Division, to Director of Administration of Relief, 5 November 1966, in CR, RE 400(4), part I.
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  - 75 Plascov, *Palestinian Refugees*, 41–72.
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- 88 Author interviews with former refugee residents of Mu'askar and Shu'fat camp, 7 March 2009.
- 89 Director of Administration and Relief to Chief, Technical Division, Inter-office memorandum, 1 June 1966, in CR, RE 400(4), part I.
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- 95 Note for the Record, 15 October 1966, attached to letter from Acting DUA/J to Acting Commissioner-General, HQ, 17 October 1966, in CR, RE 400(4), part I.
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- 106 Plascov, *Palestinian Refugees*, 68.
- 107 Adwan Taleb, "Real Estate Sector inside the Refugee Camps in West Bank" (Stuttgart: UNRWA and SIAAL, Institute for Urban Planning, Institute of Stuttgart, 2006–7), 72. According to UNRWA files, not all of camp land in Shu'fat had been expropriated prior to 1967 and the Central Registry files refer to Palestinian private ownership of land parcels in Shu'fat. See CR, RE 400(4), part I.
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- 111 Camp Regulations, Appendix to 1 January 1982, in CR, RE 410(WB), part III.



- See summary of camp regulation in “Contraventions, Allocation of Plots and Demolitions,” attachment to Senior Legal Officer to D/Com-Gen, 17 April 1980, in CR, RE 410(J), part III; Berg, “Unending Temporary.”
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  - 127 Author interview with ‘Aziza, 7 March 2009, Shu‘fat camp.
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# Karimeh Abbud

## Entrepreneurship and Early Training

Mitri Raheb

### Abstract

Palestinian photographer Karimeh Abbud has become an icon of female entrepreneurship in recent years. Yet, internet searches will yield distorted information that neglect her real story. Raheb sheds new light on Abbud's family history, her upbringing, and career and how she had to negotiate her role at the intersection of colonialism, Orientalism, nationalism, Zionism, feminism, and Protestantism. Abbud's biography is atypical of most Palestinian women of her era. Her story provides insight into the life of the urban, educated, middle-class Palestinian Christian community in British Mandate Palestine. Abbud has been recognized as a pioneer in photography and the first female photographer in the entire Middle East. Through her photographs, she made an important national contribution to documenting Palestinian life prior to the Nakba. The author highlights Karimeh's role as a female entrepreneur who dared to cross traditional gender lines to enter and excel in a male-dominated profession that became an important and unique part of her life and work.

### Keywords

Karimeh Abbud; female photographer; Palestinian photography; Bethlehem; Nazareth; Lutheranism; Protestantism; female entrepreneurship; studio portraits.

It was by chance when I first heard the name Karimeh Abbud, Palestine's first professional female photographer, in

April 2009.<sup>1</sup> It spurred me to embark on a discovery mission, collecting material from archives of the Jerusalem Mission Society in Berlin, as well as from the archives of the Christmas Lutheran Church in Bethlehem and, in 2011, I was able to interview Karimeh's niece. I had found little material about Karimeh Abbud in Western mission archives, locating, for example, only one small reference in a report written in 1936 by the German Lutheran pastor at Christmas Lutheran Church in Bethlehem.<sup>2</sup> This is typical of many mission histories written largely from a Western perspective that treat indigenous people as objects without agency. Ellen Fleischmann, in her work on the Palestinian women's movement during the British Mandate era, remarked: "Palestinian women are almost completely absent from the writing on this crucial period of Palestinian history."<sup>3</sup> With increased interest in the biographies of native Arab Christians in general (see the work of Womack<sup>4</sup>), and particularly of Arab women, this essay seeks to fill an important gap in the field.

In Palestine and the Arab world, Karimeh Abbud has emerged in the last decades as an iconic female entrepreneur. Three documentary films have been made about her, the latest for *Al-Jazeera*.<sup>5</sup> In 2017, Google featured her for their homepage doodle on her birthday, November 13, and renowned Arab novelist Ibrahim Nasrallah published a biographical novel in 2019 entitled *The Biography of an Eye*.<sup>6</sup>

In this contribution toward understanding her life and work, I will focus on examining Abbud's career as a pioneering female entrepreneur, exploring as well her upbringing and family background in the Protestant church.

In a life entwined in Palestine's history, Karimeh Abbud was born an Ottoman citizen and lived through the last two decades of Ottoman rule over Greater Syria at the height of European penetration. She was a young adult when the Ottoman Empire was dissolved and Greater Syria was divided into smaller nation states ruled by two European empires: France and Britain. Karimeh saw how British promises to the Arabs were not kept and how instead Palestine was put under a British Mandate with the aim of establishing a Jewish homeland. In her adult life, Karimeh witnessed how the British facilitated Jewish immigration into Palestine and gave Jews preferential treatment over and against the Arab population. The last years of Karimeh's life were shaped by the great Arab revolt of 1936–1939. This turbulent history was the context that shaped Karimeh's life and career.

## Family Background

The story of the Abbud family is closely connected with the history of the Protestant mission in the Middle East. The Abbud family originated from the village of al-Khiyam in upper Galilee, located in today's southern Lebanon. That region (Hasbaya-Marj'ayun) came under the influence of the American Protestant mission at an early stage. On 26 February 1844, several Greek Orthodox families from the town of Hasbaya approached the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions in Beirut and expressed the wish to convert to the Protestant faith.<sup>7</sup> By 1851 a local Protestant church was established in Hasbaya by the American Board. It must have

been in this context that in 1850 a local Protestant convert, Ya'qub al-Hakim from the small town of Ibl al-Saqi, was spreading Protestant beliefs and came into contact with Dahir Abbud al-Asqar from al-Khiyam. Ya'qub was able to convert Dahir to the Protestant faith and Dahir convinced his brother Da'ibis. Da'ibis, born in al-Khiyam in 1823, was about twenty-seven years old when he converted. Twenty years later in late 1870, Da'ibis Abbud died leaving behind a widow and eight orphaned children.<sup>8</sup> The wife of Da'ibis decided to send her two youngest boys, Sa'id (Karimeh's father) and his brother Sulayman to the Syrian Orphanage in Jerusalem, known as the Schneller school.<sup>9</sup>

In 1890 Sa'id left the Syrian Orphanage and went to Bethlehem, where he started teaching at the Bethlehem school of the English women's mission.<sup>10</sup> Sa'id met his future wife Barbara Yusif Badr<sup>11</sup> there and they married on 27 August 1890. In 1905, Sa'id Abbud was called to become assistant pastor to the German mission at the Christmas Lutheran Church in Bethlehem, where he served until his retirement in 1947.

## Early Years

Karimeh was born in Bethlehem on 13 November 1893, half a century after the opening up of Ottoman Palestine to European consulates and Christian missions. Karimeh was baptized at the Christmas Lutheran Church, the first Protestant congregation established by the German Jerusalem Mission Society (*Jerusalemsverein*) in 1860. The baptism was conducted by the German missionary Emanuel Mueller on 1 April 1894. At this time, Karimeh's parents were teaching at the English school in the town, which brought the Abbuds into contact with the European mission.<sup>12</sup> Interestingly, for the baptism of Karimeh, the family chose two English ladies, most probably teaching colleagues at the English school, to be the godmothers: Miss Double and Mrs. Corry Fennell.

The Abbuds were foreigners in Bethlehem and had no family connections there. The only family for them must have been at the English school where they were teaching. This was a characteristic of many of the Protestant converts: their connection to their extended family had been severed and it was felt a privilege to have a European missionary as a godfather or godmother. For the European missionaries, such an occasion was celebrated as proof of the success of their mission activities.



Figure 1. Karimeh Abbud. Courtesy of the author.

Karimeh was born into a family in which both parents were educated. This was not uncommon among many of the Protestant converts of that era, but was in no way representative of the larger Palestinian society, which was predominantly rural. Karimeh attended the English women's mission school in Bethlehem where her mother was still teaching. Catholic and Protestant missions had begun opening schools for girls and women as early as the mid-nineteenth century. Karimeh now represented the second generation of Protestants and these children developed a more critical attitude to the mission agencies than their parents, who had felt greatly in debt to the missionaries and often adopted their Orientalist perceptions. At school, Karimeh encountered a common attitude in which Palestine and Arabs were portrayed as backward and inferior in race and character to the British. In the context of this colonial encounter of the early nineteenth century,<sup>13</sup> Karimeh felt the need to resist and respond. When one of her English teachers kept repeating that, "Arabs are primitive, they eat with their hands and are not capable of innovation," Karimeh went to the library and brought back an illustration of how English tribes had lived in earlier centuries. She told the teachers, "See how your ancestors were living! So stop talking about the Arabs in such a way."<sup>14</sup> This Orientalist colonial attitude of Europeans, and in particularly British missionaries, triggered a proto-national sentiment in Karimeh's mind that developed further under the British Mandate.

At school, sewing and needlework were important subjects. Domestic work was viewed in girls' mission schools as the ultimate fulfillment for female life and vocation. Karimeh mastered this domestic handicraft. One day, her English teacher asked her to shorten one of the teacher's dresses. Karimeh refused. The teacher asked why when she was so good at it. Karimeh answered: "If I do it now, you will get used to asking me to do it for you. I am not your maid."<sup>15</sup> Such incidents illustrate the colonial encounters facing a female Palestinian pupil, and it also shows the rebellious spirit and courage of this particular pupil. One could attribute this rebellious spirit as an early expression of nationalism, but there might have been another reason. In these years, Karimeh came into contact with the German mission where her father was working. At a time when European missions were competing for the souls and minds of the people in Palestine, the Abbud family felt closer to the German mission than to the English mission. In the early twentieth century, Germany was at the height of its imperial power, and this was manifested in Palestine through massive church construction projects, especially in the Bethlehem-Jerusalem area.<sup>16</sup>

## **Karimeh's Upbringing: Resisting the Confines of Gender**

As well as resisting the role of servant assigned to the colonized by colonial minds, Karimeh also resisted the gender role reserved for women. Her behavior was related to her upbringing as a pastor's child, and as the second eldest daughter. Her first brother, born two years after her, died when he was four. This must have given Karimeh and her older sister Katarina the sense that boys were more fragile, something that proved to be true in their lives. One of their brothers died when he was twenty-four, while the

youngest brother, Mansur, fell from a bell tower when he was young, suffered a concussion, and spent his life afterward in a mental hospital. It was the daughters of the Abbud family who proved to be resilient. They were all very well-educated, fluent in three languages: Arabic, English, and German, and all played the piano; Lydia, the youngest sister, also played the guitar. The three sisters were economically independent and worked as teachers, mainly in mission schools: Katarina worked in the Protestant school run by the Germans in Bethlehem, while Karimeh worked in the Syrian Orphanage run by Schneller in Jerusalem.

Barbara Abbud, Karimeh's mother, was more conservative and stricter than her more liberal husband, Pastor Sa'id, in dealing with her daughters, who called her "the Holy Spirit."<sup>17</sup> Karimeh and her sister were liberal and feminist in their thinking and way of life by the standards of the time. The mid-1920s was an era of social and cultural change: the latest Western fashions were imported to Palestine and long Victorian hair styles were abandoned for short hair. Lydia, decided one day to cut her hair short, one of the first women in Bethlehem to adopt the latest European hair style.<sup>18</sup> Her mother shouted angrily that it was only fit for a "prostitute." The conflict between Lydia and her mother expresses the tension between two generations of Palestinian women. Karimeh and her sisters were modern "Protestant girls" who opposed a life of motherhood, and were ready to cross the boundaries set by their society. Unsurprisingly, Katarina and Karimeh were among the first women in Palestine to get a driving license, buy a car, and drive throughout Palestine. Their free and liberal spirit, education, and the fact that they put their career first, may explain why the three sisters remained unmarried or married very late in life. Katarina did not marry at all. Karimeh married when she was thirty-seven, and Lydia when she was thirty-three. This was a common practice among educated women of that era.<sup>19</sup> Even after Karimeh married a widowed distant relative, she was the one who supported the family financially.

Abbud's biography offers a unique insight into the life of a middle-class, educated Christian family in British Mandate Palestine. Karimeh describes the culture in a pastor's household, especially in relation to gender and the role of women, and indirectly sheds light on an era when the concept of gender roles was shifting radically. By the mid-1920s the issue of women was no longer confined to closed circles but was discussed openly in large sections of major Palestinian newspapers.<sup>20</sup>



Figure 2. From left to right: Barbara, Karimeh's mother with her son Mansour (baby); Katarina; Najib; Karimeh; Karim; and Rev. Sa'id Abbud. Courtesy of the author.

## Karimeh's Entrepreneurial Career

Karimeh started work as a teacher at the Syrian Orphanage in Jerusalem, one of a small number of Arab women employed in the labor force, mainly as teachers, clerics or junior civil servants.<sup>21</sup> By early 1920, she apparently decided to change careers and took photography lessons with an unidentified professional photographer in Palestine. Photography was first developed in Paris in 1839 and arrived in Jerusalem the same year, half a century before Karimeh's birth. Hundreds of European photographers flocked to the Holy Land in the second half of the nineteenth century to take photos of biblical sites to sell in Europe or to pilgrims. Some of the photographers were missionaries working in Jerusalem, Jewish immigrants, or foreign residents like the German Templers. Local photographers emerged as early as the late 1850s in the Armenian Patriarchate in Jerusalem. The first local photography studio was opened by Garabed Kerkorian in 1885, eight years before Karimeh's birth. By the turn of the century, several local Arab photographers were active in the Jerusalem-Bethlehem area; the best known was Khalil Raad.<sup>22</sup> At the small Christmas Lutheran Church in Bethlehem where Karimeh's father was the pastor, there were two accomplished photographers, Ibrahim Bawarshi and Tawfiq Basil,<sup>23</sup> the latter being the son of the Protestant mukhtar and one of the first converts from the Orthodox faith to Protestantism. Karimeh grew up surrounded by male photographers.

In the early 1920s, when Karimeh decided to make photography her career there were no female photographers among the Europeans residing in Palestine or among the locals. Although several female photographers emerged in Europe as early as the 1840s, in Palestine and the larger Middle East region, photography was an exclusively male profession. Karimeh's decision to cross gender barriers and enter into an exclusively male-dominated profession fits well with her liberal upbringing and her Protestant identity.

Karimeh was more than a photographer: she was an entrepreneur. She used her family and her Protestant network to open studios at several locations in Palestine. She took photographs in Bethlehem, Jerusalem, Nazareth, and Haifa at a time when transportation was not easy, few roads were paved, and a journey from Bethlehem-Jerusalem to the Nazareth-Haifa region would have taken half a day. Nevertheless, Karimeh would drive herself to her far-flung studios. (I am not aware of any male photographer who demonstrated such ambition.)

Karimeh was a business-oriented woman. As early as 1924 she was advertising in one of the leading Palestinian newspapers *al-Karmil*.<sup>24</sup> These advertisements offer an insight into how she positioned herself in the industry as a local (*wataniyya*) female photographer. Her choice of the word *wataniyya* was not by chance. *Al-Karmil* was a national Palestinian newspaper whose founder, Najib Nassar, was among the first to realize the danger of Zionist settlement in Palestine and its impact on the future of Palestinians. Since this newspaper was mainly distributed in the north of Palestine, Karimeh advertised her studio in Haifa. Although Karimeh had relatives in Nazareth, Jerusalem, and Bethlehem, she did not have relatives in Haifa, so the

choice of that city must have been part of her deliberate business plan. Haifa was developing rapidly at that time due to British investment in the port and had many well-to-do middle and upper-class Palestinians who would likely be interested to have their picture taken. In this advertisement, Karimeh identified herself as the only female photographer in Palestine. Her advertisement added that she had learned this profession at the hands of one of the most famous photographers, and that she specialized in portraits of women and families. This was the unique niche that Karimeh sought to fill, a competitive edge that she sought to exploit. She was aware that women in many conservative families might not feel comfortable going to a studio, so she offered to take photographs in their homes, possibly because Karimeh had her own car. She soon became famous for her sensitive and unique portraits. Her advertisement stated that she was available every day except Sundays. Christian Protestant values were an important element in her identity, but perhaps Karimeh also injected time-management skills crucial for an entrepreneurial spirit.



Figure 3. Rev. Sa'id Abbud. Courtesy of the author.

## Karimeh's National Role

The adjective *wataniyya* in Karimeh's advertisement, understood here as local or native, also has a political connotation since *wataniyya* can also be translated as "national." In the 1920s, Palestinian Christian and Muslim women had started to organize themselves politically, to send letters to British administrators, and to protest against the Balfour Declaration and Jewish settlement in Palestine.<sup>25</sup> The Western Wall disturbances and the execution of three Palestinian men by the British authorities in 1929 pushed politically engaged women to organize themselves as a national organization with local chapters. Thus, it was ultimately the national cause that united the women's movement in Palestine and that led to the creation of the Arab Women's Association, and the first Arab Women's National Congress that same year.<sup>26</sup> Throughout the 1930s and 1940s, Palestinian Arab women, both Christians and Muslims, actively participated in political demonstrations.



We do not have any proof of Karimeh's direct involvement in this movement but it was most probable that a woman of her status, education, and mobility was aware and involved in some way. We know that her father, Sa'id Abbud, was one of the first Christian religious leaders in Palestine to become politically active, beginning in 1936 with so-called "Protestant evenings" that discussed topics like Jesus and the fatherland, Christianity and nationalism, and Zionism and biblical prophecies.<sup>27</sup> These Protestant evenings were triggered by the great revolt of that year and were geared to address Christian Zionist and Jewish Zionist claims to Palestine based on scripture, while encouraging Christians to become engaged in the national struggle of their people. As a sign of his support for the revolt, the pastor began to wear a kufiya, which had become a symbol of Palestinian identity.

Karimeh's political activity took place on different terrain when her photos became a political battleground. The intensification of the political conflict with Zionism in the 1920s and 1930s affected every aspect of life in Mandate Palestine, including photography. The Jewish Zionist movement was employing photographers to show Palestine as a barren place, as a "land without a people" ready for the "people without a land." Photography became a propaganda tool to demonstrate how Jewish immigrants were making the deserted land bloom and bringing progress, civilization, and modernity to this ancient land.

Karimeh was developing two kinds of photographs: images of religious and historical sites and of contemporary Palestinian cities. These photos were documentary proof that the land was not barren or deserted. In addition, Karimeh was taking pictures of real Palestinian families, mainly middle-class, educated, largely well-to-do and well-dressed. These pictures gave the Palestinian people a face that refuted Zionist propaganda. Abbud's pictures were important on another front: her photographs were not sold to tourists or for the international market but they were made expressly for local people. Her images of Palestinian families in their actual environment rebutted the Orientalist narrative that depicted Palestinians, particularly women, according to the European imagination or biblical imagery. In that sense, Karimeh's pictures are an important national contribution to the documentation of a thriving middle-class Palestinian life prior to the Nakba.

Immediately after her marriage in 1930, Karimeh and her Lebanese husband left to Brazil, where a large, thriving Lebanese diaspora existed, and where her only son, Samir, was born. They did not stay there long before returning home, another indication of Karimeh's attachment to Palestine and her people. Karimeh died young at the age of 47. In 1947 her father and sister Lydia left to Lebanon where their extended family had originated. After the 1948 Nakba, Lydia dedicated her life to assisting Palestinian refugees in Beirut and volunteered as a music teacher. Although Lydia became a Lebanese citizen, she continued to identify as a Palestinian.

Many of Karimeh's pictures were captured by Zionist militias during the Nakba. Several albums of Karimeh's photographs (those depicting landscapes, and religious and historical sites) became commercial collections in Israeli hands, a small part of the confiscated cultural heritage of Palestine.

## Conclusion

Karimeh lived in an era of immense socio-cultural transformations and political upheaval. During her life, Karimeh had to negotiate her role at the intersection of colonialism, Orientalism, nationalism, Zionism, feminism, and Protestantism. Abbud's biography is unique and atypical of most Palestinian women of her era. Her story provides an in-depth insight into the life of an urban, educated, middle-class Palestinian Protestant Christian community in British Mandate Palestine. Karimeh has been recognized as a pioneer and as the first female photographer in the entire Middle East. Through her photographs, she made an important national contribution to documenting Palestinian life prior to the Nakba. Her role as a female entrepreneur who dared to cross traditional gender lines and enter a profession that was exclusively male-dominated remains an important and unique aspect of her life and work. She was able to identify a niche where she as a female photographer had a competitive edge over her male colleagues. She excelled in her profession as evidenced by the hundreds of photographs that she left us.

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## Endnotes

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# The Politics of Power around Qalandiya Checkpoint

## Deconstructing the Prism of Im/mobility, Space, and Time for Palestinian Commuters

Reem Shraydeh

### Editor's Note

This essay was a notable contribution to the 2021 Ibrahim Dakkak Award for Outstanding Essay on Jerusalem.

### Abstract

This essay examines Palestinian im/mobility in the colonial context of the checkpoint. The essay offers a theoretical approach for studying the prism of im/mobility, space, and time at Qalandiya checkpoint through a Foucauldian/de Certeau framework of power. Based on Foucauldian analysis of disciplinary power, the essay examines im/mobility by examining the ways the Israeli checkpoint subjugates Palestinian bodies to produce “docile bodies” only to cause them “wasted time” waiting by Qalandiya checkpoint. The author approaches Palestinian commuters as the active subjects of power who act and are acted upon at the same time. Building on de Certeau’s theory of the everyday and focusing on the tactical power of the “weak,” the author explores Palestinian agency with the production of Palestinian “resistant bodies” at the checkpoint and the evolution of “survival time” during their mobility practices. The essay is enriched with the accounts of three Palestinian commuters to complement its theoretical insight. The author concludes with the need to build on this theoretical framework with a broad ethnographic study to develop a better understanding of mobility practices for Palestinian commuters at Qalandiya checkpoint.

### Keywords

Movement; checkpoint; Qalandiya; East Jerusalem; disciplinary power; tactical power; docile bodies; resistant bodies; wasted time; survival time.

*On 16 January 2019, I spent five hours in my car driving the short distance between Ramallah and Jerusalem. This was the same period of time it would have taken me to fly to London and gain an additional study day, rather than regret my decision to spend a week-long vacation with my family in Jerusalem during the total traffic freeze between Kafr ‘Aqab and Qalandiya checkpoint. During those five hours, I listened to that most acclaimed of Arab singers, Um Kulthum, known for her hour-long performances of a single song. It was raining hard and I struggled to keep the car windshield clear of fog. I played mind games betting that if the traffic moved a few meters and I reached to a certain store, then I would have no trouble for the rest of the distance. I thought there must be a temporary obstruction between point x and y along the road to Qalandiya, but every fifteen minutes the traffic moved only a few inches at best. The congested road spawned a third lane of traffic chaotically formed from the usual two lanes. I became lost in my thoughts, musing if I had been in London, I would have reached my home a long time ago. The journey to the checkpoint felt like a battlefield. At a small opening along the road’s cement dividing blocks, some shared transport vehicles squeezed through to try their luck driving on the opposite side of the road, against traffic, to reach the front of the queue. Drivers were constantly honking and snaking their cars around to bypass others to save a few moments.*

*The seemingly endless queue ended five hours later when finally, I reached the checkpoint and presented my blue Jerusalemite ID card to the Israeli soldiers. One soldier looked inside the car to verify my ID as someone allowed to enter Jerusalem. The bar barrier was then lifted and I passed the checkpoint, a process that alone can delay the security check by up to ten minutes for each car, based apparently on the drivers’ looks.*

*Since I had commuted daily to work in Jerusalem for six years from 2012 to 2018, I knew that five hours from Kafr ‘Aqab to Qalandiya checkpoint was unusual. Rain or a car accident might slow the passage and cause additional chaos, but usually one or two hours was needed to cross the distance of three kilometers. This ordeal is a daily norm for many Palestinian commuters who must negotiate the queue of vehicles or pedestrians waiting to cross the checkpoint.*

## **Israeli Checkpoints**

Following the Oslo peace process in 1993, Israel established checkpoints to control the movement of Palestinians to and from the ever-changing boundaries of the state of Israel. Israeli checkpoints regulate, prohibit, and control Palestinian mobility – constituting a total regime of movement.<sup>1</sup> Established under the pretext of maintaining Israel’s security,<sup>2</sup> checkpoints have been justified as a temporary prevention and response for any “terrorist threat” by Palestinians to the state of Israel,<sup>3</sup> and thus, “terrorist threats and checkpoints are understood as having a cause and effect relationship.”<sup>4</sup> Indeed, Israeli authorities have claimed that “checkpoints are needed because of today’s security situation, because of the explosive device that was

discovered yesterday, because of last week's attack etc.”<sup>5</sup> However, despite the claim that they were created for a “temporary” period, checkpoints have changed in form but have never ceased operating since the 1990s until today.

Israeli checkpoints are not uniform – they differ in form and function. They range from simple flying checkpoints – for example, a moving tank of soldiers that stops to check identification cards of Palestinians, or a one-meter-square cement block to stop or divert vehicular traffic – to a twelve-meter-high control tower from which soldiers communicate or, more recently, the remote control metal turnstiles that literally squeeze Palestinians as they pass through.<sup>6</sup> Qalandiya checkpoint has evolved through all of these stages; it is currently equipped with extensive, well-solidified architectural and administrative infrastructure. By 2019, Qalandiya became the main checkpoint separating the northern West Bank from Jerusalem, processing the 26,000 Palestinians travelling daily by foot, car, or bus.<sup>7</sup> The checkpoint is mainly used by East Jerusalem residents with Jerusalem identification cards or West Bank citizens who hold special entry permits; both are subject to daily inspection at the checkpoint crossing.<sup>8</sup>

The change in the structural design of the checkpoint is not only material; there is also constant change in the rules and regulations of passage that appear random, arbitrary, and uncertain. This includes regulations concerning the age and necessary documentation of who may pass the checkpoint.<sup>9</sup> A changing political situation can also impact the experience of passage for Palestinian commuters.<sup>10</sup> For example, a Palestinian attack inside Israel or a rise in political tensions can be met with more movement obstacles and lead to closure of some roads.<sup>11</sup> Such arbitrariness in the process of passage at the checkpoint highlights the unpredictability of Palestinian life under Israeli military rule.<sup>12</sup>

## **Qalandiya Checkpoint in Context: The Implications of the Ever-changing Boundaries of Jerusalem**

Contextualizing the checkpoint of Qalandiya in relation to the spaces around it is imperative for an in-depth and critical understanding of how the checkpoint exercises its power to hinder Palestinian mobility. Following the redefinition and expansion of municipal boundaries of Jerusalem in 1967, most of the adjacent area of Kafr ‘Aqab surrounding the borderline of Jerusalem was appropriated. By 2006, with the construction of the separation wall, Kafr ‘Aqab found itself left outside the wall and completely sealed off from Jerusalem.<sup>13</sup> Kafr ‘Aqab remained legally under the control of Jerusalem municipality, but in practice the area was neglected with little attention to any municipal services.<sup>14</sup> Although it was only four kilometers from Ramallah, which was under Palestinian Authority governance, Kafr ‘Aqab was also left outside the responsibility of the PA to address its municipal needs. Kafr ‘Aqab, cast out from both the city of Jerusalem and Ramallah, is best described by what Helga Tawil called “the exopolis.”<sup>15</sup>

Ever since Israel occupied East Jerusalem in 1967, Israeli authorities have been

implementing a systematic policy of expulsion against Palestinian Jerusalemites. Since its inception in 1995, a “center of life” policy was introduced by the Israeli ministry of interior requiring Palestinians living in East Jerusalem to prove that Jerusalem is their center of life in order to maintain their residency rights.<sup>16</sup> Since the application of the policy, Israel has revoked the residency of more than 10,000 Palestinian Jerusalemites who failed the Israeli measures of “center of life.”<sup>17</sup> This includes Palestinian Jerusalemites who travelled abroad or who sought affordable housing in the suburbs.<sup>18</sup> Many Palestinian families who lived in the suburbs moved back to the city to guarantee their residency rights. However, with more than 70 percent of Palestinians in East Jerusalem living under the Israeli-established poverty line, this meant that not all families could afford the high cost of housing to maintain their residency rights. Housing availability was also limited by Israeli authorities complicating the permit process, severely restricting, or simply denying building permits to Arabs in Jerusalem.<sup>19</sup> Palestinians were left with building and renovating their homes without permits, a practical solution that was even more visible in the Kafr ‘Aqab neighborhood.<sup>20</sup> Despite legally being part of Jerusalem, housing in Kafr ‘Aqab was more affordable due to its location outside the wall around Jerusalem. Eventually, thousands of Palestinian Jerusalemites found themselves forced to migrate to the city’s outer limits.<sup>21</sup>

With poor urban planning, no building permits, limited land, and neglect by Jerusalem municipality, apartment buildings in Kafr ‘Aqab expanded upward.<sup>22</sup> Buildings were eventually filling all available space on both sides of the main road between Ramallah and Jerusalem that intersected with Qalandiya checkpoint. The chaotic building up of Kafr ‘Aqab into an overpopulated space added another obstacle to mobility for travelers to Qalandiya checkpoint. Understanding the impact of the checkpoint on im/mobility therefore transcends the inspection point itself between the Israeli soldier and the Palestinian commuter. It stretches to the waiting spaces prior to arrival to the checkpoint: the long queues of Palestinian pedestrians and the long lines of Palestinian vehicles negotiating their way toward the inspection point.

## **Im/mobility, Space, and Time around the Checkpoint**

With the increasing scholarly attention to the “mobility turn,”<sup>23</sup> much academic reflection and discussion has been made about mobility in the Western world.<sup>24</sup> In a fast-paced and technologically-advanced globalized world, examination of mobility becomes even more essential due to the increase in movement and flow of people, goods, and ideas, and the profound ways in which these mobilities have impacted how global citizens experience space and time. Nevertheless, little scholarly reflection has been focused on mobility or its lack in a non-Western and colonial context where it is most deprived.<sup>25</sup>

As Auoragh sees it, “Mobility is naturally adjoined with immobility” since mobility reflects unequal power relations.<sup>26</sup> In her article on Qalandiya, Helga Tawil-Souri

reiterates this inevitable association, stressing that mobility cannot be addressed in separation from immobility. The relative immobilities that control and limit Palestinian movement around the checkpoint cannot be understood apart from mobilities created for Israeli settlers to move – illegally – onto Palestinian land.<sup>27</sup> With the unevenness of Palestinian im/mobility at the checkpoint, there follows an unevenness of Palestinian experience of time and space, reflecting the power of Israeli authorities in colonizing and controlling Palestinian movement.

Before placing space and time in a colonial context and particularly in the context of the checkpoint for understanding Palestinian im/mobility, it is important to look first at the global transformation of how the world is experiencing space and time. In his reflections on recent transformations in globalization, David Harvey introduces the idea that the world is experiencing a time-space compression as a result of how capitalism annihilates space through time.<sup>28</sup> Building on Marx's rationalization that "capital must tear down every spatial barrier to exchange and conquer the whole earth for market," the annihilation of space requires that the time spent moving between one place to another should be reduced.<sup>29</sup> With the annihilation of space, time-space compression means "the world is experienced socially and materially as a smaller place."<sup>30</sup>

Paradoxically, this rationalization works ironically for Palestinian commuters traversing the checkpoint. In a reversed equation, Palestinians experience "prolonged" time in a narrow stretch of space. Contextualizing this for the passing of Qalandiya checkpoint shows that the time needed to travel between Kafr 'Aqab and the checkpoint did not decline. Rather, it increased due to the waiting Palestinian commuters need to do as a result of Israeli control of their movement. In line with Fabian speculations on differences in sharing the same time between the West and the non-West,<sup>31</sup> it can be argued that Palestinian subjects at Qalandiya checkpoint do not share the same time with the Western developed world. Instead, the wheel of time is rather jeopardized for them as they are always behind the actual globalized time. Unlike the speeded-up time of a globalized and capitalist world, time is slowed down for Palestinians.

## **Foucault's Conception of Power**

The jeopardized experience of time-space for Palestinian commuters is a result of the unequal power relations that control Palestinian movement. To understand this tight grip over Palestinian mobility, an in-depth analysis is needed of how the politics of power unfold at Qalandiya checkpoint. The way power is exercised on the movement of Palestinian commuters across the checkpoint can best be understood through Foucault's conception of power. For Foucault, power exists<sup>32</sup> only when it is put into action and must be understood dynamically as existing in ongoing processes. Foucault highlights that the exercise of power entails a set of actions on possible actions that "it makes easier or more difficult, it constrains or forbids absolutely but it is always a way of acting upon one or more acting subjects by virtue of their acting or being



capable of action.”<sup>33</sup> In other words, a relationship of power can only be articulated if the other is recognized and maintained as a subject who acts. In his article “The Subject and Power,” Foucault elaborated that there are two meanings of the word “subject”: “Subject to someone else by control and dependence; and subject tied to his own identity by a conscience or self-knowledge. Both meanings suggest a form of power which subjugates and makes subject to.”<sup>34</sup> Eventually, in a relation of power, Foucault posits that power is practiced over subjects, and he suggests that subjects are also capable of action.

In *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault offered a better understanding of the way power works by introducing disciplinary power, a form of power that renders the subject in question submissive. Through disciplinary power, Foucault offered a detailed analysis of the exercise of the power of punishment through the instrument of the individual’s body. To use Foucault’s words, the body is an object and target of disciplinary power where “systems of punishment are to be situated in a certain ‘political economy’ of the body.”<sup>35</sup> Through offering a historical development of punishment in the eighteenth century French penal system, Foucault exhibited the various torture methods with which “the truth of the crime is published in the very body of the man to be executed.”<sup>36</sup> Yet, the development of the punishment-body relation became less directly centered on the body and punishment gradually shifted towards the pain and suffering of the criminal’s soul. In fact, Foucault exhibits how the French penal system witnessed a transformation from one thousand long methods of death including burning, beating, and starving into one single death, a momentary death done through cutting off the head.<sup>37</sup>

Unlike the transformation of punishment in the French penal system, Palestinians endure a combined torture of both the body and soul as they suffer physical bodily checks as well as wait in long queues of pedestrians and vehicles. Even worse, Palestinian bodies remain the central target of punishment as they are still checked, inspected, and humiliated. While Foucault argues that by the nineteenth century the great spectacle of physical punishment disappeared and the theatrical representation of pain was excluded,<sup>38</sup> it can be deduced that the theatrical representation of pain is still visible at Qalandiya checkpoint as it is encapsulated and intensified in the narrow, chaotic, and numerous queues of Palestinian vehicles and pedestrians.

## **The Politics of Disciplinary Power and the Making of Palestinian Docile Bodies**

Throughout Foucault’s account of disciplinary power in the penal system and later on in its application in the state’s institutions including hospitals, schools, factories, and charities, Foucault posits that the aim of disciplinary power is to produce submissive and obedient subjects to the system that is in power. Foucault explains that disciplinary power operates through a corrective approach which entails repetitive habit and exercise. This happens through taming and training the body and behavior of the

condemned in question through forms of constraints and coercion including timetables, compulsory movements, regular, and repeated activities.<sup>39</sup>

In her article on “checkpoint knowledge,” Alexandra Rijke demonstrated how disciplinary power was exercised on Palestinian commuters as they internalized the knowledge of the best behavior and bodily appearance that would let them appear the most obedient and the “least suspect” of any potential threat while crossing Israeli checkpoints.<sup>40</sup> She indicated how some sought to appear less Palestinian and more foreign so that they could pass the checkpoint more easily.

Eventually, Palestinian commuters were transformed into what Rijke described as an “obedient and non-threatening Palestinian other.”

In her article entitled “The Dangers of Driving under Israel Apartheid,”<sup>41</sup> Izzy Mustafa further highlights this knowledge by recounting her experience of how she disciplines her body movements in order to be safely able to pass the checkpoint. She shares her father’s advice on driving at the checkpoint:

Don’t rev your engine. Keep your hands on the steering wheel. Don’t make sudden eye contact with the soldiers in front of you. Turn down your music. Have your ID ready to be checked. Have your foot on the brake pedal. Make sure when the soldier waves you forward that you don’t hit the gas pedal by accident.

Izzy explains that this is part of the checklist she runs through in her mind every time she crosses an Israeli military checkpoint in Palestine, where any driving mistake or accident can be suspect as a threat to Israel’s security.

Disciplinary power operates in the context of Israeli military checkpoints as an arbitrary system of orders and regulations governing Palestinian movement. One of the disciplinary examples of this arbitrary control is through the invention of the “imaginary line.” In discussing Israeli military checkpoints, Hagar Kotef and Merav Amir explain, “The imaginary line is a line drawn (metaphorically, abstractly, ‘in thin air’) by a soldier or soldiers at the checkpoint. It is a line that delimits the permitted movement of Palestinians within the space of the checkpoint, yet a line that exists only in the minds of the soldiers standing in front of them.”<sup>42</sup> Since it is an unmarked



Figure 1. Traffic jam in front of Qalandiya checkpoint, 05:50 AM. Residents of neighborhoods left on the other side of the barrier on their way to work in Jerusalem. Photo by Amer Aruri and B’Tselem, online at [www.btselem.org/photoblog/201404\\_qalandiya\\_checkpoint](http://www.btselem.org/photoblog/201404_qalandiya_checkpoint) (accessed 10 November 2021).

line, the orders and rules on the exact place where Palestinian commuters should stand is blurry. Even after checkpoints became well-constructed and turnstiles built to make sure every Palestinian can pass singly and even after lines were marked, the imaginary line still existed in different areas of the checkpoint, either before passing the turnstile or after.<sup>43</sup> The installation of the turnstiles slowed progress of the queues at times, resulting in tension, chaos, and more pressing and pushing forward in the lines.

Eventually, the imaginary line makes an abrupt and arbitrary re-appearance when the security check takes a long time causing for more pushing forward in the queues by the turnstiles. This manifests through the notorious order *irja' la wara'* (Go back!) screamed by soldiers behind their booth at the commuters. With this order, Palestinians in the queue are reminded to mind their individuality, keep their place in the line, and control the movement of their bodies. Changing the routine is one way to fully control the bodies and time of the Palestinian commuters. According to an account from Checkpoint Watch Activists (CPW),<sup>44</sup> the change in routine was an evident pattern that emerged at the checkpoint:

Those (Palestinian commuters) waiting in line were shifted around some fifteen times from line to line for 45 minutes, and one time [the soldiers] changed the routine even more when they closed line 3 and yelled over a loudspeaker to go to line 2 and immediately after they reached there, they were sent back to line 3.

These rhythms and routines reminiscent of Tom and Jerry chase-and-miss games carry in their arbitrary nature of change a tight control over the movement of Palestinian bodies as they navigate between the lines guessing which one is the open one and which one is closed.

Similar to the changing routine for pedestrians waiting to pass the checkpoint, Palestinian vehicles are also subjected to a certain discipline and mode of order and control. This includes what Foucault called the dual system of “gratification-punishment” that operates as part of training and correcting the subjected individual.<sup>45</sup> Following this system, individuals are given rewards and penalty points according to their behavior and performance. In a similar manner, as the regime of the checkpoint was established under the claim of a cause-effect rationalization wherein its “establishment was in response to terrorist threats by Palestinians,” this means that the more “obediently” Palestinians behaved and assuming the political situation was calm, the fewer obstacles they would face passing the checkpoint. For example, the gates situated near the checkpoint and leading to Dahiyat al-Barid, which can be opened to relieve traffic pressure from Jerusalem, are opened or closed according to a system of reward and punishment. If Israel announces a security alert or an alleged attack, for example, Palestinians are collectively punished and the gate closes causing a traffic bottleneck. In an interview with Iman Sharabati,<sup>46</sup> a Palestinian commuter living in Kafr ‘Aqab, Iman elaborates:

The way this gate works is really provoking. It does in practice help me

pass and reach my home faster when it is open, yet the mechanism by which it opens or closes is conditional on the political situation. Say for example there is an attack or there are orders to relax or tighten movement restrictions then the gate being open/closed operates accordingly. It feels like we are being tamed.

Such mechanisms and methods of how disciplinary power operates on the subject are essential to understand how the subject is made docile. Yet, the essence of disciplinary power is situated in a cause-effect relation of docility-utility where bodies are made docile in order to be useful.<sup>47</sup> Eventually, the process of subjectivizing the bodies and making them docile is intended to reform the condemned criminal through forced labor, make pupils at school better students, and workers at factories more productive. Yet, situating docility-utility in the colonial space of the checkpoint does not operate in the twofold way Foucault theorized.

## **Palestinian Docile Bodies and the Development of “Wasted Time”**

Palestinian bodies around the checkpoint are made docile to be punished and not to be useful bodies. They are humiliated, subjected, regulated, trained, and made obedient in order to serve the colonial plan that turns them to occupied subjects. Their docility does not serve their utility; put simply, their docility is of no use for them. They are not improved or better subjects and the ways in which they have been taught to be disciplined only results in their time being wasted.

It is particularly essential to shed light on one of the important aspects of the docility-utility dynamic and that is time. According to Foucault, “time

is the operator of punishment.”<sup>48</sup> Foucault posits that punishment must be temporal so that it can be effective and the condemned criminal is reformed. Eventually, duration becomes essential to the act of punishment where long hours of punishment have more effect on the criminal than a passing moment of pain. Yet, Foucault highlights that once punishment did the fixing, it should be diminished because the purpose of punishment is achieved and that is reform.<sup>49</sup> However, punishment at the checkpoint is continuous, which Palestinian commuters must experience daily.



Figure 2. Waiting for the security check at the checkpoint. Photo by Amer Aruri and B’Tselem, online at [www.btsalem.org/photoblog/201404\\_qalandiya\\_checkpoint](http://www.btsalem.org/photoblog/201404_qalandiya_checkpoint) (accessed 10 November 2021).

In Foucault's concept on docility-utility, time is not only central in the making of docile and reformed bodies of condemned criminals but it is also essential to the making of docile bodies for individuals of the state's institutions including the army, school, factory, etc. Time is the core of what makes bodies docile and hence soldiers, workers, and pupils had to capitalize on every moment of time to shape their bodies in the best way they can to turn them into useful ones. "Establishing rhythms, imposing particular occupations, regulating cycles of repetition"<sup>50</sup> for individuals was essential so that they can make use of time and be better soldiers, more productive workers, and improved pupils. Those in authority make sure that the time of the docile bodies is utilized to be useful time as they begin "to count in quarter hours, in minutes, in seconds."<sup>51</sup> Wasted time is forbidden; individuals are expected to avoid any useless time.

Yet, the time of Palestinian commuters around the checkpoint is wasted time as they wait long hours to pass the checkpoint. Eventually, Palestinian bodies are disciplined to become docile and obedient bodies but are only left with useless and wasted time. In 2017, I attended a play called "Other Places" in Jerusalem where one of the actors, Raeda Ghazaleh, recounts her actual experience of daily commute between Jerusalem, Bayt Jala, and Ramallah for work.<sup>52</sup> She explains a detailed mathematical calculation of her wasted time at Qalandiya and Bayt Jala checkpoints as she exits and re-enters her city of Jerusalem:

I live in Jerusalem and my children go to school in Jerusalem as well. My parents live between Bayt Jala and Jerusalem. I work in al-Hara theatre in Bayt Jala and I teach in Ramallah as well. Every day I drive my kids to school and then go to work to al-Hara theater in Bayt Jala. I then leave Bayt Jala to pick the kids from Jerusalem and I drop them at my parent's house in Bayt Jala. Then, I leave for my second job in Ramallah. I go back to Bayt Jala to pick up the kids and return home to Jerusalem.

In order to live my day in a normal manner ... it would take me 20 minutes from Jerusalem to Bayt Jala, 20 minutes from Bayt Jala to Jerusalem, 20 minutes to bring my kids back home from Jerusalem to Bayt Jala, 40 minutes to go to Ramallah, another 40 minutes to go to Bayt Jala to pick them up, 20 minutes to return back home in Jerusalem. This process would take me 160 minutes of travel – almost 2 hours and a half.

But now (because of the checkpoint) this commute route takes me 420 minutes – 7 hours daily. The difference between my commute duration in the normal ideal situation and the current status quo is four and a half hours – I waste four and a half hours of my time every day. This is equal to 22.5 lost hours a week, 90 hours a month, 990 hours a school year and 4,950 hours in 5 years. This means I have lost 206 days of my life in the last five years just stuck at the checkpoint!

## De Certeau's Politics of Tactical Power

Within these everyday experiences of being immobile waiting to pass the checkpoint, Qalandiya checkpoint can still be a space of flows and non-flows. Helga Tawil-Souri suggests that Palestinians still experience some mobility, and flow of time and space in the tiny chances when the checkpoint slowly allows their daily movement.<sup>53</sup> It is in these opportunities of movement that Palestinians have the chance to challenge the imposed immobility and find ways to fight it. Given the limited possibility of movement and control over space and time, resistance may be seen in the simple act of passing the checkpoint. To put it in Tawil-Souri's words, "checkpoints redefine what resistance is; in this context, for example, simply getting through can be deemed resistance."<sup>54</sup>

Hence, in juxtaposition to Foucault's theory of disciplinary power in spaces around the checkpoint, Michele de Certeau challenges it with his conception of power. In his book *The Practice of Everyday Life*, de Certeau introduces the power of tactics as a way of resisting systems of domination, and inquires about ways of operating that could manipulate the mechanisms of discipline. In his words:

If it is true that the grid of "discipline" is everywhere becoming clearer and more extensive, it is all the more urgent to discover how an entire society resists being reduced to it, what popular procedures (also "miniscule" and quotidian) manipulate the mechanisms of discipline and conform to them only in order to evade them, and finally what ways of operating form the counterpart on the consumers (or dominee) side, of the mute processes that organize the establishment of socioeconomic order.<sup>55</sup>

In response to his own inquisition, de Certeau suggests to examine the power of tactics as a force that challenges the mechanisms of disciplinary power. Through the power of tactics, de Certeau develops a theoretical framework for analyzing how the "weak" make use of the "strong."<sup>56</sup> According to de Certeau's logic, a tactic is an action attributed to the weak, where the individual would take advantage of opportunities despite the constraints and limitations imposed by dominating systems of the strong. De Certeau suggests that several everyday activities like cooking, reading, moving about, dwelling, shopping are tactical in character.<sup>57</sup> Giving the example of reading, de Certeau elaborates that despite the overwhelming culture of consumption presented through TV, magazines, newspapers, or the internet, how the consumers use the images and texts they see, what they make of what they watch, how they absorb them, what they skip and what they select, are all ways of reading that are out of the hands of those who produced them and that are only tied to the hands of the users. De Certeau suggested that within these tiny chances lies the agency of users and eventually their potential of resisting the material they are expected to consume.

Situating this logic in the context of the spaces before the checkpoint, ways of commuting would be ways of "moving" through the crowded, slow, and almost immobile lines of vehicles and pedestrians before the checkpoint. They are the continuous battle of "movement" attempts to inch a few steps forward through the

crowded lines. Helga Tawil-Souri puts it this way: “In reshaping these spaces and being active subjects within them – even within limitations and under constant surveillance – Palestinians have turned the Israeli-created landscape of checkpoints into a battlefield where everyday life continues to exist, albeit redefined by the occupation.”<sup>58</sup>

## **Palestinian Resistant Bodies and the Evolution of “Survival Time”**

Palestinian pedestrians and vehicles queuing before the checkpoint find themselves stuck in a space of massive immobility imposed on them as individuals using these spaces. Looking through the power of tactics, Palestinian commuters should challenge the disciplinary power of the checkpoint and hone their resistant bodies to develop tactical ways of movement to cross the checkpoint more quickly and easily. That is, Palestinians ought to cut through space to save a few



Figure 3. At the entrance to the checkpoint. Photo by Amer Aruri and B’Tselem, online at [www.btselem.org/photoblog/201404\\_qalandiya\\_checkpoint](http://www.btselem.org/photoblog/201404_qalandiya_checkpoint) (accessed 10 November 2021).

seconds from here, a minute from there, and maybe cumulatively they will make it through to their workplaces on time – what I call the evolution of “survival time.”

Since it does not have a physical place, a tactic depends on time. It is always on the watch for moments of opportunities that must be seized “on the wing.” It must constantly manipulate events in order to turn them into opportunities of mobility.<sup>59</sup> De Certeau emphasized the inevitable interrelation between tactic and time and the detachment of tactic from place. He first highlighted the inevitable relationship between place and strategy where strategy has a place as its “proper” base from which it establishes its relation with others such as adversaries or targets. He then posited that a tactic has no place as its establishing base and therefore belongs to others. De Certeau establishes that “the ‘proper’ is a victory of space over time.”<sup>60</sup> In the context of Qalandiya checkpoint, this victory is visible through the complete Israeli control of the checkpoint space which eventually paralyzes Palestinian time. Indeed, the wasted time Palestinians experience while queuing to reach Qalandiya checkpoint is a manifestation of the colonial control of Palestinian space and eventually the triumph over Palestinian time.

In that “spatio-temporal container” where space is limited and time is slow, Palestinian subjects ought to manipulate any space gaps they find in the long queues to gain more time. Through the performativity of mobile practices including the art of pulling tricks and managing movement with limited space available, Palestinian

bodies resist their imposed docility as they try to dig through any possible opportunity in the given space to survive time and get through the rest of the day “normally.” Over time, commuters seek to find new ways of moving around and establishing informal systems of mobility.<sup>61</sup> Indeed, Hammami argues that the drivers and commuters by the checkpoint personify the “ethic of getting through anything, by anything, and to anywhere.”<sup>62</sup> Hence, Palestinian commuters seek to take control over the waiting spaces preceding their turn to be checked at the checkpoint; what Sewell called “spatial agency” which he described as “the ways that spatial constraints are turned to advantage in political and social struggle and the ways that such struggles can restructure the meanings, uses, and strategic valence of space.”<sup>63</sup>

One of the tactics that Palestinian commuters use to combat the long line of pedestrians by the checkpoint turnstiles is to stand by the nearest Palestinian vehicle near to the point of inspection and appeal to the passing cars to let them ride across the point of inspection. They are then dropped off after the point of crossing to continue their commute on public transport buses to Jerusalem. This way they can save much time. Hanan Yassin, a teacher living in Kafr ‘Aqab who crosses the checkpoint daily with her car, says:

I cross the checkpoint with my car while my sister uses the pedestrian lane. By catching a ride with the closest passing cars to the point of inspection, she can save a big chunk of time. I noticed that sometimes there is one-hour difference between her crossing the checkpoint and me. While I am still stuck in the queues, she would have already passed.

Another tactic that Palestinian commuters use to combat the waiting spaces of the long vehicular and pedestrian queues is to avoid Qalandiya altogether and use alternative routes, such as the road leading to Hizma checkpoint. In her research on how time serves as the infrastructure of control to the mobility of Palestinians in Jerusalem, Hanna Bauman recounts how some Palestinian commuters resorted to shared Ford transit vans departing from near Qalandiya checkpoint but driving through Hizma checkpoint instead to enter the city of Jerusalem.<sup>64</sup> Raeda Ghazaleh, the commuter between Jerusalem, Bayt Jala, and Ramallah,<sup>65</sup> explains:

When I am returning back from Ramallah to Jerusalem, if I see a lot of congestion at Qalandiya checkpoint, I use alternative routes like Hizma checkpoint. It does help sometimes but, if you think of it, [the time it takes] using the long bypass road to reach Hizma checkpoint is almost the same ... as waiting at Qalandiya checkpoint. However, by using the alternative route, you do not feel passive. At least, you feel you are doing something during that time.

Sometimes, even the ways Palestinians spend their wasted time of waiting can embody the act of survival from being muted subjects. As Maha Samman writes, it can be claimed that Palestinians create their own rhythms and patterns within the larger rhythm of the Israeli occupying power. Samman elaborates: “Such rhythms provide



Palestinians waiting in queues with a means to release tension through psychological self-pacification either by listening to music, or connecting with others through social media devices, or by being alert while driving to prevent losing one's place in the queue – each of which can be considered an accomplishment under such circumstances.”<sup>66</sup> In my interview with Hanan, she reiterates, “Sometimes, the experience of driving towards the checkpoint is a nerve-wracking one and full of stress and anxiety. The best thing for me to do is to dissociate myself and not let it affect me. Sometimes, I use the waiting time to correct student's exams, listen to relaxing music like Fairouz, or just drink my coffee while waiting.”

Online mobilities may be deemed another tactic in which Palestinians battle space to save time. In the case of Qalandiya checkpoint, the creation of social media groups and apps has acted as a navigating tool giving real time updates and information of the current traffic at Qalandiya checkpoint and hence helping Palestinian commuters reschedule and better manage their time by using other alternative routes or postponing the times of exiting their home or work.<sup>67</sup> Samman points out, “Receiving this information before reaching the checkpoint gives one a sense of advantage in being able to re-arrange one's schedule accordingly. Such information helps in making on-time decisions about when to approach the checkpoint, or whether it is better to stay at work and maximize the time that would otherwise be wasted by idle waiting in queues.”<sup>68</sup> Iman reports:

Social media groups, especially “Ahwal Tareeq Qalandiya/Hizma,” the one I use, is very helpful. They also exhibit a sense of solidarity among commuters. Sometimes it gets funny when some commuters post on the group asking about the traffic when they are actually in the middle of the traffic itself. It could be that someone is in the beginning of the traffic asking about the traffic from people who are two or three cars away from the actual point of inspection. This helps the people who are in the beginning of the traffic line to make a decision if to continue their commute or turn around or use an alternative route.

To put the aforementioned tactics in perspective, it can be argued that such tactical movements of commuters are silent, tireless, and almost invisible amid the larger subjugating control of the checkpoint regime. Such observation falls in line with de Certeau's description of the user's consumption of products as almost an invisible, tireless, and quiet activity amid the larger system of capitalism which produced them.<sup>69</sup> Due to their quasi-invisibility, it is therefore difficult to map those tactics and draw a clear pattern out of them. Eventually, mapping tactful practices of Palestinians requires a broad ethnography that would engage deeply with Palestinian commuters in order to be able to better understand their mobility practices. Most importantly, ethnographic research on im-mobility in a non-Western and colonial context is highly needed not only because it is lacking in the field but also because it shifts the focus towards Palestinian agency and resistance, which is the foundation of Palestinian indigenous narrative.

## Conclusion

The deconstruction of the ways Israel practices its colonizing power to produce Palestinian docile bodies and waste Palestinian time was necessary to showcase how Palestinians unfairly experience jeopardized time in comparison with the rest of the developed world. However, such analysis sits well in a settler-colonial framework where it is a narrative showcasing the settler's success over Palestinian resistance. As much as settler colonial academy is important to understand the structural colonization of the settler, it is also important to resist it. Hence, in her article "Writing/Righting Palestine Studies," Rana Barakat calls scholars to lend attention to positionality where indigenous resistance ought to be the main focus of the narrative and not settler triumph over the occupied subjects.<sup>70</sup> Accepting Barakat's call of positionality; meaning that settler colonial studies should not be the main focus but should inform and benefit indigeneity, this article does benefit from settler colonial studies in its analysis of how Israel practices disciplinary power over Palestinian bodies and waste their time. However, it places it within the larger framework of indigeneity; hence favoring Palestinian resistance as a point of main focus where disciplinary power is challenged with the power of tactics where Palestinian resistant bodies manage every possible opportunity of mobility to create their survival time.

*Reem Shraydeh holds an MA in media, campaigning, and social change from the University of Westminster, where she focused on the role of Palestinian mobility in shaping the Palestinian collective identity. She has also written about Palestinian artistic productions in Palestinian magazines such as Fusha and Rumman.*

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## LETTER FROM JERUSALEM

# Jerusalem and the Continuing Nakba

Philip Farah

### Editor's Note:

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### Abstract

The author recounts the experience of his own family who, along with the majority of Palestinians, were victims of the ethnic cleansing of 1948. He views Israel's plans to forcefully displace Palestinians from neighborhoods in the eastern part of Jerusalem, such as Shaykh Jarrah, accompanied by home demolitions, as in Silwan, through the lens of continued ethnic cleansing of Palestinians to establish a majority Jewish State. He links the continuing attempts to Judaize Jerusalem and the accompanying repression of Palestinians to the racist nature of Zionism which extends even to Israeli Jews of non-European origins. Coincidentally, the author was incarcerated with Moroccan Jews who grew up in the same Musrara neighborhood from which his mother's family was ethnically cleansed in 1948. Musrara became a Jerusalem ghetto of North African Jews, some of whom went on to form the Israeli Black Panthers. Through his narration of his prison experience and what he learned from incarcerated Arab Jews, Farah illustrates that racism is endemic to the Israeli political system of settler colonialism.

### Keywords

Jerusalem; Shaykh Jarrah; Silwan; Dayr Yasin; ethnic cleansing; settler colonialism; Black Panthers; Black Lives Matter.

I am a Palestinian American, born in Jerusalem in 1952, four years after the Palestinian Nakba – the catastrophe of 1948. My family's story is part of the story of Israel's ethnic cleansing of my people.

Today, as I see Israel proceeding with its settler colonial project in the Jerusalem neighborhoods of Shaykh Jarrah and Silwan, I remember my family's experience of the continuing Nakba. I have a close personal connection with Silwan and Shaykh Jarrah, neighborhoods in East Jerusalem that are now the focus of Israel's ethnic cleansing. Following three and a half years of hardship as destitute refugees

from the Musrara neighborhood in what became Israeli West Jerusalem, my parents rented a small, two-bedroom apartment in the nearby Shaykh Jarrah neighborhood. In addition to their two children (my younger brother and I had not been born yet), my father's mother, aunt, older sister (who was paralyzed), and younger brother crammed into the little apartment with them.

Since both my parents had to work to rebuild a shadow of their former life, they employed a teen-aged survivor of the Dayr Yasin massacre, Rasmiya al-Jundi, to help raise the children. Dayr Yasin was a Palestinian village on the western outskirts of Jerusalem where the Zionist forces of Irgun and Lehi massacred between 100 and 110 villagers on 9 April 1948.<sup>1</sup> Menahem Begin boasted that the news of the massacre was crucial for the Palestinian exodus, and allowed the Zionist forces to "advance like a hot knife through butter." Rasmiya's family, whose personal nakba dwarfed ours, eventually settled in the village of Silwan, at the southern edge of the walled Old City of Jerusalem. While poverty rates in Silwan were higher than the average rates in East Jerusalem, some of the dwellings there had patios with an expansive view of the southern portion of the Jerusalem Old City Wall. I have fond memories of playing on the Jundi's patio and eating the delicious food that Rasmiya's mother always offered, and also of admiring the beautiful embroidered thobes that she wore.

Today, hundreds of families in the neighborhoods of Silwan and Shaykh Jarrah face the prospect of being expelled from their homes to make way for Israeli settlers. Israeli courts put a legal facade on this process, but they are actually facilitating the predation of extremist settler organizations, including Ateret Kohanim, Nahalat Shimon, and Elad, which receive most of their funding in the form of tax-exempt donations from supporters in the U.S. It must be noted that the settlers who have already forcibly replaced some Palestinian families in Shaykh Jarrah, and who are scheming



Figure 1. The Qamar family, the author's mother's family, in their front yard in Musrara. The author's mother is seated on the right of the photo. Jerusalem, 29 August 1942. Courtesy of the author.

to forcibly displace many other Palestinian families, belong to ultra-religious Jewish sects whose socio-economic status is among the lowest in Israeli society.

Like 85 percent of the Palestinians who lived in what became the Jewish State, my parents were forced to leave behind their home and all that they owned. While the United Nations was complicit in the founding of Israel on the ruins of the Palestinian people, a majority of its member states



Figure 2. Rasmiya al-Jundi with George Farah, 1958. Courtesy of the author.

passed Resolution 194, calling on Israel to allow Palestinians to return to their homes in towns and villages in what became the Jewish State. But Israel blocked the return of the refugees, and the western powers looked the other way; Israeli soldiers shot at any Palestinian attempting to infiltrate across the new borders and many were killed. Hundreds of ethnically cleansed Palestinian villages were destroyed, and Israel settled tens of thousands of Jewish immigrants in the homes of Palestinians who had been driven out of their towns. And the dispossession has not stopped; many of the inhabitants of Shaykh Jarrah today, as well as some residents of Silwan, are victims of the ethnic cleansing of 1948. Now they are facing forced expulsion from their homes for the second time.

Shaykh Jarrah is within a few minutes' walk from Musrara, the neighborhood where my mother, Mary Qamar, grew up. Until 1948, my mother lived in a beautiful stone house in the predominantly Palestinian Jerusalem neighborhood. The fighting in 1948 drove them, like nearly all the Palestinians in western Jerusalem, away from their homes, never to return. My mother is now 101 years old; she sometimes has trouble remembering my children's names, but she vividly recalls the details of her Musrara home, its garden, and even the colors and placement of its furniture. Hundreds of Jewish immigrants took over the homes of the Palestinians driven out of Musrara, including my Mom's home. Most of the new settlers were North Africans who spoke Arabic, ate Arabic food, and celebrated their life events with Arabic music; essentially, they were as Arab as my Arab, Christian family.

Musrara later became the birthplace of *ha-Panterim Shahorim*, the Israeli Black Panthers, who fought against the discrimination they, and other non-European Jews were facing in the new Israeli state. In 1976, I was arrested by the Israeli police, and spent two months in incarceration, under "administrative detention," the infamous practice that Israel inherited from the former British colonial power.<sup>2</sup> The first month of my incarceration was at the Moscowbiya (Russian Compound), bordering my



mom's neighborhood of Musrara. There, I developed a friendship with one of the founding members of the Black Panthers, Reuven Abergel, who grew up in Musrara, a block away from where my mother's home stood. He and his brother, Eliezer, were jailed on some minor drug charges. Over forty years later, I met Reuven in Jerusalem, when he was leading a tour of Musrara for a human rights delegation. From him, I learned what happened to the Musrara neighborhood after 1948 when my mom's family was forced to leave. He said the North African immigrants were settled in Musrara as the European Jews found it undesirable for themselves due to its proximity to Jordanian army posts right across the border. At the time, it also lacked electric and water utilities because they used to be supplied from what became Jordanian-controlled East Jerusalem. Spacious homes that had been occupied by single families had been partitioned to house several Jewish families, often one family per room. There was rampant unemployment and, eventually, crime.

Seventy years on, Reuven told me, Musrara is experiencing gentrification. Because it is close to the center of Jerusalem, it has become a very desirable location. Poor Moroccan Jewish families are priced out to make way for affluent Israelis and some of the formerly beautiful but run-down stone houses are being renovated and restored to single family homes to be sold at very high prices.



Figure 3. The Qamar family home in Musrara, Jerusalem, currently being renovated as the Musrara neighborhood is being gentrified. Courtesy of the author.



The results of this history, the history of my family and that of Palestine, was on display in May. As protests against the ethnic cleansing of Palestinians from Jerusalem neighborhoods intensified, ultra-religious Jewish extremists provoked Palestinians further with racist rallies claiming Jerusalem for Jews only. Israeli police attacked Palestinian worshippers inside al-Aqsa Mosque compound, desecrating the third holiest place for Muslims in the middle of the holy month of Ramadan. In response Hamas in Gaza issued warnings to Israeli authorities to stop the attacks on Palestinians in Jerusalem and the desecration of al-Aqsa, and, predictably, fired its crude missiles into Israel, and Israel launched yet another savage attack on Gaza with hundreds of civilian casualties, including scores of children.

The story of the ethnic cleansing and settler colonialism in Silwan, Shaykh Jarrah, Musrara, and Dayr Yasin, and Israel's wanton killing of Palestinians, especially in Gaza, are emblematic of the story of Palestine/Israel in the past hundred years or so. It is a story of injustice, violence, and rampant inequality. It is a story of European settlers displacing an indigenous people who become the most persecuted segment of society in their homeland. But it is also the story of inequality among Israelis, where non-European Jews are suffering from gentrification, and where poorer ultra-Orthodox Jews are used as a vanguard in belligerent ethnic cleansing of Palestinians, in the name of religion. It is also the story of one of the most militarized societies in modern times.

Violent repression of Palestinian protesters and savage attacks by Israel's military against the defenseless inhabitants of Gaza are an essential element in what some consider a brilliantly successful economy. This violence is a foremost marketing tool for Israel's selling its military and surveillance hardware and various mercenary and training services to repressive regimes around the world. Israel can boast that its policing techniques and lethal weapons are continuously field-tested.

Israel's continued predation on Palestinians necessarily means that it has a severe internal "security problem," and its perpetual state of conflict keeps its deep internal divisions on a backburner. The most effective Israeli political figures are the ones who can convince their Jewish constituents – no matter where they fall in the hierarchy of Israeli society – that they are the toughest in "maintaining security" against the Palestinian, Arab, or Muslim threat.

How long can Israel sustain the mythology that underlies its settler-colonialism and militarism? As it moves further and further to an unabashedly supremacist ideology and unrestrained violence against Palestinians, will it be more difficult for the Western powers to maintain their material and moral support? The international solidarity movement with the Palestinians has, in fact, gained significant support in recent years, notably in tandem with the growth of anti-racist groups like Black Lives Matter and Jewish Voice for Peace. The stronger such movements grow, the greater the chances that forces of peace and justice will prevail in Palestine/Israel.

*Philip Farah was born in Jerusalem in 1952 and like the majority of the Palestinian population, his family were forced to leave their ancestral homes and towns. In 1978 he*

*immigrated to the United States and earned a PhD in environmental economics from the University of New Mexico. He currently works as an economist in Washington, DC, and lives in Vienna, Virginia.. Farah is a founding member of the Washington Interfaith Alliance for Middle East Peace (founded in 2000), and the Palestinian Christian Alliance for Peace.*

#### **Endnotes**

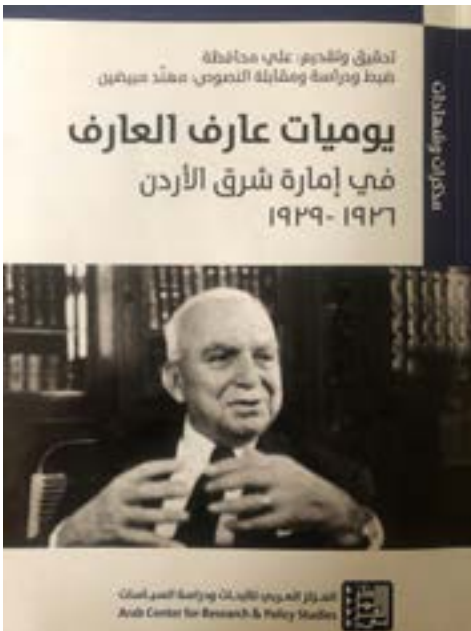
- 1 Israel's history and society are full of ironies: The Jewish neighborhood of Givat Sha'ul was built on the ruins of Dayr Yasin. In 1951, some of the abandoned buildings were used to establish a therapeutic community of three hundred patients called the Kfar Sha'ul Government Work Village for Mental Patients. The majority of patients were Holocaust survivors.
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## BOOK REVIEWS

# Rebel at Night, Colonial Official by Day

*Yawmiyat 'Arif al-'Arif fi Amarat Sharq al-'Urdan: 1926–1929* [The Diaries of 'Arif al-'Arif in the Emirate of TransJordan: 1926–1929]. Edited by Ali Muhafadha and Muhannad Mubadin (Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies, Doha/Beirut, 2021).

Review by Salim Tamari



## Abstract

The memoirs of 'Arif al-'Arif in Amman from 1926 to 1929 cover the period when he was secretary to the Ministerial Council, on “loan” from the Mandate authorities. This diary covers the relationship between 'Arif and Prince Abdallah during the formative period of the Jordanian state. It includes his description of the relationship between the British Colonial Office and the Hashemites, as well as a detailed assessment of the early oppositional groups such as Ansar al-Haq (Partisans of Justice) and the mysterious group known as al-Kaff al-Aswad (the black hand). The book dwells extensively on border conflicts with Arab tribes in Saudi Arabia and Iraq.

## Keywords

'Arif al-'Arif diaries; Prince Abdallah; Transjordan; Hashemites; Partisans of Justice; Black Hand (al-Kaff al-Aswad); Jerusalem education.

In the work of Abdul Rahman Munif, the late Saudi novelist, Amman is singled out as the “only exclusively Arab capital.” The reference here was to the Ottoman outpost built almost from scratch during the Hamidian period on the site of ancient Philadelphia in order to protect the southern flanks of the sultanate. In Munif's *Sirat Madina*, we encounter a city lacking a “native” community, compared to Baghdad, Beirut, and Damascus. A majority of Amman's citizens were made up, then and now, of immigrants and refugees from neighboring Arab regions; hence its *Arab* identity becomes paramount.<sup>1</sup>

This sardonic comment on native Ammanis is highlighted in the recently published memoirs of the historian ‘Arif al-‘Arif covering the years 1926–29 when ‘Arif was “loaned” by the Palestine Mandate government to serve as ministerial secretary to the newly established emirate of Transjordan. His colleagues and companions were predominantly Syrians, Iraqis, Hijazis, and a few fellow Palestinians. ‘Arif’s task in the letter of appointment was vaguely defined as “assisting in the reform of the new principality” (Eric Mills to ‘Arif, 49). At the time, Transjordan was one of five political entities established under Anglo-French suzerainty following the Sykes Picot agreement, and created after the Cairo conference of 1921. Its boundaries were still not fully determined, and one of ‘Arif’s assignments was to help negotiate the constant tribal intrusions from neighboring states into and within the Jordanian domain. Of those, the most serious was the Wahhabi major threat to the stability of Prince Abdallah’s regime, which they saw as a residual remnant of their own struggle with the Hashemites following the expulsion of Sharif Husayn, and his son King ‘Ali of Hijaz in 1926.

‘Arif had left us with three intimate diaries – all unpublished during his lifetime: *The Siberian Diary* covering his incarceration in the Russian war camp in Krasnoyarsk (1915–1917); *The Gaza Diary* (1934–1936) from when he was qaymaqam in Gaza; and the present *Amman Diaries* (1926–1929), by far the most important and of historical relevance since it throws significant light on the genesis of the Jordanian state and its rulers.

Before his Amman appointment, ‘Arif was already an established civil servant in Palestine during the 1920s. Following his incarceration in Siberia as an Ottoman war prisoner (1915–1918), he joined the Arab rebellion in Syria under the leadership of Prince Faysal. On returning to Palestine after the war, he joined the opposition to the military government and to the inclusion of the Balfour Declaration in the terms of the Mandate, editing briefly (with Hasan al-Budayri) the unionist newspaper *Suriyya al-Janubiyya* (Southern Syria). In 1921 he was arrested and charged, together with Hajj Amin al-Husayni, with incitement and sedition during the Nabi Musa clashes, leading to his exile in Transjordan. After being pardoned by the British, ‘Arif returned again to Palestine and was appointed as district governor (qaymaqam) successively in Jenin, Nablus, Bisan, and Jaffa.

The diary is introduced and meticulously annotated by ‘Ali Muhafadha and Muhannad Mubaidin. The latter’s extensive introduction highlights the progression of ‘Arif’s torturous relationship with the emir and his secret involvement with oppositional groups in Jordan – most notably Ansar al-Haq (partisans of justice) party – an offshoot of the Syrian Istiqlal party, and al-Ahd group – an underground military officers’ movement during the Ottoman period.

A striking feature of these memoirs is the persistence of an Ottoman presence in the lives and politics of the Arab East from the post–World War I period, despite the rupture between Sharif Husayn and the Ottoman High Porte during the Arab revolt against Turkey. Virtually all the major political appointments involved figures from the military and political personnel who served during Ottoman rule. Those include

Rashid Talee‘, the first prime minister of Transjordan and former Ottoman governor of Huran, Tripoli, and Ladhikiya; the second prime minister of Jordan ‘Ali Rida Pasha al-Riqabi, a former officer in the Ottoman army; and ‘Arif’s close associate and nemesis, Hasan Khalid Abul Huda, the third prime minister who served in several administrative posts during the reign of Sultan Abd al-Hamid. His father Shaykh Abul Huda al-Sayyadi was the chief counsellor to the High Porte and a leader of the Rifa‘i Sufi movement in the Arab East and Yemen. Many leaders of the oppositional Ansar al-Haq movement in the 1920s were former members of the cultural Arab Muntada in Istanbul, and the clandestine al-Ahd group. ‘Arif himself worked as a translator in the Ottoman foreign ministry and was a lieutenant (*mulazim*) in the Fifth Army when he was captured in the Russian Front in the battle of Erzurum. Several of those leaders, including members of the Hashemite Palace, continued to have properties in Istanbul that they visited periodically. King Talal, Abdallah’s eldest son, we learn from the diaries, spent his last days confined in his Bosphorus mansion. ‘Arif dwells on these connections, as well as their common bonds from the Ottoman period. On a number of occasions Abdallah communicates with ‘Arif in Turkish by phone and in writing, possibly in order to circumvent British eavesdropping (201).

In the memoirs, ‘Arif is engulfed by a love-hate relationship with the emir. He is fascinated by the latter’s literary prowess, his generosity, and his *joie de vivre*. During his first meeting with Abdallah, ‘Arif is welcomed as an exiled patriot from Palestine. “This country has the greatest admiration for you and your past,” he is told by the emir. “We know you from the days when you escaped from English rule in Jerusalem and sought refuge in our midst [in 1919]. Initially you were a Karaki [a refugee in Karak], then you became a Salti [a resident of Salt], and today you are here where you will become Ammani” (62). An important core of the diary is the evolution of ‘Arif’s relationship to the emir, which can be encapsulated in these critical moments of mutual affection and comradery, but eventually an enmity that leads to ‘Arif’s downfall. The emir is described as a master chess player, whose obsession with the game takes precedence over state affairs (110). But ‘Arif is also alienated by the emir’s kowtowing to the British and their dictates when it comes to the terms of the Jordanian-British treaty (147, 186); his silence over the Balfour Declaration (188); his expulsion of Syrian nationalists allied with the Druze leader Sultan al-Atrash who sought refuge in Jordan (224); and the adoption of the British drafted constitutional frame for Transjordan, which ‘Arif considers as a document of “enslavement” (247).

The diary is replete with anecdotes about palace plots and back-stabbing attempts by fellow ministers and former comrades in arms from the Ottoman period. ‘Arif narrates in detail Abdallah’s strained relationship with his brother Prince (later King) Faysal, whom he sees as a less deserving claimant over the crown of Syria, and later to the Iraqi throne. One intriguing episode deals with the education of Abdallah’s sons, Prince Talal and Prince Nayif. The emir complains to ‘Arif that the British keep interfering on how and where Nayif, his favorite son, should be educated. He (the emir) choses Rawdat al-Ma‘arif college in Jerusalem. The British high commissioner is enraged because Rawdat al-Ma‘arif is known for its radical nationalist curriculum

and decides that Nayif should go to St. George's college (diary entry for 3 December 1926). Since the Qur'an is not taught in St. George's, the commissioner suggests that a private tutor be brought to instruct him in Qur'anic studies (127). The battle over Nayif's schooling continued for two months until they finally reached a compromise by sending him to the Teachers College where Nayif would be under the personal supervision of the principal, Ahmad Samih al-Khalidi (6 January 1926). The emir was still unhappy since he found that the professor of Arabic literature in the Teacher's College was none other than Is'af al-Nashashibi, whom he described as "an atheist, who does not believe in God and the day of Judgement." Furthermore "Nashashibi is pro-Umayyad, and I do not want my son to grow loving the Umayyad dynasty, and opposed to the Hashemites." 'Arif is shocked beyond description – "I said to myself, I would have thought the Emir would oppose his son being exposed to British legal practices, or Zionist propaganda . . . but here he was expressing repulsion at his studying Umayyad history, as if the Umayyads were *kuffar* (unbelievers), and irrelevant to the study of Arab and Islamic history!" (138).

The break with the emir and the government came finally as a result of their adoption of a constitutional draft ("dictated by the high commissioner and the colonial office in London") that 'Arif and Ansar al-Haq described as a "treaty of submission" (246 - 48).

What can this diary tell us about the genesis of the Transjordanian State? The main contours of those formative years have already been covered in Zirikly's *Two Years in Amman 1921–1923*.<sup>2</sup> In terms of historical analysis, there is not much beyond the material already available from the works of Sulayman Musa, Andrew Shryock, and Joseph Massad.<sup>3</sup> 'Arif's diary is an intimate self-reflective record of his public events that was clearly not intended for publication since he kept it under cover for nearly fifty years until his death. It does, however, provide us with original insight into the nature of tribal rivalries within Jordan, and border conflicts with Saudi and Iraqi tribal groups. It also provides a vivid picture of the earliest oppositional groups, such as Ansar al-Haq, that challenged the almost total hegemony of the British colonial apparatus. Of the tribal conflicts, the only successful achievement of 'Arif during his Amman tenure was to oversee the Iraq-Jordanian border tribal conflicts in 1927 involving the Bani Sakhr, Huwaytat, and Zaban on the Jordanian side, and Shammar, Anza, and Daliyam tribes on the Iraqi side. Since the underlying conflict was over turf, land control, and grazing rights it was clear that the tribes did not recognize as their own state boundaries what the British established as new demarcations of the colonial state. During the same period, the embryonic state became engulfed with a series of internal violent incidents triggered by "the Black Hand."

With the Black Hand group (*al-Kaff al-Aswad*) we encounter a detective narrative of the first order. During the period of December 1926 to February 1927 a "terrorist group" surfaced in Amman calling for the elimination of those who act contrary to the "will of the people." It carried out a number of bombings in the capital and in the southern towns of Karak and Maan (138–39). A police investigation claimed that the plot had targeted the British high commissioner, the commander of the armed forces,

the prime minister, and the emir himself (140). The “terrorist suspects” according to the police, were headed by Tahir al-Juqqa, head of the Jordanian People’s Party, and the Palestinian journalist Mahmoud al-Karmi, editor of *al-Shri’a* newspaper. Scores of additional oppositional characters were arrested and sent to jail under the charge of terrorism. The government established a committee of enquiry into the activities of the Black Hand headed by the public prosecutor and a number of judges, and included ‘Arif al-‘Arif himself in his capacity as the secretary of the ministerial council. The committee came out with a highly contested report on 4 February 1927, indicating that the Black Hand was a fabricated organization engineered by Shawkat Hamid, the Circassian director of police, and instigated by the British high commissioner in order to suppress nationalist opposition to the British (141). The nationalist suspects were released and the charges against them were dropped, but the suppression of opposition groups continued.

Readers expecting a conceptual paradigm for the genesis of the Jordanian state should be cautioned that this is a diary/memoir and not an analytical treatise. Its material is rich in anecdotal and political gossip, especially on palace intrigues and inter-governmental rivalries. It should be read in tandem with the earlier diaries of Khayr al-Din Zirikly, *Two Years in Amman 1921–1923*, when Zirikly was appointed as the first inspector of education in the nascent state five years earlier. But these memoirs also contain astute observations on the nature of the British colonial strategies in the Arab East during the post-Sykes Picot period, as well as original analysis on one of the earliest oppositional movements in the twentieth century, Ansar al-Haq. ‘Arif considers his own involvement with Ansar al-Haq as his crowning achievement in Jordan, leading to his co-authorship in 1926 of *Al-Kitab al-Aswad* (the black book), which addressed the repression of the oppositional movement in Transjordan and the “pervasive anarchy” in its administrative apparatus. *Al-Kitab al-Aswad* was the collective work of the Ansar al-Haq group that included Salah Bseiso, Rashid al-Khuza’i, ‘Adil al-‘Azmah, Husayn Tarawna, and other former members of al-Istiqlal party. It is noteworthy that members of this nationalist group included native East Jordanians, but also a wide array of Syrians, Iraqis, Hijazis, and Palestinians. ‘Arif himself was the co-author (with Muhammad al-Shurayqi – a Syrian former leader of the Young Arab movement during the Ottoman period). *Al-Kitab al-Aswad* was initially a clandestine manifesto containing an exposé of British rule, but was eventually published in Jerusalem (presumably a tamer version) under the collective authorship of Ansar al-Haq in 1929.<sup>4</sup> The manifesto called for an end to corruption and British meddling in the affairs of state – *but significantly not an end to British rule*. It openly called for the abrogation of the British-Jordanian Treaty, and the British-sponsored constitution. The document called for the establishment of a free constituent assembly and parliament that would be elected directly, and for a government accountable to the parliament (246).

Two questions evoked by this diary go unanswered by ‘Arif: First, why would the author be seconded as an advisor to the nascent government of Transjordan when a few years earlier he had been charged with being a subversive nationalist and anti-

colonial outlaw and condemned to life imprisonment? And secondly, how is it possible for the author, after such a radical break with the regime that he considered to be a tool of British colonialism, to go back and serve in its administration as a senior minister and mayor of its major city?

Throughout the diary ‘Arif expresses anguish and self-doubt over his conflicted role as an advisor to the emir, and a member of the ruling elite in Amman. He was often complicit in the duality between his loyalty to the Hashemites (and implicitly to the British *diktat*) and his Arabist affinities to oppositional groups – a situation that he described as “government loyalist during the day, and nationalist rebel at night.” He was finally unable to square the circle and resigned from his mission pressured by both the emir and the British high commissioner, Colonel Cox, in a moment that was most likely triggered by his involvement with Ansar al-Haq. ‘Arif’s later involvement with British rule in Palestine continued to exhibit this Machiavellian conflict in his character, as he continued his public service with the Mandate, as governor of Bir Sab’a (during the Palestine rebellion), Gaza, and Ramallah. But his relationship with Prince (now King) Abdallah resumed after the war of 1948, when he became mayor of (Arab) Jerusalem and continued in that position until 1955.

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#### Endnotes

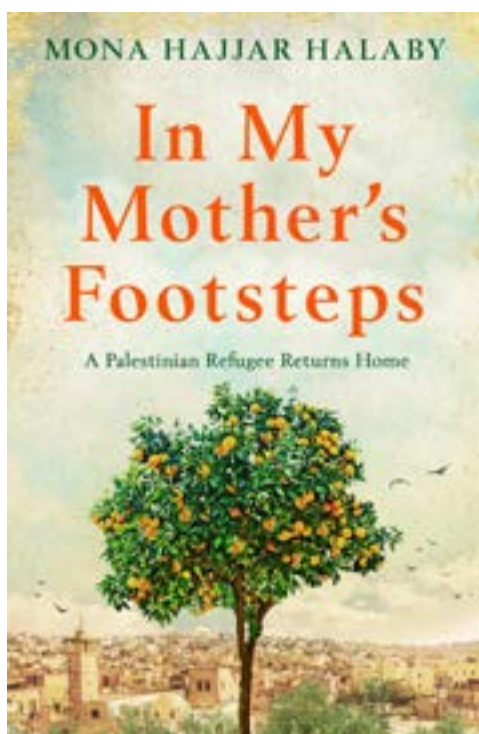
- 1 Abdul Rahman Munif, *Sirat Madina*, published in English as *Story of a City: A Childhood in Amman*, (London: Quartet Books, 1988). The reference to Amman in the 1940s as “the only exclusive Arab city” comes from Mu’nis al-Razzaz reading of *Sirat Madina*, and appears in the preface of the Arabic edition. In reviewing the story of Munif’s Amman, Tetz Rooke made a remark about the author that beautifully captures ‘Arif’s relationship to the city in an earlier period. “A twin story about personal growth and development and about urban growth and development about the surrounding city of Amman,” writes Rooke, “the boy-protagonist is depicted at the start of an identity-building process, his creation of himself, and so is the Jordanian capital whose lack of historical roots and quest for identity makes it a perfect metaphor of Arab modernity and uncertainty about belonging.” Tetz Rooke, *In My Childhood: A Study of Arabic Autobiography*, Stockholm Oriental Studies (Stockholm: Almqvist and Wiksell International, 1997).
- 2 Khayr al-Din Zirikly, *Two Years in Amman 1921–1923*, Amman, nd.
- 3 Sulayman Musa, *Saf’hat min tarikh al-Urdun al-Hadith: Adwa’ ala al-watha’iq al-Baritaniyya 1946–1952* (Amman: Dar al-Sahafa, 1992); Joseph Andoni Massad, *Colonial Effects: The Making of National Identity in Jordan* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012); Andrew Shryock, *Nationalism and the Genealogical Imagination: Oral History and Textual Authority in Tribal Jordan* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2008).
- 4 Ansar al-Haq, *Al-Kitab al-Aswad fil-Qadiyya al-Urduniyya al-Arabiyya* [The black book on the Arab Jordanian cause (Dar al-Aytam al-Islamiyyah, 1929).



# Returning to my Mother's Baq'a

*In My Mother's Footsteps: A Palestinian Refugee Returns Home*, by Mona Hajjar Halaby (Thread, 2021) 290 pages. Paperback, \$10.99.

Review by Nadim Bawalsa



## Abstract

Mona Hajjar Halaby's memoir takes readers on a journey to Palestine, past and present. The daughter of exiled Palestinians from Jerusalem, Halaby, like many Palestinians, spent her life in the diaspora hearing stories from her mother, Zakia, of her parents' childhood and their home. Unlike most Palestinians in the diaspora, however, Halaby was able to return to Palestine to teach in Ramallah for a year in 2007. Halaby devoted herself to the children of Ramallah, on the one hand teaching them patience and introspection, and on the other, learning from their resilience and wisdom. Halaby describes in detail the impressive march she organized of a group of Palestinians and their supporters through West Jerusalem streets on the sixtieth anniversary of the Nakba in 2008. She also tells how she entered her mother's home in Jerusalem – albeit with the help of an Israeli Jew and by not revealing her true identity – and conversed with the Israeli Jewish occupants in it. A sorrowful and painful account of return that offers a moving reflection on longing and loss, Halaby's memoir is also an empowering and inspiring must read for Palestinians in exile, and for anyone interested in the historical and ongoing plight of the Palestinians.

## Keywords

Palestine; Jerusalem; Ramallah; exile; Nakba; Return; Talbiyya; Baq'a; Ramallah Friends School.

Halaby's moving memoir is at once a tribute to her mother, to Jerusalem, to Ramallah, and to historic Palestine. It is an account of the Nakba recounted from the experiences of her mother and her maternal family who suffered tremendous loss and subsequent dispossession starting in 1948. It is an account of Halaby's own returns to Palestine, whether by herself over the course of an academic year in which she taught at the Ramallah Friends School, or with her mother, her sister, and her husband, to rediscover Jerusalem and their family home in Baq'a. It is an account all too familiar to Palestinians around the world.

Yet Halaby does something altogether unique: in recounting her time in Ramallah and Jerusalem during 2007 and 2008, Halaby offers a tribute to teachers, and to the Ramallah Friends School, a historic institution that has given generations of Palestinians a voice, and a safe space in which to learn how to grapple with the absurdities and indignities of life under occupation. In different chapters, Halaby takes us into her classrooms in Ramallah. She introduces us to troubled first- and sixth-graders whose development is stunted by ongoing trauma at the hands of Israeli soldiers, whether at military checkpoints, or throughout the forty-day siege and enforced closures of Palestinians in Ramallah during Israel's 2002 invasion. She invites us into conversations she has with devoted colleagues, with concerned parents, and with rowdy pre-teens. She shares her wisdom and offers invaluable insights, based on her expansive career as an educator, into the most beneficial techniques and approaches teachers and parents can adopt in caring for their students and children, and in encouraging new generations of leaders and doers.

These thoughtful interventions into educating under occupation are punctuated by gripping memories and photos of Palestinian life in Jerusalem before 1948, as recounted in letters her mother Zakia wrote to her. As a story of return to Palestine, *In My Mother's Footsteps* thus stands out. Not only are Halaby and her family members allowed entry by the Israelis, she also manages to organize a peaceful march through Talbiyya – an affluent neighborhood in western Jerusalem that was depopulated of its Palestinian residents in 1948 – on the sixtieth anniversary of the Nakba in 2008, and even to enter her family home in Baq'a, albeit with the help of Israeli Jews.

As an exiled Palestinian educator who holds U.S. citizenship, I was also able to return to Jerusalem with my mother in 2011, and to reconnect her with her father's home in Talbiyya. Yet we were not allowed in, and we certainly did not march through the occupied streets of West Jerusalem wearing T-shirts with "Nakba Survivor" printed on them. Halaby's memoir thus keeps you on the edge of your seat. On the one hand, it transports you to a Jerusalem only known through photos and memories; on the other, it injects you into a social and political scene in which Palestinian Jerusalemites, exiled and occupied, raise their voices and assert their right of return, in the heart of their ancestral city. Certainly, no other account of return to Palestine combines these elements and achieves this depth.

Beyond the pain of dispossession and exile, Halaby's memoir is a gripping reflection on loss and tragedy. Interspersed throughout the chapters are narratives of

how Halaby and her family dealt with sudden death, whether in ritualistic funerals or philosophical conversations about life and death. In a memoir of return to Palestine, these interventions seem all the more relevant and meaningful. Halaby's memoir is a testament to the profound humanity and introspective stoicism of what it means to be a Palestinian, however privileged, to which Halaby herself admits in the final section of the memoir entitled "A Letter from Mona." While a humble confession, it is nonetheless critical, for it is her privilege that ultimately allowed her to return to Palestine several times on a Western passport; it is her privilege knowing and working with progressive Israeli Jews that allowed her to enter her family home, and to march in the streets of Talbiyya; and it is her privilege that allowed her to bring new and inventive teaching methods to Ramallah's traumatized students.

As for her writing style, Halaby can be overly descriptive, at times offering metaphors and analogies that muddle rather than elucidate the intended meaning. In describing Ramallah's cacophonous streets and the "ancient" alleys of Jerusalem's Old City, Halaby at times veers towards romanticizing and exoticizing Palestine, in a way reminiscent of Orientalist depictions. While arguably suitable for a memoir of return to a beloved homeland known for its mesmerizing hills and sunsets, and for its aromatic foods and trees, the more cynical reader may find this style of writing to be overwrought and distracting. That said, the book is replete with stylistic variations, from historical overviews and detailed dialogue, to introspective queries on profound moments and memorable letters and speeches. The reader will have much to experience literarily in *In My Mother's Footsteps*.

Halaby's moving tribute to her mother and to Palestine is critical reading for anyone interested in the literary genre, and in the historical and contemporary lived experiences of exiled peoples. It is a human account of what it means to be Palestinian, and to have the fortune of returning to Palestine, however temporary.

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# Jerusalem Statistical Yearbook 2021

Palestinian Central Bureau of  
Statistics

## **Editor's Note**

*JQ* thanks the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS) for providing this key document to *JQ* readers. The full report can be found online at [www.pcbs.gov.ps](http://www.pcbs.gov.ps)



## Jerusalem under Occupation

### Background

Jerusalem, as an important historical city, has always attracted different peoples and civilizations. Despite facing over twenty-five different attacks and sieges, Jerusalem conquered all attempts to change its identity. Jerusalem is the cradle of three monotheistic faiths and the holiest of cities. It is the first Qiblah of Islam (the direction to which Muslims turn to pray), the site from which Prophet Mohammad ascended to heaven, and the site of Christ's death and resurrection.

Founders and invaders of the Capital of Palestine gave it different names across history; a review of its names in world documents and manuscripts has historical significance for researchers and highlights greed and conflict over Jerusalem, which many civilizations have fought over. The Jebusites castle, currently known as Jerusalem, was built six thousand years ago – Canaanites, Persians, Greeks, Romans, and Islamic nations followed.

### Communities Destroyed in Jerusalem in 1948

The Israeli occupation played a destructive role in Jerusalem with its measures of depopulation and land domination, and demolished the entire infrastructure of the city it occupied in 1948. It uprooted the indigenous population of the city, pushing many of them to live in the eastern part, to settle in other Palestinian Governorates or to immigrate to Arab and other countries. The number of Palestinians depopulated at that time is estimated at 98,000 persons with property extending over 272,735 dunums.

**Table 1. Depopulated Jerusalem Governorate Localities of the Year 1948 by Population and Area**

Locality	Land Area (Dunums)	Population	Displaced Date
Lifta	8,743	2,958	1948/01/01
Bayt Naqquba	2,979	278	1948/01/01
Bayt Thul	4,629	302	1948/01/01
Qaluniya	4,844	1,056	1948/04/03
Al Qastal	1,446	104	1948/04/03
Dayr Yassin	2,857	708	1948/04/09
Nitaf	1,401	46	1948/04/15
Saris	10,699	650	1948/04/16
Jerusalem (Qatamon)	20,790	69,693	1948/04/28
Bayt Mahsir	16,268	2,784	1948/05/10
Al-Jura	4,158	487	1948/07/11
Aqqur	5,522	46	1948/07/13
Khirbat al Lawz	4,502	522	1948/07/13
Sataf	3,775	626	1948/07/13
Suba	4,102	719	1948/07/13
Maliha	6,828	2,250	1948/07/15
Dayr ‘Amr	3,072	12	1948/07/17
Khirbat Ism Allah	568	23	1948/07/17
Kasla	8,004	325	1948/07/17
Artuf	403	406	1948/07/18
‘Ayn Karim	15,029	3,689	1948/07/18
Dayr Rafat	13,242	499	1948/07/18
Ishwa	5,522	719	1948/07/18
Islin	2,159	302	1948/07/18
Sar’a	4,967	394	1948/07/18
Al-Burayj	19,080	835	1948/10/19
Dayr ‘Aban	22,734	2,436	1948/10/19
Dayr al-Hawa	5,907	70	1948/10/19
Sufla	2,061	70	1948/10/19
Bayt ‘Itab	8,757	626	1948/10/21
Bayt Umm al-Mays	1,013	81	1948/10/21
Dayr al-Shaykh	6,781	255	1948/10/21

Jarash	3,518	220	1948/10/21
Ras Abu 'Ammar	8,342	719	1948/10/21
Khirbat al-Tannur	..	..	1948/10/21
Khirbat al-Umur	4,163	313	1948/10/21
Al-Walaja	17,708	1,914	1948/10/21
Allar	12,356	510	1948/10/22
Al-Qabu	3,806	302	1948/10/22
Total	272,735	97,949	

### **Jerusalem under Israeli Occupation post-1967**

Jerusalem along with other Palestinian towns fell under Israeli military occupation in 1967. Following its occupation of the West Bank, of which Jerusalem is an integral part, on 28 June 1967, Israel issued its first illegal administrative order, annexing East Jerusalem (approximately seven km<sup>2</sup>) and other areas in the western part of the city (the total area of which was around thirty-eight square kilometers at that time). This was followed by other illegal procedures, including the dissolution of the Palestinian Municipal Council; distribution of Israeli identity cards to Palestinian Jerusalemites; the nullification of Jordanian laws, courts, and banks; the imposition of Israeli curricula on the Palestinian education system; and other actions. Such measures aimed to remove and cleanse any feature of Arab rule and subject the land and the population to Israeli control.

The boundaries of Jerusalem were extended through the expropriation of more land from the occupied West Bank, to double the total area of the Jerusalem Governorate prior to June 1967. Land annexation was accompanied by the destruction of many Palestinian communities, especially on the western side of the governorate. The demolition and complete depopulation of three Latrun villages (Emwas, Yalu, and Bayt Nuba) was a flagrant example of the ethnic cleansing committed by Israel.

Thousands of dunums of Palestinian land in the Jerusalem area have been targeted for confiscation using different pretexts, for the purpose of establishing Israeli settlements in a belt around the city. The population has been further squeezed by the building of the Annexation Wall on the borders of the Jerusalem Municipality, which isolated many communities (both land and population) especially in the northern Jerusalem Governorate, forcing the population to migrate outside the borders of the wall area.

There are fifty communities in today's Jerusalem Governorate (according to the administrative divisions of the Population, Housing, and Establishments Census of 2017). The data for Jerusalem Governorate in the following summary was collected through three sources of data collection: the Population, Housing and Establishment Census, field surveys based on samples (such as the Jerusalem Social Survey), and data from administrative records.

**Population in Jerusalem Governorate outside Municipality Border by Locality and Sex, 2017**

Locality	Total of Population			Population Increase %	
	1997	2007	2017	2007–1997	2017–2007
Jerusalem (J2)	105,857	124,635	133,877	18%	7%
Rafat	1,573	2,141	2,779	36%	30%
Mikhmas	1,391	1,305	1,288	-6%	-1%
Qalandiya Camp	6,712	7,962	7,876	19%	-1%
Qalandiya	855	1,063	540	24%	-49%
Bayt Duqqu	1,177	1,461	1,657	24%	13%
Jaba‘	2,398	2,870	3,705	20%	29%
Al Judeira	1,570	2,052	2,489	31%	21%
Al-Ram and Dahiyat al-Barid	18,899	18,356	12,264	-3%	-33%
Bayt A’nan	3,154	3,589	3,978	14%	11%
Al-Jib	3,436	3,805	3,903	11%	3%
Bir Nabala	4,499	4,343	4,647	-3%	7%
Bayt Ijza	497	629	807	27%	28%
Al-Qubayba	1,516	2,860	3,662	89%	28%
Kharayib Umm al-Lahim	276	328	379	19%	16%
Biddu	4,704	6,129	7,777	30%	27%
Nabi Samwil	161	233	221	45%	-5%
Hizma	4,517	5,654	6,726	25%	19%
Bayt Hanina al-Balad	1,025	966	1,046	-6%	8%
Qatanna	5,555	5,823	6,596	5%	13%
Bayt Surik	2,827	3,505	3,803	24%	9%
Bayt Iksa	1,162	1,708	1,675	47%	-2%
Anata	7,112	10,864	13,109	53%	21%
Al-Ka’abina (Tajammu‘ Badawi)	713	626	811	-12%	30%
Al-Za‘ayim	1,801	3,068	5,924	70%	93%
Al-‘Ayzariyya	12,807	15,874	16,425	24%	3%
Abu Dis	8,937	9,721	9,551	9%	-2%
Arab al-Jahalin (Salamat)	893	650	1,754	-27%	170%
Al-Sawahira Sl-Sharqiya	3,861	5,229	5,862	35%	12%
Al-Shaykh Sa‘ad	1,783	1,757	2,623	-1%	49%



1. Population

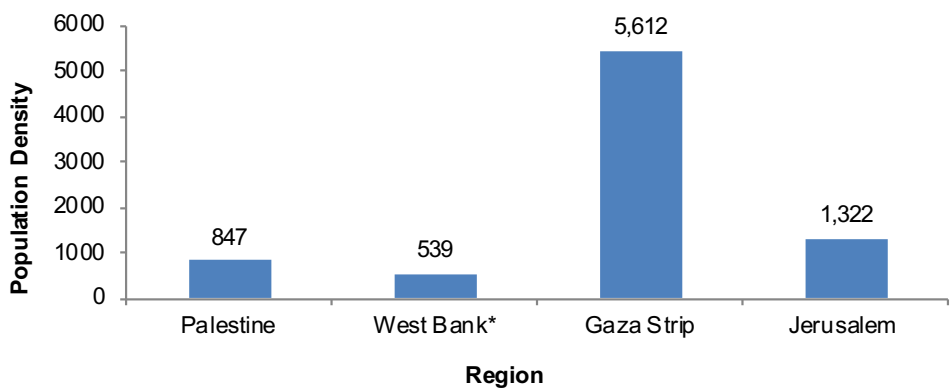
- The estimated population of Jerusalem Governorate in mid-2020 was about 461,700 people. The estimated population in the governorate represented 9.1 percent of the total population in Palestine and 15.1 percent of the total population in the West Bank.
- In 2017, the sex ratio in Jerusalem Governorate was 107.6 males per 100 females.



Population Density

- The total area of Jerusalem Governorate is 345 km<sup>2</sup>.
- The population density in Jerusalem Governorate was 1,322 (capita/km<sup>2</sup>) at mid-year 2020.

Table 1. Population Density (Capita/km<sup>2</sup>) by Region, Mid-Year 2020

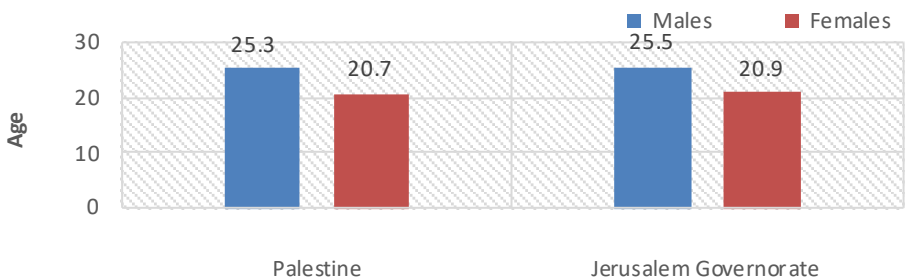


:\* Data includes Jerusalem Governorate.

2. Vital Statistics

- The number of registered live births in Jerusalem Governorate with Palestinian ID cards was 3,615 in 2015; 3,637 in 2016; 3,601 in 2017; 3,783 in 2018; and 3,587 in 2019. Registered deaths for the same years were 318, 361, 341, 295, and 341 respectively.
- 3,056 marriage contracts were signed in shari‘a courts and churches in Jerusalem Governorate in 2019.
- There were 525 divorce cases in shari‘a courts in Jerusalem Governorate in 2019.

Table 2. Median Age at First Marriage in Palestine and Jerusalem Governorate by Sex, 2019



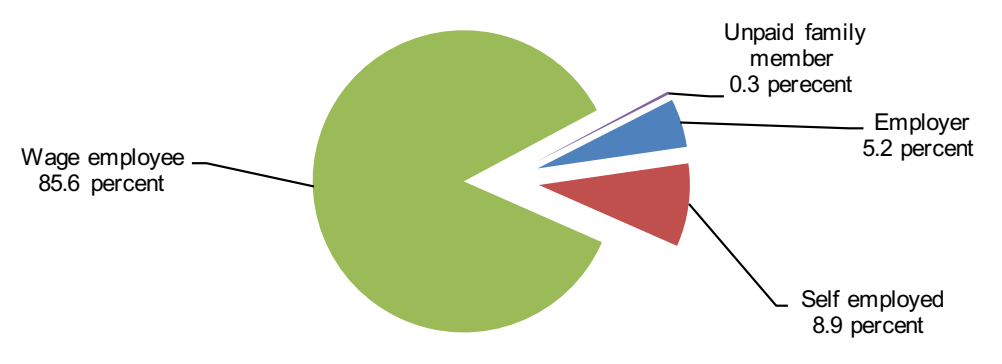
3. Health

There were 7 hospitals in Jerusalem Governorate with 716 beds in 2020. The total number of discharges from Jerusalem hospitals was 132,573 in 2019. The total number of hospitalization days in Jerusalem hospitals was 247,890 in 2019. The bed occupancy rate in Jerusalem hospitals was 93.3 percent in 2019. In 2017, around 79.7 percent of individuals in Jerusalem (J2) reported having health insurance. Percentage of Palestinian Population with disabilities in Jerusalem (J2) was 1.8 percent in 2017.

4. Labor Force

- The labor force participation rate among individuals (15 years and above) in Jerusalem Governorate was 35.9 percent in 2020 (61.8 percent for males and 10.5 percent for females).
- The unemployment rate in Jerusalem Governorate of individuals (15 years and above) was 6.5 percent in 2020.
- Employment rate in Jerusalem Governorate among individuals (15 years and above) was 93.5 percent in 2020.
- Employed individuals in Jerusalem Governorate distributed by employment status in 2020 were as follows: 5.2 percent employer, 8.9 percent self-employed, 85.6 percent wage employee, and 0.3 percent unpaid family member.

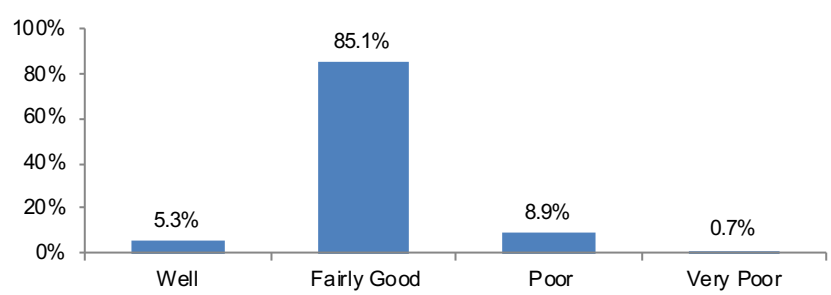
Table 3. Percentage Distribution of Employed Individuals from Jerusalem Governorate by Employment Status, 2020



5. Living Standards

- Income from wages earned from employment in Israel was the main source of household income for 41.6 percent of households in Jerusalem Governorate in 2018. Income from the private sector made up 21.4 percent, and income from national insurance allowances was the main source of income for 17.2 percent. Wages from the government sector represented 4.5 percent of households in Jerusalem Governorate.
- Around 5.3 percent of the Palestinian households in Jerusalem Governorate from household point of view described their standard of living as well, 85.1 percent described it as “fairly good,” 8.9 percent as poor, and 0.7 percent as very poor in 2018.

Table 4. Percentage Distribution of Palestinian Households in Jerusalem Governorate by Living Standard from Household Point of View, 2018



## 6. Education

### 6.1 Schools<sup>1</sup>

- In scholastic year 2020/2021, there were 261 schools.
- In scholastic year 2020/2021, there were 75,184 school students: 36,761 males and 38,423 females.
- In scholastic year 2020/2021, the average number of students per teacher was 15.1 in government schools, 22.5 in UNRWA schools and 15.7 in private schools.
- In scholastic year 2020/2021, the average number of students per class was 21.3 in government schools, 21.0 in UNRWA schools and 22.9 in private.



### 6.2 Higher Education<sup>2</sup>

- In scholastic year 2019/2020, there were 12,171 university students: 4,562 males and 7,609 females.
- In scholastic year 2019/2020, there were 350 college students: 49 males and 301 females.
- In scholastic year 2018/2019, there were 2,669 university graduates: 1,008 males and 1,661 females.
- In scholastic year 2018/2019, there were 114 college graduates: 11 males and 103 females.

## 7. Culture

- In 2020, there were 51 cultural centers operating in Jerusalem Governorate.
- In 2020, there were 4 museums operating in Jerusalem Governorate.
- In 2020, there were 2 theaters operating in Jerusalem Governorate.
- In 2019, there were 122 mosques operating in Jerusalem Governorate.

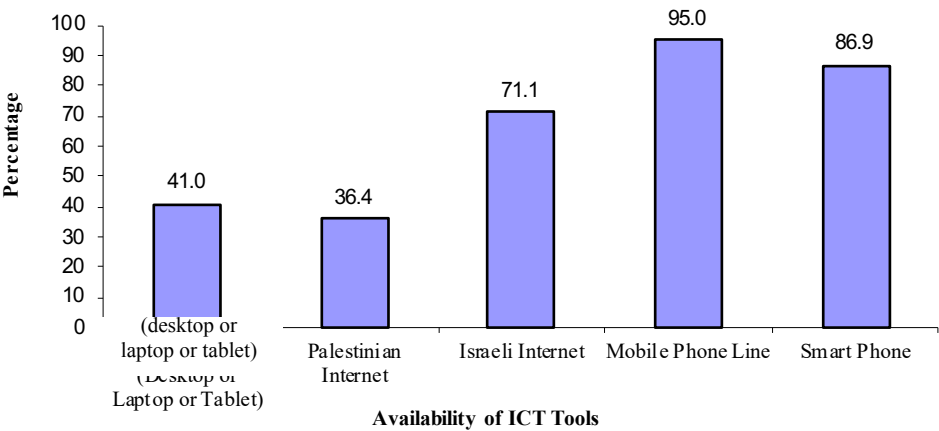
1 Data excludes Municipality and Culture Committee Schools in Jerusalem.  
Data for the academic year 2020/2021 are preliminary data.

2 Universities include traditional universities and university colleges ,and the number of students represents all students affiliated with these universities from different governorates

8. Information Society

- In 2019, 41.0 percent of households in Jerusalem Governorate owned a computer (desktop, laptop, or tablet).
- In 2019, 36.4 percent of households in Jerusalem Governorate used a Palestinian internet service compared to 71.1 percent who used an Israeli internet service.

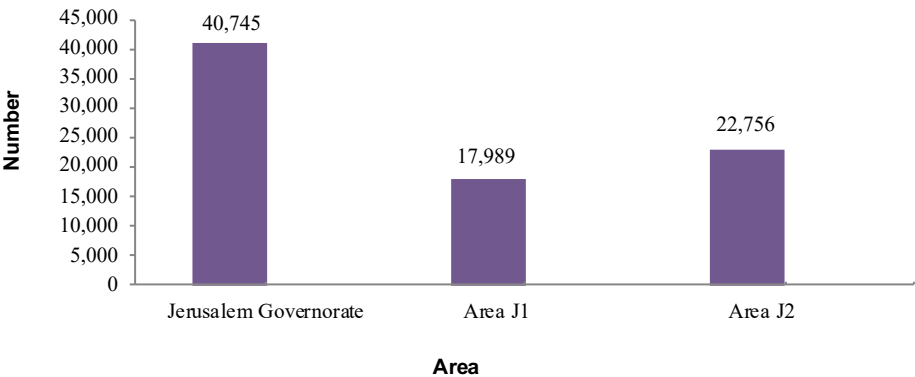
Table 5. Percentage of Palestinian Households in Jerusalem Governorate by Availability of ICT Tools, 2019



9. Buildings

- The number of buildings in Jerusalem Governorate that were counted during the period from 16/09/2017 to 31/10/2017 was 40,745 buildings, of which 17,989 were in Jerusalem (J1), and 22,756 in Jerusalem (J2).

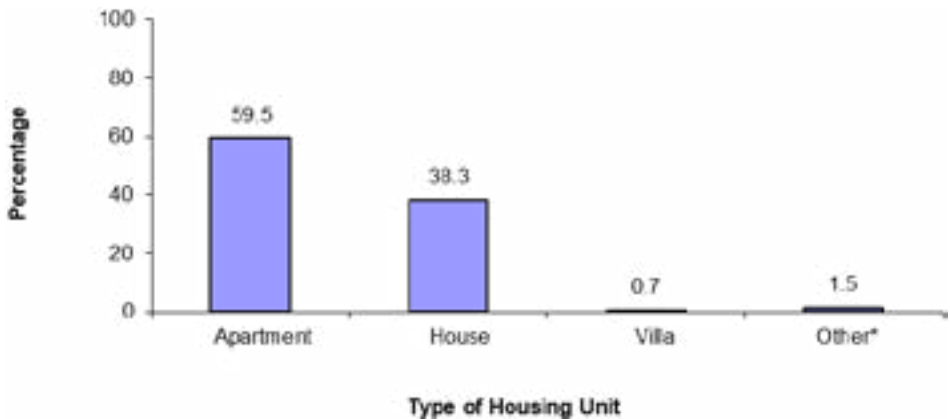
Table 6. Number of Buildings in Jerusalem Governorate by Area, 2017



**10. Housing**

- In 2019, the average number of rooms per housing unit in Jerusalem Governorate was 3.1 rooms.
- In 2019, the average housing density in Jerusalem Governorate was 1.4 person per room.

Table 7. Percentage of Households in Jerusalem Governorate by Type of Housing\* Unit, 2019



\* Includes: Independent Room, Tent and Marginal.

**11. Environment and Natural Resources**

**11.1 Water**

- 96.2 percent of households in Jerusalem Governorate use public water network for drinking water, 1.9 percent use bottled water during the year 2019.
- 85.4 percent of household members in Jerusalem Governorate had an improved drinking water source located on premises, free of contamination and available when needed in 2019.
- The amount of rainfall in 2020 was 591 mm in Jerusalem station, while the mean average of rainfall in Jerusalem station was 537 mm.

**11.2 Electricity**

- During the year 2017, the number of housing units in Jerusalem Governorate (J2) that were supplied with electricity through a public electricity network was about 22,974 housing units, 315 housing units through a special generator, 22 housing units without electricity, and 9,031 housing units with non-stated source of electricity.

### 11.3 Solid Waste

- 21,721 housing units in Jerusalem Governorate (J2) during the year 2017 disposed of solid waste by throwing it in the nearest container, 1,488 housing units disposed of solid waste by burning, and 87 housing units by throwing them randomly.

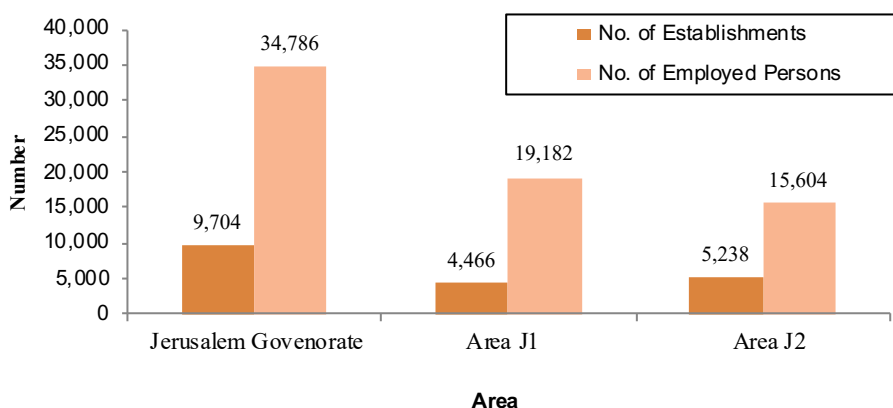
### 11.4 Sanitation

- 98.7 percent of households in Jerusalem Governorate used improved sanitation in 2019.

## 12. Establishments

- In 2017, there were 9,704 establishments operating in the private sector, non-governmental organizations and government companies in Jerusalem Governorate. Those establishments employed 34,786 employed persons, of whom 15,604 were in Jerusalem (J2) and 19,182 in Jerusalem (J1).
- In 2017, there were 10,227 establishments operating in Jerusalem Governorate classified by main economic activity: 5,326 in wholesale and retail trade; repair of motor vehicles and motorcycles; 1,239 in manufacturing; and 969 in other service activities.

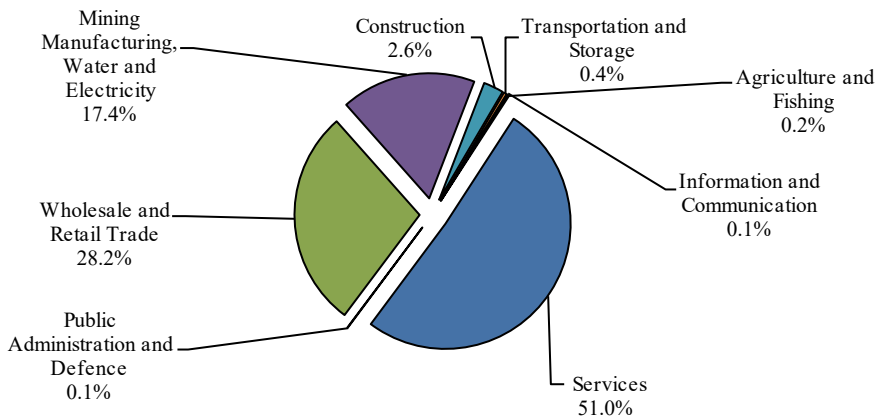
Table 8. Operating Establishments and Employed Persons in the Private Sector, Non Governmental Organization Sector and Government Companies in Jerusalem Governorate by Area, 2017



## 13. National Accounts

- In Jerusalem Governorate (J1), the gross value added at current prices was USD 1,348.4 million for 2019 compared with USD 1,321.6 million in 2018.

Table 9. Percentage Distribution of Value Added in Jerusalem Governorate (J1) by Economic Activity, 2019



**Note:** Value added within national accounts includes all value added incurred from all economic sectors including the informal sector.

### 14. Consumer Prices

- The consumer price index in Jerusalem Governorate (J1) increased by 0.74 percent in 2020 compared with 2019, and by 1.37 percent in 2019 compared with 2018.

### 15. Transportation and Telecommunication

#### 15.1 Transportation and Storage:

- There were 184 establishments operating in Jerusalem Governorate in 2019.
- There were 804 employed persons in this sector in Jerusalem Governorate in 2019.
- The output value in Jerusalem Governorate was USD 7.9 million in 2019.
- The value added realized by the transportation and storage was USD 5.0 million in 2019.

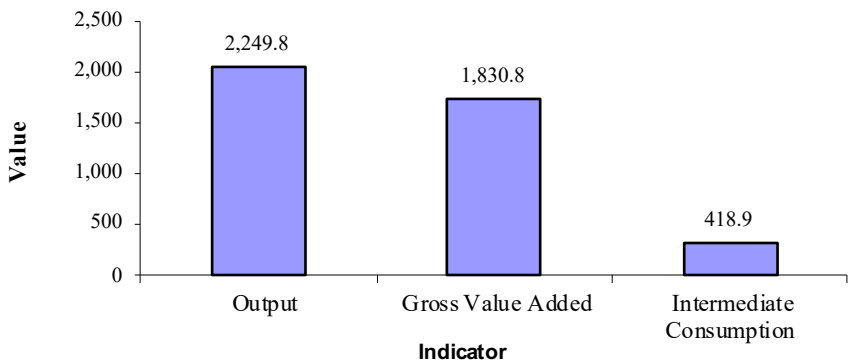
#### 15.2 Information and Telecommunication:

- There were 48 establishments operating in Jerusalem Governorate in 2019.
- There were 94 employed persons in this sector in Jerusalem Governorate in 2019.
- The output value in Jerusalem Governorate was USD 2.2 million in 2019.
- The value added realized by the information and telecommunication activities was USD 1.8 million in 2019.

Table 10. Main Economic Indicators for Information and Telecommunication



**Activities in Jerusalem Governorate, 2019** (Value in 1,000 USD)



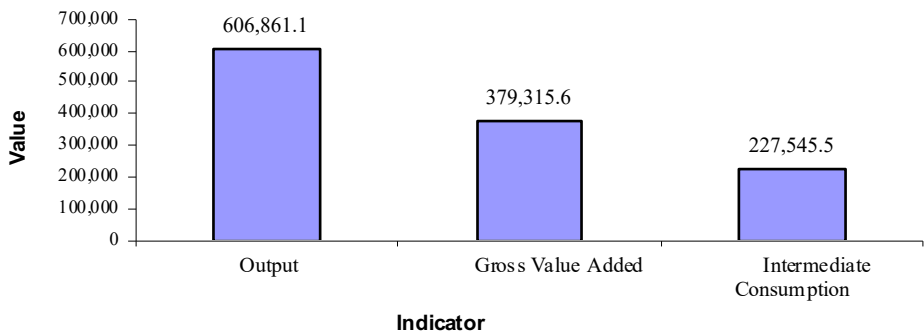
**16. Construction Sector**

- 102 building licenses were issued in Jerusalem Governorate (J2) with an area of 69.5 thousand m<sup>2</sup> in 2020.
- There were 2 licenses issued for non-residential purposes in Jerusalem Governorate (J2) with an area of 3.3 thousand m<sup>2</sup> in 2020.
- The output value in construction activities in Jerusalem Governorate was USD 21.8 million in 2019.
- The value added realized by the construction activities was USD 17.2 million in 2019.

**17. Industrial Sector**

- The output value of those enterprises was USD 606.9 million in 2019.
- The value added realized by the industrial sector was USD 379.3million in 2019.

**Table 11. Main Economic Indicators for Industrial Activities in Jerusalem Governorate, 2019** (Value in 1,000 USD)



## 18. Tourism

- There were 19 hotels in operation responded to the hotel survey at the end of the year 2019 with 987 rooms and 2,199 beds in Jerusalem Governorate.
- Average number of employees in Jerusalem governorate hotels was 652 in 2019.

## 19. Services Sector

- There were 2,994 establishments operating in Jerusalem Governorate in 2019.
- There was 17,700 employed persons in this sector in Jerusalem Governorate in 2019.
- The output value in Jerusalem Governorate was USD 771.8 million in 2019.
- The value added realized by the services sector was USD 577.9 million in 2019.

## 20. Internal Trade

- There were 5,127 establishments operating in Jerusalem Governorate in 2019.
- There were 12,597 employed persons in this activity in Jerusalem Governorate in 2019.
- The output value in Jerusalem Governorate was USD 753.2 million in 2019.
- The value added realized by internal trade activities was USD 598.8 million in 2019.

## 21. Registered Foreign Trade

- The total value of registered imports of goods to Jerusalem Governorate decreased in 2019 by 12 percent compared to 2018 and reached USD 349.7 million.
- The total value of registered exports of goods from Jerusalem Governorate decreased in 2019 by 38 percent compared to 2018 and reached USD 56.9 million.

## 22. Israeli Violations

- Number of Settlements constructed on confiscated land in Jerusalem Governorate: 26 settlements, 16 of them were in (J1) in 2019.
- In 2019, around 316,176 settlers in the settlements in Jerusalem Governorate and 232,093 of them were in (J1).
- 14,701 Jerusalem ID cards were confiscated between 1967 and 2020.
- In 2020, the Israeli authorities demolished 165 buildings in Jerusalem Governorate (121 residential buildings, 44 nonresidential buildings).



## Call for Contributions

A special issue of the *Jerusalem Quarterly*

### **Retracing UNRWA's History: Archives, Social History, and Visual Culture on Palestinian Mobilities and Humanitarianism**

Guest Editors: Maria Chiara Rioli and Francesca Biancani

The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) was established to assist Palestinian refugees expelled from their homes, or who were forced to leave their towns and villages after the outbreak of hostilities in 1948. UNRWA came to influence the formation and transformation of Palestinian identity, as well as the social, educational, and cultural history of Palestinians in the Middle East and beyond, but it also had an impact on the domestic politics of the countries hosting its operational fields.

Relevant studies produced by development scholars and anthropologists have focused on the recent work and crises of UNRWA. However, UNRWA's establishment in the aftermath of the 1948 War for Palestine and its daily management, existence, and connections with a number of humanitarian, political, and religious institutions at that time remain overlooked by historians. In addition, little has been written about the transformations wrought on UNRWA's internal politics and operations by turning points in the Arab-Israeli conflict such as the 1956 Suez Crisis, the 1967 Six Day War, the first intifada, the Oslo agreements, and the second intifada. A social history of UNRWA, its involvement in the life and networks of the camps, and its role in the broader history of humanitarianism in the Middle East and beyond still lack source-based historical investigation.

In this context, the question of the archives is a fundamental one: Throughout these past decades, UNRWA archives underwent a troubled history of displacement and dispersion. Since the 1990s, various inventory projects have addressed the UNRWA archives' multiple collections over various locations. However, financial limitations and political factors hampered this work, leading to the current situation whereby only irregular and limited access to archival material has been possible with the exception of the UNRWA visual archive.

For this Special Issue of *Jerusalem Quarterly*, we welcome contributions covering three main axes:

1. Archival history of UNRWA: Articles will retrace the history of the UNRWA archives since their creation to the present; the trajectories and various placements of the written, oral, and visual collections; the policies behind their material and digital preservation; their dispersion or cessation; conditions of access or denial; and intertwining curatorial practices, critical archival theory, and politics;
2. Social history of UNRWA: Articles will retrace some strands of the social history of UNRWA-run refugee camps, exploring how the camps were created and administered, their transformation into urban agglomerations, their system of management, the conflict that arose, but also the history of family, education, work, mobilities, disability, and how UNRWA policies intervened in these phenomena;
3. UNRWA in the humanitarian history in the Middle East and beyond: Articles will approach the relations between UNRWA and other – humanitarian or not – agencies and institutions in the field, and propose an historically-based analysis of UNRWA's role and impact in the transformation of the concept and practices of humanitarianism in the region and globally.

Contributions should be based on an analysis of archival material. *Jerusalem Quarterly* is particularly interested in submissions that address UNRWA's work in and around Jerusalem. The editors encourage collaborative proposals. The digital format of the *Jerusalem Quarterly* has the advantage of allowing published articles to include audio and video sources, as well.

Please send a draft proposal to the managing editor:  
[jq@palestine-studies.org](mailto:jq@palestine-studies.org)

and to the two guest editors:  
[mariachiara.rioli@unive.it](mailto:mariachiara.rioli@unive.it)  
[francesca.biancani@unibo.it](mailto:francesca.biancani@unibo.it)

Proposed abstract submission deadline: 28 February 2022.

Proposed draft submission deadline: 30 June 2022.

Publication of Special Issue: 2023.

For submission guidelines, please refer to:

[www.palestine-studies.org/en/journals/jq/how-to-submit](http://www.palestine-studies.org/en/journals/jq/how-to-submit)

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# Ibrahim Dakkak Award for Outstanding Essay on Jerusalem

Ibrahim Dakkak Award for Outstanding Essay on Jerusalem is an annual award launched by the *Jerusalem Quarterly* in 2017 to commemorate the memory and work of Ibrahim Dakkak (1929–2016), Jerusalem architect, activist, political leader, and former chairman of the Advisory Board of the *Jerusalem Quarterly*.

It is awarded to an outstanding submission that addresses either contemporary or historical issues relating to Jerusalem. A committee selected by the *Jerusalem Quarterly* determines the winning essay. The author will be awarded a prize of U.S. \$1,000, and the essay will be published in the *Jerusalem Quarterly*.

Essays submitted for consideration should be based on original research and must not have been previously published elsewhere. They should be 4,000 to 5,000 words in length (including endnotes), preceded by an abstract of no more than 200 words, and up to 10 keywords.

If the submitted article is in Arabic, the abstract and keywords should be in English.

Preference will be given to young/junior/aspiring/emerging/early-career researchers and students.

Please submit essays and a short bio (including current or previous affiliation with a recognized university, research institution, or non-governmental organization that conducts research) via email to [jq@palestine-studies.org](mailto:jq@palestine-studies.org), mentioning the Award.

Any photos, charts, graphs, and other artwork should be in camera-ready format, and should be saved as JPEG, with a minimum resolution of 600 dpi, or 700 KB. Submitted images must have copyright clearance from owners, and have captions that are clear and accurate.

The deadline for submissions is **15 January** of each year.

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# الأوقاف والملكيات المقدسية

دراسة لعقارات البلدة القديمة في القرن العشرين

منير فخر الدين

سليم تماري

تقديم: شادية طوقان



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إعداد وتحرير ومساهمة: روان شرف





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نَظْمِي الْحُجْبَةِ

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Edited by Rashid Khalidi & Salim Tamari

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SACRED CITY



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**Mu'askar and Shu'fat**

**Retracing the Histories of Two Palestinian Refugee Camps in Jerusalem**

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**Jerusalem and the Continuing Nakba**

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Cover photo: A Palestinian youth defies Israeli soldiers by repeatedly biking in front of them at the Qalandiya checkpoint. Because of his age, he was not able to cross the checkpoint to reach Jerusalem, 8 June 2018. Photo by Anne Paq.

Back cover: Dena Matter, *Greetings to Jerusalem*, 2019. Acrylic on Canvas, 100 x 70 cm. Copyright Dena Matter.





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